

INTERVIEW

Leo Jantz

YEAR

2005

GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Leo Jantz

DATE: October 17, 2005

PLACE: Jantz home, Cimarron KS

INTERVIEWER: Joyce Sullentrop

PROJECT SERIES: Veterans Oral History Project for Gray County

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Leo Jantz, the youngest of four Jantz brothers who served in World War Two, graduated from Cimarron high school. He was drafted into the Army in 1946 and after basic training in Fort Bliss, sailed from Seattle to Japan to be in the Occupation Forces. After seven months, a physical problem sent him to the hospital and he was given a disability discharge and sent home aboard a hospital ship. Leo worked on the farm and did carpentry until his retirement in 1990.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Jantz's induction and training for service in Japan, his illness and return to Cimarron. We discussed the dirty '30s and life in the depression in this area.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW: none

SOUND RECORDINGS: 2- 60 minute tapes

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 1 1/3 hours

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 17 pages

ORAL HISTORY
Jantz, Leo
Interview Date: October 17, 2006

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)
Interviewee: Leo Jantz (LJ)
Tape 1 of 2
Side A

JS - The question that I have is: When the war started in 1939, how old were you and what did you think of the war or what did your friends or community or relatives think about the war?

LJ - Well, I graduated when I was eighteen, in 1943 so I would have been fourteen in 1939. Of course, at that time at my age, you didn't think too much about it, but we knew that Great Britain was going to get into it and if they got into it, we would too.

JS - Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed? That would have been in '41.

LJ - I was at home.

JS - Were you listening to the radio?

LJ - We found out later on that day while listening to the radio, yes. Then on Monday, Cimarron High School had us listening to President Roosevelt declare war.

JS - Was there any feeling of "As soon as I can, I am going to go to the war," in the community? Did some people immediately enlist; some of the young men?

LJ - No. At that time they had the draft on and you didn't have to worry about enlisting. You were going to go, regardless. Some of them did enlist, knowing that they were going to get drafted.

JS - Did you register for the draft when you were eighteen? Do you remember?

LJ - Yes, I did.

JS - Everyone in the community did that?

LJ - Yes.

JS - And was there a draft board of local people?

LJ -Yes, there was.

JS - So, you were drafted in '46, or did you enlist?

LJ - I was drafted before, but I didn't pass the physical on account of I had bad knees.

JS - If at that time you wanted a deferment, if for whatever reason like family or farming, you would go in front of that board?

LJ - Yes. You would have to do that.

JS - Do you have any other memories about Pearl Harbor day? Do you remember what you thought?

LJ - Well, I thought that was a treacherous thing for them to do.

JS - Did you read about the war daily or listen to war news?

LJ - The war came home quite sudden because Dwight Roberts was on the battleship, Arizona. He was from Cimarron so that brought it home real quick.

JS - There were other young men in the community that were in the Army before Pearl Harbor, then?

LJ - Yes.

JS - Joined before 1939?

LJ - Joined or were drafted.

JS - So you think that most people were drafted rather than enlisted?

LJ - Yes, before Pearl Harbor, anyway. Then, after Pearl Harbor a lot of them enlisted.

JS - They would have enlisted for what reason?

LJ - Patriotic reasons.

JS - During the war you had the medical reason why you were not drafted. Then in '46 were you drafted?

LJ - I was drafted.

JS - The medical problem had gotten better or what?

LJ - They just had gotten more relaxed on the people that inspected you.

JS - And about that induction; where did you go for the physical?

LJ - Fort Warren, Wyoming for the physical and I was inducted in Fort Riley. I went to Fort Bliss for basic training.

JS - What is the induction ceremony like? What did you do?

LJ - They just swear you in the Army, is all.

JS - And the real part doesn't come until you are at the training fort? What was basic training like? What did you do?

LJ - Well, it was fairly easy. It was anti-aircraft basic. It wasn't infantry basic so we just marched mainly around the camp and we went out on the rifle range and learned how to shoot the M1. It was in the middle of the desert. By the time you got your turn at the range your rifle wouldn't even work, so you had to clean it cause it was sandy. It was so dirty it wouldn't fire, anymore.

JS - At Fort Bliss, describe the food and the sleeping and all of that.

LJ - It was in barracks just like the rest of the Army, but we didn't have the long marches like the infantry did.

JS - Did you choose anti-aircraft or did they just put you there?

LJ - No, you didn't choose anything when you were drafted. But they had one five-mile hike and I was barracks guard the day they had that, so my knee didn't come into anything until I got over in Japan.

JS - So, the training consisted of maybe short marches and shooting the M1?

LJ - Yes, anti-aircraft basic, more or less. It wasn't the infantry basic. Not near as rough as the infantry basic.

JS - Were there other people from this community that were in your group going through and did you know anyone?

LJ - Most of mine were from Chicago and it didn't take you long to know people in the Army.

JS - How long was the training?

LJ - Six weeks.

JS - Did you get to do anything fun during basic training?

LJ - No.

JS - You were just mainly on base?

LJ - Right.

JS - Was there any particular individual or experience or memory that you had about basic training?

