JOSEPH HOOG

MEMOIR

ALSATIAN CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

B30

JOSEPH HOOG - 1914

PREFACE

This interview is the product of the Castroville Oral History Project B. The interview was conducted at the library by Connie Rihn on June 11, 1981.

Joseph, or Joe, Hoog was born March 21, 1914 to Emma Schmitt and Albert Hoog, both of pioneer Alsatian families in Castroville. Joe, the oldest of ten children, received his schooling at St. Louis. He started farming with his father, but went on his own when he was 26. He owned several horses, leased them to Moye Military School and served as riding instructor for the boys at the school. He entered the Army in World War II and served in the European theater. He served in the 36th Division, and later in the 135th Quartermaster Truck Company in Gen. Bradley's 12th Army. His war career took him to England, France and into Germany. His background in Alsatian and German gained him the job of interpreter for his company. He was discharged in 1945, and he returned to Castroville. He and his brothers opened a dairy to serve the community. After they sold the dairy, Joe went to work at Medina Base. He accepted the appointment as Constable for the East Precinct of Medina County and served in that capacity for twenty years. During his law-enforcement career, he was wounded twice in the line of duty. He retired in 1976. He and his wife Gertrude are very active in the community, in Church organizations and in the American Legion. His several hobbies include giving wagon rides to people at St. Louis Day and other

celebrations in the area, and he and several friends recently rejuvenated a molasses press and annually make molasses according to the methods taught them by the old-timers. In 1968 Joe and Gertrude went to Germany and France and revisited the many places Joe had been during World War II.

Tape #B30
1 hour 45 minutes
transcribed

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Joseph Hoog
Tape # B30
Sides 1-2-3-4

Side 1

		Page
006	Family background: Albert Hood/Emma Schmitt; ten children: Joseph, Francis, Thomas, Robert, Albert, Raymond, Mary, Dorothy, Catherine, Joan Ann	1
019	Peter Hoog (grandfather), lawman 50 years.	1
048	Albert Hoog (father), farmer and county employee .	3
060	Large family survives: cows, chickens, large garden.	3
070	US Army interpreter, World War II.	5
097	Joe's education/St. Louis School, Agriculture school after WW II.	6
106	Horses trained and leased for riding, Moye Military School; Joe riding instructor	7
120	Sonny Haass' park at Medina River Dam, swimming, horseback riding, picnicing	7
128	Hoog ancestors from Rixheim, Alsace; Schmitt ancestors, Oberensen.	8
136	World War II experiences, Lorraine, France	9
155	Joe visits Ulman, Germany, home of Father Jacob Lenzen.	9
192	Corpus Christi Feast celebration in Germany (1944)	10
245	Joe and wife revisit Germany and Alsace, 1968. . .	13
281	Joe and brothers open dairy, 1945.	15
325	Airstrip is built by government, 1940's.	16
348	Federal government sponsors Agriculture school in Medina County following war.	18

Side 1

		Page
378	Joe marries Gertrude Anders of Dobina, Texas June 7, 1949.	19

Side 2

436	Hoog family makes molasses	21
447	Molasses making process revived by Hilmer Mangold, Dr. Woodrow Sharp, and Joe Hoog	21
518	Present-day molasses makers: Sammy Tschirharts, Raymond Hoogs, Walter Etters.	26
565	Emma Schmitt Hoog-organist and musician; CDP boarding school, early 1900's.	29
590	Hoog boys revolt against musical training.	30
612	Alfred Schmitt (uncle) musician; bugler in WW I. .	31
634	Kate Scmitt (aunt), St. Louis choir.	32
640	Beetz pool room moved to Hoog premises for six boys bedroom.	33
672	Hoog brothers-carpenters-Tommy, Albert, Francis, Raymond	34
693	Catholic Church influences, Sister Marcella, Father Heckmann, Father Lenzen	35
730	Joe's Alsatian background gains him interpreter job in WW II.	36
776	Eisenhower's supply depot, London air raid, close call to death	38

Side 3

008	World War II experience, London bombing, hauling supplies for Eisenhower hdq., moving through France after D'Day.	38
150	Discharged from Army, 1945	47
170	St. Louis Day, sausage making at Albert Hoog's; Sausage making tradition passes to son Tommy, to Tommy's son, Ralph.	48
250	Joe builds wagon, gives rides at St. Louis Day and other celebrations.	52

Side 3		Page
285	Joe's gig from Jul Jagge, built by blacksmith Frank Tschirhart.	53
306	Joe's career in Law-enforcement, constable 20 years.	54
315	Shot in line of duty, jaw repaired by Dr. Wurzbach	55
370	Recount of shooting (about 1967)	55
Side 4		
434	Joe shot second time (about 1971), retires from law enforcement 1976.	58
483	"Corpus" stolen off cross at Cross Hill, 1920's. .	60
505	End of interview	62

index pt 3

This interview is the product of the Castroville Oral History Project B. Connie Rihn is the editor and narrator. The interview of Joe Hoog was conducted at the library by Connie Rihn on June 11, 1981.

Q Okay, Joe. You're the oldest one in your family. Would you give me a little background of your parents and your brothers and sisters and when you were born.

A I'm Joe Hoog. I was born on March the 21st, 1914.

Q Okay. And who were your parents?

A Albert Hoog and my mother's name was Emma Schmitt.

Q Okay. And how many children did they have?

A Ten. Six boys and four girls.

Q Can you name them? In the order that they were born.

A Yes.

Q You are the oldest though, right?

A Right. Joseph, Francis, Thomas, Robert, Albert, and Raymond the boys. The girls are Mary, Dorothy, Catherine and Joan Ann.

Q Okay. And are all of them living?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Now your grandfather was -- on the Hoog side -- is --

A Peter Hoog.

Q And you knew him?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Do you know anything about him. I know that he was a law enforcement officer here in this area. In what capacity was he?

A Well, he was a lawman for 50 years. He was a deputy sheriff, city marshal and justice of the peace.

Q Now is this all at the same time?

A No, different times. The last years he was the justice of the peace.

Q Did anybody else in your family then follow in his footsteps in law enforcement? Any of his children?

A I did.

Q You were the only one then?

A Yes.

Q So what years about was he a law enforcement officer? Do you know the time that he was, about what year? Okay, when did he die.

A Oh, about in the '20's.

Q Was he in law enforcement right up until he died or was he retired a few years?

A He held his office till he died.

Q And how old was he when he died? You don't know that either?

A He died in 1930. That is correct.

Q He was about 82 years old.

A That's about right.

Q Do you know anything about his career as a law enforcement officer?

A Well, I do know that all of us children would go to his house which was about one block north of us almost every day to play there and he was real kind to children. He'd

walk up, he had his office in the Marty Building. Justice of the Peace office and he had his trials. I never witnessed any trials. My grandmother once told me sh'd never marry a Justice of the Peace again, I said why not. She said they kiss too many brides.

Q Then he never talked to you about things. You didn't listen to him talk about old stories.

A No, very little.

Q Well, did your grandmother -- was she living longer than him?

A She died about two years after he died.

Q Well, did your daddy ever talk about it?

A No, he worked for the county and a farmer and people never talked too much about what happened before and we were too young to ask questions.

Q So your dad was a farmer and worked for the county?

A Yes.

Q Well you were talking about Peter Hoog being such a fine man well I always thought your dad was such a fine man. Albert -- he used to come up and walk uptown and sit in front of my store when I'd be working in the evening. He just loved to talk.

A That's right.

Q But he was such a nice man. How in the world did they raise ten children in those days?

A Well, it was tough. I say this, neither one was ever hungry. Maybe we didn't have the best things in the world

to eat but we always had enough. At that time we had two or three milk cows, fresh milk for the house and the neighbors come and picked up quarts and some people came and got some a nickle a quart.

Q Oh, you all sold milk then.

A That's right. And mother had chickens. She never did go to a grocery store. All the groceries she ordered by telephone in Tondres or Sonny Mann's store, they'd bring the groceries there, and she had the eggs on the table. Sometimes she even got some money back for the eggs.

Q In other words, she made enough on her eggs to buy her groceries?

A Most of the time, yes.

Q Did you all raise any more of your food besides the chickens and the milk?

A Yes, we always a had a big garden.

Q It must have been that everybody had a garden in those days, huh?

A That's right.

Q Everybody raised as much of their own food as they could.

A That's right.

Q Did you think that when you went to Alsace that people lived pretty much the way that you were brought up in your parents.

A Well, I was in Alsace the first time during the war. And they still probably at that time in --

Q World War II you're talking about?

