

"Sepia" [Pseudonym for Vincent Harris Miles]
Interviewed by Allan Berube
World War II Project
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Transcribed: Loren Basham

ALLAN BERUBE: This is Allan Berube interviewing Vincent Harris Miles otherwise known as "Sepia" in Los Angeles, in Glendale, on March 14, 1984. Okay we are going to start this, I want you to tell me when you were born and where you were born you're your religious background and you family.

SEPIA: Well, I was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa and this place where I grew up and schooled. I was born on March 15, nineteen hundred and twenty-eight. And I don't believe my age I don't hardly tell it too many times. I grew up there in Fort Dodge, Iowa till I was about 5 years old then my parents moved into Davenport, Iowa in the same state. There I finished grade school. I went into high school and after that I went to a private school for music and art and dancing.

AB: In Davenport?

S: In Davenport, Iowa. I was quite involved in a lot of social activities at the age, at that time. I was quite a fan of a lot of sports like baseball, football; football I'll tell you was rough. I got hurt on that several times but didn't give it up. But I was quite a person in basketball, that was my real forte. I loved it. I did a little basketball play I went on various teams there in Iowa. I traveled quite a bit throughout the Midwestern states. After a fashion, lets see, after awhile I got to go into, started going to a private school for voice culture, music. And art. And I did a lot of art for Father Caddish at St. Ambrose College where I had a 1 year scholarship given to me for that reason. I stayed with him for about a year and a half learning art. And then from that, then I stayed into the music and then I went to Augustina College in Moline, Illinois.

AB: And did you grow up Catholic?

S: No, I'm of a Protestant background. I am the type of person involved in every church that comes along as a matter of fact. My parents were stern people. They believed in me going to church, they believed in going to church themselves. And I would go to church in the mornings, which was Bethany AME Church at that time. And then in the afternoon....

AB: Bethany?

S: Bethel AME Church. And then I would go in the afternoon to another church which was Third Baptist, a Missionary Baptist Church. And I would go to Sunday school in the morning and church in the afternoon at the other place you see. And so they kept me in

church, which I am kind of glad they did because I was a terror when I was young. I was always getting into trouble. And by God, I'll tell you I got whippings. They used switches and it stung too. And I'm glad that they chastised me the way they did because if I hadn't of been, I think today I might have been a real holy terror and would probably in the state pen. Because I was into everything. Fighting, stealing and I don't know what all, really. And by them being so strict with me, it really cured me. Otherwise I got sent down probably in some state pen, where I don't want to be. But however, they stayed with me and kept me into the religious field until I was able to go out on my own. I did not leave, well a lot of things transpired while I was in Davenport, Iowa. Being there, I was 21 years of age, I believe, somewhere in there. Then I decided to get involved with the service, volunteer. They didn't want me to go but I thought it was best. I dropped all my work in the schools, the colleges and decided to go into the service. Because I knew sooner or later I was going to have to go anyway so I decided to go in, to volunteer. So I was inducted into the service in the Army.

AB: When was this, what year was this?

S: This was 1943. And I got involved. I took my basic. In of all places I would have gone was Texas. I had heard so much about Texas. That it was hot and stuffy and everything else. But I went in, the basic was six months. I went through the coast artillery, I was in the Army Medical Corps. There was a corps detachment and I had all three of those. I was involved in all that. After taking all the basics going through all that training, bivouacking and what do you call that other thing, you go out bivouacking it's called, well anyway, went out like we were fighting. We were fighting right on the graph, fighting on the firing line. Which was an ordeal. And one thing I never got though in Texas, I never forget this, it was so scary. We were on a bivouac one night and it was pouring down rain and I mean it was pouring down rain, it was like cats and dogs. And we had pitched our little pup tents, individual pup tents. And mine was right on the doggone Gulf of Mexico beach. And I was one of the guys way out in the desert somewhere, nobody else was around me. And that's where I pitched it anyway. So I went to sleep that night. And being that I, you reach down leg, you wake up in the morning and thought nothing about it. I woke up the next morning, believe it or not, so help me God, there was a rattle snake laying across one leg, my left leg and the other pushed between my legs, just sound asleep. Well, strangely enough, I didn't panic. I took one look at it, I says, oh God, don't let me do something crazy. I didn't panic. And all of a sudden the snake looked like it raised its head, looked at me and said, well I guess I'll leave now, I've had my sleep. And you know, to this day I do not know where that snake disappeared to. It screws out of my tent. There was a little puddle of water there at the base of my feet. It swam through the water out in the sand, and the sun was bright; it was very warm. I do not know where the snake went to. It disappeared, like steam into the air, right. And I said to myself, I wonder, was that snake there for protection; could it be something that God decided to do. To keep me from doing something foolish or whatever. Because, like I said, I don't know where that snake came from. Out here alone no one around me. And I tried to figure, where did it come from. But when it left, it disappeared just like that. Like into thin air. I didn't get scared. It was like God had taken a hold of my hand and said, don't be afraid, its not going to bother you. I stayed

there until the end. Other people around a snake like that would panic. The first thing you would panic. You can call but it would strike you. But that snake turned and said to me, I have had my sleep and I'll leave. And just flitted away like into thin air. And I often think about that. Why did it happen. What was the reason behind that. And I said, only God would know. Only God knows why that happened. And from that time on, anywhere that I went involved with the service, I was not afraid. When I first started, I was scared to death. I was going kill when it came to action in the service overseas. Which did happen later on. After we spent a lot of time in bivouacking, going through that training and I've done some of the craziest things and got away with it. So we got our orders and we had to go overseas.

AB: Before we get onto that can we backtrack?

S: Backtrack, okay.

AB: Now, I am confused. When were you born?

S: I said 1928, didn't I?

AB: Because in 1943, you would have been 15. So....

S: I know, that is not right. That is not right at all. I should have told you. You wouldn't believe it if I told you. It was actually 1924 I was born. I always say 1928 because nobody believes me when I tell them the right.... But it was 1924. So you can quote me on that now. But I will keep that a military secret. Because nobody would believe me. And I guess somebody would say, huh. 1924 it was. I've got a birthday coming up on Friday. It's Friday? Yeah, it's Friday. That's it, does that correct it for you now, better? Alright.

AB: And you enlisted, you were inducted in Davenport?

S: I signed up in Davenport, Iowa. But I was inducted in Fort Dodge, Iowa, where I was born. Is that ironic?

AB: During the physical, did they ask you anything about homosexuality?

S: Sexual, no. They never did. They might have assumed that I might be, but I didn't come across I guess to them that I was homosexual. I knew it. Because some crazy things happened to me before I got in the service as a matter of fact. But if they knew, they didn't say anything about it. I went through basic without any problems. Through the physical without any problem. I took my shots. I saw some nice looking people standing there, you know what I mean.

AB: You'd had experiences in Davenport before that?

S: Oh, yes, I had.... I went to many parties. I used to go to a club called the Circle Inn, which was in the era was called Quad Cities and in the Quad Cities you had numerous of gay places to go to. Mostly I went to gay parties. But there was one particular bar that I would go to all the time, I had a ball there; its called the Circus City. Which was right next to the Rock Island Armory. Up the street a little ways. You know Rock Island Armory. Up the street a little ways. I often think now, I'll never do down there because there's nothing to hide behind right. Well, that didn't stop me, I went anyway. I got into more difficulty that way too and I thought sure the cops would give me problems too but they didn't bother me. But we stayed most of the time in the Circle Inn, which was a beautiful gay bar. All the people, all nationalities went there. ____?____.

