Transcription: John Pearsall

Today is September the 18th, 2009. This is Mike McGrieken with the Veterans Land Board and I'm interviewing Mr. John Pearsall. We're at his home in the Holly Hall Retirement Center in Houston, Texas, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Good morning Mr. Pearsall.

John Pearsall: Good morning.

For just a couple of formalities, when were you born?

John Pearsall: December 30th, 1924.

OK, and whereabouts?

John Pearsall: Ranger, Texas.

Ranger, Texas. Where's Ranger?

John Pearsall: It's between Fort Worth and Abilene.

OK, very good. And what branch of service were you in?

John Pearsall: Army.

OK. Tell me a little bit about yourself just from basically when you were in school and where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked, and then we'll get into your own service.

John Pearsall: Well, Pearl Harbor weekend I was home for the weekend from college, and we were riding around, a group of friends. News came over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by Japanese. So we mulled that over and didn't know what to think about it, and we got talking and figured that it was gonna be over with by the time I got to be old enough to get in the service. That turned out to be wrong. But I guess that was about it.

So you were in college. What college were you going to?

John Pearsall: John Tarlton.

OK, so after you heard the news on Pearl Harbor, what did you do?

John Pearsall: Well, we talked about it. Everybody was about in the same boat. They didn't, nobody understood it really until I got home and talked over with my dad, and he knew about it. So we just kind of put things on hold to see what developed.

So did you go down then a few days later and enlist in the Army?

John Pearsall: No, I was 16 at the time.

Oh, OK.

John Pearsall: And I figured this is going to be over with before I got old enough to get in it. But that was wrong.

OK, so then you went back to college.

John Pearsall: I went back to college and that following year, '41, '42, a lot of my friends were going in the service and I finally gave up, and signed voluntary induction papers and went in. And I had taken this test at school for the ASTP, it's an Army Specialized Training Program, and so I thought I'd follow that up.

And how did you follow that up?

John Pearsall: Well, I finally gave up and just signed voluntary induction papers.

So you went in and went to boot camp right away.

John Pearsall: Yeah, it wasn't right away, it was I went through the school year of '41-'42, and by then most of my friends were going off into the service, so I signed voluntary induction papers to speed the process up, and it did, and I reported to Camp Walters in Mineral Wells, to the reception center. I've got the date.

OK, you were in Mineral Wells at Camp…

John Pearsall: Yeah, at the reception center. And I had taken this test for the ASTP previously and passed it, so I figured that's where I would go. It ended up being basic training at Fort Redding, which was infantry. And after the short break-in period, we were split up. The group in there was all ASTP students, and they were from different parts of the country. I entered the service on July the 20th, 1943, at Camp Walters in Texas.

Let me just take a break right here. I failed to mention at the beginning of the interview that we're sitting here with Mr. Pearsall's three sons, David who served in the United States Navy, Darryl who served in the United States Army, and Mark, and I probably didn't do that in order of birth, but I did it by easiest way. But this is kind of a unique situation where these three sons get to hear about their dad from their dad.

John Pearsall: I think it's great.

OK, go ahead. You completed basic training.

John Pearsall: Then after I finished basic training, the group was all ASTP students, and so they were sent to various colleges across the United States.

What is ASTP?

John Pearsall: Army Specialized Training Program.

OK.

John Pearsall: And I was sent to Arkansas State College in Jonesboro, Arkansas. By the end of the first three-month term, myself and a couple of other guys were lookin' for a way out. We wanted war, activity. So they agreed for us to go to Little Rock ___ for the Air Corps. And we took it and passed it, and I was ready to go flying off into the wild blue yonder. We got back to school and the commanding officer told us to pack up. They called a formation one night after supper and said that they were closing the ASTP program and everybody would be reassigned to line outfits. Well, that meant infantry, because everybody had had infantry basic. My group was sent to 99th Division at Camp Maxie at Paris, Texas, and there we continued infantry training, only more so. As the time went on, we were anticipating we were going overseas pretty soon. Then when D-Day occurred, that sped things up quite a bit. So in September of '44, we began to head for the port of embarkation, which was Boston, and we sailed on the SS Argentina. At that time, it was a British luxury liner. It was still British, but the luxury no longer existed. After a few days out, we joined a large convoy and headed for England. After a few days, we were looking for emergency rations or some other kind beside what came out of the kitchen.

