



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE
Grade 5 and Up

Hispanic Americans and World War II



This guide is a product of the
VOCES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
University of Texas at Austin



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and **World War II**





Introduction

THE VOCES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

September/October Hispanic Heritage Month —Educational Materials

The mission of the Voces Oral History Project is to recognize the contributions of men and women of Latino heritage of the World War II generation. Through a variety of resources, such as a newspaper publication, website, conferences and books, the project seeks to disseminate the remarkable stories of the World War II generation. The Project will add to these various components by making these archives available to teachers and students through educational materials such as these.

These kits include:

- 2 posters featuring WWII veterans and people on the home front
- 4 trading cards for each student
- a supplementary teacher's guide, which includes classroom and take-home activities, as well as resources on WWII and oral history for teachers.

The educational kit, created in recognition of September/October Hispanic Heritage Month, has been developed by elementary teachers and addresses the historical experiences and contributions of U.S. Latinos and Latinas during the WWII era. Activities are designed to engage students and teachers in learning about the WWII generation and what it was like to be a Latino during that era – both at war and on the home front. Activities relate to themes discussed in stories from the Project's newspaper, *Narratives*, which is based on oral history interviews.

Examples of themes include women's work in wartime jobs on the home front, various positions Latinos held in military service, Mexican nationals in the U.S. armed forces, use of Spanish language and military honors bestowed upon Latinos and Latinas.

Central to this guide is the incorporation of primary source materials such as discharge papers and letters from soldiers back to their homes.

Children will learn how the Project collects oral histories, and how they can do oral histories with their own family members. Each lesson in this guide is aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and note which objectives are met in the lesson.

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About Latinos and Latinas in World War II

World War II was a major turning point for U.S. Latinos, changing the world views of an entire generation. Many Latino soldiers returned home to find the same discrimination they had left behind; they began questioning a system that held Latinos to a lower status. Many veterans used the G.I. Bill to earn a college education. Latinas who worked in military installations and in other jobs previously denied them also questioned the status quo. Some Mexican citizens were brought in to fill jobs left vacant by departing soldiers. Few lives were left untouched—even those men who were unable to join the fighting forces would never be the same.

In the years following World War II, these men and women made astounding civil rights advancements for Latinos—in school desegregation, in voting rights, in basic civil rights. Powerful organizations grew out of this era, including the G.I. Forum and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF).

For Puerto Ricans, World War II brought new questions: the U.S. came to appreciate Puerto Rico's military importance in the Caribbean, especially as guardian to the Panama Canal. The U.S. said that it needed to keep its sovereign power over the island for reasons of national security, and World War II strengthened that position. Accordingly, the U.S. dramatically increased the number of military personnel in Puerto Rico, a military presence that endures to this day. Even as soldiers from Puerto Rico came to the mainland, most of them for the first time, to train before going to fight in the war overseas, Puerto Rico remained isolated in the Caribbean. While the war created jobs in the U.S. mainland, unemployment rose in Puerto Rico. Later, the post-war economic boom in the U.S. helped to finance the industrialization and modernization program on the island, which led to the mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland.

Sadly, the stories of these men and women have been virtually untold, either in the mass media or in historical texts. This project has recorded interviews with over 900 of these men and women and worked hard to share its work with the public, in particular, with future generations, so that they will know about the sacrifices and contributions that Latinos and Latinas made for this country as Americans.

Source: www.VocesOralHistoryProject.org

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Timeline

Major Events of World War II 1939 – 1945

1939

SEPTEMBER

- 1st Germany invades Poland. World War II begins.
- 3rd Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declare war on Germany.
- 5th United States proclaims neutrality.
- 17th The Soviet Union invades Poland.
- 29th Germany and the Soviet Union divide up Poland.

OCTOBER

The Nazis begin euthanasia on sick and disabled in Germany.

NOVEMBER

- 4th Although President Roosevelt has declared American neutrality in the war in Europe, a Neutrality Act is signed that allows the U.S. to send arms and other aid to Britain and France.
- 30th The USSR attacks Finland.



1940

MARCH 18th Mussolini and Hitler announce Italy's formal alliance with Germany against England and France.

MAY 7th British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin resigns in disgrace. He will be replaced by Winston Churchill on May 10.

10th The German Blitzkrieg ("lightning war") begins, as Rotterdam and other Dutch cities are attacked from the air. By the end of the month, the Dutch armies will have surrendered, Belgium will have surrendered, and the evacuation of British and French troops from Dunkirk will be underway.