AB: Tell me more about the Circus Inn.

S: The Circus Inn. The Circus Inn was a gay bar. Everybody like I said from ____?____ would go there. There were not too many lesbians involved, it was mostly male. It was dim lighting, naturally, and hanky-panky going on here and hanky-panky going on there. It was a bar that was recognized by the police and they never bothered us. They never gave us no kind of trouble. The funny thing, we didn't have that problem there. We had another called the Red Inn which was about 4 blocks beyond Circus Inn, which was like about 2 blocks up and 2 blocks over. I would go in too. But I spent more time at Circus Inn because it was more prominent than the other and most everybody would come there.

AB: What was ray like?

S: Ray? You mean was it the top bar or something like that?

AB: What was the other place called?

S: Red Inn.

AB: Red Inn?

S: Oh yeah, which one was most popular

AB: What were the different crowds?

S: Well actually the crowd at this, it was about the same. Except at the Red Inn a lot of girls went there. Now I do not know whether they were lesbians or what, because we associated so much together. We had no time to figure out whether a person was gay or not gay. It was like we had a family. We'd go places together, we'd talk about crazy things, we'd do crazy things together. It was just that way. We never thought about who was gay and whose not gay. What we did was our own business. What they did know was their own business. We'd go to parties together. Even in the colleges, in universities we had the same problem. Nothing said. No the cops wouldn't bother us, nobody would say anything. We'd go to different cafes, we had one called Blue Devil. It was a crowd of all. It was straight.

AB: College kids?

S: Yes, college kids. There was no difference made about you being gay. You'd wouldn't hear fairy, you're a queen, or you're homosexual. You never heard it, I never heard it. We were just people who went together, we lived together. And what we did in out backyard or in our houses was our own business, it was nobody else's. And of course we told too, but we never had a problem like that. Like we do out here. And they'd go about their business. And we had several gay places. And they knew it. And they see people go in there, they would say, hi how are you. Very sweetly. How are you today, is everything all right? And its concern. They didn't care what your sex life was. It really wasn't. And so I never had a problem. I didn't have any racial problem either. It was all inter-racial. We can do with a black, green purple or what. We were people, human beings. We were treated as human beings. And even when you go to a social event, everybody knew each other. Hey, how do you feel today. Is everything all right. And if you got in a hospital, someone gets sick, they're concerned. They didn't care if you were gay or not gay. It was just your person they were concerned about. Which was very good. And if they see you there, if they know you're gay they don's say anything. Even the cops would call you by name, how's everything today. And if he would see you, say you're walking down the street with a girl who may be a lesbian and they never say anything. I only had one incident where one lady, of course she didn't actually say I was a fairy, she said, you really walk like a fairy. I said so I walk like a fairy, I fly like one too. And she immediately laughed. But she never said it again. Even though she was from a really close friend of the family. My flair around them, I was always into helping a home or helping on a sale. I was always doing things. I love to cook. And every time they would see me cooking the first thing somebody says, did you always cook in your house. I said no, my mother and father cooks once in awhile. "Oh, I was wondering." I said, what are you wondering about. Nothing. So they would drop the subject. Because to me, I began to wonder where are they trying to go to, where are they trying to come from. But I never pushed that issue on them. Because what they are thinking is their business, what I am doing is my business. What I think is my business. They never, that's the only incident. She didn't come out and say I was a fairy, she just said I walked like one. And I said well yes I fly like one too. But I never had no problems.

AB: Did your parents know that you were gay?

S: Think about it. If they did, they never mentioned it. I know I never forgot, my brother, my younger brother.... Not my brother, excuse me, a dear friend of the family. His name William. I'll never forget it. We was talking and I don't know, something strange he said. I don't remember exactly what answer I gave him. But then a few weeks later he said, You want to go outside behind the wall? I said, oh, how far? And nothing dawned on me at that time, what he was thinking about. I said what for? Then about 20 or 25 minutes later then it started hitting me, oh, he knows. I said well, I'll go with him. So I wanted to find out for myself exactly what was really on his mind, what he wanted to do. So we went, it was one of these brick walls, hadn't been completed in a house. There was 2 of them, one was higher than the other. So I went with him. I said, I

always called him Bill, I said, what's on your mind Bill. Want to have sex with me? I said, not particularly. I said, you know I had a strange feeling after waiting 25, 30 minutes that was what you was thinking about. I said what are you trying to tell me or convey to me. He never would say. But it was written all over his face what he was thinking, you see. He never again approached me in that avenue. And I never forced him. Because everything that is going to happen is going to happen, right. And he was close to the family which I didn't give either way. I was practically my own boss more or less. So that went down the drain. But my brother, my younger brother. He came out and said to mother and dad one time, right there, right in the dining room as loud as he could say it, Bill is trying to get in what-cha-call-it's pants. A little high I was feeling at that time. I didn't say a word. But its something in me, he kept pushing that issue. Now trying to keep away from it, we got into a hell of an argument. We got into a very nasty fight. And being that my temper was up, I struck him across the mouth with a belt buckle. And it was kind of dangerous that we were doing that but he had tormented me to a point which you call of no return. If he had left it alone it would be fine. I would have thought no more about it and he kept pushing the issue. And Bill was trying to forget it too. So finally it just subsided. And he kind of forget about it. And I really forgot about it. And that was it. That was what I was doing before I went into the service and got involved in the service. I was always gone on the weekend, going somewhere. Never take ___?___ with me, I'd be crazy as well. But I always would go with a dear friend of mine by the name of Albert Junkie. He and I would go everywhere together, everywhere. And I said let's go here, he had never been in the service then. He, I had no idea that he was gay.

AB: Was he then?

S: Well, I think he was bi. I think he was bi. But would never admit it. I mean admit it to me or to himself. I thought about. I thought several times to make a play for him. But you know how something inside says don't. Because you don't know for sure how he's going to accept it, how he's going to take it. What action he might take afterwards. And I really was afraid because we were very close. It was, we went to school together. He was a white guy. And that was it. And never kidded more, and I wouldn't say anything about it to him anyway. We stayed very close friends until he committed suicide. And to this day I don't know why he committed suicide. Because he went out one night without me. And he went to a café there in Davenport, Iowa that we all went to together. I tried to find out where he was at. The parents didn't know where he was at. All I could think about he went to a café because there was a girl there. And which I didn't like her. I know that he would like to but he was trying prove a point. And he went there without me. I talked to his parents and said why did he do it. They said why did he go without you, I don't know. And when they found him, he had taken a whole bottle of aspirins in a coke. Turned a car out. And right in front of the café, I thought he was going to go. That's where I found. I didn't find him dead at that time. I just saw the car and something said no, no, back home. The parents were upset. When they told me that he had committed suicide, I said oh shoot. Why would he do it. There was nothing I could do. ___?___. It took me a whole week to get over it. I drank and drank and drank trying to forget it. Because I was really in love with him. But I didn't want to make it too

obvious. But I think his parents knew. Because they would always sort of cater to me, always had the run of the house. Even the sister. They like upon, they were like family to me. And anywhere that he went they made sure I went with him. And he always wanted to go with me. That's how we were so close knit that if he had a problem, I would know it. But sometimes it was hard to find that problem. Especially when he goes away like he did and you never know he is going. And ___?___ says something terrible because he did that too. But, like I say, these things can happen. So that went on by and I sort of went through my own crazy rituals with it. I was going to see what the finals are and after being with Albert, I gave it some serious thought and said no, I don't want to get bogged down with a love affair. And I just decided not to get involved. And that was it. Like I say that was the end of it right there with him. Because there was another friend of mine too that I was quite interested in. But we just were friends, more or less. And of course when we got into fights. He would even fight my battles, it was so cute; I loved it. And I got in a fight with a ___?___ one time and he took it up. On himself to fight for me. I said, Claude, don't do that: Shut up, it's okay. He would fight with his family until the police would say you go and stand right there, I'll fight your battle. I said, you don't have to fight my battle, I can fight for myself. So I don't care what you say. We are either going to fight together or I'll fight for you and you stand and watch. And believe me, he got to fight with two families. It was hell. This was do at school.