So you had trouble with the food that was cooked on board the ship.

John Pearsall: It was British.

What does that mean?

John Pearsall: Well, it wasn't anything to write home about. I think most of us existed on rations we'd get, not rations, but edibles we could get from the kitchen. And the British were very enterprising. They made available for instance you could get a hot apple pie for $10, and so that more or less set that scope. But we existed on PX rations I guess you would say, most of the trip over. It took us 11 days to cross. We docked at Southampton, and let's see, in September of '44. We were getting off the ship, and we noticed British servers were carrying off bags of fruit, which we should've been getting while we were on board.

So they were hoarding them for themselves.

John Pearsall: So be it. We went to a Camp Peddlehanton, which must've been built during the days of William the Conqueror. We spent the first day or so stuffing mattress bags with hay and straw, and learning how to build a fire with coal, which we weren't used to, and we continued with general field problems, marches and so forth, always in cold weather. In early September, again '44, we boarded the LST's to go to France. It took us a couple of days to get across, and we docked at Lahars, France. We then loaded onto 6x6's, Army trucks, and headed for Belgium. It took several days to make that drive out there. We checked our basic equipment, machine guns and mortars, and we relieved, we got to Belgium, final destination was Aubel, Belgium. We continued checking our equipment and relieved a part of the 39th Infantry on the 9th Division on November the 11th, which is near Krinkelt in Belgium. Duty was very light, mostly manning machine guns and mortar replacements, and rifle companies sent out patrols keeping check on what the Germans were doing.

Were you in actual combat at that time?

John Pearsall: Yeah, we were on the front lines then. About December the 10th or 12th, myself and another machine gunner were pulled off to go with K Company, a rifle company, on a scouting patrol on our left flank to check out a hill called Rath Hill. This patrol was not only to

check out our right flank, but to scout this hill for possible occupation and check the visibility of the Rhine River for our crossing later.

So your company was getting ready to cross the Rhine at that time?

John Pearsall: No, we weren't there yet. The Rhine River flowed near that hill, and we didn't really know where it was or what we were doing, just what we're told. But I recall very well it was cold, cold, cold on top of that hill, and there was no digging in. Hit the ground with a shovel and it would throw it back at you. This was on December the 12th, 13th, 14th. On the 16th, we got the answers to the questions. We returned to our base camp. We ran into a large flow of German troops on the way back to our battalion CP, and there were shots fired. No one was hurt that we were aware of. Late that afternoon, we got back to our battalion, our former battalion command post, and everything was mass confusion. Nobody knew what had happened except that we had been hit very hard by an extremely large German force of I think it was a couple of infantry and one or two armored divisions. We didn't slow 'em down, but we tried. They told us anyway until we got word of what happened to the front, nobody knew. Right that afternoon, there were two guys came stumbling into camp. They were cold, they were wet, they had no overshoes, no overcoat. They were miserable. So we took one of them and we had set up our gun in a jeep dugout, and it provided a little cover, so we put him between us so he wouldn't fall out, and settled down for the night. The Germans by that time had – let me back up a minutes. Just before dark, there was a large group of GI's coming down the road, so a couple of our troops went out to guide 'em in through the booby traps and so forth, and they were shot. This was a large group which we thought were GI's were actually German soldiers with GI overcoats on. Anyway, we scared them out off into the woods, and wondered what the heck we had brought on ourselves. Our front lines had been overrun by two or three German infantry divisions and armored divisions. No one knew what started what, what the status was then. Along in the late afternoon, we were in our I guess call it a dugout, it was a jeep dugout hole in the ground. We would basically hide a jeep and provide us some cover. A large group of German soldiers came down the road into our CP area and the fight began. We scattered them into the woods.