LJ - We had a drill sergeant, Holachi who was a corporal, that we made sort of fun of, but not to his face. He sort of had a high voice. But everybody was there for a purpose.

JS - Was it different meeting the young men from Chicago?

LJ - Oh yeah, they were close most of them. They were different from the people I was used to, but they were friendly and we got along fine.

JS - What was the food like? I would think it was sort of a shock for you having lived here and then going to the Army; the food, clothing and all of that.

LJ - The food didn't bother me a bit because I wasn't very finicky about eating anything they put before me. As long as it looked good and tasted good, I ate it. Particularly, that day that I was the only one around, the cook cooked the eggs like I wanted them and everything like that. So that doesn't happen very often in the Army.

JS - Why were you the only one around?

LJ - I was barracks guard.

JS - What does that mean?

LJ - Well, you always have rifles and stuff like that and personal items. You are to stay there and see that nobody comes in and steals anything.

JS - I have always heard of KP. Did you have other work that you had to do other than your basic training, like cleaning?

LJ - We cleaned up around your area and there was latrine duty, which was extra. I didn't have very much KP, but yeah, I had some.

JS - What did they let you bring from home when you went, if anything?

LJ - Just brought your toothbrush and stuff like that, and that's it.

JS - But no photographs or clothing?

LJ - Well, whatever you could carry on your body and your billfold or whatever.

JS - When you got over there, was the training sufficient for what you did in Japan?

LJ - No.

JS - What did you do when you were sent abroad?

LJ - We were the Army of Occupation and I took anti-aircraft basic, but they put me in the infantry when I got over to Japan. So, you knew how to shoot the M1, but that's it. They had to teach you what you were supposed to do over there for the Army of Occupation.

JS - What was your major duty over there?

LJ - I wasn't really over there long enough to find out, but they tried to march you everyday and everyday and everyday and I just could not take it on account of my knee. They finally took a tape measure and one knee was an inch bigger than the other one. They asked me if I wanted to go home or up to the hospital. I told them I was willing to stay in the Army, but I just can't walk everyday so they sent me home.

JS - When you went over there, you were still training? You were not assigned and sent to a certain part of Japan where you had certain duties?

LJ - Well, they knew that when they sent us over there, but I didn't. The town where we were was Otsu, Japan.

JS - Can you locate where it might be close to?

LJ - It was just a small town and we did have a little bit of an earthquake there that shook three times. That was the first time I had that kind of an experience. Also they had coal heaters that worked well, but they changed over to steam heat and half the time you were freezing to death. You had to go outside and take showers in cold water and no heat. That was an experience.

JS - Had these barracks been built by the Army?

LJ - They used to be Japanese barracks.

JS - How many people would have been stationed there in that small town?

LJ - I imagine a company.

JS - And you went with your group from basic training?

LJ - Yes.

JS - Did you encounter anyone from this area when you were over there?

LJ - No.

JS - Did you go via ship or were you flown over?

LJ - Ship from Seattle to Yokohama, I think sixteen days.

JS - Was this your first experience being on the ocean?

LJ - Yes.

JS - What was that like?

LJ - It was an experience, I'll tell you. I didn't ever get sick, but a lot of people did and then you had to duck. People were always heaving, you know. And we had a little gun turret that we always went and sat in when we were outside on deck. The seas got so rough one day that they wouldn't even let us go out there.

JS - In the gun turret you were sort of guarding?

LJ - No. The metal was about that thick. It was a Marshall Victory ship, but they used it mainly for transport, then. You know they didn't have to have the guns after the war.

JS - The Marshall Victory ship, could you explain that a little further?

LJ - Well, it was mainly a transport, not a troop ship, but it did hold about 1200 people. Then they had a lot of goods on there that they transported, too.

JS - To Japan?

LJ - Yes.

JS - To help in the rebuilding of Japan?

LJ - That, and the Army supplies that they needed and officers' cars and whatever.

JS - When you were in Japan, did you get out of that small town to travel to other places?

LJ - I wasn't there long enough to get a furlough. When they finally decided to let me be on my way, I went to the hospital in Kyoto, which is a fairly large city. There was a summer palace of the emperor so it was a nice city.

JS - Were you traveling by yourself?

LJ - Oh no, you never did travel by yourself in the Army. They always had two or three with you and they took you by ambulance to the hospital.

JS - So you went to the hospital to be discharged?

LJ - When I left; I went on a hospital ship when they took me home and it took thirty days because they are slow moving. We had to go to the Philippines and Okinawa and pick up people.

JS - The hospital ship was picking up soldiers who had been injured or had other conditions?

LJ - Those who were on the way to being discharged.

JS - What was it like on the hospital ship?

LJ - Well, it was still moving and it was an experience because there were all kinds of people on there and you had to stay away from them. I know one time, there was a fellow on the bunk next to me and the nurse was doing something to a patient and that guy just up and tried to (?) her. Of course, you had all kinds of people on board ship.

JS - So you had your own bunk. It was a hospital ship so there were medical facilities with nurses and doctors. Because you were not critically injured did you have any experience with them?

LJ - No. I was ambulatory.

JS - You could walk around and take care of yourself. Did you get to get off the ship when you were in the Philippines?