AB: In collage or high school?

S: This was in high school. That's where it got really....

AB: And this was all the boys in high school?

S: Yes. We was all together. We got to fighting.... What was so funny, those were black families. Two black families. They got jealous. They got jealous because they were ___?___, because one of the girls when they were shown a rival for the college pianist when I went to school, and she was in the class. All because she let me use her skates. Ride the skates. They got mad and they got jealous. And they said some of the most nasty, racial, racially too. And I just told, I said you're a pain in my.... I said if you are going to be that way, be that way. And that's it. That's, I guess that's when the thing was started. Actually in high school. That's where high school. And I think it also started in grade school too. Because I did some hell filings in grade school too. It was unbelievable. Especially with this little kid. I shudder now. But I wasn't too good but I spanked in school every time I got in trouble doing something crazy. And I did crazy things. My closest encounter was with the Claude and Albert. They were my heart and naturally ___?___ committed suicide that would put a damper on the whole thing. And then from then on I got more and more involved, more involved and I started going to parties.

AB: How did you get involved? How did you...?

S: Socially?

AB: Yeah. How did you find these people who go to parties? These were mixed parties?

S: Yes. Well the funny thing about it, it was sort of a mixture of straight and gay. And what everybody did it seemed to look alright. If, say, I wanted to go home with this guy, he may be straight. Yes, let's have fun. It wasn't "I can't be bothered with you." It wasn't because you're black or white either. There was no such thing. I know numerous time that I have had dates. I would go to a little party and they would say lets go to the park or from the park I would go to somebody's house, whatever. And my gay life, like I say, when I came into it. I actually started in grade school you see. But, like I say, I didn't really know too much about it until I got older. And then I got older and older and I got more involved. It seemed very complicated because I didn't know what to say or what to do, where to go.

[End of tape 1, side 1]

[Tape 1, side 2, Sepia 3-14-84]

S: Like I say, I didn't know what to say, what to do. And what would somebody say to me if they caught me say in the arms of another guy. And I thought, what would I say. Would I say, "mind your own business." Or what. And I really was sort of trying to face that. What answer would I give them. I said to myself, I saw such and such a person in the bushes or in a house or having sex or whatever. So I told myself, well, this is good, what shall I say. I turned to him, and you know it was a funny thing, just tell it like it is. Tell them whatever you want to say. If you want to tell them to mind their own business, mind their own business. If you want to tell them what you do, go ahead and tell them, whether they like it or not. So I got to the point where if somebody came up and said, are you gay or are you homosexual or bisexual, or whatever, I got in the habit of saying at that time, I don't know. I said, whatever God made me, that's what I am. Because what I do is my business. Whatever other people do is their business. I won't interfere with their business; they won't interfere with mine. And that was the attitude I carried with me. Which I still carry that today. Because it is none of my business. What somebody does in their back yard or their house or whatever. And the short of it whatever I do in my house, if I do, it's because I want to, you see. But I maintain that ever since I got to the point where I could understand what gay life is. And what it will be, for me. And I'm glad that I let myself go because I was in a shell. I was sort of slightly in the closet. I wasn't completely in the closet, because when I had my wonderful ___?___ you see. So therefore I knew. And I knew that time and I will tell you about Bill, that I was gay. And when he said go behind the wall I knew right then; my eyes opened up. But I couldn't show it. But then after time went by, I went through this whole thing, the Army, service and all that jazz. But I had, getting in the Army I had one incident there.

AB: Okay, let's stop.

S: You want to do it again...?

AB: No, no, I do. I want to get some information.

S: Ask some questions.

AB: You went to basic training?

S: Mmhuh.

AB: And where were you stationed after that? You went to Texas after that?

S: When I finished my basics in Texas, I was in Houston, I was in Galveston, and I left San Antonio. We traveled all across the United States to Newport News, Virginia. I got my orders to go overseas.

AB: During that time, during basic training, did any of your officers tell you about homosexuals, or...?

S: Surprising enough, there was nothing said. Of course I was carrying myself in a way, I guess I looked so straight. Because I had the same problem, they think I'm straight unless I do something crazy: oh he's not straight at all. But during basic training I never had any time with any officers. And they never said anything to me, only if they give me orders, what I had to do, what I didn't have to do. No one ___?___ with any officers, noncom or whatever, now enlisted men I had not problems with.

AB: Was this a racially mixed...?

S: Yes. The only time I actually got into where there was A battalion, a battalion was all black. That was when I got into Newport News, Virginia that I had join up there because I was in headquarters detachment in the medial corps. So we worked with each detachment or battalion. We were like a forerunner for this and that. So if a group comes in, we would take all the paper work, the medical work for them, handle all that ourselves. So they wouldn't bring an extra team to do it. And that was like a special service. So that's what, after we when through basic, that's where they put me what you call special service and I worked along with that. And I went everywhere, everywhere. Now then when I was in Newport News, Virginia, man that was the most horrifying thing ever. We were there for awhile, about 5 weeks. Then we got our orders to move out to go to Italy. And in Italy, I always want to go to foreign countries anyway, but I didn't want to go like this, right. And Italy was one of the countries I just loved. So we got there, meant to fight. I said, oh God, here I am. I thought save me, save me, save me. It was so comical. But we arrived, we arrived in the mine field.

AB: Where was that?

S: This was in Naples. I had a close friend. He told us all this all problems, were up in the hills, the mines. Which they had already set paths to make sure we don't hit nothing

that would explode. And you know the funny thing, in a way I was, that was educational to me, as well as enjoyable. I had no problems, no qualms. I went right through the whole thing. Stationed there in Naples. I went anywhere I wanted to go. And even as bombs falling, shrapnel and everything else; we had foxholes to get into. But I never, because we had no ___?___ guy, because I was too involved with my work at that time. We stayed there for awhile and then we moved out: went to North Africa. That's where I got involved with a black battalion. We took over there again.

AB: Do you know which one that was?

S: That was the 92nd Division. Yeah, 92nd Division which was a crack battalion. We were crack. By that time I was made T5, rear man of the line. After I got there, and this is where everything began to come out. I was there for like about I guess 5 weeks. But there was one thing that was strange. We could go out on a pass on the weekend. Okay. It was in Oran, North Africa.

AB: Where?