Were these Germans not in GI overcoats? You could tell they were Germans right off the bat?

John Pearsall: Yeah, this was two different groups, and they had alerted us as to the fact that the Germans had broken through, so we just waited. That night, the night of December the 16th, we were prepared for whatever happened. We didn't know what it was gonna be. But the Germans made a lot of noise during the night, trying to draw fire, and we obliged 'em. I laid a 45 on the bank of the dugout, and we agreed to rotate guard duty. One would get sleepy and wake up the next one, and so forth. But the Germans made a lot of noise during the night trying to draw fire, and we were not going to oblige 'em. But at one point there was a loud scream hollered, and some sort of comment from the German, and he fired a couple of shots from his Burp gun. Well, after getting back to earth and going three foot straight up, we settled down and just waited. Morning came and as soon as there was enough daylight, we looked out and there was a dead German soldier about five feet from our gunhole, and there was his Burp gun. Well, I retrieved the Burp gun and kept it for some time and finally mailed it home, and it arrived home. Early that next morning, December the 17th, came a German tank with infantry support and we opened up on 'em with a machine gun before we realized that was a bad move. The tank came about 50 yards from our machine gun hole.

So that tank came really close to where you guys were.

John Pearsall: Yeah, he came I guess within 50 yards of our place. He hadn't exactly spotted us but he fired a couple of shots, and the ___ blast was worse than the shell. The shell landed some 50 yards or so behind us, but that was close enough. So in the mean time we picked out a garbage sump about 20 or 50 yards behind us. It was much deeper than our jeep dugout, and we agreed that the tank had to pull up and get off a couple of shots at us, and he had to back up and turn his turret to get a shot at the mortar positions. So we concluded that the best thing we could do was wait until he started back and then make our move toward the garbage sump, which we did. But he evidently saw us because he fired a couple of shots in our direction and we went sprawling in the snow, and lost a machine gun. I don't know where, hadn't seen it until yet, but we made it to the garbage sump and ducked down there to get out of cover.

Son: Was that also the same time that your canteen took the shrapnel?

John Pearsall: The tank? No, no. It evolved into another scrap that night, that evening rather. We were trying everything we could do to knock that tank out. Bazooka wasn't worth a hoot on the front and side armor on one of those tanks. But several guys took turns on the bazooka and tried to do something to that tank. Finally one of them succeeded in breaking the track on the left side of the tank. All he could do then was just go in circles. They just waited for him to make a complete round and they let him have one in the rear end and set him on fire, and then they just sit where a turret could shoot with the troops coming out of the tank and wipe 'em out. The guy who knocked the tank out we learned got a distinguished service cross for doing that. We went back to the shootout, but it was obvious that we were not gonna hold 'em, we were not gonna stop 'em, so we started out in a southerly direction and we came under German artillery fire for a while, but that didn't last too long, and we continued, well we called it a strategic withdrawal. We didn't call it a retreat. And on the rest of that day and night, and the following day on I guess it would've been December 17th, we came upon an area that had been just recently evacuated, and they had left in a hurry, they went through the kitchen area and spotted some oatmeal had been dumped on the ground and it was still warm, so we ate it. It was better than what we had. And then continued our retreat, you can call it that, south. And we marched all day, all night, and the night of the 18th I guess it was we thought we were gonna get a break, stop and get a rest, but that would've been foolish because if you set down for five minutes, you'd go asleep, and then you sit there and freeze to death and they'd go off and leave you. So we hoofed it up, continued on the morning of must've been around the 19th. We got to Elsenborn Hill which is where we were going to set up our line of defense. The first thing I did was check us for wounds and frozen feet, and then fed us hot food and routed us in the direction of our former outfits.

And you weren't wounded and didn't have frozen feet.