LJ - No. Some of them did, but they got in trouble for it.

JS - We are glad you didn't get in trouble. When you left home you went to Fort Bliss and then did you take a train to Seattle? Is that how you got to Seattle to get on the ship?

LJ - I took a Pullman. I didn't take a regular Army train. They gave you a ten day leave between the two places so I came home. I took a Pullman, but I could have flown as cheap, but I took the Pullman.

JS - Was that your first train ride?

LJ - Not the first train ride, but the first Pullman.

JS - Maybe you need to explain the difference between the Pullman and a regular train ride.

LJ - A regular train ride is just on the chair car and you have no sleeping facilities. On a Pullman you can sit in a chair or you have a berth so you can sleep.

JS - And the dining?

LJ - You have your separate dining.

JS - Was that a good experience?

LJ - Yes, it was.

JS - Were there a lot of other servicemen on it?

LJ - Yes, but they weren't going the same place I was.

JS - When did you find out that you were going to Japan? Was it while you were finishing basic training?

LJ - Well, when I got to Seattle.

JS - What was that like? Finding that you were going across the ocean?

LJ - Just another experience.

JS - I know you were only over there seven months. Did you write home? And were you able to receive mail?

LJ - No, because they misplaced my name. I didn't get any pay, didn't get any mail, and didn't get anything. I had to borrow \$25 from one of my friends to even have spending money on the way home.

JS - I take it they found your name sooner or later?

LJ - After I was discharged, yeah.

JS - So, you were almost non-existent to the Army. There was no way you had of communicating with your parents?

LJ - No.

JS - Were they worried when you were sent to Japan?

LJ - No. The war was over. But you know, accidents could still happen. I tried to volunteer in the Air Force right after I graduated from high school. My mother was so against it that I soon let that go.

JS - Were you the only son in your family?

LJ - No. I had three brothers. One was in the Navy, one in the Air Force and one in the Army.

JS - Are you the youngest?

LJ - Yeah.

JS - No wonder she didn't want you to go.

LJ - Three of them had already gone. It about broke her heart when she thought I was going too, so I just couldn't do that.

JS - Was there not a rule where they wouldn't take all the sons from a family.

LJ - Sort of like that, yes. That is what I hear, I guess.

JS - So your brothers enlisted?

LJ - They were drafted.

JS - Before Pearl Harbor or after?

LJ - After.

JS - And the others, did they serve in Europe?

LJ - The one in the Air Force was stationed in England and they flew twenty-five missions over Germany. The one in the Army was in North Africa. He was an

MP and chauffeur. The one that was in the Navy was on a merchant ship and was part of the Navy that manned the guns.

JS - Now, they were able to write home to the family. Do you remember some of the experiences they told about?

LJ - Well, of course the one in the Air Force couldn't talk about the missions they were on.

JS - What was his name?

LJ - Millard. Dallas, the one that was in the Army in North Africa wrote about driving for a colonel. He kind of waited on the big guys.

JS - And the one on the merchant ship?

LJ - Francis manned the guns on the ship.

JS - They stayed in until the end of the war and then came home?

LJ - In Europe.

JS - Because they were in the service, did that make you want to go?

LJ - Oh yes, I wanted to go. I actually wanted to join the Air Force, but like I said....

JS - And that is understandable. When they were drafted, they were over there. They didn't get any leave until after the war?

LJ - They got a leave after the basic training before they went overseas.

JS - Why would they have selected for instance, the Navy instead of the Army?

LJ - At the time they went in you didn't. They put you. It was the early part of the war when they went in.

JS - I guess I thought that even drafted, you had some choice.

LJ - Well, after you knew you were drafted you could volunteer and try to get into what you wanted; Marines or Navy or whatever.

JS - I am glad you are explaining that. Do you remember when they left home? Did they all leave at the same time?

LJ - They went according to their age. Dallas went first, then Millard, then Francis.

JS - When you were in Japan, did you have an opportunity to be with the Japanese people?

LJ - Especially after I got in the hospital. All the nurses were Japanese.

JS - Could the nurses speak English?

LJ - I don't think so, but you had to have some sort of contact because the only way you could get a haircut over there was with yen. You had to sell cigarettes or something like that for yen in order to get a haircut.

JS - Did most of the soldiers smoke?

LJ - I would say most of them did, yes.

JS - You weren't getting paid, how did you buy cigarettes?

LJ - Red Cross gave them to you free.

JS - Were they the unfiltered kind?

LJ - I guess unfiltered or filtered, it didn't make any difference. They would give you a whole carton.

JS - What else did the Red Cross do?

LJ - Well, I can't tell you exactly because that's all they would have done for me.

JS - You were still in training and doing marching. How did you spend the rest of your time?

LJ - Played cards and things like that.

JS - What kind of cards?

LJ - Pitch and some poker, I did not play poker. We weren't there long enough to learn a lot of stuff.

JS - Did they have a library? Did they have entertainment for you on base; movies or entertainers coming in?

LJ - Not that I knew.

JS - Didn't it get to you?

LJ - It's monotonous, I'll guarantee you. And they had them honey buckets.

JS - Explain that.