JUNE 10th Italy declares war on Britain and France, and U.S. President Roosevelt announces a shift from neutrality to "non-belligerency," meaning more active support for the Allies against the Axis.

28th In the U.S., the Alien Registration Act (the Smith Act) passed by Congress requires aliens to register and be fingerprinted; the Act makes it illegal to advocate the overthrow of the US government.

JULY 9th As German air attacks over Britain intensify, the British Royal Air Force begins night bombing of German targets.

SEPTEMBER 27th Germany, Italy and Japan enter into a 10-year military and economic alliance that comes to be known as the "Axis". Hungary and Romania will join the Axis in November.

OCTOBER 29th Military draft, or conscription, begins in the U.S. It is the first military draft to occur during peacetime in American history.

NOVEMBER 5th Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected to an unprecedented third term as president, with 54 percent of the popular vote. He defeats Republican Wendell L. Wilke.



1941

- JANUARY** 6th Contrary to widespread isolationist sentiment, President Roosevelt recommends “Lend-Lease” program that will provide U.S. aid to the Allies.
- APRIL** 16th Britain receives its first American “Lend-Lease” aid shipments of food. By December, millions of tons of food will have arrived from the U.S.
- JUNE** 22nd German troops invade Soviet Russia, in what they call “Operation Barbarossa,” breaking the “nonaggression” pact signed in 1939. Two days later, President Roosevelt promises U.S. aid to Russia.
- AUGUST** 9th Secret meetings between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill begin off the coast of Newfoundland. They will result in the Atlantic Charter, which contains eight points of agreement on the aims of the war.
- SEPTEMBER** 11th President Roosevelt issues an order that German or Italian ships sighted in U.S. waters will be attacked immediately.
- DECEMBER** 7th Just before 8 a.m., Honolulu time, 360 Japanese planes attack Pearl Harbor, the U.S. military base on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. The attack cripples the U.S. Pacific fleet, and kills more than 2,300 American soldiers, sailors, and civilians. The attack precedes Japan’s formal declaration of war, which is delivered by the Japanese foreign minister to the U.S. embassy in Tokyo more than seven hours later.
- 8th President Roosevelt addresses the U.S. Congress, saying that December 7 is “a date that will live in infamy.” After a vote of 82-0 in the U.S. Senate, and 388-1 in the House, in favor of declaring war on Japan, Roosevelt signs the declaration of war.
- 11th Germany and Italy declare war on the U.S. President Roosevelt calls an end to official U.S. neutrality in the war in Europe, declaring war on Germany and Italy.



1942

- JANUARY** 14th An order from President Roosevelt requires all aliens to register with the government. This is the beginning of a plan to move Japanese-Americans into internment camps in the belief that these people might aid the enemy.
- FEBRUARY** 19th Executive Order 9066 is signed by President Roosevelt, authorizing the transfer of more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans living in coastal Pacific areas to concentration camps in various inland states (and including inland areas of California). The interned Japanese-Americans lose an estimated 400 million dollars in property, as their homes and possessions are taken from them.
- APRIL** 28th Coastal “dim-outs” go into effect along a fifteen-mile strip on the Eastern Seaboard, in response to German U-boat activity of the U.S. Atlantic coast.
- MAY** 14th The U.S. Congress establishes The Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), under the direction of Oveta Culp Hobby, editor of the Houston Post.
- 15th Gasoline rationing goes into effect in the Eastern United States. Nationwide rationing will begin in September.
- JUNE** 13th President Roosevelt authorizes the creation of the U.S. Office on War Information (OWI). The first director is Elmer Holmes Davis, a CBS commentator and novelist.
- JULY** 30th The Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Services (WAVES) is authorized by the U.S. Congress.
- SEPTEMBER** 16th The Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASPS) are established in the United States. The armed forces will be supplied with more than 1000 auxiliary pilots through this organization.
- DECEMBER** 1st In the U.S., coffee joins the list of rationed items.