A World War II, 1945. They probably lived still like about a hundred, two hundred years before. They still had their stable next to their kitchen where they kept their oxen and hogs and chickens and everything was clean but hardly any of the families had a car or a truck at that time. But they've learned, I think, from the Americans and when we went back there in '68 things were completely different. They had tractors, they had, want to build new homes and modern homes and they improved a hundred percent.

Q Un-huh. Well, when you went there in World War II, it was after the war?

A The fighting was over with. I stayed there about six months.

Q Were you surprised when you got to Alsace at how you could communicate with the people?

A Yes, I was interpreter for the company in German. I drove a truck and I traveled all over.

Q Oh, really.

A And I stopped and spoke to some people. At first they were afraid, they thought I was a spy and after I got their confidence they were very happy to know that someone from the United States could still speak their language and they welcomed me to their homes and were real nice.

Q Well did you think at that time that the people were a lot like the people in Castroville in their habits and everything?

A They were, yes. They spoke like us and the cursed liked we did.

Q And you didn't have any trouble with the language at all. I mean you could --

A Well, I couldn't speak it perfect you know but I could get along with anybody.

Q But they were really surprised to find an American that could speak Alsatian.

A That's right.

Q Well can you also speak German?

A Yes. See when we went to school we studied German for two years. The first two years.

Q Okay, Well just tell me where you went to school.

A At the St. Louis School in Castroville.

Q How many years of education did you have?

A I attended St. Louis nine years.

Q Do you have any further education other than that?

A Yes, I attended agriculture school four years after that.

Q Where was that?

A Here in Medina County in Devine. See after the war they paid us eighty dollars a month to go to school.

Q Oh, this was after the war then when you came back.

A Yes.

Q So how old were you then at that time?

A About 32.

Q So it was sort of like a GI bill of rights?

A That's right. They paid for our schooling.

Q Well, that was a good deal. Were you a farmer yourself?

A Yes, I was farming with my dad till I was 26 years old and

then I went on my own. That didn't last long, the war came along and I left home and go in the service. Before that I had some riding horses and I was riding instructor at they Moye Military. I furnished the horses but when I had to leave home I sold the horses to the Sisters of Divine Providence. A saddle and horse sold at that time, good horse, gentle for anyone to ride for fifty dollars. Now a horse like that would sell for a thousand.

Q Oh, really. Fifty dollars, that seems cheap.

A It was but fifty dollars was as much as almost a thousand now. You could almost buy as much.

Q I remember your horses. I remember those Moye Military boys riding those horses. In fact we used to come and ride horses on Sunday afternoons. Did you keep them down there where City Park is now, is that where your land was?

A No, we had them Saturday and Sunday at below the bridge. Sonny Haas had a park there. And people from everywhere came to stay the night and we kept those horses going practically all day Saturday and Sunday.

Q Down there with Sonny Haas.

A Yeah.

Q Yeah, he had a --

A Swimming pool, rooms for people to change and he sold soft drinks and a few other little things like candy and things like that.

Q Yeah, that place was fixed up really nice. We really enjoyed going swimming there. That's where I swam a lot.

That was during the World War II time too, wasn't it?

A Uh-huh, yes.

Q Let's get back a little bit more to when you went to Alsace in the war. At that time did you find your ancestor's home or didn't you know anything about it.

A I knew, my mother sent me the address for the Schmitts at Oberensen, but I never got far enough sout to actually - within fifty miles of there. My trips didn't allow me to go down there.

Q Oh. Now Oberensen's between Mulhouse and Colmar, isn't it?

A Right.

Q And that's where the Schmitts came from.

A That's right.

Q And the Hoogs came from --

A Rixheim.

Q Rixheim and that's just outside of Mulhouse?

A Right. We were in a convoy and I happened to be the leading truck and it got dark. That's in Lorraine. We came to a railroad track and a man was in one of those little square buildings stopping the trains or stopping the traffic. So there's a vacant lot or probably two acres vacant so we stopped and asked him if we could park our trucks here. I asked him, spoke Alsatian to him. He looked at me and didn't know what to think. American trucks and an Alsatian driver. So I asked him if we could park our trucks here and he said yes. He said in 20 minutes I'll have my day's work put in and I'll get off. I'm coming back with my

family in about an hour. Well, they got the neighbors, mostly young people and a band came over there and played for us. It was just about a month or two after the war. They were so happy that they could speak -- you know, someone could speak to them.

Q Uh-huh. And Lorraine now this is north of Alsace right, Lorraine?

A Yes. We were actually stationed in Verdon, that is in Alsace.

Q How do you spell that?

A V-E-R-D-O-N.

Q That's in Alsace?

A Yes. And also my mother wrote me that Father Lenzen and Sister Barbara came from Ulmen, Germany.

Q What was the name?

A Ulmen. U-L-M-E-N. So I had a trip from Paris to go to Cologne to pick up supplies and I looked on the map and I noticed this town was about five or six miles south of the main highway. I had plenty time to come home so as I was driving by myself I said I'm going to try to find this family. It was just a small town about five, six hundred people. A lady about 40 years old was walking down the street. I asked her if a family named Lenzen is living here. She looked at me and spoke perfect English. She said, "I'm one of them" And at that time we weren't supposed to fraternize with the Germans. She said, "I'm going to walk along the sidewalk and just follow me and I want you to meet Father Lenzen's brothers." I almost started

running, I was afraid I was going to get in a trap, but my conscience told me to follow her anyway. She came there and she walked in the house and told me to stop there. She went in and said (they had a big barn, real high barn where they kept their animals in there) and said, "Back your truck in here, so nobody know it." I looked around the windows everywhere, people looking out to see what's going on.

Q Everybody in town knew that the Lenzens had a visitor, huh?

A So Father Lenzen's brother and his wife and nieces and nephews were there. Got acquainted and they asked me to stay overnight. Well I studied the situation awhile and thought it was all right so I stayed there. I slept upstairs and they gave me a feather bed about, feathers about a foot thick.

Q Uh-huh, was this wintertime?

A No, it was summertime, I almost smothered to death I guess.

Q Well, had they been in touch with Father Lenzen cause he was still alive --

A No, they were so glad to hear, that's the first time they could hear from Father and Sister Barbara in about five or six years. They were not allowed to write to America at that time. And I told them that they were doing fine, that we liked them and everything and they were so happy. So I told them I'm going to leave in the morning but it happened to be Corpus Christi Day and they ate breakfast about eight and I said, "Well, I'm going to have to be going." They said, "This is Corpus Christi Day. You're going to

mass first." Well, I didn't want to walk up the street --

Q Were you in your uniform?

A Yes.

Q Oh, okay.

A And I said, "I'm not going to walk up that street and I don't know where the church is (and they had a little girl about ten years old) and they said, "We'll tell her to walk up the street and when she walks up the steps of the church, you walk up there." I did.

Q Was this when the war was over?

A The war was over for about a month.

Q But you still were not allowed to fraternize?

A Not allowed to speak to any of the Germans. As I went home every little town, Corpus Christi Day, and they had the same thing going on like the custom we had here where they had the altars out and little girls throwing the flowers on the street.

Q Okay. Can you tell me more about that. Do you remember any details about that?

A You mean about --

Q The one you saw in Germany, the Corpus Christi.

A Well, they marched down the street and I had to stop four or five towns to let the procession go by first.

Q And they were walking?

A Exactly, yes walking. They had the bands and the badges the men just like we have --

Q Were they carrying the banners?

A Yes.

Q And the little girls were strewing --

A Right.

Q -- the petals.

A Just like we used to do when we were young going to school.

Q Uh-huh.

A So as -- when I left that morning this lady that spoke good English. The reason she could speak English, I forgot to tell you to start with, she was with Father Lenzen in Schulenburg 12 years and she went to school in Schulenburg. She came over as a little girl. That's why she could speak such good English. The men were all either captured or still weren't home. And they had several nieces around about 20 years old there. This woman said "Pick one and take her along to Texas."

Q Why didn't you?

A Well, I never got back there no more.

Q Well, you passed up an opportunity there, didn't you? Now where is Ulmen in Germany in relation to France?

A It's west of the Rhine River.

Q How far about?

A And north of Lorraine. I would guess about 60 miles.

Q Is it close to like Belgium?

A It's between Trier and Koblenz.

Q Okay.

A That's the reason I could find it. But the town name was Ulmen. But Hitler made them change that and Hitler made

that street Hitler Street and when I got there it was still Hitler Street.

Q What do you mean the main street of the town?

A The street where they lived on.

Q Oh, the street where they lived on was --

A It was Hitler Street.

Q Oh.

A And when she led me down Hitler Street I was still more confused and I thought I was really going to be taken but they told me I said the address said Ulmen Street but they explained to me that Hitler made the council change the name to Hitler Street.

Q Yeah. Now is Ulmen the town or the street? Ulmen?