John Pearsall: Not that time. They said they were gonna hold me back until, they ran out of ambulances, and they were gonna have some available first thing in the morning. Well that came and went, and like a lot of their promises, but we went on to our, rejoined our outfit on down the line, and we were strung out along a ridge. In fact, they called it Elsenborn Ridge. And we found out the status of our remaining troops, which was pretty slim. I think there were 5 out of the original 30 that survived to that point, without being wounded or captured. I was promoted to sergeant, and given a squad for which I built up around survivors. From then on, it was dig in, mount your guns, and sit and wait. Well, the Germans I guess knew that, and they made quite a few attacks on our positions, but it was really futile. They told us they had enough artillery behind us to put a shell in every 20 feet of front we were holding. That relieved us a lot. And they put it to good use. The Germans had maybe three attacks a day trying to get up that hill, but

no luck. And so the frequency of attacks subsided. We could look around and spot some of the German nearby towns, church steeples and so forth, and we recognized the one at Krinkelt on our kick-off point. Then all we had to do was wait for replacements to show up.

How long did that take?

John Pearsall: We started getting replacements about the 1st of the year, and it stretched out to a point where some of them had spent Christmas at home. Next thing they knew, they were over in Belgium. Surprise, surprise. But we were glad to see 'em, and especially they were a source of replacement for clothes and shoes. They came over, each of them had two pair of boots, so we relieved them of one pair, and they kept one. It was a blessing in disguise I guess you would say. Every day was pretty much the same. Christmas Day came, and the only thing special about that was we had been promised turkey and dressing, and which we were real glad to receive. It didn't come until late that afternoon, but it did come, and it was frozen of course. We managed to thaw it out and eat it, and we thanked them for the food. It wasn't so much bringing the food up, but it was the thought behind it, which we appreciated. Replacements started coming in slowly but surely, and we just continued building back up to strength. I guess that was basically it at Elsenborn. The weather cleared about the 1st of the year I believe it was, and it was a real pleasure to see those airplanes come over, I'll tell you. We had P-51 and P-47 pursuit planes patrolling our area, and German prisoners that we took, said it was so bad that they couldn't even crawl out of their foxhole to answer nature's call without getting strafed. But that was all right with us. At some point along in there, we were pulled off line and given a break I guess you would say. We occupied a group of I would say a little distance from Elsenborn, and as the Army was fond of doing, the commanding general sent word that he would to review the troops. Well that went over like a lead balloon, but we obliged him, we had to. And we stood in this open field for I don't know, quite a few minutes, it seemed like hours. Finally here he comes. He climbs out of this big new car, and had on a pair of brown leather boots that anybody would pay a fortune for, and so he welcomed us to the war, and the next thing we knew, he was chewing us out for so many casualties from frostbite frozen feet. He said you don't have anything to do but change your socks every day, put on clean, dry socks, and you can whip this trench foot. The guy next to me said I wish that SOB could see these socks I've been wearing for a month. We didn't think too much of him, but I don't think anybody did. He gave up after a short while and left. Then we returned to our positions on the front line, and waited things out. More and more replacements kept coming in, and finally we got up to, I guess pretty well up to strength. We had all of our squad together. I think most of 'em did. They told us we were gonna go back to our original positions we started with the Bulge and go from there, heading for the Rhine River. So we went back and it was a sight to see, a welcome sight, but I lost one of our good buddies on the day en route to our original positions. We got caught in the woods with a mortar barrage, and that was deadly, deadly. So then we were down to four in our original group. While we were there enjoying the site of our original positions, they managed to send a couple of us back to Paris for a three-day pass. Oh, that was something. First thing we did, we go into a big shower, strip off all of our clothes, and clean up. And that was very welcome. And from then on, we just enjoyed the sights of Paris and what it meant. We went back to our outfit and we took back several bottles of Schnapps and wine and what have you just to show our gratitude. But then we started out for the Rhine River. That was our next target. And we went across Cologne plain, with not too much heavy action. Some of us scattered, some not. We finally arrived at a town of Grumlinghaus on the Rhine River just opposite Dusseldorf. So we thought well, surely they're not going to cross the Rhine River here. Nobody had decided. We stayed there I guess maybe a week and had exchange of shots between the sides, and finally one morning word came down to load up, we're going to get back in the war. So we piled into Army

