

## Texas City / World War II Oral History Project

### Audited Transcript

Interviewee: Ernestine Moreno

Interviewer: Rebecca Snow

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[0:00]

R: This is Rebecca Snow talking and today is March 19, 2012, and we're here at Moore Memorial Public Library in Texas City, Texas, and we just want to talk to Mrs. Moreno about her experiences during the time of World War II.

So, just to thank you very much for coming.

E: Pleasure to be here.

R: And we wanted to ask you—well, just to get started, do you mind saying around what you were doing at that time, say like at the beginning of the war?

[00:42]

E: Well, (clears throat) when we first heard about the war, I was very young, not quite teenager yet, and I had two older brothers, and they were very excited when—they paid more attention about the war than I did. I was more concerned with my pets at the time,

you know. And they were really tuned in because they—one of the things they wanted to do was join the Army, and course they were too young.

R: How old were they?

E: Uh, they must have been about sixteen, seventeen. But they were—the oldest got to be eighteen and so he got to volunteer. Although my parents didn't want them to go, they did sign for them to volunteer, so both of them volunteered.

So that left me next in line, and so it gave me the opportunity to kind of be, you know, the boss around there and I had no boss. I had nobody to tell me what to do, because my brothers were always trying to tell me what to do.

And so, one things that I remember, we had a 1936 half-ton Ford pickup that somebody had to drive, and I did not know how to drive. My brothers did all the driving—we were the only ones that had a vehicle in our neighborhood.

R: And wait, where did you live then?

E: We lived on Dock Road, here in Texas City. Always lived here in, in Texas City—it was called just Dock Road, because it went right to the docks.

Yeah—I did learn to drive, but I had to get a permit from the chief of police, who was Willy Lavish at the time, and he gave me a permit to drive. And the city was small, it was just Texas Avenue from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, which was not very big—all the businesses were there.

And I remember that everything was rationed, you know, they rationed the gasoline—there were no nylon hose. You did get coupons, and so many, so if you snagged your hose, you just had to wait until the next time they gave coupons. But then, somebody had a bright idea to paint your legs—so during the war, the young ladies that were teenagers and young ladies that painted their legs—they painted the stripe on the back with a liner. And so it was—

R: How did they paint them?

E: Well, they painted—

R: What did they use?

E: They had a—it was sort of like a make-up, you know, that you could put on your legs, and your legs would be—would look—in different shades, you could get it in different shades. Just like hose.

[3:24]

R: So you could buy it—

E: Nylons, nylons were rationed. You know, I guess because they came from Japan, all our nylon products came from Japan at the time. And so, you could get a coupon—they distributed coupons for everyone. And I don't remember how often they gave the coupons. I know we had—the gasoline was rationed, and we got coupons for your gas.

And since we were the only ones with a vehicle, I just saw an opportunity to take my neighbors to the grocery store, so that's one of the things that I did, as a very young lady, that I remember, that I would take—offer my services. I wouldn't charge them. I said, "All I want is your gasoline coupon." (Laughs.) And since they didn't use it, you know, they were eager to trade off. So I remember that as an exciting thing during the war.

R: But, let me ask, if your—one was sixteen and seventeen, and then the seventeen became eighteen, he went off to war?

E: He went off to war, and then the other one—

R: How quickly did he go off, was it after Pearl Harbor and everything?

E: Yes, it was after Pearl Harbor, and then the other one was not old enough, he was seventeen, but my parents had to sign for him, and they did, because he did want to go.

R: But he had to—did he have to wait until he was eighteen, too?

E: No, no, he did not have to wait.

R: Really?

E: With a parent's permission, he did not.

R: So they both went into the service.

E: Yes. They both—

R: And you were around—

E: I must have been about thirteen, fourteen.

R: But you could drive? When you were—

E: I learned to drive. And since we didn't—Texas City was small, you know, it wasn't a big—what it is now. And I only drove to the grocery store. I didn't drive all over town.

R: So did you get special permission?