A The town but there's a street --

Q There's a street also Ulmen, okay. I see. Is that probably the main street in the town?

A It was the main street, yes.

Q Uh-huh. Well, did they change it back then after the war?

A I didn't go back, I didn't get a chance to go back so I don't know.

Q You didn't go back there in 1968 either?

A No, we stayed at Weisbaden where I was stationed about eight months. I showed my wife the buildings we lived in and there we rented a car and we drove across the Rhine River. I had to decide where I wanted to go, either go see the Lenzens or go to Alsace. We decided to go to Alsace. We drove along the Rhine River till we got to Alsace.

But before, when the war was over my name was about to come up to go home and the company commander told us that we can take a trip to Rome paid by the government. But if your name comes up you'll miss the boat. Well, we didn't want to miss the boat. We were still there three months. I had all the time in the world to travel everywhere but I didn't do it.

Q You wanted to wait for that call.

A That's right.

Q Uh-huh. You were saying that Father Lenzen's sister that spoke such good English, do you remember her name?

A It was Father Lenzen's niece.

Q Oh, his niece.

A Yes, her mother and father were the ones that lived in the house.

Q I see. Oh she's the one though that spoke the good English.

A Right.

Q Well then Barbara was his twin sister, was she not?

A Right.

Q And she came over here to be his housekeeper.

A Right.

Q Well now did she come right away when he did or come later?

A That I don't know. Now the people --

Q Because she never did speak real good English, did she?

A No, but this woman was young I guess so many years with them. She spoke good English.

Q That was interesting. Let me think what else I want to ask you. Were you surprised at how Alsace looked in the

war or was it pretty bad?

A Well, I wasn't too much surprised. In '68 when we over in Oberensen where the Schmitts came from the first man I met was the old man, we stopped and just looked at the buildings and an old man came by on a bicycle and I started talking to him and he was real nice and friendly and I asked him why those people decided to come to Texas when they lived in this beautiful Rhine Valley. He said well at that time each family had a small farm. There was no factories and no place for them to go and the oldest one would inherit the little farm and the others had to go out somewhere in the world to make a living. So this opportunity came and they came to Texas. Just left their home. That's the reason they left there to come here.

Q Yeah. In other words, there just wasn't enough opportunities to make a living and most of the families were sort of large just like over here we had large families.

A Right. But this was '68. He said now, so many years after war there's work for everybody. Nobody has to leave here. Conditions were really good.

Q Uh-huh.

A The young people can go work in the cities.

Q Okay. Well, we're going to get back to your own life here after the war then. You said you came home and you went to agricultural school in Devine and were you farming already at the time?

A Yes, When I came home I started a dairy, my brothers and I

and I started from scratch to build barns, buy cows and we furnished Castroville with milk. We delivered it twice a day in the cafes, homes and schools. They already started the school lunches.

Q Now was this good old raw milk --

A Uh -- we delivered twice a day. We milked the cows in the morning and that was delivered within an hour by bottles in the cafes and the schools and everywhere. It went to their ice box. We didn't even cool it till later.

Q Yeah. Did you also produce cream and things like that?

A Yes, we sold cream also, coffee cream --

Q Okay, where was that dairy located?

A Uh -- we grazed our cows what is now the airfield. I had the lease from the government. See that land was sold about 1940 to the government. Some belonged to my dad, some to my uncles and six, seven different owners and they were forced to sell it.

Q Uh-huh.

A But when I got home I got a lease and then we grazed our cows there but we walked them home and we milked the cows at our house there.

Q You mean you crossed the river with those cows every time you milked them?

A Morning and evening?

Q Yeah, that's what I mean --

A That's right.

Q And you'd walk them across the crossing down there, the Jungs' crossing?

A Yes. There were no buildings around there then.

Q Yeah, well for heaven's sake.

A They didn't -- well, at that time --

Q Was the exercise good for cows?

A Well, it wasn't the best in the world and I also owned 40 acres just across the river there we grazed them most of the time and we didn't have to walk so far.

Q Oh, I see. And the dairy was located about where Dan Ruempel's house is now or --

A Right.

Q That's what I thought. I remember that building --

A Well, the buildings are still there. The milk parlor and also the barn.

Q Did you ever get as automated as to have milking machines?

A Yes, we had milking machines.

Q Okay, did any of this schooling you got in Devine teach you to upgrade that?

A Right. Right.

Q Oh, you did learn methods then, there?

A Yes. Well, that school was in different parts of the county. First we started out in the old Rio Medina country school. And Paul Richter was our agricultural teacher. Well we had several of them. Then we moved close to Natalia. And the last year we were supposed to be seniors, big shots, we had to move to Devine.

Q Oh, well who sponsored this program? Was it the federal government?

A Federal Government, yes.

Q It wasn't the county through the A & M Extension Service?

A No, no, no, our checks were direct from the government.

Q From the government, and they furnished the teacher and --

A Right.

Q Well, can you say you really learned anything from this?

A I did, yes.

Q What types of things?

A Well, fertilizing and conservation, how to raise cattle and just everything that course of agriculture covers.

Q I've never heard this before. I guess I was just too young but I was about a teenager when it was the end of the war.

A I guess there was about 20 of us in this vicinity. We had two days school and two nights a week.

Q Two whole days?

A Yes.

Q And then two nights?

A Two nights.

Q And you did this for four years you said?

A Yes.

Q Umm -- that's very interesting. Okay so then, were you married at this time, Joe?

A I married while this school was going on.

Q Oh, okay. So when did you marry and who did you marry, tell me that.

A Gertrude Anders from --

Q I'm sorry, I didn't catch her name.

A Gertrude Anders, A-N-D-E-R-S.

Q Oh, okay.

A From Dobina, a small town out of Schulenburg.

Q And how do you spell the name of that town?

A D-O-B-I-N-A. It's the size of Rio Medina.

Q Oh, uh-huh. How did you meet Gertrude?

A Gene Suehs, my friend and I were standing at the service station about six o'clock in the evening, two old bachelors. He said I want you two to go to the Catholic senior dance.

Q Oh, Father Rolf wanted you to?

A Yes. I said I don't want to go to the dance. I'm telling you to go.

End of Side 1

So Gene and I decided to go to this dance anyways - Gunter Hotel.

Q And the group was what?

A Catholic Senior Youth Club.

Q Oh, yes, okay.

A So anyway, stand there, didn't know anyone so Father Jurachek, got me by the shoulder and said there's four girls sitting on the table you go dance. I walked over there and the first one I get to I asked if she wanted to dance. She accepted, that's where we started knowing each other --

Q And that was Gertrude?

A Right.

Q And she was working in San Antonio at the time?

A She was working at the Santa Rosa Hospital as a cook. I thought if she cooked for the sick people she could also cook for me so we got married.

Q Oh, you were really looking for a cook, huh? Well, how long did you go with her?

A Six months.

Q You weren't too slow at that at that age. For waiting so long. How old were you when you married? About 30 or so?

A 34.

Q Uh-huh. So you and Gertrude have been married now how long? What was your wedding date?

A I think it's 32 years.

Q And your wedding date?

A I know it's April the 7th, but I can't tell you now just what year.

Q Okay, let's figure it out. About '49.

A Must be about that.

Q Is that right?

A I guess so.

Q April the what was it? April 7th?

A June the 7th.

Q Oh, June the 7th, okay. June 7th about 1949.

A Yeah, that's all right.

Q Okay, Gertrude is from a little town close to Schulenburg. So she's also of German heritage, isn't she?

A She's half German and half Czech.

Q Oh, I see. Uh-huh. Let's see. Okay now I know you've been a farmer and like you've raised horses and you've had a dairy. Something you've been doing all your life I understand or has it recently just been revived is the making of the molasses. Have you always done that?

A No, but our parents and grandparents made it and I was, the younger brothers went with Dad to make molasses and they had to go south to LaCoste.

Q Why?

A The Echtle family had a press and the presses here were not operating any more.

Q What do you mean the presses?

A The presses that presses the cane. They kind of closed up around here and we were still about the last family to make molasses.

Q I see.

A And we had to strip that cane, load it on a wagon and Dad and two younger brothers left in the morning about four o'clock with a wagon to go six miles. That probably took an hour and a half, they pressed it and I'd stay home and milk the two cows. Then I went down later in the day . I never learned too much about making it, but Mr. Hilmer Mangold's grandfather had a press and Hilmer Mangold had his place on the farm. We were looking at it one day and I said let's fix this up and make molasses. Well, we also got Dr. Sharp as a partner. We set it up and started making molasses. Neither one of us knew too much how to make

it but we had Andrew Kempf and some of the oldtimers to tell us about how to cook it. And we were pretty lucky and we made about 15 batches the next two years and every time we learned how to make it better.

