

MEXICAN AMERICAN VETERAN FINDING AID- IN PROGRESS

3777 FLORES, MARTY

An oral history with Marty Flores, one of the many female workers that took up manufacturing jobs during WWII. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University, Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview covers Mrs. Flores's upbringing in a Navy family; living through the Great Depression; losing her mother to cancer at a young age; completing her schooling during the outbreak of the war; how Pearl Harbor effected her Japanese American schoolmates; losing her boyfriend Albert in the fighting overseas; working as a riveter for Lockheed Martin in Los Angeles; facing sexual harassment in the workplace; enjoying the independence that came with her own income; her happiness at the end of the war despite being laid off; how she made more money during and then after the war than her father and husband, respectively; how her husband Joe - a "macho" type - forced her to quit her job and how she felt about it then and now.

3803 GRANDOS, EZEKIEL

An oral history with Ezekiel Grandos, a veteran of World War II who served with the 44th Infantry Division in the Pacific Theater. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University, Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically this interview covers Mr. Grandos's service in the Pacific, his "baptism of fire" during the invasion of Biak, an island off the coast of New Guinea, and other battles; his contraction of malaria; the rations he received; what he did during down time; his experience guarding a group of Korean laborers in the Philippines; how he dealt with death and combat; what it was like serving in the occupation of Japan and meeting the survivors of Hiroshima; and how he felt about going home.

3804 BENAVIDES, VIRGINIA

An oral history with Virginia Benavides, the youngest of 10, brought up in a barrio of Los Angeles during the Great Depression and World War II. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview covers Mrs. Benavides's experience as to what it was like growing up during the Great Depression; being concerned with looking nice, Frank Sinatra, and 40s music all the while finishing school and working night shifts to support her family; how she was treated in a community made up of Anglo, Jewish, and Russian neighbors; her experience working for shirt makers, hat designers, and in the manufacturing industry as a riveter; how she came to be the only person in her family to graduate high school; how she learnt about and dealt with the war; how President FDR motivated Americans during the tough times; her experience of the Zoot Suit Riots; and finally, how her family coped with the war and the loss of her brothers in the Pacific.

3805 FUENTES, DAVID

An oral history with David Fuentes, a veteran of World War II who served in the 1st Cavalry Division of the US military in the Pacific theater. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview covers Mr. Fuentes childhood in East Los Angeles and Beverly Hills during the Depression; how his father, a musician managed to sufficiently take care of his family financially while Fuentes's mother cared for three orphan children in addition to her own son and daughter; how his Japanese neighbors and classmates were unjustly treated after Pearl Harbor; what it was like to say goodbye to his parents after being drafted for the war; what basic training was like in Fort Riley, Kansas; being shipped off to the Philippines; how he was "scared as hell" in his first combat encounter on the island of Leyte; how he felt about killing Japanese soldiers; how he felt about Japanese war crimes; how he came to be the scout for his unit; the difficulties posed by Japanese snipers and land mines; how he and his unit responded to the propaganda of Tokyo Rose; how he and his unit reacted to hearing the news about war's end; his role in the capture of General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the occupation of Japan, and the capture of Prime Minister Hideki Tojo after his suicide attempt. Fuentes also discusses his life after the war, seeing his parents again; using the G.I. Bill to attend a tailoring school; his work making mink coats and dresses for "movie stars;" his view of the war as a Mexican American; how he sees Japanese people today; and his current volunteer work in a Japanese museum. Throughout the interview Mr. Fuentes gives engaging, detailed accounts of specific encounters during the war and occupation.