E: I had a special permit, and my parents had to go with me to the police station and it was the chief that wrote it out and he says, "Okay young lady"—I had to promise that I would, how I would drive. He got in the car with me—the truck—it was an old truck. It didn't go very fast, anyway. It was, you know, all manual.

R: Yes.

E: So I learned to do that. And I was proud of myself because I thought, "Well, I'm somebody now, because I'm in charge." Before, my brothers were in charge, they did everything, you know. And so—

R: So you helped out.

E: So I helped out in that respect. And those are the things that I remember, that I did not charge my neighbors to take them to the grocery store. And they bought the fifty-pound sack of flour, beans, and rice, and they couldn't carry that, so they used my truck.

[6:07]

R: Right. And how far away was the—

E: It wasn't that far—

R: The store you were going to—Pick and Pay, one of these places—

E: I was going to Davison's. Davison's. It was one of the grocery stores.

R : And where was that?

E: It was, I would say, three to four—I'd say about five or six blocks away. It wasn't that far from where we lived. And it was a just a straight line. And there was no traffic, people didn't have vehicles—they didn't. I don't know why we had one.

R: Did you need it for like your farm? [speaking at the same time] Or your father's work?

E: Well, my father had cattle. We had seven cows, we had three horses, and we had like seven hogs, and we had sheep and we lived out in Dock Road where we had a lot of land that we could use. It all belonged to the Texas City Terminal Railroad Company, but we lived in that area, so it was not uh, it was not—

R: What did your father do for a living?

E: My father was a railroad man.

R: He was.

E: He was a railroad man and he worked for the railroad all his life.

R: Did he work for the Terminal Railway Company?

E: Yes he did.

R: He was an employee.

E: He was an employee of Texas City Terminal Railroad, one of the—

R: So he was just—

E: He was one of the ones that brought the railroad in Texas City. He came to Texas City before we were Texas City. I think it was Shoals Point or something like that. And uh there were some company homes that the Terminal owned, and that's where we lived, in the company.

R: So he didn't build the house.

E: No, he didn't own the house. But we had a lot of land. It belonged to the Terminal, but we were able to use it. And we could plant, you know, we never had any problem with our food, in fact my father always said we were rich. And I said if we're rich, I hate to see what poor people look like, live like. (Laughs.)

But we had to go fish, to have our fish, and crabbing. And if we wanted chicken, fried chicken, we had to go out and kill it. And then if we wanted corn, we had to go out and pick it. And if we wanted—we were lucky, we had everything. We raised it, you know— so, as far as things being rationed, it did not affect us because my father was, you know, we grew everything.

R: Right, but then there was rationed, like sugar and coffee—

E: Yes, the sugar was rationed. I don't remember, there were other staples that were rationed—

R: They said coffee.

E: Coffee was rationed. Yes, coffee—

R: Did your parents drink coffee?

[8:50]

E: They did, but they didn't drink that much. We drank a lot of milk, because we had so many cows. All of us drank a lot—a very large amount of milk.

R: And then they said fats, sometimes, things like butter.

E: Yes, butter and—

R: Did you—did that affect you?

E: No it didn't, because we, my mother made her own butter.

R: She did!

E: And she made her own cheese. (Chuckles.) And we had a lot of eggs, so that's why I say, I guess that in one respect I guess we were rich, in that respect, if you can see it. Rich I would think, rich to me is money (chuckles), but we had other things. The neighbors didn't have—the neighbors didn't have that, we were just lucky that I had a father that liked to do all those things. Because that's a lot of work. And we all enjoyed it.

R: So your mom was a housewife.

E: Yes she was a housewife. She never worked.

R: But she, but she also did work, worked the garden—take care of the animals—

E: Oh yes, she worked the garden, she had us work the garden. And the thing that made it interesting to me, was that my father always said since I was the only girl for a very long time, he said, "Well, you get to pick first." And he put all the seeds out for us. And so my brother would say, "Don't pick the strawberries, don't pick the corn, don't pick that," and that's exactly what I would pick, because I didn't want him to get it. (Laughs.)