Q Oh. What is really the trick to it?

A Well, first you have to go out in the field and cut the cane off which about eight feet high.

Q Now we're talking about sugar cane.

A Yes, sugar cane.

Q Is it any special variety of sugar cane?

A There's several brands, orange, red top and what we got was ribbon cane. It worked out pretty good, some may be better but we stayed with that. Then it had to be cut off, seed has to be cut off and hauled to the press. This is an old-time press, horse-drawn. The horses go round and round and we have to stick that cane through that press. It presses the juice out and runs in the barrel.

Q What color is this juice?

A It's kind of the same color as the stalks, kind of a greenish looking. And after -- the pan holds about 90 to a hundred gallons. We fill that pan and we cook it with wood like the old-timers did because there's no money involved. All we have to do is hard labor to get some wood.

Q Uh-huh.

A The batch will be ready to take off, it could be any time between two and four hours cooking --

Q Okay, you start out cooking just this juice that you have

pressed out?

A Yeah, nothing added or nothing but just the juice.

Q Just the juice.

A The cane juice and when it starts bubbling, it has to boil all the time and after it starts bubbling then we take a spoon and stick it in there and if it starts dripping real slow it's just about time to take out.

Q In other words like if it coats the spoon?

A Yeah, coat the spoon it's --

Q Okay, does it change color as it cooks --

A It starts getting kind of brown.

Q Okay. Let me ask you this. What is the pan you're cooking in made of?

A It's eight feet long, eight inches wide and eight inches high and --

Q Like a trough then?

A Yeah it's a square just like a box.

Q Uh-huh, did you build this.

A We had it built in San Antonio.

Q And what is the material that the box is made of? Is it a metal?

A It's metal, yes.

Q Like aluminum or --

A I can't think of it now. It's made out of stainless steel.

Q. Okay. That makes sense so it wouldn't rust or anything.

A Yes, that's right. And it will stand the fire. Just plain

metal tin would burn up.

Q Yeah. And so then you have this fire just built all along under this trough?

A Underneath, yeah, it's kind of a pit.

Q Yeah.

A And this pan rests on the rock pit and continuously someone has to keep stirring it and scooping off and skimming the impurities that come on top.

Q Is it like a scum?

A Like a scum, yes, we take that off.

Q Uh-huh, what do you do with the scum then is it usable or --

A We just throw it away.

Q Uh-huh.

A Some years ago they threw it to the hogs, they'd get drunk.

Q Oh, really?

A Yeah.

Q Do you think it creates an alcohol?

A It probably does, yes.

Q Okay, so it takes about two to four hours then to cook it.

A It depends on the wind conditions, if there's a strong wind that blows over this where it's boiling, it cools it off. If it's a quiet day you could probably cook it a lot faster.

Q But I imagine it's a lot hotter to cook it on a quiet day, too isn't it for you to stand there.

A It would be, yes.

Q Okay and do you have special utensils then that you work with?

A Right. Usually they take an old frying pan, drill out some holes in there, and the good juice goes through the small holes and --

Q Oh, to skim off that scum you mean.

A Yes, the scum would stay in the frying pan.

Q uh-huh.

A You throw that away.

Q Uh-huh, well, that's interesting. Okay now where is this thing located?

A Right now it's at our property just east of Castroville on the Kempf Lane.

Q Oh, up there close to the airfield there?

A Yes, about a mile from the river road.

Q So you're close to where Ralph lives?

A Yes, that's right.

Q Okay. You have it permanently set up there?

A Yes.

Q Well did you move Hilmer Mangold's press over there?

A That is the press and Hilmer does not even know, it belonged to his grandfather. He does not know how old it is.

Q Oh. Have you had pictures taken of this and everything?

A Yes.

Q Uh-huh. Another thing, how often do you make this molasses now?

A Well, see we plant that cane about March 1st if the weather permits and it's ready to go about the first part of July. Just in the hottest season of the year.

Q The hottest part of the year. So another thing is it important that you pick the cane at just the right time?

A Yes, the cane, the seed has to be ripe and several things you know that you have to look at before you start cutting it.

Q Uh-huh. In the old days you say a lot of people made it but then it tapered off.

A Yes.

Q Do you think it was because it was just too much work?

A Too much work and it mostly stopped during the war because there was no young people and the old people couldn't do it and it just kind of faded away but now we're the first ones to start it and quite a few people found those old presses and set them up again.

Q Uh-huh. Well now Sammy and Yvonne Tschirhart and Jody and Raymond, where do they make their molasses?

A They make it out at Sammy's place out there.

Q Oh, they have a press set up there also.

A Uh-huh.

Q I see. Do you know of any others besides yours and theirs?

A Well, the Walter Etters set one up and I think there's another one set up now at Macdona. We donated 15 gallons to the church.

Q And how do you bottle this by the way?

A There is a faucet on the pit and we lift this pan off when it's ready and open this faucet. Then we have a 15 gallon aluminum jug that it runs into. Then we load it up and take

it home and it takes till the next morning to cool off and then we bottle it in gallon jars and quart jars, just whatever's available.

Q Okay as this is cooling then this molasses, does it change color again?

A It does change a little, yes.

Q Well, how does it --

A It may get a little darker --

Q It makes it darker.

A -- till the next morning.

Q Then does it also get a scum on it again as it's cooling?

A It has a scum on it but it's pure molasses. Just kind of a foam. But that settles down by the next morning. You just have pure molasses.

Q And so nothing but nothing is added?

A No --

Q Do you think that the oldtimers quit making this because the commercial factories started producing the molasses in a more factory environment? Do you think that's one of the reasons maybe?

A Well, the molasses, they have what you buy now in these stores is things added to that, it's not just the pure sugar cane molasses.

Q Yeah. But I guess it really is a lot of work though?

A It is. You could sell it for twenty dollars a gallon and you wouldn't make any money off of it, if you figure the labor, what it costs now.

Q With this the whole operation, how long does it take you from beginning to end?

A Oh, time you cut it and scrape it and get it to the press, it depends on how many people you have to help you. It takes about four men almost a day to get it to the press and then another eight to ten hours the next day to -- till you --

Q Till you cook it and you get the fire --

A To press it, it takes for a batch with the horses going around and around about two hours.

Q It takes about two hours a batch to press it.

A By the time you get it on the fire it's probably another 30 minutes till you get the fire to burning to boil and --

Q And another three to four hours cooking it and then you have to draw it off and take it home and cool it? So actually you're working on it about three days, huh, till you finally get it bottled. Do you have it and then do you boil your bottles and everything for sterile, to make it sterile and all that?

A Yes.

Q So that it's as sterile as possible. Okay, is there anything else that we've missed on this molasses making? Have we covered it pretty good?

A I think that covered it pretty well.

Q Do you have to use any certain type of wood now for the heat?

A Well, any wood'll do. But the oldtimers used to get this

cypress wood. They said it had a better flame. But any wood will do if you get enough under there.

Q Cypress wood is sort of a premium now, isn't it?

A That's right.

Q The cypress trees are disappearing. Okay. We'll change the subject completely now. I know that your family has always been involved in St. Louis Church. Your mother was an organist and the Schmitt family was very active in the musical circles and drama, your Uncle Alfred and your Aunt Kate and as you were growing up do you remember this about your mother?

A Yes, she played the organ in church for quite a few years. She studied music where the Sisters of Divine Providence were --

Q Where Moye is now?

A -- Moye is now when she was a little girl.

Q Did she go to the boarding school?

A Well, she went to the school where the boarders were but she went home --

Q She was a day student at the boarding school?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Did she and Kate go there then?

A I don't know if Aunt Kate went there or not. She never said she did or not but Mrs. Fred Jagge, she went to school here and my mother said she'd go home on weekends if possible on the train. And she'd get off at LaCoste and someone would pick her up and bring her up here. One night

they come in the train, the train stopped west of Castroville at what they call the Noonan Switch. She thought she was at LaCoste, it was dark already. She stepped off the train and looked around and she saw it wasn't LaCoste but the train left and she walked from there about four miles to LaCoste in the dark at night and she was about 13, 14, years old. And at that time on both sides all there was brush but she made it. I talked to her about it.

Q Yeah, Mrs. Jagge told me that story when I interviewed her.

A Uh-huh.

Q Yeah, she came from D'Hanis. She was a Poerner.

A Yes.

Q Okay. So your mother was the organist. And did you all sing at home, did you all --

A They wanted us to sing but we boys didn't sing, too stubborn to sing and when I went to school the first year Sister Jodoca was here and the music room was Dr. Sharp's kitchen. We went over there. The sisters, that was their living quarters.

Q Uh-huh.