S: Oran, O-R-A-N, North Africa. And they always tell you, never go anywhere alone. Go two abreast when you go anywhere. But you know, the funny thing, anytime I went, I went alone. And I knew where the red light districts were, I learned real fast. We weren't allowed to go there. But you know we did sneak there you know. And I got in trouble too. I always got in trouble when to those places; had a lot of fun. The most strangest thing of all.... Now they tell you, don't ever go out alone because there is hardly no moon, there's no lights. Its pitch black, you can't even see anything in front of you. I would go there. I would go on a truck and go there. Okay. I walked 4 miles back and I could see figures of white sheets backwards and forwards. And they never bothered me. They were snipers; not snipers but what I call head hunters. Because they would attack you and kill you in a minute without hesitating or thinking about it. But every weekend I wanted to go on the pass. So then I walked, I walked back. And could see in the front and they never bothered me. Anybody else would get attacked and killed. And I thought to myself many a time, God must be with me. He must have been. Because any other time they would attack me like the others. Because I've known a lot in the service got attacked, both black and white. They were attacked and killed right on the spot and left there. But me, the whole time nothing bothered me. I would go shopping by the river, shopping what I had there; come back I did come back on the bus, the truck sometimes. It all depends on me. Never bothered me. And never had an encounter with nobody saying homosexual or gay or whatever.

AB: Did you have any sex there, with men?

S: Yeah. Men. This particular one. This is the one I am going to tell you about.

AB: Okay.

S: We moved, we left that area and went to another area. To a new area where we had to take over. I'll never forget this young man. To this day I will never forget him. I was head of the headquarters, I wound up being head of the medical division. I had to handle all of the paperwork, the medical paperwork. And I had to make inspections of all the latrines and all the kitchens and make a report on that. And in my travels from one bivouac area to the other I would run into various ones, okay. But this one particular stood out in my mind. And I'll never forget one night, what started transpiring between him and myself. He came to my tent one night. The big bivouac tent. And we were laying there, not sure if there was someone was there or not, you look, right. I had a funny feeling going over me. He was on the side of my bed. I said what do you want? "I want to be with you." I don't know one of the other guys in the same tent, you know, I said, shoot, what am I going to do. So I said, look, what is your name. He said, my name is Ricardo. What 's your last name? Ricardo Kobel. I said why do you want to be with me? Because you interest me. I said, Oh. I said, I can't tell you right now what to say but later on would you meet me. And he did after that, around 6 o'clock that evening he shows up. And a master sergeant was standing there. I thought to myself, I wonder what he's thinking, he's still looking at us. Okay. I said, Ricardo, what do you want. He said, I want to be with you. I said, why do you want to be with me so much? Because you interest me and I'm lonely. I said, alright, if that's what you want it, okay. So we started going around with each other constantly. Every time we had the chance. And things started happening. The master sergeant started making derogatory remarks.

AB: About going with him?

S: He never said anything about "gay" or "homosexual," but he says, you're a queer duck. And I said, well it takes one to know one. I said, what's your story. I said, if I like the guy, I like the guy. I said, he's a lonely person. It doesn't seem like you are going try to get him out of loneliness so I have to do it myself. He said, I'm not a queer duck, I think he's a fairy. I said, so what. If that's the way he wants to be, that's the way he wants to be, there's nothing you can do about it. So he would come and this went on by and they watched me like a hawk. They did everything they could to try and get me out of the headquarters detachment. In this tent, the tech sergeant, the master sergeant. The captain knew about it. The lieutenant knew about it. And they gave us all kind of hell. They put Ricardo on a what do you call it, lousy shit detail. Which I didn't like very well because it was wrong. All because of the fact that the guy was lonely and was seen around me all the time. He just wanted somebody to talk to. But the funny thing, we never had sex. It was close to it. But we had to be very careful. We got so close to _____. Anyway, I went on and on and on and after a fashion somehow they got us separated. I don't know how they did it. But at the same time the master sergeant, by my own, when I say it to him, got back to headquarters, the detachment where I took my orders from. The captain got hold of it, the captain confided, said, what's the matter. I said the master sergeant has been giving Kobel a bad time. He tried to get him transferred. He's been giving me a bad time. I said because we're running around together. He's calling us all nasty names like queer and gay and fairy. And I don't appreciate that. He said, I'll take care of it. He did. The master sergeant got knocked down to a buck private. The T sergeant got knocked down to a buck private. They raised

mine up. And any time there was anything said about Ricardo and myself, the captain said, let me know. How did you know. He said, look I've known all along. There's nothing wrong with it. So if Ricardo wants to be with you, fine. I see no objection. ____? _____. But he was very liberal minded. And he did not tolerate any shenanigans. Even Colonel Little, the top echelon officer, didn't like it either. He knew a good deal. And I turned in a report. On that morning. I had charge of the morning report and anything they did wrong, I turned in. That's what they told me to do and believe I did, every time they got on our necks and gave us a bad time and tried this KP duty, peeling onions or potatoes, stuff like that. Ugh-ugh, they got it. And it's told, leave us alone. We're friends and don't try to mar it. And I lost him through, I had to leave and go back to Italy. Then somehow we got separated. I got the address where he lived, he lived in Cuba. I got information where he lived in Cuba and when I go out of the service I tried to contact him but there was no response. I don't know whether he's alive or dead to this day. But I often think about him. Because there is a type of person that I could have loved, which I did love. Because he was honest with me and I was honest with him. And I would have loved to get back with him and become lovers. But being that he had to go his way and I had to go my way and I came back to the United States and I tried to get in touch with him like I said, but to no avail.

AB: Were your officers all black too?

S: No. Colonel Little was white. The master sergeant was black, though. The T sergeant was black. One of the corporals was white. Some Italians were involved in there too.

AB: How about this base officer who was protecting you?

S: Well the captain.

AB: The captain.

S: He was black. But the colonel was white. It was always mixed headquarters. We were handling both white black enlisted men in our battalion, headquarters, so we were swamped. I had no problems on racials. Being so black, I had a problem with the stupid asinine person, who didn't understand the beauty of life, beauty of a love affair. That's what he thought, and naturally I told him what I thought. He didn't like that. That's why he was giving.... He went up next to Ricardo.

AB: You think so?

S: I was sure of it. Because he did everything in the whole wide world to try to separate us. He had Ricardo out there digging a ditch. Till 6 o'clock in the evening. Which was wrong. And I know it was done for one reason, getting back at me. What I reversed. He had to do it and I had set on him, make him dig that ditch, and that's when he went down to....

AB: Private?

S: Yes buck private. And they made ___?___. Made sure, that was why I had to go to Harris at the time. Corporal Harris, his name was, what was his name. Corporal Thomas Goode. Thomas Goode. He say make sure that Thomas Goode ___?___, I had to laugh, it was funny. Make sure that he digs a ditch 6 feet deep and fill it back up. And make sure he does it through sundown. And I lived it. I loved it. He hated it. He got so mad at me, he wouldn't speak to me no more. He would have nothing to do with me. Which is what I wanted, see. And the corporal left everything in my hands. He say, says Corporal Miles, Corporal Harris, you're in charge. If they get wrong, report it to me. I'll come check in with you about every week that you're here. Or when you have 2 days in your ... no problem. I would too. I sent in a report in the morning.... I was actually a real I would say down to earth person. If I didn't like it, I just didn't like it. If you're wrong, you're wrong. If you're right, you're right. That's the way I am. And I'll tell you like it is. I may holdback a little bit but eventually I'll let it all go. That's the way I was in the service and I stayed that way when I came out.

AB: I have a question. When you were in, did you go to medical corp. school?

S: I took all my medical training in the service.

AB: And where did you do medical training?

S: They train you right, doing, I took that in Texas. Which was taken in Texas. That was part of my training with the ___?___ coast artillery. I would go to school or medical training and then I'd take coast artillery, which I got a medal star. I was serious. I got marksman awards. American, what do you call it, American award, which is a ribbon. Not a defense ribbon; it was a war ribbon actually, used in war. And I can't think what it is right now. But I received about 4 of those. Which I am very proud of. It may have meant shooting guns or something else though. I almost shot a plane down that belonged to us. I was at Air Force student bivouac and they told me, shoot at the plants. Yes sir. And that gun was going to town, it was a submachine gun. They had a target. And I was going right to the target. They said, where are you going, stop. I was just kidding. Just that far from the town, I'd play.