R: What do you mean, "He would get it?" You had to pick what you would take care of—

E: (Laughs.) No, no, no. He was really pulling my leg, but I was too young to know it. He said he didn't want those because they were too hard. When you have to plant strawberries, you know, and then you have to keep them and you have to watch them that the vines don't catch.

R: So when you were picking it up, the seed, you were actually saying you would take care of those.

E: Yes. That's what—

R: You were going to put them into the ground—Really?

E: You would put them in the ground. And that was your responsibility. So now, my brothers, we grew up to love to work. And we worked so happy. If you wanted to see us happy, just give us a lot of work. But we just made it a game. It was just a game during the war. That's what we did.

R: Did you have any hired hands, any people coming in for pay?

E: No, this was right after the Depression. We were lucky to even—

R: So no one was coming in to help with the laundry?

E: No one. No one helped, no one.

R: How did your mom the laundry? Do you remember?

E: Oh, wait —on the washboard.

R: On the washboard? Where did you get the water?

E: Well, we had a faucet and it was outside. We didn't have anything inside, everything — we had a latrine outside.

R: So was it a pump, or was it just—

E: It was a pump. You pumped in water. We had a lot of animals. We had chickens, and we had ducks, and we had turkeys—

R: So you didn't have running water in the house.

E: We didn't have running water in the house.

R: Until you got older, maybe?

E: Not until after the Texas City disaster, when our house was demolished completely. It just fell to the ground.

R: Wow. So you were used to always taking the water this way?

E: Yes. We didn't even have a phone.

R: But the quality was still good even if—

E: It was good, it was good. I mean, no one ever said it wasn't. So we used it, and my mother boiled her water outside in a big old cast iron pot, you know.

R: How did she heat it?

[12:06]

E: Well, she used logs. Just put the fire outside, and then we had a big stick, where we just, when she put the bluing in, you know, how you put the whites in and that— everything was beautiful, the whites—we didn't have any bleach. I mean, I don't know what she did. But she let us children do most of the work. She just supervised and told us. And that way she kept us busy and she kept us out of trouble.

R: But you must have done different jobs than your brothers.

E: Yes.

R: There was just the three of you.

E: Yeah, the three of us—four of us, really—four. There was a smaller one.

R: There was another one? Who was that, boy or—

E: It was a young boy. He was killed in the disaster, that day, at the age of fourteen.

R: I'm so sorry.

E: And he was, he—he liked the animals. So you could get him to feed the chickens, and you could get him to water the chickens and the roosters and the turkeys—

R: But how old would a child be before they could start helping? Maybe five? Six? Seven?

E: Well, six or seven. They watched us and they could do—we'd let them do it. I would let them do it. I'd say "Here, you do it. You throw the seeds out." And he would. He'd turn around and say, "Did I do it right?" I'd say, "You did it real good. You can do that again." And that would help me too, because I was teaching him and he was learning. But he loved his animals.

R: Was he ever scared of the animals?

E: No, he never was scared.

R: And you weren't scared of the horses or anything when you were little, or the cows?

E: No, no, we were not scared. Each one of us had a cow to milk and take care of. And each one of us had a pig to take care of. Mine happened to be white. So I had to keep him clean and wash him down and wash the place where he laid. My father fixed like a log, a wooden thing that he would climb up and that's where my pig would sleep. I had to make sure that that area was really cleaned down, so I washed it. So, we were busy. We didn't have time to get into any kind of trouble.

R: But when your brothers went away—

E: Then that's when I took over.

R: Did one go first? And one went a year later, maybe?

E: Yes, one went first. He was older.

R: In the first year of the war?

E: They wanted to go serve. They wanted to go serve. They were not scared.

R: So you think it was the first, right after Pearl Harbor?

E: Right after Pearl Harbor. It was on the radio. We didn't have TV. I don't think we got TV until 1950.