A But where the kitchen is now they took about 20 of us in there, maybe more, and Sister Jodoca had a hearing aid. She'd hear pretty good and they crowded in that room about a hundred degrees and we were sweating soaking wet. She turned around and looked at me and said, "You sing now." "I can't sing." She said, "Yes you can, your aunts and uncles can sing, your mother can sing, you can." I never

opened my mouth and finally she gave up.

Q She gave up, you outlasted her? I didn't think you'd -- with the nuns, I thought you'd be scared of 'em.

A Well, I was but I couldn't sing.

Q You just couldn't sing. Well, did anyone in your family inherit this musical ability?

A Well, the girls sing but the boys didn't.

Q But none of them played the piano, did they?

A Our Kitty learned to play cornet.

Q Cornet, yes.

A But none of us boys ever played any music.

Q Now your Uncle Alfred was also, he played in a band and my dad told me that his mother, Cecilia, you know Ed's wife, she and Alfred would play in these plays, they would be the lead actors in the plays. That they liked to do that. Even after they were married, they liked to put on these entertainments, they called them.

A Uh-huh. Well, he believed in music and even on Dad's farm they had a camp house there. Somehow he moved a piano, a old organ he got somewhere and moved it over to that farm house. He'd plow a round and go play that organ for 20 minutes. Grandfather caught him one day --

Q You know isn't that something that his musical abilities --

A He said you have to be out there working not playing music during the day.

Q Evidently that was how the oldtimers treated music. It

was not something you did unless you had everything else done.

A It was real music then.

Q Uh-huh. But Alfred probably would have gone far in the music world if he'd have gotten some --

A He was a bugler when he was in the service.

Q In World War I?

A Yes.

Q Oh. Was he about the same age as Walter Holzhaus, in that age or was he younger?

A He could have been younger.

Q Walter went on to play the trumpet in World War I and he became a really famous musician.

A Also I can't answer that question. I was too young to know Holzhaus at that time.

Q Yeah. You do remember your Uncle Alfred real well, don't you?

A Yes, oh, yes.

Q And then Kate, did she play the organ also?

A No. Only mother played. The choir, instead of going to church, they practiced at the Schmitt house with Aunt Kate and they come down there to sing most of the time to practice with the piano.

Q And Aunt Kate lived right almost next door to you.

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q Did your family always live in the house that was the Hoog house there?

A Yes, next lot to us, the Schmitts moved a building about 15 from it was a pool hall there where Gene Suehs, after they went out of business, hotel and --

Q Who was that owned that?

A The Beetz family.

Q Yeah. And that building eas part of that Beetz --

A They had that for a pool room, they called that a pool room and that was before my days, they moved that building, the lot that belonged to the Schmitt next to our house. And ten of us, there wasn't room for all of us to sleep so the boys slept in that building next to us.

Q So that was the boys house?

A Yes.

Q And you know that house now is moved up to the north part of town and someone's living in it.

A The lumber's still good.

Q And Kitty and Floyd lived in that for many years. Isn't that something.

A The six boys were together, we had our fights. We'd throw things at each other clean through the window. Dad came and looked in the window all busted up. You all broke it, that's your hard luck, you fix it. We didn't know how to fix it but north wind the rain came in through the windows but we made it.

Q You didn't fix it? You never did fix 'em.

A Well, he remodeled it then when Floyd and Kitty got married.

They lived in there, he remodeled the whole thing and that's when the windows were fixed. But we lived through snowstorms and everything and it never was fixed.

Q So there was six of you boys in there, huh?

A Yes.

Q Well, so you say you fought a lot, but you also got along pretty good, too, didn't you?

A Oh, we got along pretty good, just friendly arguments.

Q Well now, of all the boys there you were a farmer, Francis got away from the farm.

A Yes, after he was about 18 he went to work for the Moye Military School.

Q Uh-huh. And so now he's a contractor, isn't he?

A Yes, he's retired.

Q And also Tommy and Albert and Raymond are all carpenters, aren't they?

A Yes, all carpenters.

Q Do you think that this carpenter trade came from somewhere in the family?

A Well, our ancestors in Alsace were builders.

Q Really?

A Yes.

Q I'll be darned. That is interesting. Well, how did Tommy and Raymond and Albert get interested in carpenters. Is it just the looking for a job?

A Well, they were remodeling the mall here at the time. Joe Joeris was the contractor and he was looking for laborers.

Tommy was a young boy and went to work for him. He stayed there probably 25 years. And Francis went to work for Sister Jane. He took Sister Jane in early in the morning to the market to buy vegetables and groceries and he also did some work at Camp Cayoca while it was being constructed.

Q Uh-huh. Okay. But your family, like I had said while ago, has always been very close to the church. Did you feel this influence from your parents?

A Yes, especially my mother. But when we went to school we had to be there at eight o'clock for mass and if one of us was missing Sister Marcella knew about it. Then for awhile we had catechism from -- school let out at 11:30; but after we got to a certain grade we had to stay a half hour for catechism for about two years. And Sunday mornings we had to be at ten o'clock mass. They had two masses that morning but the children had to be at the 10 o'clock, not the first mass.

Q Second.

A Yes. And if anyone was missing they heard about it Monday morning. And instructions, you know, catechism every Morning about an hour.

Q Uh-huh. What did you think about Sister Marcella?

A She was strict but she was a good teacher.

Q Uh-huh.

A She kept order.

Q Did she understand Alsatian?

A I think she spoke German. I never found out actually

where she came from.

Q Okay, which priest did you grow up with?

A Father Heckmann.

Q What did you think of Father Heckmann?

A He was a good man.

Q Uh-huh. He was Alsatian.

A That's right.

Q Father Lenzen, he was here the longest of any priest.

A I think so.

Q 25 years.

A Yes.

Q Was your family close to him?

A Yes.

Q Uh-huh. Mine was too. When you got away from home in World War II what did you -- how did you feel being Alsatian and getting to know a lot of other people, what did you think of your culture?

A Well, I was proud of it. It paid off over in Europe I could speak Alsatian and German and I was the only one, we were 110 in this truck company and I was the only one that could speak that. I had to be the interpreter -- for the company commander and if anyone German would come to the office over in Europe, they'd call me to speak to him. Doing that I made a lot of friends. On my records when we to sign up they wanted to know what descent I was and I put on there German. When we got to France they told me a man was coming and I had to go with him, the

secret agent. I didn't know at the time but he was a high ranking officer and two French officers. They had to go somewhere in a truck, I took 'em. We parked in the forest under the shade trees, they started questioning me about six hours about my family history, what I believed in and everything. Well it took me a while to catch on but they were secret agents checking on me.

Q Uh-huh.

A Even one of the French officers left I didn't know where they went but the one American did most of the talking, we slept together and he kept talking to me during the night abdut things.

Q Just trying to pull out of you everything --

A He, well I told him about my forefathers and where everybody came from and I never had no more trouble. I actually never had trouble but they wanted to be sure that I was all right. I wasn't going to go to the Germans.

Q Yeah. Actually you should not have put German down on your application probably. You should have put down Alsatian.

A We didn't know.

Q You didn't know.

A Because actually most of the people that came from there, mostly German names anyway and actually we don't know for sure.

Q But these intelligence officers were screening you --

A Yes.

Q -- so that you would be accepted to do translation work, huh?

A Right.

Q Uh-huh. So you had an interesting army career then, didn't you?

A Yes.

Q Were you ever in any danger?

A Yes, we moved into London, a hundred and ten men in our trucks and the first morning a general spoke to us and we were at Eisenhower's headquarters, hauling supplies for him. He said thousands of soldiers would like to give their right arm to be where you are right now. You are just a picked bunch of men and we want you to do the job. So that night we parked in the middle of London and pulled our trucks in front of a building. About eleven o'clock a English guard came up to our room and said get out the buzz bomb is coming over. A friend and I, he was from a New England State, we said ah, we're not going to go out, we're going to stay in bed. We waited about ten minutes so we said we better get down there anyway. We went down in the cellar in the basement and about five minutes a bomb hit the roof, it was an incendiary bomb, it goes through the cellar roof and explodes and it come to our room, I guess the building had about six stories. It went in the middle of my buddy's bed right where his stomach would have been. That thing exploded in the room there.

Q You wouldn't have survived had you stayed?

A No, neigher one of us would have. So we went back to our

rooms there wasn't any power, straightened things out and we slept the next morning. So we couldn't have any lights on, the Germans would spot those lights.

End of Side 2

But that evening while we moved in a man walked up there, he passed me on the step and said I have to go up to the roof to check the electricity. The lights and everything were burning. Everything seemed to be all right but I had no right to check this man or say anything to him. That night, the first night we were in London, the bomb hit us and I'm sure he put up something up on the roof because they couldn't have spotted this --

Q You think he was a German agent then?