trucks and headed south. We got to this little town of Remagen on the Rhine River. A railroad bed had been discovered intact that the Germans failed to blow, and the commander of that detail was executed for failure to follow orders. Anyway, we got as many troops across that bridge as we could. I think we had the first full infantry division there and across the river. We had a little skirmish in the town on the opposite end of the bridge that didn't amount to much. We solved that little problem and then went up into the hills and we could look back and see the bridge at that time. It was a beautiful sight. We concluded that it shortened the war by no telling how much – considerable. We could watch futile efforts of the German Air Force trying to knock that bridge out. Then they had to run a gauntlet of fire around the crest positions, and not too many of 'em made it, but that was a pleasure also. And maybe it was five days after we had crossed, the bridge finally collapsed from all the artillery and bombing and so forth. But the engineers had two or three pontoon bridges across by that time, so the troops just really poured in, and everybody know that the Germans' last natural line of defense for their country. So it was just a matter of hanging together and fighting it out. We swung up into the rural pocket toward the end there, and closed that out. I think our division received some, we had near 12,000 German troops surrendered. And they actually believed that they were going behind our lines to re-equip, reorganize, and join us to fight the Russians.

So you were getting ready to fight the Russians at that point in time.

John Pearsall: Well we were thinking about it. Nobody wanted to, but of course the Germans would welcome any opportunity. We stopped in a little town named – what was the name of that town -

What did you do at the little town that you stopped at?

John Pearsall: We stopped there and continued receiving prisoners. They came in and surrendered. We didn't have any combat there, which we didn't miss, but after that we were transferred to the 3rd Army under Patton. So we headed south and we crossed the Danube River. I don't remember what town, maybe Regensburg, but anyway there was no action there like there was crossing the Rhine, and we went into a group of Germans, hold out their line of defense of a town by the name of Landshut, and it took a couple of days for us to quiet them down, and then we continued south. We were in the Bavarian Alps by this time, foothills, and I had to say that was beautiful country. But we were in a jeep and trailer, the whole squad, and we stopped in some little town, I don't even know the name of it. I don't know the reason we stopped but as GI's are prone to do, they sent out a few scouts to check out the town. Well, they came back with a crate of 60 dozen eggs and there couldn't have been anything that we would have enjoyed more. So we continued the next morning to another little town further down south, and had breakfast. We ate eggs until they came out our ears, every size and description, but they were good. We stopped at the next little town, the war by then, it was all over. But the official word had not come down, so we were just kind of hanging far away. Anyway we stopped in this little town. There was a prison of war camp there that held quite a few of our troops as prisoners, and in fact a lot of them were original 99th Division troops who had been captured at the opening of the Bulge, and so everybody kept a low profile because there was a lot of shooting and celebration going on, and nobody wanted to get hit this late in the game. During the night, a guy came down asking for me. It turned out to have been the first gunner in our machine gun squad when we went overseas, and I was second gunner. So we spent the whole night talking about the war, experiences and so forth. It was very enlightening. At any rate, we parted friends, and I met him years later at a division reunion, and we continued our discussion. But this was it for now. We pulled back and headed for the town of Lohr, Germany, and got ready for the breakup.

The division was filled with high pointers, ones that had enough points for discharge, and the rest of us were sent to line outfits. I wound up with a 1st Division, as a bunch of them did, and so we did our normal share of roadblocks and traffic monitoring.

So this would have been after Berlin, after Hitler committed suicide.

John Pearsall: He had not committed suicide at this point.

OK, this is still in the early part of 1945 then.