LJ - That is fertilizer. They had a long plank like on a trailer and pull it out to their rice paddies that way. They didn't throw anything away. Thank God it was wintertime when I was over there because you couldn't imagine what it was in the summertime.

JS - So was the base staffed by Japanese?

LJ - Japanese were supposed to take care of the furnace and keep hot water, but they went to sleep half the time and we had cold water showers in a cold barracks. Cold bathrooms and I will remember that as long as I live.

JS - You thought you would never get warm?

LJ - Yeah, and that is probably the reason I got pneumonia.

JS - When you were over there?

LJ - Yes, you had to go outside to take your cold shower and shave with cold water in a cold bathroom. Then you had to go back inside through that cold air so it was natural that if you were prone to get pneumonia, you would get it.

JS - Were you issued heavier clothes by the Army?

LJ - But you didn't wear that when you went out to take a shower. You just had a robe more or less, and that don't protect you very much.

JS - Sounds like hard duty to me.

LJ - It was walking pneumonia, is what I had.

JS - Were there people there who had fought in Japan?

LJ - No. They were still taking basic training yet.

JS - And the ones who had already been there when the war ended had already gone home?

LJ - Yes.

JS - As far as war experience was concerned....?

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Leo Jantz (LJ)

Tape 1 of 2

Side B

JS – At any point in the months that you were in, were you with people who had been fighting in the war?

LJ – No, I just had brothers and friends that came home and told me about it.

JS – So as far as hearing many stories about the war or the war experience.

LJ - Of course, you had read all that before you went overseas.

JS - You would read that, for example, in newspapers do you mean?

LJ – Oh, yes.

JS - So when you were in training at Fort Bliss there were papers there that told you?

LJ - Oh, yeah.

JS - Anything else about being in Japan? It was a different culture and I know you were basically on base, but any specific or significant things that you can remember?

LJ - Well, I know this much, the first night we were on base, two or three guys decided they wanted to go to town without a pass. That created quite a stir.

JS - They would sneak out?

LJ - You had to, you weren't about to get a pass. But you didn't know what to do. You get in them towns and there are people who don't know how to speak English. So, what are you going to do?

JS - So what happened to these three guys?

LJ - They caught them, didn't take much time either.

JS - And that probably stopped anyone from sneaking out again?

LJ - It stopped the guys that were thinking about it.

JS - Was the food any different when you were over there?

LJ - It was basically Army food. On Sundays you had chicken and maybe ice cream or such. It was basic stuff like you had in the States.

JS - Now, there was a commissary where you could go and buy candy and things like that? You weren't receiving mail.

LJ - Or money.

JS - Or money. So you couldn't really do that. What did the Army say when they lost your identity?

LJ - What did they say? They don't apologize for anything.

JS - Do you have a memory of a particular officer that you had in basic training or over there? People often have something to say about their sergeant or someone.

LJ - I wasn't there long enough to get to know anybody when I got over to Japan. But I do remember the first night I spent there. It was a Repo Depot and it was cold. We slept in cots with no heat in the middle of winter and with two blankets and that's the coldest night I ever spent in my life. Some guys had a kerosene heater in their tent and they found some kerosene and lit them up. Some tents caught on fire and burned all their clothes up and everything.

JS - Well, I guess being cold was better than that.

LJ - Yes.

JS - Did you have any expectations before you were drafted about what it might be like? Was it like that or was it different?

LJ - I wasn't expecting too much, especially in basic. That didn't worry me, but when I got over there and they put us on the train to where we were going to be stationed you felt sort of weird. The houses and farms were different. Thatched roofs and stuff like that and I wasn't used to that.

JS - The training and equipment and all that was basically what you expected?

LJ - Oh yeah.

JS - What about your treatment with the knee? Did you think that was as it should have been?

LJ - I had a choice that they could either operate on my knee or not. I decided not, because I saw one guy there that it had been six weeks since he got his operation and it was still draining.

JS - That was when you were coming back?

LJ - That was when I was about to get discharged. They would have operated on me, but as far as that goes they treated me. But they did give me a certified disability discharge not a compensation, but a certified disability.

JS - What was wrong with your knee and what was the operation that they could have done?

LJ - Well, I was double springing on the diving board when I was still going to high school and as the board was coming up I was coming down. I snapped my knee and after that I had loose cartilage in my joints. I had had knee trouble before that and that really accentuated the fact.

JS - When you were finally drafted did you think it was odd that they accepted you then, but hadn't accepted you earlier?

LJ - It really wasn't a doctor that examined me. It was a sergeant and he said my knee was stable and that was good enough.

JS - Because you were in there a number of months, was there a soldier that you knew that you kept in contact with after you came home? Or was that just not possible?

LJ - The one I borrowed the twenty-five dollars from. He wasn't my best friend over there. You know, it takes a pretty good guy to loan you twenty-five dollars and not expecting it back, but I did send the twenty-five dollars to him. I wasn't over there long enough to really establish a friendship that I would have carried on.

JS - You were then, here at home when the war ended?

LJ - Yes.

JS - Do you remember what happened locally? Was there a celebration? What were people thinking?

LJ - There was no celebration in town. I was running a tractor farming, when Japan surrendered.