A -- I don't have no proof to that but I think he was someone who just put a lighter mark on our roof. We were lucky we didn't get killed. My canteen cup that we drink coffee from, it's made of aluminum. The next morning before daylight we went to eat breakfast. Mostly it was dark, just a few candles and he poured some hot coffee in my cup, I was holding it and it happened to be a hole in this bottom and that hot coffee hit this cook's legs. The shrapnel went through that thing and he said why in the heck are you pouring this coffee on me and I said I didn't shake it. I didn't pour no coffee on you. Looked and it had a hole, the shrapnel went through that cup.

Q The night before in your room? When that bomb had gone off?

A Yes. So I know if we'd have stayed in there we'd have been dead.

Q So when you were in London under Eisenhower's headquarters what was your job?

A We were hauling supplies for the headquarters like office supplies when we moved, or just anything that needed to be moved.

Q Uh-huh. From where to where?

A Well, first from London to South Hampton was the south part of town where the ships took off to go over to France. Some days I had secret documents on the truck just by myself and they told me we're going to send you about 150 miles just by yourself. They said these spys won't interfere when they see your truck. So I did never got in trouble.

Q Were you scared?

A At times, yes. Well anyway our headquarters, we called it Shave headquarters and Montgomery, they were together in South Hampton. It happened that eight drivers and trucks had to cross the channel with Montgomery's headquarters and when we landed on Omaha Beach we're in the British convey. We went about five miles and I was the lead truck and an MP stopped us. I said I'm with this British convey, I don't know where to go don't stop me. He said you broke into this British convoy. He kept us there. Let about a hundred trucks go by this intersection so I went back and said do any of you boys have a map.

They took off and we don't know where to go and we were still in the area where the fighting was going on. We decided we'd just park there on the side of the road and maybe somebody would come back. Somebody came back in about 30 minutes and they picked us up. But they never told us where we were going to go or where we're going to stop. We didn't know a thing.

Q And where were you at this time?

A In France, we landed at Omaha Beach.

Q Okay, is this right after D-Day?

A Yes, a few days after.

Q So you partook in D-Day in the big invasion.

A Although the fighting was in already, maybe 20 miles. We followed up. We moved gasoline, all the gasoline had to be moved in five gallon cans. There were no pipelines and no barrels.

Q My goodness.

A We had about 400 of these five gallon cans in a truck and it was always said that Patton was, well he was stopped but the reason he was stopped we couldn't get the gas up far enough. All those tanks and trucks and as the distance got longer we couldn't get the gas up there fast enought.

Q Were you ever afraid that those trucks would be blown up with all that gas?

A Well, yes. We parked in a apple orchard about 50 miles from the beach and the next morning we started leaving.

When most of our trucks were out here comes some mine detectors, you know they had those things that detected a mine. Some mines were planted and we walked around there, we had our trucks and everything, just lucky nobody stepped on them and the trucks didn't drive over them. So above me, I slept in a cot, apple trees and they told us not to eat apples. The Germans poisoned them. I looked at this apple up above my head and I ate it anyway. About two in the morning I got indigestion I thought I'd die. I was afraid to go tell a doctor because we wasn't supposed to eat it. Finally I got a friend of mine and we went to the doctor. We had to drive about three miles in the dark till we found this doctor. First thing he asked me was it a green apple and I said yes. He said you have indigestion from the green apple.

Q Just ordinary indigestion. It wasn't poison.

A No, it wasn't poison, but I thought I was going to die.

Q Yeah, you were being punished.

A I didn't taste any more of those apples.

Q I was just going to say even fresh fruit sometimes like that does give you indigestion.

A I threw up, oh, I was really sick.

Q Oh you threw up.

A Yes.

Q For heaven's sake.

A But he gave me some medicine and I went back and I was all right the next morning. But it happened right after we

drove away we all stayed on the pavement and I was told later on that a truck got on the grass and there was a mine there and it blew the truck into pieces.

Q So after you moved into France where did you all set up headquarters then or didn't you do that?

A We set up headquarters --

Q In the north of France --

A -- along the coast across from the English channel. And every few days the headquarters moved up.

Q Uh-huh.

A And the most time we spent was in Metz, France and there we stayed quite awhile. Then we moved to Paris.

Q Uh-huh and how long were you in Paris?

A About three weeks.

Q And then what did you do after that?

A We moved toward Germany and the Rhine River.

Q Is that when you got down to the Alsace region then?

A Yes.

Q Uh-huh. Were you hoping to do that or was it just luck that you went to Alsace in that region?

A Well, just luck that we moved there.

Q Did you ever meet any of the other boys from Castroville in the war?

A No, I never did meet any from home.

Q I think Ihnken, Alan Ihnken went to Alsace also?

A Yes.

Q But he was with a different company --

A Yeah, he was with the 36th division and I was two. Irvin Biediger and Ehlinger boy from Devine were together but before we went across had maneuvers in North Carolina and it was hot and we had to stay in trucks they didn't need our trucks to save gas and so a quartermaster truck finally came and I asked the driver, I said we'd rather drive than burn up here in the sun and we were transferred. We didn't go across with them then.

Q So you were with the 36th Division.

A To start with for two years. Then I got transferred to the 135th Quartermaster Truck Company.

Q 135th --

A Quartermaster Truck Company.

Q And who were you under? What part of the army or --

A Well after we were in France and we got organized it was the 12th Army group, General Bradley's headquarters.

Q Did you ever see Eisenhower or Bradley or any of them close up?

A Yes, a few times. I saw Eisenhower where he drove by when we walking the street where he drove by with this English woman driving. But that's all I know. Bradley was a good commander. Patton he was strict, probably too strict. I got in his headquarters. I think he was the 3rd Army, had to go down there and deliver something, MP's stopped me and after they stopped me they said you don't have a necktie on. Well, we've been here quite awhile and no officer ever told us to wear a necktie.

Yeah, but this is General Patton's headquarters, here you wear a tie. Said you can go now but if you come back have a tie on. Bradley said, spoke to us and said I don't care how you dress but when you've got a job, do the job right. That's all I ask you.

Q Uh-huh. Wasn't Bradley considered the General of the soldier --

A He was with the 3rd Army and he was rough with his troops. Bradley was --

Q Oh, Patton was rough?

A Patton was rough, yes.

Q But Bradley --

A He was, everybody liked him but you never heard a good word spoken about Patton.

Q Oh even by the soldiers in World War II.

A Right.

Q Oh, I see, they hated him too.

A Right. But he was a good commander, he got things done.

Q Yeah. So when did you get out of the army then. How did you get out of France?

A We moved across the Rhine River to Weisbaden, I guess we stayed at Weisbaden six months in '45. We just went back to the coast to haul supplies and after, -- wasn't much work no more, the ones that were married and had children, they went home first.

Q Oh, that's how they picked them.

A Yes. Or how long they were in.

Q Was the area around where you were stationed right after the war, was that in bad shape from the war --

A A lot of these cities in Germany were completely wiped out by the bombs. Just rocks, piled up rocks. But Weisbaden they knew they Air Corps headquarters, they didn't bomb Weisbaden. It was a kind of resort where the rich people spent their, came to hotels and recreation there.

Q Wasn't there some sort of an agreement that the Germans didn't bomb certain things of the Allied and the Allied in return like Nuremburg was never bombed either because it was a, wasn't it, I think --

A It probably wasn't, I didn't get there.

Q I just remember reading that some places were not bombed because they were considered so historical.

A But in all our travels in Germany the big buildings had red paint, big writing, "hospitals". So one time a German, I had to take him somewhere to pick up some steel at a steel mill. I asked him why they had so many hospitals. He laughed and said those weren't hospitals, they were just places where they made ammunition or things like that.

Q And so they camouflaged them.

A That's right. And the bombers if they could help it they weren't supposed to bomb hospitals.

Q Uh-huh. Oh, was Alsace in bad shape, too?

A Not as bad as France was along the coast. Some of the towns were bombed pretty bad and the biggest percent of

them weren't so bad.

Q Then you all came home by ship, I guess.

A Yes, 17 days.

Q Now were you immediately released from the service when you got over here?

A Yes, we got on the train in New York and when the train got there the next day at Fort Sam they discharged us. It didn't take very long.

Q Uh-huh. When you came home did you have any problems adjusting back to life here in Castroville after such a --

A Well, after five years being with strange people everyday if I'd go to a dance and I knew everybody knew me it seemed completely different or at night if somebody fired a shot, you know, try to kill a skunk or something I just jumped up in bed, I was nervous but I got over it pretty quick.

Q Uh-huh. Did you have other nightmares like that about the war after you came home?

A No.

Q No? It didn't bother you at all. You were never wounded then or anything?