R: Now you said your brothers of course were following closely, it didn't affect you so much. But do you remember when Pearl Harbor—?

E: I remember hearing about it, and I didn't really understand it, you know, I just knew that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. And that MacArthur was there, and I liked history a lot so that's the only reason that I knew, because when I wasn't helping I was always reading.

R: And then, what service (unintelligible)?

E: My brothers, one of them went, the smallest went into the military police. The other went into the Air Force.

[15:05]

R: And then so, when they did go, that was maybe two years into the war?

E: They stayed, I think they signed up for three, I think that was the time that was, the thing that they signed up for, three.

R: But I'm saying, it probably was about '42, '43, suddenly you and your little brother with the only ones here.

E: Yes, we were the only ones there, and I got to be in charge. I was never in charge before.

R: How did you all do all the farm work without the brothers?

E: Well, we did, we did. My father killed some of the hogs, and butchered some of the cows, so we had plenty of meat. And I don't know how the—

R: You mean he did that, because you had less people to take care of them?

E: Well, I don't know why, I don't know if he did it because of that, or because of the money, or I don't really—finances, I don't know. I know he worked very hard. He worked with the railroad and he also worked— he was one of the first entrepreneurs here. He

had a barbershop, that he ran when he wasn't working. The barbershop was at the house. He worked Saturdays and Sundays, cutting people's hair, in Texas City.

R: So when your brothers were away, they wrote letters?

E: They wrote. We had no phone, we didn't—we never had a phone. Well, not until—

R: And did you—do you remember your parents following the war news? Like listening to FDR talk—the fireside chats.

E: Well, all we had was the radio that my parents listened to. And then they wrote, you know. I had one brother that went to California, and another one went to Washington state. And they would write every day, but we didn't hear from them verbally because we didn't own a phone.

R: Because you didn't own a phone, right. And a lot of people didn't get—did they ever get deployed overseas?

E: Yes, my oldest brother did. I don't remember where he served, he went in through Hawaii—I don't know what, you know—I don't remember, just what—

R: But he didn't die. He was—

E: No, they were both fortunate to come back. The oldest one did come back because he hadn't graduated from high school and he did test out and got his high school diploma. But the little one decided that he was old enough now, and he joined the Merchant Marines so he was a Merchant Marine until he retired. He sailed the world, and so he never did get his high school education.

R: So you were maybe, you couldn't tell about your parents being worried about them and stuff—(unintelligible).

[17:48]

E: Well, if they did, they was a praying family, so I know they prayed a lot. As far as being worried and coming unglued, they thought that this was a good country to defend. They were glad that they had two sons that could go and defend this country.

R: Were you able to, what did you do for—do you remember like how things changed? You said, the rationing?

E: The rationing changed, but—

R: Was there places you would have driven to that you didn't drive because you didn't have enough gas?

E: Well, no, not really. I was not allowed to really drive, only necessities. Taking people to the doctor—but then, at that time, the doctor would come to your house. If there was an emergency, I would take my neighbors. And just my immediate neighbors, which was about a six to eight neighbors that were real close, that lived out there with us. And that worked for the railroad also. Those were the only ones that I was connected with. If I used all my gas stamps, they would give me theirs, because they didn't have any need for them.

R: And so you didn't feel like pinched, as far as—maybe that would've been your mom thinking about the sugar.

E: Uh, yes.

R: And whether—they said people used things like juice, you know, from cans, or from like molasses, other things.

E: Well, we had sugarcane. And my father made, I don't know what he made from the sugarcanes. He was more of a farmer, and could do a lot of things. We never had a lack for sugar. There was some sort of sugar, liquid, or otherwise. And he made candy from sugarcane. I don't know how he did it. So that was another form of—

R: So you didn't feel pinched for food—

E: Not as far as food, because of my parents. Because they were both—

[20:04]

R: When you said you like, when your father would say you were rich, you say, "Well — how rich?" Did you think that was—did you feel like that was from the war, or that was just (unintelligible)?