AB: Does that inspire things?

S: And you had to start at this end and go this way. Shoot that target down. And I was going right at the target. But that scared the hell out of them because if I had hit that plane and kind of shot it down. I quit doing that quickly. They took me off of that real fast. But I did get marksmanship for rifle and machine gun, and very happy about that. And then I got my passing papers for medical too. And what they put me into, oh brother. Here I knew I was gay and they put me on what you call it, venereal disease detail.

AB: On what?

S: Venereal disease.

AB: How charming.

S: Yes. You can imagine what that was. They were coming to me too for treatments. And I said, you behave yourself, behave yourself. I going to be fine. But that was the hardest thing to do because they're sad too, also. But I had to make that inspection of venereal disease with the enlisted men. I had to make the report on it. I had to go through the hospital, oh it was sad in a way. Some never got back to the United States because they were so badly, badly chewed up. Because of venereal disease. And we would have, actually between the captain ___?___ and myself, we would have about once a month an orientation on venereal diseases. And I got to thinking about and says, here I am an inspector and I've got to be real careful about touching them. I have seen some of the wildest ones that we don't talk about. I knew that some were hot to trot. But you see, I just couldn't touch them. I couldn't have nothing to do with them. You can always tell when a guy is hot to trot. And you get the same way and feel like grabbing and having sex with them. And you know, you can't do it. And that was one of the hardest things to go through to see how so many of them can't have sex any more because of such, backs are all blistered and everything else. And you can sit and talk to them of venereal disease until you are blue in the face and when you go to these off limit areas you're not supposed to go to and you come back with venereal disease. And you tell them not to do it again. You put them through the program of getting cured. And they turn and go back for it again. And they lose all sex organs and everything else. It really upset me. "I can't live without it."

AB: The medical corpsmen had a reputation as being gay. In your training did you know any other men?

S: Well, I'll tell you, if there were any that were gay, they never showed it. A lot of times in my travels I would look at them very hard. I don't know what they were thinking about. Of course I know what I am thinking about. But they never made no kind of motion or moving toward you let them know their gay or not. Now I am sure there were a lot involved because things that happened in my barracks. I know I was not the only one, there had to be another guy.

AB: What do you mean by that?

S: Well, I've seen where there are 2 guys having sex together. But I never interfered, you see.

AB: In the barracks

S: Yeah, in the barracks. Here I would be after house in the 9 o'clock curfew time when the lights were all out and you were hear them tiptoeing. Never tiptoed to my bed though. At least everyone considered Carl did. I know they were having.... You can't

help it. When you get that urge and you don't have no woman around, you've got to get off one way or the other right. So I am pretty sure there were some gay.

AB: This was all medical barracks?

S: No, not all medical no. This was enlisted men and there were some headquarters detachment all involved, both black and white.

AB: This was in North Africa?

S: Well this was both places. More or less in North Africa than in Italy. Because that was the biggest bivouac area. Italy was very confined to a certain area. In a city, itself, Naples. And we couldn't hardly go anywhere because there was constant fighting going on all the time. Snipers here, snipers there and you had to be very careful. I couldn't make my move like I wanted to. So I had to wait until I got to ___?___ and you could get away with it. Because I didn't do too much, I did a lot of ___?___, but I didn't have nothing to do with anybody. I didn't try to find anybody homosexual whatever, bisexual whatever, just because of my work. I was too devoted to it at that time. But when I got to North Africa then it was open territory, like they say, and whatever happened, it happened. If it didn't happen, it didn't happen. I do know one night some guy tried to put the make on me. I wouldn't let him do it. Because I didn't know whether that was a trap, entrapment. It could have been a warrant officer, it could have been an MP, it could have been whoever, I didn't know. So I decided, no. But when Ricardo came along, well that was a different story because I knew he was an interested man. And they could conducting willing, he could, he could say, he's the one who gets by me. ___?___ So therefore I just said let it go. And I can say it worked out all right. I am just sorry that we didn't get together after the service because I am sure if it had he might have come to the United States and probably stayed with me. Because he was in love with me. And kept my love with him sort of low key. Because I didn't want to get too, too involved. Because when you get involved too much, sometimes it creates a problem. And being in the position I was in I had to keep it sort of down hill or in low key, you see. But however, if I would have known that he came to the United States because I haven't seen him for a long while. But I am sure if he came here, because I'm older too now and at the time I was living in Iowa. When I tried to find him. When I came to California. I've been in California ever since 1959 and everything.

AB: Did you know, hear about any other, any enlisted me getting discharged with good discharges ...?

S: For being homosexual? Not while I was in. Now when I was in the headquarters detachment, no one came through. If they were a homosexual or whatever, they never came through our office. Where I would have to make out a report to that effect, you see. A profit and loss, I probably wouldn't do it anyway to protect them, I wouldn't say anything about it. There are a lot of men who were homosexual, bisexual but they never confessed, never showed it....

[End of tape 1, side 2]

[Tape 2, side 1, Sepia, 3-14-84]

S: They never did show it. And a lot of times I tried to find it out in my travels going to make, what do you call it, spot check in the kitchens, if its up to par. There was one incident I do remember though. I went to make a check on one of the kitchens. And this young Italian, he was like kitchen police. He stood there in the middle of the kitchen floor, it was like this tent kitchen floor. And he stood there and stared at me. Now I do not know what was going through his mind, and naturally I didn't try to pry into it. Because I didn't know whether he was thinking about committing suicide or killing me or what. I was just going to wait to see if he was going to make any moves, motions or even say anything. And then I knew what course to take with him. Because sometimes if you say something at the wrong time, and I decided to wait on him to see what was on his mind. Twice he stared at me. One time he was walking down into the, through all the row of tents and he stared and I just looked at him and kept on walking. When I went to make a spot check on the kitchen where he works at well then he stared again, real hard. And of course like I said I just looked at him and didn't say nothing. Because I don't know what he was thinking about. But I wish I had. He was nice looking, he was nice and tall. But I just didn't make a move. So I just left it that way. And then I went and did spot checks all over the kitchen, latrines, so forth and so on. And I saw him again at a long distance and he looked at me real fast and he stopped and he kept on going. And I never made no approach to him because I wasn't too sure about him, he could be a plant. You know, some times you had to be careful, you never know what has transpired with some of these officers. They may when a person entered entrapment, like the police do once in awhile around here. So I just decided not to say nothing to him, just acknowledge that I saw him and just keep on walking. And that's what I did. And the next time I saw him again. I don't know caused me to do this, I went to make the spot check in this particular kitchen he was working at and I had given it a clean bill of health, that everything was spotless, the stove was clean, the floor was clean. And he was working around there at that time. And he looked at me and I stopped and looked at him. I went about my business. Ten minutes later I had to go back there, he had set himself on fire in the kitchen. He had poured gasoline on the floor and set it on fire. To this day I do not know why. Maybe if I had said something it might have prevented it, but how do I know. I didn't want to say something to him out of fear that it might not be right so I just left it. But that kind of bothered me when he went back, he called and asked me did I make a spot check and I said yes, I had just left him like 20 or 30 minutes ago. The floor was completely dry. The stove was clean because I went through it. Because we always wear white gloves. And there was nothing on the gloves. The floor was completely dry. Everything around, the food was all, and the shelves were real nice, he really did a good job. And 20 or 30 minutes later the whole building went up in smoke. Him with it. And probably it was the worse thing that I had make the last minute report on it and turn it in. I was the last one to see the body. Be sure it was quite a sight, taken away. But it was a hard thing to do, really. Because it felt bad, because I had seen him and not even talked to him. A lot of these crazy incidents really happened to me. When I was in the hospital

I had another one too. I was having them everywhere. This one was a knockout. When, see I had gotten shot in the service.