JS - Because you were at home while the war was on, were there certain things the individual families did because of the war effort? Were there things that were not available to you such as with rationing?

LJ - When you lived on a farm you didn't; sugar and coffee of course, but living on a farm we didn't have any problems.

JS - What about gas?

LJ - We had farm gas.

JS - What about tires for machinery?

LJ - Not everything was on tires. You still had lugs, you know, on some tractors. Most everything was on tires, but if you needed a tire, and you really needed it, you got it.

JS - Anything else? I seem to remember something about scrap metal drives. Remember those?

LJ - Yeah, they had some of them. They had two or three, as I recall.

JS - And people would.....?

LJ - Bring their scrap metal into town, yeah.

JS - Then the government would take it and recycle it, eventually?

LJ - Yes.

JS - Here at Cimarron, there would have been an airbase where, Dodge?

LJ - There was one at Garden City and Dodge City, both. Then they had auxiliary landing fields between Ingalls and Garden City. I think they are taking up that concrete right now. It was thick.

JS - Who owns that?

LJ - The government. Well, I think Gray County is taking care of that. I think Ingalls thinks they own it.

JS - Maybe they want to do something with it?

LJ - They are taking the concrete off so they can use it for farm ground, I guess.

JS - So, when you were at home you were definitely aware of the war effort and participated.

LJ - Oh, yeah.

JS - Anything else that you can think of about what the community might have felt? Were there people who did not think that we should have joined the war?

LJ - Oh, there were a few, but not too many in this area.

JS - Probably after Pearl Harbor, they wouldn't have spoken out about it.

LJ - Not very much.

JS - Your friends in school, were most of them drafted?

LJ - Most of them were and the ones that weren't, volunteered because they knew they were going to be drafted anyway.

JS - Was it an advantage to volunteer before you were drafted?

LJ - Yeah.

JS - The advantage was?

LJ - Well, we all took the test for the V-12 program and they just picked, what I would call the youngest ones. That he would be the last one to be drafted, anyway.

JS - What is the V-12 program?

LJ - It was a college program for you to be an officer or whatever, to put you through college. At that time, the war was over by the time you graduated from college.

JS - I had never heard of that V-12 program. And you took a test locally, like you'd go to Dodge?

LJ - Yes, for high school students.

JS - When you came home, then you had a disability so did you continue to farm or did you choose another career?

LJ - Yeah, I continued to farm and then I gradually went into construction. Of course, I did a little bit of that before I graduated from high school, actually. My dad was a carpenter and farmer.

JS - A question that might not apply to you: did anything that you learned in the Army help you when you got home?

LJ - No.

JS - How would you characterize the experience? Did that experience of training and going abroad change you or make you think about things in a different way? How did it affect your life?

LJ - Well, it awakens you to the fact that all people are not all the same and that it is a big expanse of water between places. When you look out and see that, all you can see is water, why that wakes you up to the fact that if something happened to that ship, what are you going to do? But, we had seagulls all the way across. Of course when they got tired, they could land on the ship.

JS - What did you think of the ocean the first time you saw it? Were you at all scared or tentative about sailing out into that?

LJ - No. I wasn't scared or shaky or anything. The only dangerous part was if you were in the fantail, if you slipped why you might be gone. That is the only thing that was shaky out there.

------(Break in tape)-----

JS - There wasn't any danger of any . . .

LJ - We hit the tail end of a typhoon, and that was scary. Cause the ship would come down and go up and come down and shake, and you'd begin to wonder whether it was going to break apart or not.

JS - Were there tall or high waves?

LJ - Oh, yeah.

JS - And the ship would go up?

LJ - And quiver.

JS - A lot different than Kansas weather.

LJ - It wasn't a big ship, you know. It was a Victory Ship.

JS - You said it held about 1200?

LJ - Yes. But that is still a small ship.

JS – But how did the hospital ship . . .? In comparison, what was the size of the hospital ship to this?

LJ – Probably about the same size of ship, but it didn't carry near as many people, and it was . . . It rode the waves smoother. It didn't go up and shake like that. Of course, we didn't hit any rough weather on a hospital ship.

JS – Were you able to see the workings of the ship when you were on there? Could you see all the inner workings?

LJ – No. Of course it was right at Christmas time when we were going over there, and they were thawing turkeys out. It was sort of slick going to the mess hall.

JS – That's right. So, you celebrated Christmas.

LJ – Over there.

JS – Okay. And how, what was it?

LJ – We landed in Japan on the 21st of December.

JS – What was the celebration like?

LJ – Well, they just had turkey and stuff.

JS – And that was it?

LJ – Like they did in the States.

JS – But you didn't get anything because you weren't receiving mail, right?

LJ – Well, I got, they served turkey in the mess hall. But I didn't get any letters or anything. No.

JS – I thought maybe they would have celebrations where they would do something special, like sing Christmas carols. Was religion a part of being in the service at all?

LJ – No. It certainly was not. They had a chaplain. In Fort Bliss, they let you have passes on the weekends. And you could go to church if you wanted to, but it wasn't on our Army Base. Private churches.