E: Well, my father had this thing, he told us every day that we were so lucky to be so rich. And I never understood that I guess until I grew up. His definition of richness [was different from mine]—as I would, I would mostly connect it to money. If you have a lot of money, you're rich.

But we were rich in so many other ways. Because we had good health, and we had plenty of food. If we didn't have it ready, we knew where to go get it. And we weren't limited, and we weren't in need for a stamp to go get it, other than the gas. And that was because we were the only ones that had a vehicle at the time.

R: Right. And the vehicle, if something went wrong with it—

E: Well, he would fix it, or he would get a neighbor that was a mechanic. I think he did mechanical work for the Terminal. So he was kind of well aware that, and he would always come. But I don't remember ever having a flat, or ever having—running out of gas.

R: How did you—about clothing, did you feel like there was less clothing out there to buy? Did your mother make your clothes?

E: My mother made our clothing, all our clothes. My clothes. And then she made the boys' shirts. But she made them out of the sacks, the flour sacks. She'd buy the 50 pounds, which was big, pounds of flour, and beans—whatever she had to buy. They came in this beautiful material. And that's what she used to make my skirts and my blouses.

R: And did you learn to do that too?

E: I learned now, as I retired, as a senior citizen I have learned to do that; I have learned—

R: But she didn't make you learn when you were growing up?

E: No. Well, one of my disabilities, as she said, that I could never learn to do those things because I was left-handed. She tried to teach me, and everything she taught, I would do just the opposite. She says, "Well." [Makes a gesture of futility with hand.] But I did learn, I did learn. There is a method to teach left-handed and I did learn, but only after I grew up and was married and had to do that myself. But I learned it because I wanted to.

R: How about at the school? When you were like in what seventh—eighth grade?

E: Well, we walked elementary, we walked—

R: In those years?

E: I didn't drive my truck to school, I just drove it for necessities around the house.

R: So when you went to school, you just walked to school?

E: We walked to school, we walked as a group. Everybody had a lot of children, so we just walked together.

R: What school did you go to?

E: I went to Danforth. And I went to Wolvin High School—you have a picture of it over here. And I was under that school when it came down during the storm.

[23:01]

R: Wow. So you went to Wolvin until you were like eighth grade?

E: Yes. Then I went to Danforth Elementary, which is over on 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

R: During the war years, what school did you go to?

E: I think it was Wolvin. And then we had another one that was called Gonne, G-o-n-e, School Elementary. These were the two that I remembered going to.

R: Right. So you weren't in high school yet. During the war, do you remember the end of the war, when they had—

E: Yes, I remember the parades, and I remember—

R: There were parades?

E: Yes, and then I remember my brothers coming home.

R: But the parades happened first? Did you remember people saying, "Hey, the war's over?"

E: Yes, yes—

R: Because then there was one war in Europe, and then one war in—

E: It was on the radio when they declared. I don't recall the date when they declared that the war was over.

R: Was it the one in the Pacific? The Japanese, or was it the European, because that one happened first.

E: I don't remember. I think it was the one—the Japanese, maybe, the Japanese.

R: On the radio.

E: On the radio.

R: And how—do you remember, were you home—

E: Oh, we were home. Yes, we didn't go anywhere.

R: You heard it on the radio.

E: Heard it on the radio. We had a Kinwalt radio. (Laughs.)

R: So, not a neighbor came running over saying—

E: No, no neighbor came running. But then they all got excited because their sons were coming home. I think everybody had someone serving in the military at the time. Most of our neighbors did.

R: So you weren't really old enough to have friends in the military?

E: No, other than people that I knew, like neighbors. And I remember that there were stars that you could put out on your window. How many—there was a little flag that you could put on.

R: Did you do that?

E: No, my mother did. My mother had two stars and each one indicated someone serving from that household. And they were proud. These mothers were proud to hang those things on their window so everybody could see that they had one, or two, or three or whatever many they had, in the military.