AB: You did?

S: This side completely riddled with shrapnel. So the funny thing about it, it was so quick. This is happened when I went back to Italy. Then they had to rush me to the hospital in Italy, to the United States Army hospital there. I woke up the next morning with this beautiful sunlight coming through the window. "Hey I'm alive, I'm alive." This guy said, yes you are. Oh, God, who was this. He was tall and he had a slight accent. And I didn't know whether he was from the United States or not. He says, I'm your nurse. I said, you are? Oh, how, how wonderful. He was German. Do you know everywhere when I got to the point when I got out of bed, no one else would handle me but him. He would take me everywhere that I was supposed to go, to the infirmary. He would take me to the movies, go get my food. And make sure I got a wheel chair unless he took me out of the wheel chair and put me in the bed. At the point I could go walking he made sure he walked with me, which I really didn't need. But everywhere that I was going he was right there. My every need. I said, do you live in Germany? No, I'm from Milwaukee, Wisconsin is all. Next door to where I live. He said, where are you from? I said, I'm from Iowa. Oh, yeah, I've been there before. Ohhh. I was beginning to wonder whether I had seen him before or not. But I didn't. But really everywhere I went in that hospital, even outside to the PX or anywhere, he was right there. Wouldn't let me go by myself. Even if I wanted to. Even when I went to play games like I used to go to play poker. There he was. He would find me. I wouldn't tell him where I was going, but he would find me. It was real funny. Because I would get out of my bed, put my clothes on and go out. Nobody would stop me. But for some strange reason he would find me ever doggone time. And I would think to myself, oh shoot, what am I going to do. He's following me everywhere I go. So it came time for me to leave that hospital and come back to the United States. I said this is going to be so sad that I have to leave him. Well I didn't leave him. He wound up paying a visit in Gary. I don't know how he did it. But the funny thing, as much I wanted a sex life, we never had. But he would make sure that my every need was all plain. We were somewhere in the Abruta Island because a hurricane was approaching the Florida coast and we had to go around. So we had to stay overnight. He was sitting beside of my bed. When I went to bed he was there. When I got up in the morning he was there. I thought it was, I wondered what he did between times. I did not notice until we got to Florida, because I went into another hospital in Florida, and that was in Coral Gables, Florida. And that's when they transferred everything around and I didn't see him anymore. At least I thought I wasn't going to see him anymore. And that's when ___? ___. And I went back to Texas, landed in Texas. Still no sign of him. In the meantime, I saw this guy. And my eyes just lighted up like a Christmas tree. And I was sure I was going to have him as a close friend or whatever. No such luck. Well, got into Texas, left Texas, left Texas and went to Colorado. To Fitzsimons General Hospital there. That's where I was there. And who did I see, him again. How did he get there faster than I. Here I was in Florida; he's here. He never told me. But he was there right at the bedside. Oh brother. Well we finally made it. We finally made it.

AB: In Colorado?

S: Mmhuh. All ___?___ in Denver, Colorado. We had a love affair. I don't want to give times out, really. And finally it just dissolved. He went his way, I guess he went back to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I don't know. But it was just so strange. He got lost in Florida and I thought I'd never see him again and all of a sudden, boom. His last name was, Gus..., one of those crazy long German last names. His first name was James. But his last name was a mile long. And I said forget it, I just called him Jim or James all the time, that's all. But I thought to myself, what a person like to have around because he was concerned. Then when I lost him and my heart sunk. Then I started with this other guy well my heart sunk with that one too. Because I figured that was for me. But when I got back, when I got in Denver, Colorado and saw him again well my eyes lit up. But it just seemed to dissolve. But of course, as I say he was gone. And then I went on back to Iowa then.

AB: Is that when you got discharged there?

S: Yeah at Fitzsimons General Hospital, an honorable discharged.

AB: When was that?

S: That was in 19... latter part of 1945. Latter part of '45.

AB: Do you remember where you were on at the end of the war on VJ day?

S: Lets see I think I was here. I was back in the states because they brought me back. I was back here, yeah. I was in the hospital, in Fitzsimons General Hospital. That's what happened, that's where I was at when everything burst right open on VJ day. But I stayed there 6 more months before I was released. And then I was planning on staying there, in Denver, Colorado after I got released. And then I changed, I'll go back to Iowa because I wanted to go back to school. Which I did do, back to music. And this time I went into acting.

AB: Did you have the GI bill to do that, to go back to school?

S: No. I used everything else but that. So I stay in school the rest of the time.

AB: A questions I want to ask, do you know what you were doing when Pearl Harbor was bombed? That day.

S: What was I doing? You know I am not too sure. I think, I think I was in a movie that day. I am pretty sure. I know I wasn't home. Either I was at, because I went to church quite a bit. Either I was at church or I was in a movie. Because I love movies. And it was possible I might have been in a movie. Yeah, I was, because I was a crazy person and loved to go watch the serials. The chapters of them, or Rod or ___?___. And I still

like to do it yet. That's what I was doing when it came. Because, nothing panicked though. Funny thing, nothing panicked when I was in that movie. But there was concern, yes, there was a lot of talking going on, they've heard about it. But it wasn't so prominent in the theater as much as it was after you got outside the theater. Then you hear people crying and yelling and all that. So I just said, it's in God's hand. It's in God's hand. They make three inside of me, for some strange reason. And the others were so panicky. It didn't panic me at all. I just turned very calmly. It was like a day that it happened. I didn't like it naturally. But it just didn't make me panicky. I just took it calmly and I said, it's in God's hand. Whatever that will is then I will. It's going to resolve itself eventually. I hate to see it, but you can get uptight about it, I didn't. And I never, strangely never, the whole time the fighting was going on didn't seem to really get me panicky. It seemed like I stayed cool the whole time. And all because I had such religious training. It sort of just kept me calm and cool. Because I knew if I got panicked I might do something stupid, even one of those things. It bothered, it's true it bothered. But not to the point where I'd go out and jump in a river or kill myself, whatever. Which a lot did not this. And I just, it's in God's hands. What's going to happen is going to happen. It states in the bible that there will be wars and rumors of wars. I just didn't give it no serious thought about what might happen to me or happen to anybody else. If it's going to happen it's going to happen, if it's not, it's not. I took it in that stride so when I got involved in the service myself I left panic behind. It made it very easy for me.

AB: I have some more questions about before you went into the service. The circus and all that, the parties that you went to. One person that I interviewed said that, and she was from Davenport, and she went to, she said there some older men who had a house near the river and that there were gay parties with mostly men. But she went there, she was the only dyke that went there. Does that ring a bell with you at all?

S: Now it all depends when, what year that house was there. Because there is so....

AB: It might have been, right, if you went in, in '43, it may have been like '44.