John Pearsall: Yeah. We were posted at a little town called Scheinfeld, and it was a nice little town. People were very friendly there, and we set up a school, and offered all kinds of subjects. I subscribed for a course in the German language. I figured that would come in handy. It turned out to be a nice respite from the combat, and it didn't take too long for us to form a GI nightclub, and so but it was well stocked with beer, and the beer was delicious. And they would have a dance I guess every Saturday night, something like that, and the locals seemed to enjoy it as much as we did. Oh, they offered some school courses – mechanical drafting – I signed up for a course in the German language which I figured would come in handy, and the teacher was a former German school teacher. She was great. From there, oh let's see, I think about that time, yeah, while we were in Scheinfeld, a program had been set up to provide a six-day leave for troops to go to either Paris or Switzerland. I opted for Switzerland and I'm glad I did. It was a beautiful country and we toured everything we could tour, plus the purchase of a genuine Swiss watch. The Swiss people were somewhat alarmed when they heard that the ___ were gonna come in there on leave, furlough, because during the war they had interned so many, they had interned quite a few Air Force pilots, and troops, and they continued drawing their flight pay and everything and they darn near bankrupted the country, and they were not looking forward to it, really. But they turned out to be very friendly and we were invited to several little social events, and the Swiss soldiers, they had, I think they, well I don't remember how much they served every year reserve duty, but they did, and anytime we would go into a pub, there would be some Swiss soldiers there and nothing would do but what we would join 'em and have a beer with 'em. And we had not one, but several, and then we returned the favor. So it was a very interesting trip. I took a sightseeing tour that basically circled the country, and those trains there, they were a work of precision. I think you could set a watch by their time schedules. So that came and went and we went back to Scheinfeld and continued with various duties. Somewhere along in there, the word came down that we were going to be sent to Nuremberg to assume security details at the prison, prisoner of war camp or prisoner of war trials. That turned out to be very interesting.

So you were in the detail that was responsible for security at the Nuremberg war trials.

John Pearsall: Yes.

OK, tell me a little bit about what you did.

John Pearsall: Well, there was three types of guard duty there. Regular guard was a regular two on, four off situation. Escort guard which was once they took prisoners to their conference room to meet with their family or their lawyer or whoever, and then a special escort guard was formed at the last. It was the ones that escorted the prisoners from their cell into the courtroom, and I had a taste of all of them at one time or another.

So you were at all three different levels of security.

John Pearsall: Yes.

So on some of those old newsreel films, we might've seen you –

John Pearsall: Oh yeah, yeah.

Could you point yourself out if we had one?

John Pearsall: Yeah.

OK, very good.

John Pearsall: I'll never forget the first day that I came on -

We're looking right now at a photograph of one of the trials and there are four soldiers behind the folks that are on trial and Mr. Pearsall is pointing himself out to me to be this soldier here, is that correct?

John Pearsall: I think so. Yes.

Right smack in the center of five guards.

John Pearsall: It was a very rare experience to participate in that.

What made it so tiring?

John Pearsall: Well it was a page in history that closed out. The first day I was on duty at the Palace of Justice, I was given a tour of the cell blocks, and well it's hard to describe the feeling that took place when you stood there and looked down a row of cells. Here was Goering, here was von Ribbentrop, Keidel, Jodl, Raeder and Donitz, and any others. They were in individual cells and they were something like 8-foot square, which is barely big enough to put in a bed and a table. But that was all they needed, and there was a corner of the cell on the front wall that was carved out to contain a commode. So the prisoner could be watched at all times. Now it turned out that the reason we were sent on this detail was that the previous guard detail had fouled up and allowed a prisoner to commit suicide. That was Robert Ley. And boy, heads rolled. So we relieved this outfit, and instead of one guard on five cells which they had, we had one guard on each cell, and they stood there looking through a hole in the door about 12 inches by 12 inches, and had mounted a foot light, so the prisoner was kept under watch continuously.

Son: And the one that committed suicide was Goering, right?

Son: Robert Ley was the first one.