R: Do you remember anyone passing away? I mean, anyone being killed in the war that you—

E: I remember one, I don't recall his name, but he was famous in the neighborhood. He was killed. I think he was a captain. He got to go up high. He never—he was one of the few who didn't come back. But I didn't personally know him. I just heard of him.

R: Yes, because I don't think there was a lot of people who died in Texas City. Do you remember your dad being more hard-worked because of the war, with the railroad? What was his actual job with the railroad? What was his actual job?—

E: His job was a foreman. He was a section foreman. They picked him up at all hours of the night, all hours of the night. It wasn't until I was about fifteen or sixteen that I said, "Dad, you need a phone, because when they come pick you up at two, three o'clock in the morning they wake up not only you but the whole neighborhood, banging on the door." So I was in the process—

[26:05]

R: Was that always the time, or just during the war?

E: Yes. Well, it depended, whenever they had engine problems, if the engine would fall off the tracks, he would have to get his men together and go.

R: And you didn't remember—that could have been before the war (unintelligible).

E: It was during the war. It was during the war.

R: You mean that that stepped up? There was more—

E: Well, no, it was at that time when my brothers were away. But that was one of his jobs, that he had. As a section foreman, he had to get his men together to fix whatever the problem was.

R: Because they did do more railway transport, I believe, during that time.

E: Yes, during that time.

R: So he might've been busier. He probably was busier.

E: Yes, he was a busy man. But my father loved to work.

R: Do you remember anything like post—like at school, did you guys have like assemblies, or rallies where people talk to you about the war?

E: No, the only thing that everybody bragged about is how many they had serving. Who they had serving from their family. It was a big thing, it wasn't anything that you frowned on. It was a joy to have someone from your family serving in the military. I

remember the teacher asking, "How many do you have?" "And how many do you have?" and ask everybody in the class, and what branch were they in, and things like that, that was one thing I recall.

R: Did the kids always remember the branch?

E: They always—they remembered. They were proud. See, they were proud. And then they said, "Well, my mother has a flag with six on it," "my mother has a flag with three," and, "my mother has a flag with—". And the flag was important because you hung that on your window and everybody saw it.

R: In addition to the stars.

E: Yes. The flag had the stars.

R: The flag had the stars.

E: And these stars, each star that your flag had represented a son that you had serving. So it was just—

R: And they gave that to you to put up.

E: Yes.

R: And do you remember the kids talking about the Japs or anything, or the Germans?

E: Yes, yes. I think it was December the seventh, if I remember correctly that that was Pearl Harbor. Was that Pearl Harbor?

R: You don't remember the boys playing war and stuff like that?

E: Yes, well, they did play. The military against the Japs, they called them Japs. But they played that. We didn't think anything of it.

R: And so when—so you didn't feel like it—you said the nylons, but were you old enough to buy those things?

E: No, I was not old enough.

[29:00]

R: You were remembering when they did that.

E: But my mother had—back then, when you went to the grocery store you wore nylons, you wore a hat and you wore gloves. People got really dressed up when they went to the grocery store. I remember the nylons, I remember some of the teenage ladies—girls, they were trying to do their legs, one in different colors. That seam in the back that they tried to paint, sometimes it wasn't very straight. It was a new thing, it was something new.

R: Did you feel, like—you said you had meat from your place, so how about rationing of meat? Like buying chickens, because you didn't have chickens. You weren't buying any of them.

E: No, we didn't have any trouble with any meat. And I don't know (clears throat) exactly what my parents did with those, if they had coupons, or rations for them, or if they gave it to other people that didn't have it, just traded off the stamps or coupons, I don't know what they were called. But you were issued so many. But we had plenty of everything. We shared everything that we had with our neighbors.

R: You did? So you remember neighbors you said not doing so good?

E: Yes, yes. They had a larger family than we did. We had a family of twelve that we provided milk to, and cheese and eggs at no cost. My father just gave it to them.