A No.

Q You were lucky. Boy I'm going to change the subject completely. Here we go from World War II. I meant to ask you while ago when we were talking about your family being involved in the church, I know that they've always been active in the St. Louis Day also.

A Yes.

Q Okay. To what involvement were your mother and father in St. Louis Day?

A Well, mother never was involved too much. She had all those kids and it seemed like one was born almost every year but dad was. He usually made the sausage at our place. That was for him everything was done the hard way. There was no refrigerator at that time, he had to take an old wagon and put all the side boards on, get about four feet high on each side, go cut some small trees to make these sticks to hang the sausage on. That was hung in the wagons. Then they had to get about 1500 or 15 blocks of ice that weighed about a hundred pounds to put in that wagon and we covered that up with sheets. That's where they hung the sausage in.

Q Oh, that's how they kept it cool?

A Right. So about six o'clock the next morning somebody'd come along, usually Wilfred Wernette with his truck and he'd tie that wagon on that ruck and they'd pull it up there and that's where they had their sausage cooling up there.

Q Let's back up a little bit. When did they make this sausage?

A People would go in groups about Friday evening, oh, they'd leave home about two or three o'clock and go to the farms and kill the hogs and calves and some cows for sausage meat.

Q Well, did the church buy these or did these people donate the meat?

A It mostly was bought. Sometimes one or two may have donated one. Then they killed them on the farm and they'd bring it in, some had already some model T pickups. They brought it up and hung those halves on trees around there.

Q At your house, at your home place?

A Yes. Those big mesquite trees.

Q What are we talking about, what year was that? How old were you at this time?

A I guess I was maybe about 18 then.

Q You're talking about the '20's then?

A They made the sausage in that room we slept in. We had to get up about three o'clock in the morning.

Q To clear out.

A Everything had to go out, our clothes, beds and everything. Dad come over there and we didn't want to get up. He just turned the bed over, it's time to get up. We got up. Then about five o'clock people from all around came in there and then we made the sausage.

Q And this was in the morning, Saturday morning at five o'clock in the morning.

A Yes and by one or two o'clock the sausage was made and it was already on the ice.

Q On this wagon.

A Yes.

Q Didn't they smoke it first.

A They smoked it in that wagon, too.

Q Oh, in that wagon.

A Yes.

Q How did they smoke it with that ice in there?

A They did it somehow, they had enough space, I don't think they smoked it too long.

Q Uh-huh. But then they kept it cool with the ice and then hauled it up to Wernette's Garden. Is that where it was held?

A Well --

Q Do you remember it any other place?

A Well, they had it Tragesser's place there, there where Whitehead live. They had it there several years. I know they took the sausage up there. And one or two years they had it at church there also.

Q On the church grounds?

A Yes, where those hackberry trees were.

Q Uh-huh, yeah, I heard that.

A That's before it started getting so big.

Q Yeah.

A And before my time they had it down at Bill Biediger's place.

Q Yeah, I heard a lot of people talk of that. You know they must have had it at Biediger's place in the 1900's even.

A Probably so.

Q And then also how about the Verein Hall here.

A That I don't know but that could have been possible.

Q Several people that are a little older than you mentioned that.

A Probably so.

Q But it wasn't large either at that time.

A It couldn't have been, just the local people.

Q And their families.

A LaCoste, D'Hanis.

Q But your father then was always involved in the sausage making?

A Most of the time, yes. Well, he had his friends, old buddies you know, every year, some younger ones started helping and some of the older ones passed away and some younger ones started coming.

Q Well, you all made sausage quite a bit then at home for yourself too, didn't you?

A Yes, dad always had hogs. Sometimes we'd kill a hog and maybe a calf with it.

Q Uh-huh. How many hogs about a year did you kill?

A Probably four or five.

Q Uh-huh. With that size family it would take quite a bit I guess. Then Tommy your brother took over the sausage making for St. Louis Day from your dad? And then Ralph now is taking --

A And James Haby, he was very active. He was with dad and they worked together for quite a few years. When he was in high school I think James stayed at Mrs. Schorp up here where you live. That's where he started as a young

boy helping with the sausage.

Q Uh-huh. And his sons are quite active still in making the sausage. You do something else now too with your background in raising the horses for Moye and then renting out horses for horseback riding. You started doing something the last few years, you want to tell us about that?

A Yes, we started at St. Louis giving our children wagon rides pulled by two horses. It's a wagon I fixed myself, not the running gears or sheels or anything but, the box on it we can load about 16 people on there. We've been to Hondo two times for the church celebration. Devine once and we're going to LaCoste next week --

Q To give rides at the celebration?

A --yes. We just donate to the church and some of the parishioners, they collect, we don't even touch the money.

Q Well did you build little seats in that wagon or what?

A Yes, in my travels all over Europe and Canada and everywhere I saw where they gave rides but they could only put three people, four with the driver on those surreys. I kept thinking how in the world you could take more people and if you ride in one of those old-time wagons and put a bench lengthwise on each side of the wagon, to make room for that many people.

Q And you just need two horses then to pull it?

A Yes. Last year at St. Louis Day we had 570 people ride the wagon.

Q Golly, mostly children?

A Children and old people. We had Mrs. Jungman and she's 101 now I believe, she rode with us up to the park.

Q Oh, she did.

A Right. It worked real good. People were standing in line and they saw this old lady on the wagon and I heard some say well if she can ride we can ride too and I had a lot of old people ride the wagon. They said they didn't ride it because they enjoyed it, they just wanted to remember the old days when they had to ride a wagon.

Q Before you had this wagon did you use a little gig or something or what did they call it?

A Well, we have a gig which we train horses with but that --

Q Didn't you used to lead the trailrides with that?

A Yes, we had some of the nieces and nephews ride that.

Q Oh, uh-huh.

A It was just a few people.

Q Well is your gig from your family --

A Uh, no it was Jul Jagge's old gig where the two boys and a sister came to school with. I went over to Jul Jagge's one time and I saw just the steel part there and I asked Mr. Jagge if he'd want to sell that. He said load it on your pickup I'll give it to you, I want to get if off the place. I took it home and I found some Model-T wheels. It was made originally by Mr. Frank Tschirhart, the blacksmith and it was really built well. We found these wheels, bought some tires and that is where that gig come from.

Q And that has old Model-T tires on it?

A Right.

Q I didn't know that. Okay. So, are you retired now, Joe?

A Yes.

Q We talked about your early life and when you came back from the service and being a farmer. But you haven't only been a farmer. What was your other profession that you had?

A Well, I sold out the dairy to Rio Vista and I went to work for Zachry at Medina Base as a guard, security guard. In the meantime our Constable Henry Haller died and some of my friends came and asked me if I would accept appointment till the next election.

Q As constable? In this precinct, huh?

A I said I don't think so but I told them I'd study it. I studied it about three years, three days I mean, so finally let Hondo know I would accept this till the next election and then let somebody else have it. Well, nobody wanted it the next election so I had it for 20 years.

Q For 20 years? Well, did you enjoy your time as --

A Well, I enjoyed working with children. I liked them all.

Q You had a couple of close calls, didn't you?

A Yes, I was shot twice. Once in the face and one in my hip. But I guess I wasn't supposed to die, still living.

Q Were you in the hospital at the times you were shot?

A Yes, I was taken to the Castroville Hospital and Dr. Fay came down to treat me right away. She asked me after the first day where I want to go. And I said will you treat me here and she said well, that's up to you. I said I make my decision I'd rather be here because you're just

as good as anybody.

Q Now which wound was this? The face?

A The face, yes.

Q Did it break any bones?

A It went in front of my jaw and came out right here, just under the skin. I'm just lucky I'm living. It was a steel bullet. If it would have been a lead bullet I wouldn't be here.

Q And who was that that shot you?

A Well, I'd rather not say.

Q Well, it's a part of the public record.

A Well, Larry Mechler, it was a 16 year old boy.

Q I see. But how long did it take you to recuperate from that?

A My jaw was wired up with wire for six weeks, I couldn't move my teeth. A doctor in San Antonio did that. Dr. Faye treated me every day and she was a wonderful doctor. And lots of doctors in San Antonio, I had to go to other people and they looked at my face and said who treated you and I said Dr. Fay Wurzbach and they said nobody could have ever done better.

Q Well, that's good. Okay, after that happened to you that first time were you a little apprehensive about continuing your job?

A It didn't bother me too much.

Q So how many years later was it when you got the second --

A About four years later.

Q And that was the Ybarra boy?

A Victor Ybarra.

Q And both times you were shot as you were trying to arrest the suspect.