S: That is a possibility I might have been in. You see because I did go to a lot of house parties. Now a lot of house parties I didn't go to because I didn't know anything about them. There was a very proper family, Dr. Bates, Stanley Bates, and he was gay, very much gay. And he and I were very close friends. Now I don't know whether the rest of his family knew it or not, but he and I hung around together. And I went over to his house for a party too. And he had his own business, he was a chiroprapist. He would allow gay parties, he would invite me. He would have parties at the house. But see he would invite a mixture of people and whether they were gay or not I did not know because I lived that close to him. Like West View. As the family itself might say. But I do know I went to a lot of house parties. I went to a lot of parties in, they would have parties in parks and clubs. And I do know one club, it was called Blue..., not blue it was another name. Oh, Blue Bird Inn. Way out. It was away from everything. It was a 2 story building. They had the 1st floor dancing and then they had a bar there too and upstairs I think it was little off rooms you go to or something like, maybe, I don't know. I never went up there, I was always on the 1st floor. But I do know, that particular one,

they had a lot of jazz groups coming there. It was a mixture of all nationalities there. Stan and I would go there all the time. And there were gay people there as well as bisexual, heterosexual and I am sure there were lesbians because a lot of girls there. A lot of girls together a lot of girls with guys too. Which could also be a couple, who knows. But we always go there and it was a wild place. It was like on a little island. And the only way to get to it, you had to go down a road this way and it branches off. It was a little on water. It was like a little tributary into the Mississippi River. And we would always go there. And the cops knew about it. It was wild place, I mean it was really wild. Everything was happening as a matter of fact. We would always go on the weekend because it was just such a wild place. That whole area was wild.

AB: This was where the Inn was too?

S: Yes, that whole area was wild. They would have crap, they used to call here and there. And they did have wild sex parties, sex orgies. I never got involved with those because to me it was a little too dangerous. I like privacy. But we would always go to these parties because it was a lot of fun to go on the weekends. And more than weekend, holidays. Oh, my God, holidays was something else. Like for 4th of July especially. Everybody in God's green acre was there: Gays, straight, bisexuals, everybody was there. They didn't care what happened. Who cared.

AB: This was at the Inn?

S: This is right around the Inn too. Nobody gave a hoot what you did. It's your own business. I mean the party was wild. Nobody asked, are you gay. No one asked. Lets go have fun. That's the way it was. It made no difference in you. And going the gay parties, parties like that, the gay parties with straight guys or whatever.

AB: Did they have rooms to rent there too?

S: On the 2nd Floor. It was always full. ___?___ because I never went up there, me I'm at the cars, you know. I like it in cars, you know.

AB: ___?___

S: And that's the way always with me. But I went to parties. If got a say I always went with somebody. And we would go to a hotel in which I was very well known. Go to a hotel Blackhawk hotel. Embassy Hotel Armstrong. I worked in them. And I would go there any time I wanted to and rent out a room if I wanted to.

AB: You worked at the Blackhawk?

S: Hotel Blackhawk, I was the head houseman there. Everything revolved around me again. I was from the 12th floor down to the basement, which is where they did all the cooking for all the different banquets. They had them set up for different banquets, private parties. I always had a private party, I loved that. One particular that I went to

was something else and it was a lot of fun. They would always come to me for something. I'll never forget 2 guys, and I had to go check one of the rooms out because the maid wanted to get in to clean it up. She wasn't sure whether she could go up there. So I said, okay I'll check it out for you. I knew there was 2 guys in there, but I didn't know if they were gay or not. So I put the key into the lock, turned and opened. Oh, excuse me. Well come in, join us. I said I am doing my work right now, I can't join you. They were having sex.

AB: Really?

S: Yes. There was 2 of them. Handsome looking white guys. And what was so funny, there was a big window with the bed right by the window. And there was a hotel across the other side. You could have dances quite obvious. We're not ashamed of it. Their curtains were open. Oh, excuse me; come in and join us; I said I can't. I only came to check it out so the maid can clean up. Well tell her to clean up anyway. I said, well I don't think she would want to do that. I could but I don't have the time, I'll come back later. Yeah, come back later like around 10 o'clock this evening. We'll have a party. I said, we will. Up my ally too. But I never got back because I had leave. Usually when I leave there I had to go to school.

AB: You were in college?

S: Yeah.

AB: ___?___

S: Oh I was involved in everything that came along. I gained a lot. But that particular, I said, oh brother, how I wish.

AB: That was where, the Blackhawk was where, the woman that I interviewed was from Davenport, that's where she enlisted in the WACS.

S: Yeah, they had a service on the 1st floor.

AB: Yeah?

S: That's right they had the services on the 1st floor. There were a lot of offices in that area. The whole block belonged to the Hotel Blackhawk. And they had a shopping center, a shopping, not center but stores along the street there, on both sides. Of course on the back side there was the big parking lot and there was underground parking and it was also outside too. Of course on the other side was the Hotel Dempsey and the Hotel Armstrong. No the Armstrong was in Rock Island, but Dempsey and the Hotel Davenport was all in that area. Like a hotel area. They had apartment houses around there too. But I was always at the Hotel Blackhawk because on the last floor was the penthouse where they would have big parties. I loved to go there. Especially with anybody around too, if I could find anybody.

AB: Did you? .

S: Yes.

AB: You had sex up there?

S: Of course, whenever I got a chance to.

AB: Did you have the keys to the...?

S: I had all the keys. Like I said everything revolved around me. And my office was on the 2nd floor, no, it was on the 3rd, yeah, it was on the 2nd floor. They had to come to the 2nd floor to get hold of me. And if they didn't find me on the 2nd floor they'd find me down at the commissary because I had taken charge of that too. And when they had a private party I made sure the food was prepared and I would take it upstairs myself or have one of the runners take it up stairs to the party, whatever floor it had to go to. Oh, I had an enormous job there. But I loved it. I had a lot of fun there. And what was so funny, I met this young man there. I had never seen him before in my life. And at that time I was working at another job too. I got an offer to go to the New York Conservatory of Music. But the only problem, why I couldn't go they only gave me 3 days to get ready and here I had just bought a car. Here I was going to art school and I just couldn't drop it in 3 days because I would have to get all my bills paid. Everything cleared. They only gave me 3 days. All expenses paid there for one year and a half. And I said, oh God. It was a great opportunity and I had to pray to God very hard about that. I really had to go through hell and high water. Because I wanted to go but I didn't have ample time to get ready for it. And my parents at that time too wanted me to go but they told me, look son, its up to you. You're the one that has to live with it, you're the one that has to make up your mind. And I said to my father, he was working for old man Hickey, who was head of all the big cigar stores there in Iowa. He was the foreman for it. Everything revolved around him too. So he says, well, son, its up to you. You're not in high school anymore, you're your own boss now. If you want, go, if you don't, make up your mind. I said, dad, I've only got 3 days. My poor young brother though who was having a fit: take it, take it, take it. I says okay. Then I thought I'll pray to God for ___?___ about that. And I didn't make my decision I had to say "no" because I did not have the time. And the time that I needed to get everything put together and really get them together, you know, changing this and changing that, it wouldn't give me enough time to do that in 3 days so I had to tell them. What was so funny, I had never, I never saw the person who do this in person. I never saw him. But he called the office in the Hotel Blackhawk and offered. Now I don't know if it was the 2 guys who wanted me to go to bed with them, who knows. I don't know. But it was one of those chances in a lifetime.

AB: Just out of the blue.

S: Out of the clear blue sky, right. I never met the person to this day. I don't know where he lived, I don't know whether he was from Timbuktu or what. But I said, its one

of those things. And its like when I got the scholarship for the art school, St. Ambrose College, because naturally I took that because I could go into night school for that after my work I used to do it. So I went to a year and a half with art and then I went back to ___?___ to take a refresher course in drama and acting. Which was great big official thing for when I came out here.