R: Did you learn how to make the milk, I mean how to—

E: I learned how to milk. I had my own cow. I didn't find out until I was grown that that was a Jersey cow, and it was easier to milk than the other cows. (Laughs.)

R: Did you learn how to make cheese?

E: I didn't learn how to make the cheese, my mother did that. My mother did the cheese.

R: You must have helped.

E: I watched what she did. She put something in there, I don't know what it was. I couldn't tell you.

R: I was going to ask about your brothers. When your oldest brother came back, he came back to get his, GED, they call it now.

E: GED, uh-huh. He tested out. Because he was a, I think he was a senior.

R: And he'd been gone for a little bit?

E: For three years.

R: And did you feel like he was a stranger?

E: No, not really. Not really. We were real close. My brother's job—both of their jobs—

R: (Speaking at the same time.) Did he look different?

E: He was a lot taller, and he was a lot smarter. I thought he was. And he talked about all the places he'd been, all the things he'd seen, and all the people that he'd met. That was a plus.

R: Was he a pilot? Or was he just a (unintelligible) person?

E: No, I think he was a mechanic, a mechanic in the Air Force. Because he could do all of that when he came back.

[32:08]

R: But you didn't feel like he had bad experiences and stuff?

E: No, if he did, he never told us. We never were aware of it. The other one loved it. He loved the world, and that's what he wanted to do, he wanted—

R: He did military police.

E: He did military police, and then he went into—

R: That's a tough job.

E: It is a tough job.

R: Was he just like stateside?

E: But he was always a fighter. He loved to fight.

R: Was he just on stateside?

E: No, he went all over. He went all over the world, I don't know how many—he would be gone—

R: Before Merchant Marine, though. I mean, as the military police? During the war?

E: As the military police, I know he went to Washington state, he was stationed in Washington state, but I couldn't tell you the other places that he went to.

R: Well, the military police, I mean, they sometimes had a rough job because the GIs didn't like them so much.

E: Yes. He was trained. They trained him a lot, but he was one that knew no fear. He would stand up and—

R: So you didn't feel like the war really changed him too much?

E: No, he didn't. The only thing that I thought the war did for him [was] that he wanted to see the rest of it. The rest of the world. He wanted to see the world, and he did, he got to travel around the world, I don't know how many times.

R: So then he did.

E: And he loved it. He loved it.

R: So did you feel that—so did you feel a relief when the war was over?

E: There was a lot to learn, but we saw it from a different point of view. If they said "war" to me now, with my children, it would be a different scenario. But back then it was something new, that we knew nothing about. It was just traveling, and being proud to defend this country.

R: Right.

E: So, it was a different atmosphere.

R: I was younger, and I remember in the '50s there would be—going to the movies, and you'd see the newsreels, before the movies. Did you guys go to the movies?

E: We never went to the movies.

R: You didn't?

E: We didn't.

R: Even (unintelligible)?

E: We listened to the radio at home.

R: Soap operas and stuff?

E: We listened to stories. The parents always got together and told stories and we sat at their feet and listened to their stories.

R: Did you miss going to movies? Did you want to?

E: No, we didn't really. I don't do movies now. (Laughs.) It's just one of those things. We had other priorities, and we loved what we did, and we loved the work, we loved the farm work and doing all that. It was not like a chore, that's work, you have to do it. We thought it was fun. It was all play.

R: So, in a way, the war didn't seem to change that much—your world?

E: Not in our household.

R: Except the (unintelligible) suddenly?

E: Except that we had two absent.

[35:12]

R: They were gone.

E: And that, because they chose. Not because they were drafted. They didn't wait to be drafted, they volunteered.

R: Did you miss them? Were you homesick for them?

E: Yes, oh yes, I missed them. But in a way. But in another way, I felt like, okay, I'm in charge. I'm in charge. Now I'm going to do—

R: Yes. Did they tell you that?