3806 SANCHEZ, WILLIAM R.

An oral history with William R. Sanchez, a volunteer who served in the Philippines until he was captured by the Japanese and subsequently spent the remainder of the war as a POW. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview covers how Mr. Sanchez lost both of his parents at the age of 8 and later got a scholarship to UCLA, prompting him to avoid the coming war by voluntarily serving for 2 years in the Philippines in 1940; what recruit training was like in Fort Mills Corregidor; how his success on a military test sent him up into meetings with "generals and all the big shots;" what it was like to work around General Douglas MacArthur; how his base went on full war status a week before Pearl Harbor because they had foreseen the Japanese attack and how they had sent the warning back to the states to no avail; how Fort Corregidor suffered more casualties than Pearl Harbor just hours after the attack and how they had to surrender to the Japanese five months after the start of the war; what it was like to be a prisoner of war after the surrender, being forced to collect the bodies of American casualties and burning them to prevent the spread of disease; his experience of the "the death marches, the death camps, and the hell ships" that they used to transport POWs; how he learned "tricks" necessary for survival in Japanese prisons and how the Red Cross used to visit them; what it was like to work in hard labor as a prisoner in Tokyo during the American bombing campaigns and how he coped with the sight of large numbers of dead civilians; how he and other POWs reacted to the war news propaganda of their captors; how he learned of the atomic bomb and how it lead to his release; what the process of release from the military entailed; his reaction to the welcome home ceremony in the US; and finally, how he completed his education at USC and went on to international business for the

remainder of his working years.

3807 GOMEZ, PAUL ARZATE

An oral history with Paul Arzate Gomez, a member of the 24th Infantry Division who served in the Pacific Theater during World War II. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview covers Mr. Gomez's life growing up during the Depression; what kind of activities young people used to engage in for fun at that time; how he used to sell newspapers for money; his reaction to Pearl Harbor; what it was like for families on his street to lose their sons to the draft; what basic training was like in Camp Roberts, California; how he was sent on a 36 day trip to the Philippines with the 24th Infantry Division; how he was awarded with both the Silver and Bronze Stars; what it was like getting malaria and how penicillin saved his life; how his service came to a surprising end with the dropping of the atomic bomb; his experience in the occupation of Japan for a year after the end of hostilities; and finally, how he got married and worked as a general contractor after he returned from the service.

3808 VILLALOBOS, ROBERT

An oral history with Robert Villalobos, a World War II veteran, injured in Germany shortly before the European victory. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview is about how Mr. Villalobos was raised in Santa Ana, CA amid racism and straightened circumstances, eventually being forced to work in the fields and thereby cut his education short; how he was drafted into the military in 1943 and looked forward to it, believing it would give him opportunities that school hadn't; how he was shipped off to Europe a week after the invasion of Normandy and was faced with the "unreal" scene of dead bodies; how he was shot in the neck in Germany shortly before the end of the war and became depressed as a result; how he returned to the US and his wife; what it was like to make the decision to retain the bullet in his neck for the rest of his life in order to avoid the risk of further injury; how racial discrimination made it difficult to find a job and how his status as a veteran eased the process with other veterans in higher places; and finally, how his family outgrew his home in Anaheim and eventually built another in which he has lived since 1958.

3809 LOPEZ, JOE

An oral history with Joe Lopez, a World War II veteran who served with the 91st Infantry Division in North Africa and Italy. This interview was conducted for the Mexican American Veterans oral history project, sponsored by Cal State University Fullerton. The purpose of this interview is to understand the experience of World War II from the perspective of Mexican Americans who lived through it. Specifically, this interview covers Mr. Lopez's experience of growing up during the Depression; how he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and what tasks he performed; his experience of racism in northern California as a worker and West Virginia as a soldier; how he got married in 1941 just before he was sent off to fight; his basic training in Medford, Oregon; being shipped out on a convoy to North Africa; how he felt about his wife working as a riveter during the war; his first combat experience and the "Baptism of

Fire;" how he was sent to capture Mussolini before he was killed; various other wartime encounters. Mr. Lopez also discusses how the war affected his life after it was over; how he worked for O'Keefe and Merritt after the war; how he left O'Keefe and worked as a truck driver, joined the union, and got a much higher salary; how both his wife and his parents died in 1976; and how, why, and where he has resided since then.