JS – Right. So they didn't have services for you? Either place? Any reflections on the experience of serving in the army? Of being drafted? Other than you've already talked about?

LJ – Well, when we were going overseas, they had a certain amount of candy bars that they could sell going over, because they had to save some for on the way back. And candy bars got to be 50¢ a piece. And they were about 3¢, really.

JS – They were in short supply. What kind of candy bars were they? Do you remember?

LJ – Just regular candy. . . Hershey's, Snickers, whatever. They were good candy bars. Nickel candy bars, you know.

JS – About the food, you didn't have desserts? You didn't have sweets that much, maybe? Just on a Sunday like you said, you'd have ice cream, or did you have desserts daily?

LJ - You had some kind of dessert, whether it was bread pudding or whatever, but it wasn't ice cream. And you didn't get that every Sunday either. But, you usually got chicken or something like that. Regular Sunday fare.

JS - But Sunday was like any other day? Did you do marching?

LJ - No.

JS - So you did get the day off?

LJ – Yes.

JS – Now, it is how many years later? 60?

LJ – Yeah, at least.

JS – If you look back and reflect on that experience, do you have any reflections? I know you didn't have a choice. But would you try to volunteer again like you did when you were right out of high school? Anything that you want to talk about along those lines?

LJ – Well, the only thing would be after I got out of the army, what I would have done. But, no, I probably would have done the same thing.

JS – So am I correct in thinking that your experience was a part of your life, but not a significant part of your life?

LJ – It wasn't long enough. Eight months.

JS – Right.

LJ – But, I tell you about, when we were over there, in Japan, we bought mixed nuts and took sugar from the mess hall and made peanut brittle. And it didn't take them long and they quit putting sugar on the . . .

JS - So did you have access to a kitchen? Is that how, or where did you make it?

LJ - No, they put sugar on the tables in the mess hall. But they soon quit that. We were taking too much sugar.

JS - Well, you were smart to do that, to mix it together. Any other ways in which you adapted to that army life that maybe wasn't approved of?

LJ - Well, that was one way. But that is the only one that I can remember in particular.

JS - Did you do any . . . Well, you didn't have money . . . I was going to ask if you did any shopping when you were in Japan.

LJ - Didn't ever get any leave. I wasn't over there long enough to get a leave.

JS - And then on the hospital ship you came back to Seattle?

LJ - San Francisco.

JS - San Francisco. And then you came to Denver?

LJ - Letterman's Hospital in San Francisco and Fitzsimmon's in Denver.

JS - And then from there you came on home?

LJ - Yes.

JS - And when do you get the formal discharge?

LJ - I got that in Fitzsimmon's Hospital.

JS - And then you are on your own from then on? And they don't give you any . . . ?

LJ - Well, I got all the benefits of the people that had been in the army. A year plus the time you spent in the army. But you could take some kind of instructions.

JS - And then you caught a train to come home?

LJ - No, I got a leave. My mother was awful sick, and she passed away just before I got discharged. And then we drove to Fitzsimmons, and I drove home.

JS - Well, I bet that was tough, then.

LJ - Yes.

JS - So, your brothers were already home?

LJ – Yes.

JS – What they did in the service, did that help them with what they decided to do after they came home?

LJ – No. It didn't help anybody. Millard was a farmer. Dallas worked in a paint store, installing plate glass and stuff like that. And I was working construction. So, the army didn't help. Francis worked for a gas company. Whatever we learned in the army or navy . . . But, I would say this, I don't know why, it wouldn't do anybody any harm if they would spend 2 years in the army. Discipline is the reason, because they certainly do need it. Anybody. They should be drafted. I wouldn't have any kick at all about that.

JS - Could you maybe define what you or the community thought patriotism was or is, I guess?

LJ - Well, whenever they play the national anthem, you hold your hand over your heart. If you have a hat on, you take it off and hold it over your heart. Stand at attention and don't be moving your arms or talking around to people, and pay attention to what you are doing. I think that is the very least you can do to show your patriotism to the flag.

JS – Do you think that has weakened over the years?

LJ – Yes.

JS – Why do you think that?

LJ – There are people over here that think you don't have to learn English. I think it should still be the basic language. If you want to come over here and live here, you ought to learn English.

JS - Do young men from the community, do they still join the services?

LJ – Yeah, some of them do.

JS – Ok. We don't have the draft, so what would be their motivation? Is it still patriotism like you felt?

LJ – Yes.

JS – Ok. When you came home then in '47, the Korean War or Korean Fleece Action, and there was no way that you could go because of your disability?

LJ – No.

JS - Have you received services since then because of your disability? Is that what that discharge meant? That you had a disability and you could go back to the VA Hospital, or something like that?

LJ – Yes. Any army veteran has that service available. Any army veteran, not because you had a disability.

JS – And have you used that through the years.

LJ – Yes.

JS – Out here, where is the closest place to go?

LJ – Fort Dodge. They have a veteran's clinic there. And if it is anything serious, then you have to go to Wichita.

JS – Okay, anything else that you would like to say about your experience or about war in general or your local veterans?

LJ – Well, I think all wars are probably unnecessary, and necessary at the same time. You have to have a good reason to go to war and I don't know that there is any good reason ever to go to war except as a last resort.