AB: So after the war you came to, you went back to Denver...?

S: I went back to Denver, yeah.

AB: And then what did you do after that?

S: Then after I stayed there for awhile then I decided whether I should go to, well I actually started working for the government again, in a different capacity. I worked in the warehouse, a kind of arsenal, I started working there. And then after, I worked there for, I was there for several years I think. Availed of my seniority, then I went to a supervisor. Oh, brother, the ding-a-lings I ran into over there. Especially one was something else. But ___?___ was after like hot cakes. He was always standing around my station when I was in the warehouse all the time. Well, I never get next to him. He was always coming to me for something. He would bring sprig of warehouse storage papers to check it out. Or issue some material. He was always coming to me for something. I tried to figure it out, why was he always coming to me. All the time. And there were others in the building he could go to. It was always me. And I said, his name was Sidney Gordon. I said Sydney why are you always bothering me. "I like you." I said, oh, I like you too but you're pestering the hell out of me. He says, well I'm sorry. So I went on and on and on, we never really got together but he was always pestering me. It wasn't about big things, only small incidental things which didn't really didn't make anything. So I figured, alright, I'll go along with him. But they didn't know, if they knew I was gay over there I didn't know it. Because I stayed pretty well to myself because of my work and I didn't get involved to strongly with anybody. Because when you are working in a government installation like that and the word gets out and then you can get yourself in bad, bad trouble.

AB: I have a question back when you were in the service, were there any, like when you were stationed overseas, were there any variety shows where performed in drag and stuff like that?

S: No. The only thing that I came close to anything like that is when I went to Vatican City. That was quite interesting because....

[End of tape 2, side 1]

[Tape 2, side 2, "Sepia" 3-14-84]

AB: ...the tape.

S: Yeah.

AB: Vatican City?

S: Yeah, Vatican City the things that I, I had read about it you know and I was curious about it. I went on a tour. During the tour, the guide told us about various things. They took us through the, what's the place called now. Well a place in Vatican City and they took us to an area where they had sex orgies, out of doors. It was like an amphitheater. And they have a platform about 3 feet from the ground level, okay. And on there they have looked like pillows and so forth. And this is what you call the out doors sex orgy amphitheater. Male-male, female-female, whatever they desired, they wanted, that's what they would have. And they took me through what you call the prostitution houses. One side was male the other side was female. And how you could tell the difference was across the top of each male, they had a ball and penis. That's to indicate this is the male side. On this side would have a bust of a woman, that's all female. And like I said the amphitheater says sexology on it. Sexology. In ____?____. But they never did have it there because that was sort of, it was a certain time of year that they'd have it. It was like a religious ritual. They cherish, they really cherish the body, male or female. And whatever happens, it happens. Later I found out they don't shun males having sex with males or females having female sex together. They never shun it. This is art and beauty. They never condemn it. And if it happens, it happens. They never stop it. And you know they drill it into the young kids.

AB: These are the Romans you are talking about earlier.

S: This is the Italians.

AB: Italians.

S: Point is I am not sure it is really Italians involved in all that. But it was quite interesting and I was really taken with Italy. I always loved it anyway. I wanted to go back and stay because they treated me so fantastic. There was one place I went to I always heard of, Sorrento. I got a chance to see it. Ohh, you should see it. It's way on the top of the Alps, mountains. Away from everywhere, everything. They didn't even know if there was a war on the outside or not. You walk in there and it was like you walk into a big amphitheater, red carpeting treatment. And anything that I wanted, that's the way it was. And I stayed for a whole week, I got a chance to do it. I didn't want to come back, I wanted to stay right there in Sorrento because anything goes. They treated you like you were brothers and sisters. They didn't care what color you were. They didn't even think about it. Come in, lets have a touch wine and that spaghetti or pasta together. Let's go here, let's go there. You all right; yeah, I'm fine. Good let's go. They never said I have to go back to Naples or anything like that. Stay right there. That's where I stayed the whole week. I loved it. I wanted to go back when I got back to the states, I still do as a matter of fact, but we can't get everything we want in life.

AB: I heard there was an Italian operated gay bar in Naples in the '40s. There's a galleria there or something? Around there. Do you remember anything like that?

S: That is in Naples, that is really known as Napoli. Its in what you call the, I think it was off limits. It was off limits. They wouldn't allow any soldier to go there. If you do you run a risk. Now I know one, I'll never forget this little kid come flying at me on the sidewalk one time. And on the sidewalk anything goes. Right. You see people painting you see them doing anything. You'll see them standing taking a pee. One of the little outings on us. Okay. Well this little kid came flying to me. He says, he could speak very good English, surprising because I figured he was going to speak Italian and I don't speak Italian. He said, senior, he said senior. And I said yes. You want to fucky-fucky. Well, you know, I wasn't quite up to what he meant by that. "You want to fucky-fucky?" And it dawned on me that quick, I said, Huh, with a kid? Then he said seniorino fucky-fucky. Come, come, come. And I said, oh God. And I thought to myself, where is he taking me. And I followed him. I went up a long flight of stairs. At the very top he says, senior fucky-fucky. I said no, that quick. He said, no fucky-fucky? I said, no, no fucky-fucky. It was not his sister, it was his mother. I said I'm sorry no fucky-fucky and I went downstairs. But that was so funny because those kids over there are very bold. They'll ask you for anything. I don't care what it is. And they were very bold. They would ask you for cigarettes, they would ask you for money. And they come up and say "fucky-fucky", you don't know what they're talking about. They catch you real fast. But I'll tell you.... And there are some beauties over there. You can see right now, I wouldn't want to live in Italy because I would get in more trouble. And they were trouble, dangerous, oh yeah. Well I learned a great deal in the service. My life in the service was ? . I learned a great deal. I learned a great deal since I've been out. I was more or less in the closet when I first started out. But when I started coming out....

AB: After the service?

S: I got out more so before I went into the service. Like I say, I had one foot out, and one foot in. But when I got both feet out and all things started working you see. But I was still cautious though. I learned a great deal. You learn a great deal every day in your life. You learn something every day. Don't matter where you go. Thank God I was given a racial conscious. My parents taught me never, as long as you live, never be racial conscious. Treat everybody equal. I don't care what color they are because you might hear from us. Blame if I did. Say anything bad about anybody about a race and I got my butt tanned. Because they didn't believe in it. Because I came from an interracial family and they thrive on doing to others what you would have them do unto you. If you are going live your life, live it, but live it with a beauty and behave yourself. I says, yes sir, yes sir, I'll behave myself. But I am kind of glad they ruled me with an iron hand because like I could have been a holy terror. I could have been probably 6 foot under or I could have been in jail. I learned a great deal. I never had a racial problem in my life. Everywhere I've gone in racial groups. And, like I said, I only had two time where I had to fight because they were racists. And I hate them. I really didn't hate them, I felt sorry for them. Because they did not know how to get along with other races. They figured there was only one race, the black race. And there is no such thing as the black race.

Black is not really a color anyway and just as white is not a color. That's all I got to do. Don't argue with them. I'm me, I'll be me as long as I live as God gave me breath. He gave me a life to live and that's what I'm going to do. If there is something wrong, He'll let me know. I'll find it out for myself. And so it'll happen.

AB: That's a good place to stop.

S: That's why I was saying that.

[End of tape 2, side 2]

[End of recording]