E: No, they didn't tell me that. I just said, "Well, what am I going to—how come I've got to do everything they tell me?" That was my perspective. I said, "Well, now I'm going to be in charge, and my parents are going to depend on me, so I'm going to have to do everything that my brothers did and do it right, and do a good job."

R: And so that could have affected your development.

E: Yes, I think it did. Because I did everything I could for my parents.

R: And your parents depended on you?

E: Well, I don't know if they depended on me, because I was just a helping hand. And I enjoyed it.

R: They were glad to have you.

E: They were glad that I wasn't—I guess the only way that I can think of compared to now, my grandchildren—I don't see them volunteering for anything. I mean, they'll do it if you tell them. But I didn't have to be told. I knew that it had to be done, so I just did it.

R: You knew more about what kind of work there was to be done.

E: There was, and what was expected of me, and what needed to be done. I guess that was a good thing, that the war did for me. I stepped up where my oldest brother was, not only one but two steps.

R: Two steps. But it sounds like all the kids took responsibility.

E: I thought that was really something.

R: And your youngest brother? Did he miss them?

E: Yes he did. And he was going to go in the service too. He says, "I'm going to go too." And I said, "But the war's over." (Laughs.)

R: He must've been glad to have them come home.

E: Yes, he was. We were glad to have them all back. My parents were proud that they served their country.

R: Well, it's wonderful.

E: They couldn't put it any better than that. Parents back then were glad that their children could serve this wonderful country that we live in.

R: Well, I think Texas City was a little bit, maybe, you were in a way you were insulated from some of the tougher times.

E: Yes. I think that I would have a different outlook now. Now that I know more about wars and what happens.

[38:01]

R: Because they talk about women waiting and standing in line to get just food for their kids. Now your mom didn't have to do that.

E: Yes. We didn't do that. I guess that's the richness that my father was talking about. There had to be some richness that he referred to that I didn't understand.

R: (Laughs.)

E: So that was one of them. We never stood in line for anything. We didn't stand in line for sugar, for milk, for nothing. The only thing that I don't know who stood in line for, the coupons, that they handed out.

R: Where did they hand those out?

E: I don't remember, I don't recall where it was done. I just knew that everybody had a certain amount of coupons, and staples that they could get with their coupons. But that didn't affect us in that respect that much. It did some people. And we gave a lot of ours out. I know that my parents did help a lot of the neighbors.

R: Did your parents think your brothers were going to come back and work on your place? And live with you guys again?

E: Well, they did, they did come back. And we all lived there until 1947, and that was when everything just—

R: Okay, I think—I don't know what time we are. Do you think there's something else that I've, we've overlooked?

E: Well, the only thing that I remember about the war, that the people in our neighborhood were just—not to have ever been exposed to it, because none of them had been exposed to the war. They were proud to have their family members serve this country. That I remember because I never saw anybody crying or saying, "Why my son?" Some of them were drafted, and some of them volunteered. Even the ones that were drafted, they said, "Well, I need to do this," "I need to finish school," or "I need to do this." I—

R: Of course they didn't take—

E: If they did, we never knew of them.

R: And they didn't take people with children and stuff, so that was easier, maybe. So there was nothing to do—your family didn't have anything to do with the selective service, with the war board?

E: No.

R: Because your brothers did that. Well, that's good. I think that's a really nice little picture of your family here.

E: I guess the bottom line is that we were rich. We were rich in a different sense.

R: And there's quite a big—

E: That the war did not affect my family as bad as it did some of them. Because it did affect some of them.

R: Your being very self-sufficient. But you're right about the kids today. Now there's not—

E: They don't have that—

R: There isn't all that work to do, and so the kids don't have to be knowing from the beginning, they can just—

E: Yes.

R: it just happens, Mom does it.

E: Yes.

[40:55]

R: Well Ernestine, I mean, Mrs. Moreno, thank you so much for your time. We really appreciate it.

E: Well, it's been a joy to be here. Recollecting the old days—the good old days, I'd say.

R: Good old days. Right.

[41:11]