JS – Were you interested in politics growing up? Was that discussed in your home? So when war was approaching, would you have been interested in the politics involved?

LJ – Well, of course, at that time I wasn't too interested in politics. But I am now.

JS – What were you interested in as a . . . we didn't call them teenagers then?

LJ – Having fun!

JS - How did you have fun?

LJ – Well, we went to Dodge City. They had a dance there every Saturday night, up in the rat race, is what we called it. Up on the top of the Daily Globe. The top floor.

JS – Was it a dance hall?

LJ – Yes.

JS – And what was the music?

LJ – Jersey (Peace?) Band, is what we called it.

JS – So you had to go to Dodge City to have fun?

LJ – Yes.

JS – What was Cimarron like?

LJ – Dead.

JS – Was there a movie theater? I know there used to be.

LJ – Yes, there was movie theater. That was it.

JS – Did you go all 12 years of school here in Cimarron?

LJ – Yes.

JS – When did your parents or grandparents come to this area?

LJ – I think 1918.

JS – Did you know any WWI Veterans? People who had fought in WWI as you were growing up?

LJ – Yes. My uncles.

JS – Did they ever talk about their experiences?

LJ – Not that I know of.

JS – Were they in the army?

LJ – Yes.

JS – So, you went to Dodge City to dances at the Rat Race.

LJ – The whole area did - Jetmore, Minneola, . . .

JS – And that is where you would meet other young people?

LJ – Yes.

JS – Was there drinking?

LJ – Not too much.

JS – Did you have to be a certain age to drink?

LJ – 18, at that time.

JS – And you would drive to Dodge?

LJ – Yes.

JS - So you had your own vehicle?

LJ - Yes.

JS - What kind of a car?

LJ - Well, we were using my brother's car. It was a '36 Ford.

JS - And how much was gas a gallon? Do you remember?

LJ - About 23¢.

JS - And now it is what -- \$2.49? Something like that.

LJ - Well, it was \$3.08, the highest here. It's \$2.34 now, I think.

JS - What other activities would there have been in the community that you participated in?

LJ - Well, you had to have your own little parties. A lot of times your friends or family had card parties. You played cards. You got together on Sundays or whatever and played cards and ate. That was about it.

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Leo Jantz (LJ)

Tape 2 of 2

Side A

JS - In the '30s you were a child. So what are some of your memories of the 30's? You were farming. Well, you couldn't farm then.

LJ - Yes. You did farm. You tried every year to plant something. Usually you had one big rain, a three inch rain. You don't have near those three inch rains, anymore. We usually had one and it usually came in from the northwest. You would get dust first and it would rain, afterward.

JS - And the wheat if it got up, would be blown out? Is that correct?

LJ - Nine times out of ten.

JS - Many years you did not have a wheat crop?

LJ - But you could raise feed in the low spots. If you had cattle, you could raise a little bit of feed. You didn't have to buy it all that way.

JS - And you would have a garden and you would milk cows?

LJ - Everybody milked cows then yet, but not anymore.

JS - What were the specific conditions that you remember about the blowing dirt?

LJ - Well, we used to have three days in a row that you couldn't see the sun, nothing, but blowing dirt. The dirt drifts were high, over three or four foot. All the fence-rows were drifted over and you had to dig the barbed wire out of that. It was an experience. I wouldn't want to go through that again.

JS - Did you go to school here in Cimarron or was there a country school where you went?

LJ - No, Cimarron was always consolidated. They had buses that ran. The country schools were a long ways from Cimarron. There were some out south.

JS - When the dirt came and blew for three days you didn't go to school, was that right?

LJ - No, you couldn't see where you were going.

JS - So, what did you do when you were at home and the dirt blew?

LJ - You put damp rags on the windows to keep the dirt from coming in.

JS - I guess you had radio you could listen to?

LJ - Yes. The tanks drifted over and we had ducks that got all over with mud and we had to wash them off every once in a while.

JS - Do you remember when it ended; when it started to rain again?

LJ - In '37, and we started raising crops again.

JS - And the dust storms just sort of tapered off?

LJ - Yes.

JS - I was raised at Ingalls in the '50s and it seemed to me that there was a lot of dirt blowing around in the '50s.

LJ - There was another little siege of it that lasted about five years, but it wasn't near as bad as the '30s.

JS - Is there any other particular memory that you want to get down for posterity?

LJ - I can remember black Sunday. It came in right around noon as I recall, and you couldn't see anything then.

JS - You would notice clouds in the north?

LJ - Northwest. But, black Sunday, when it hit was just like night. You could not see. You didn't dare go outside the house without a rope or something so you could find your way back.

JS - Was there any weather forecast on the radio that the storm coming?

LJ - You didn't have any weather stations out in that area. You know in '57 they had that one blizzard that came in. At noon it was all clear and by afternoon it was a blizzard and after that they put a weather station out at Goodland.

JS - I remember that, I think we were at Inglewood. We went to a music festival and they made us come home right away. I do remember that. Did you think you were poor during the dirty '30s and the depression?

LJ - Didn't think, knew we were. We were better off than some people were. We at least had beans and dad had cattle, but we never did butcher any of them. We butchered hogs.