A Yes, Mechler was already arrested and I was ordered to take him to Hondo by the Justice of the Peace. As we came up to Three Points, Castroville hired a policeman a few days before and a scuffle started with the policeman as we stopped we went up the old highway at Three Points. Mechler got out, in the meantime he took the policeman's pistol and shot him below the heart here but he had a pocket watch. That stopped the bullet.

Q And who was that policeman? Rathbun?

A Rathburn. I stepped out the opposite side of the car and I was thinking that Rathburn shot the boy. I walked up there and as I walked up there and got close to him he shot me in the face. I had my strength and he was ready to shoot again and with the FBI training they told us how in case of an emergency, how to grab that gun and either I had to grab it or --

Q He'd shoot again.

A Shoot again. I grabbed it and threw it away about 30 feet.

Q Okay you were telling us about when you were shot. The boy had shot at Rathbun and then when you came around he shot you in the face.

End of Side 3

A Yes.

Q And so then you got the pistol away and threw it away.

A Right.

Q Okay. So go on from there.

A We wrestled and Rathbun he was conscious and we both grabbed him and threw him on the ground and we held him and the traffic we waved but they couldn't see us in the dark. Finally the Justice of the Peace Amos Harlee, Frank Hartman from Hondo and the banker from D'Hanis, I believe his name was Ephram, they heard me holler for help. They drove about a hundred yards and one of them said I think somebody's in trouble. They backed up there. As they came towards me they didn't know what the trouble was. They grabbed and pulled me off of Mechler. I said you got the wrong one, the one that's holding down. They understood then. They helped him, I got to the car and called for help and some of the other officers came right away and I had no pain at all. At first my shirt got bloody did I know that I was shot. And that's the same thing that happened the second time. And I've heard military people say when you're shot you don't feel it at first.

Q Just until the blood --

A After I got to the hospital they gave me pain pills and i never suffered too much.

Q Did you lose a lot of blood?

A I guess not too much because they never had to give me any.

Q How did you ever get him to the jail then after --

A The deputies from Hondo came over and these men helped hold him down and held him there. See when we had him down I put the cuffs on him.

Q Oh, he wasn't cuffed before that?

A No.

Q Oh, I see.

A And we got a lot of help then. A lot of officers from everywhere came in from all the roads everywhere.

Q You had radios already in that time?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So then the next time you were shot was it a more serious wound or --

A No, it was just outside the hip just through the flesh.

Q Oh, I see. It didn't hit the blood vessels or anything. In that incident --

A Well, I received a call there was shooting going on the Old LaCoste Road and I started going over Jung's crossing in that area and as I came around the last turn there was a car in the ditch and Victor Ybarra. I stopped, he stepped out of the car and he had a .22 in his hand. He said he's going to shoot me. I said go ahead shoot. The one he was shooting at, he wanted to go find him. I walked with him and said let's go find him and try to get close but he knew I was going to grab that gun. He wouldn't come close enough so for some reason we walked back and he started holding the gun on me and some people called

in and Santleben came. Santleben said drop that gun. He wouldn't, so he and I both started shooting.

Q Did you all shoot him at the time?

A Yes. He had three shots in him.

Q But he didn't die from that, did he?

A No. People called the ambulance over my car radio right away, Santleben probably did and they took him to the hospital in San Antonio. He made it.

Q And how long were you in the hospital on that --

A Just that night. They released me the next morning.

Q So this happened early in your career or mid-way through or --

A I think after the last shot I stayed in five more years.

Q So you retired then from that in what year?

A When I was 62 I could draw Social Security so I could have stayed in office two more years, it would have been four years but I decided at 62 to go ahead and retire.

Q Then who took the job after you got out?

A Frank Zepeda.

Q Okay, that's Candy Zepeda, they call him?

A Yeah.

Q And he is still the constable to this day?

A Yes.

Q And when you're constable are you constable of a precinct?

A Yes, it was the east precinct halfway to LaCoste to the railroad track in Dunlay and Rio Medina and Mico and the Lake area.

Q Is it the same precinct as it is for voting or is it a different set up?

A It was at that time, yes, but they changed it now.

Q They changed it now.

A People in Castroville and Dunlay, Rio Medina and Mico, that was the precinct then.

Q Uh-huh.

A Justice of the Peace and the constable.

Q Okay. Was this the only capacity you worked with the law enforcement was as constable, right? For 20 years.

A Yes.

Q Okay. So these two injuries did not keep you from wanting to continue in the job? You just thought it was part of the line of duty.

A It was just the line of duty. It didn't bother me too much.

Q It is kind of ironic that you were in World War II and never was injured and then just here at home, of course that's a pretty dangerous profession though anyway. Well would you consider in your time as a peace officer that this is actually a pretty peaceful area or do you think that --

A I'd say the whole community was peaceful. Certain things happened which normally do but as a rule we had no robberies that were too serious, a lot of break-ins country homes but nothing too serious happened.

Q Not too many murders. Did you ever have any murders during your time?

A No.

Q Not one murder? In the 20 years?

A Not in this area, no.

Q Huh, that's interesting. Okay, well I think we've just about covered that. Can you think of anything else that we haven't covered in your life? Something I can ask you about. Okay. You just mentioned a story that I had never asked anyone about and I was wondering if you could tell us what you know about the Cross on Cross Hill. There's been three or four different crosses and during the 1920's the cross was supposed to have been torn down. Do you know that story?

A Yes. I remember when the cross was missing and several days later, it might have been, I don't know just how many days, some young men were with a seine up in the canal. That cross it got hung up in this minnow seine and I remember they called my grandfather. They went up there and they found that cross. Not the cross itself. The wood stayed up there but --

Q The "Corpus", the form of Christ --

A That was pulled off, yes.

Q And that's what they found in the canal?

A Yes.

Q They never did find the wood part though?

A The wood part stayed up there.

Q They just pulled the "Corpus" off.

A Yes.

Q I see.

A Yes.

Q Did they ever find out who that was?

A No, I don't think they did. I never heard. But I do remember that they called the Justice of the Peace and they went up there and they took it -- I think --

Q Was it mutilated or anything?

A I think the hands were broke off or something was broke off and they did buy a new one.

Q Oh, they.

A Yes.

Q Oh, so they just didn't put that one back.

A It was destroyed before that, before my days.

Q Yes, I know in 1902 it was put up there again. So there's been several crosses up there over the years. So then you don't remember exactly what year that was?

A No, I sure don't.

Q I know, but your grandfather was still living so it was before 1930.

A Yes.

Q Yeah.

End of Interview

INDEX

Joseph Hoog
Tape # B30
Sides 1-2-3-4

Agricultural school, 1940's, 348

Airstrip built in Castroville, 325

Alsace, 128, 136, 245, 730

Alsatian background, 730

Anders, Gertrude (wife), 378

Army, U.S., interpreter, 070

Beetz pool hall, moved to Hoogs, 640

Carpenters, Hoog brothers, 672

Catholic Church influences, 692

Constable, Joe's career, 2-306, 2-434

Corpus Christi Feast in Germany, 192

Cross Hill, 1920's, 2-483

Dairy, Hoogs, 281

Education, 097

Eisenhower, Gen., 776, 2-008

Etter, Walter, 518

France, 2-008

Germany, Joe revisits, 1968, 245

Germany, Ulman (Lenzens), 155

Haas, Sonny, 120

Hoog, Albert, 006, 048

Hoog ancestors, 128

Hoog, Albert, children: Joseph, Francis, Thomas, Robert, Albert, Raymond, Mary, Dorothy, Catherine, Joan Ann, 006

Hoog brothers, carpenters, 672

Hoog, Emma Schmitt, 006, 565

Hoog, Peter (grandfather), 019

Hoog, Ralph, 2-170

Hoog, Thomas, 672, 2-170

Horses, Joe's, 106, 120

Jagge, Jul, 2-285

Law enforcement, 019, 2-3-6, 2-434

London bombing, WW II, 776, 2-008

Mangold, Hilmer, 447

Marriage, to Gertrude Anders, 378

Molasses, making, 436

Moye Military School, 106

Musicians, Schmitts, 565, 590, 612, 634

Oberensen, Alsace, 128

Riding instructor at Moye, 105

River, Medina, 120

Rixheim, Alsace, 128

St. Louis Day, sausage making, 2-170

Schmitt, Emma, 006, 2-250

Schmitt, Alfred and Kate, 612

Sharp, Dr. Woodrow, 447

Shot, Joe's experience in law enforcement, 2-315

Sisters of Divine Providence, 106, 565

Tschirhart, Frank (blacksmith), 2-285

Tschirhart, Sammy, 518

Ulman, Germany (Lenzens), 155

U. S. Army, 070, 150

Wagon rides, St. Louis Day, 2-25

World War II, 070, 136, 155, 730, 2-008

Wurzbach, Dr. Fay, 3-315

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