John Pearsall: Robert Ley was the one that committed suicide. I don't remember what his function was, but it had to do with Poland I think. What had happened with this one guard on five cells, he would stop at one cell, spend a few minutes and glance at everything and see if everything was in order, then go down to the next cell and repeat it on down the line, then come back. And one or two trips down, he concluded that that prisoner had been on the toilet for a

long time, and looking through the little observation hole in the door, he could see the occupant I guess from his knees down, so there wasn't anything suspicious until he decided after 10 minutes or so that he had been on that commode long enough, and he went in and he was dead. He had taken a rag, stuffed in his mouth, and then tied a towel around his neck, and looped it around a water pipe on the commode and then just set down. So he hung himself. But that did shake up a commandant of the guard detail. So I guess they concluded it was better to have an infantry regiment in there doing that guard duty than somebody else. But the first day on duty there, I looked down the row of cells, and it occurred to me that it would be worthwhile if every American soldier observed that at one site, see what they had been fighting for and against. It was I guess uneventful for the most part.

Were you at the trials from the beginning to the end?

John Pearsall: Not to the end of it. The trials began on December 1st, and I guess ended sometime around August. But by February I had accrued enough points to come home, and I didn't stay for the conclusion.

I don't blame you.

John Pearsall: But from what I understand, it wasn't very pleasant to see. Evidently the Army hangman had goofed up some of the assignment and the hangings were not very professional. But they were effective.

So you left to come back to the States in February. And what happened after that.

John Pearsall: We went back to Hof, Germany, and joined the 102nd Division for the trip home. We didn't care what it was, we were going home. So we had loaded on French 40 and eights, which is their boxcar, and headed south. That was a great feeling. We boarded General A.E. Anderson, which is an Army transport that was far, far better than that British ship that took us over there. But we verified one thing. The Navy does serve beans with every meal. It took us 5 days to get to New York from Le Havre compared to 11 days it took us going over. That was a welcome sight, very welcome. We landed in New York and we'd been told we were going to have a steak dinner that night with all the trimmings, and we did but we had not only one, but all you could eat. I think everybody had two anyway. But of all things, when we left that mess hall, just kind of scouted around the base there, we ended up eating a hamburger. That was a sign of return home. And they told us then where we would go for discharge. I was going to Fort Ch___, Arkansas. I didn't care where it was, but I was going home. Under advice of the officials, it was suggested we not advise our parents of the immediate plans because they were always subject to change. So anyway I received my discharge on Saturday, I've got the date written down there somewhere, April the 12th or thereabouts. Anyway we headed home. We had a dental inspection the last Saturday we were there, and I was told I needed some dental work done, if I could stay over until Monday to get it done. No, I'll get that done at home.

You had your own dentist.

John Pearsall: We arrived in Ranger. We went by bus all night and arrived in Ranger oh around 8 or 9 o'clock on Sunday morning, and my dad was not at the bus station to meet me, and I thought something must be wrong. But I later found out he had checked the bus schedule there and saw that a later bus coming in, I would probably be on it. Anyway I went across the main street there and borrowed the telephone at the drugstore and called home. He was really

embarrassed that he wasn't there to meet me. But we resolved that. And we spent the whole day reminiscing, crying, laughing, whatever. I was just glad to be home.

Looking back over your service in the Army, how would you say it affected your life since then?

John Pearsall: Oh, considerably.

In what ways?

John Pearsall: Well I think it made a better person of you in broad description. I appreciated things I never had before, and I made immediate plans to return to school, but this time at the University of Texas, and continue my education, and they assured me that the GI Bill would hold up. So that was about it.

If you had an opportunity to talk to some of the young men, women that are going into the service now or that are serving now, what would you tell them?

John Pearsall: I'd tell 'em to play it straight and keep your nose clean, and do what you're told. That doesn't seem to be the modus operandi now, but it worked then.

It's real good advice.

John Pearsall: Yes it is.

The other vets I've talked to, that's pretty much the same thing. Is there anything else that you'd like to add before we stop?

John Pearsall: No, I think that's pretty well covered it.

Very good. On behalf of Commissioner Jerry Patterson of the Texas Veteran's Land Board, I'd like to thank you for your service and for your boys being here, and for your service, and for just helping out with the interview, too. Thank you very much Mr. Pearsall.

John Pearsall: Well I've appreciated it.

Thank you.

John Pearsall: And I hope the good word passes on.

Very good, we will.

[End of recording]