JS - How did you keep the animals alive? Did you have enough feed?

LJ - We raised feed for them.

JS - They were mainly milk cows?

LJ - There were some of them beef cows.

JS - Was there shelter for them when the dust storms came?

LJ - Yeah.

JS - But you had to make sure that they were in there?

LJ - And that they had water.

JS - Tough years.

LJ - Yes, but dad was a carpenter and he did a little bit of carpenter work during the dirt years. At least we were better off than some. That's the reason I was a construction person.

JS - So when you came home from the war you mainly did construction.

LJ - Yes.

JS - You did building of homes?

LJ - Yes, I built one complete home and did remodeling. I built a shop out at Warner's ranch. I worked in Cimarron for about seven years and lived in Dodge City then. I built the Cimarron Investment building north of the elevator of red brick.

JS - Now, you are retired?

LJ - I retired in 1990.

JS - Fifteen years, you have been retired. What do you do in your retirement?

LJ - Play golf.

JS - Here in Cimarron?

LJ - Yes, I do now. I played in Dodge when I was there and I do stained glass.

JS - Are you self-taught?

LJ - Yes.

JS - So, lampshades, is that mainly what you do?

LJ - Yes, I did some sun catchers and two lamps. I did a little bit of everything. I did the stones out front.

JS - When did you move back to Cimarron?

LJ - We moved back seven years ago.

JS - Are you the only member of your family still living? Your brothers are all gone?

LJ - Yes. I have a sister in Wichita. She is the oldest one of the family and she is still alive.

JS - And do you get together?

LJ - No.

JS - I was going to ask about family stories, but I think that is about all I have to ask about unless you think of something.

LJ - That's about all I can think of.

JS - Thank you.

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Leo Jantz (LJ)

Tape 2 of 2

END

**KANSAS WORLD WAR II VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY RELEASE FORM**

I hereby agree to a video/audio recording and/or photographic and/or written documentation of the interview between

J. Swellentrop and Studio Leo Jantz on 10-17-05. I understand that I will receive a personal copy of this interview.

I agree to the following conditions, unless specifically noted as a restriction:

- 1) I give my permission for all recordings, photographs, and written records to be used for educational and scholarly purposes, including publications and exhibits.
- 2) When the material is used, proper acknowledgement shall be made of the interviewee/donor.
- 3) The material gathered shall be placed in the collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas; the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; and the (local institution name and location) for use by researchers.
- 4) The Kansas State Historical Society may include information about this interview and possibly portions of the transcript and/or excerpts of the interview on their web site www.kshs.org. I give my permission for this use. yes no

If yes, the Kansas State Historical Society may include my address. may not include my address in their database on their web site.

- 5) If a researcher wishes to use the information gathered for other than educational and scholarly purposes, he/she may do so may not do so without further permission.

Restrictions:

Name: Leo L. Jantz

Address 901 N. 5th

Cimarron, KS 67835

Phone Number 620-855-3168

Signature Leo Jantz Date 10-17-05

Interviewer Signature Joyce Swellentrop Date 10-17-05



APPENDIX

Veteran's release form

Veteran's Release Form

TO BE COMPLETED BY VETERAN (IN CASES OF DECEASED VETERANS, TO BE COMPLETED BY DONOR OF MATERIAL.)

I, Leo L. Jantz, am a participant in the Kansas Veterans of World War II Oral History Project (hereinafter KVOHP). I understand that the purpose of the project is to collect audio- and video-taped oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them as well as selected related documentary materials (such as photographs and manuscripts) that may be deposited in the permanent collections of the Gray County Veterans Memorial Archives and Resource Center and/or the Kansas State Historical Society. The deposited documentary materials will serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences; and may be used for scholarly and educational purposes. I understand that the organizations involved plan to retain the product of my participation as part of its permanent collection and that the materials may be used for exhibition, publication, presentation on the World Wide Web and successor technologies, and for promotion of the Gray County Veterans Memorial Archives and Resource Center and/or the Kansas State Historical Society and its activities in any medium.

I hereby grant to the Gray County Veterans Memorial Archives and Resource Center and the Kansas State Historical Society ownership of the physical property delivered to them and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview, performance, photographs, and written materials) as stated above. By giving permission, I understand that I do not give up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold.

I also grant to the Gray County Veterans Memorial Archives and Resource Center and the Kansas State Historical Society my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) provided by me or taken of me in the course of my participation in the project to be used, published, or copied by the organizations so named and its assignees in any medium.

I agree that the Gray County Veterans Memorial Archives and Resource Center and the Kansas State Historical Society may use my name, video or photographic image or likeness, statements, performance, and voice reproduction or other sound effects without further approval on my part.

I release the Gray County Veterans Memorial Archives and Resource Center and the Kansas State Historical Society, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of such recordings, documents, and artifacts, including but not limited to, any claims for defamation, invasion of privacy or right of publicity.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature Leo L. Jantz Date 10-17-05
Printed Name Leo L. Jantz
Address 901 N. 5th
City Cimarron State KS Zip 67835
Telephone (620) 855-3168 E-mail _____