1943

- JANUARY** 11th President Roosevelt submits his budget to the U.S. Congress. \$100 billion of the \$109 billion budget is identified with the war effort.
- FEBRUARY** 7th In the U.S., shoe rationing begins, limiting civilians to three pairs of leather shoes per year. The ration in Britain is one pair per year.
- APRIL** 1st In the U.S., meat, fats, canned goods, and cheese are now all rationed. Attempting to stem inflation, President Roosevelt freezes wages, salaries, and prices.
- MAY** 27th In the U.S., President Roosevelt issues an executive order forbidding racial discrimination by government contractors.
- 29th In the U.S., an issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* is published with a cover illustration by Norman Rockwell that introduces an American icon known as “Rosie the Riveter.”
- JUNE** 14th The U.S. Supreme Court rules, in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Bernette*, that a West Virginia state law that requires school children to salute the flag, on penalty of expulsion, is unconstitutional.
- SEPTEMBER** 9th Although the Allies have announced the unconditional surrender of Italy, German forces in Italy continue to oppose Allied troops. When the U.S. Fifth Army lands at Salerno, they sustain heavy losses.
- DECEMBER** 17th President Roosevelt repeals the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1902, thus allowing Chinese residents of the United States to be eligible for citizenship. The new Chinese Act also allows for the immigration of up to 105 Chinese annually.



1944

- APRIL** 3rd In the case of *Smith v. Allwright*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that an American cannot be denied the right to vote because of color.
- MAY** 3rd In the U.S., meat rationing ends, except for certain select cuts.
- JUNE** 6th “D-Day”: The Allied invasion of Europe commences just after midnight, as more than 175,000 troops land at Normandy, France. The largest invasion force in history, it includes 4,000 invasion ships, 600 warships, and 10,000 planes.
- 22nd In the U.S., President Roosevelt signs the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act that will provide funds for housing and education after the war. It is better known as the GI Bill of Rights.
- JULY** 20th An assassination attempt on Adolph Hitler, planned by some of Hitler’s generals, is unsuccessful.
- 24th Soviet troops capture Lublin, Poland and liberate the Majdanek concentration camp. Captured virtually intact, Majdanek was the first major camp to be liberated.
- AUGUST** 4th In Amsterdam, Otto Frank and his family (including his daughter Anne, then 15) are captured by the Gestapo. Jewish, they have been in hiding for more than two years, kept by Miep and Jan Gies, but have been betrayed by someone familiar with their hiding place and are put on the last convoy of trucks to Auschwitz.
- 25th Paris is liberated by Allied French troops, after four years of German occupation.
- NOVEMBER** 7th Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected to a fourth term as U.S. President, and Harry S. Truman becomes the Vice-President.
- DECEMBER** 16th The Battle of the Bulge begins. It the last major German counteroffensive, as allied troops are pushed back in Belgium’s Ardennes Forest. As Allied lines fall back, a “bulge” is created in the center of the line, giving the battle its familiar name. Two weeks of intense fighting in brutal winter weather follow before the German offensive is stopped.



1945

- JANUARY** 26th Soviet troops find fewer than 3,000 survivors when they liberate Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp in Poland. The German S.S. has moved many of the remaining prisoners to camps inside Germany. From 1939 to 1945, one third of the Jews living in the world will have died in German concentration and extermination camps.
- MARCH** 16th On Iwo Jima, a month-long struggle comes to an end, as U.S. forces capture the 8-square-mile island. Possessing Japan's last line of radar defense to warn against American air attacks, Iwo Jima is a strategically significant prelude to the invasion of Okinawa.
- APRIL** 12th After suffering a massive cerebral hemorrhage, President Roosevelt dies at the age of 63. Vice-President Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) is sworn in as President.
- 28th At Lake Como, in Italy, Benito Mussolini and 12 of his former Cabinet officers are executed. German forces in Italy will surrender unconditionally on the 29th.
- 30th With Russian shells falling on Berlin, Hitler marries Eva Braun in his bombproof Berlin bunker. He then poisons her and kills himself. His remains are never recovered.
- May** 7th Germany surrenders unconditionally to General Eisenhower at Rheims, France, and to the Soviets in Berlin. President Truman pronounces the following day, May 8, V-E Day. The U.S., Russia, England, and France agree to split occupied Germany into eastern and western halves.
- JULY** 30th Torpedoes sink the U.S.S. *Indianapolis* in the Indian Ocean.
- AUGUST** 6th The U.S. B-29 Superfortress, *Enola Gay*, drops an atomic bomb on the Japanese industrial city of Hiroshima. The city is leveled, and an estimated 100,000 people are killed immediately (another 100,000 will die later from radiation sickness and burns). On August 9, a second bomb will be dropped on the Japanese city of Nagasaki.



1945-continued

AUGUST 10th The Japanese surrender after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and U.S. President Truman declares that August 14th will be V-J (Victory over Japan) Day. To date, nearly 55 million people have died in the Second World War, including 25 million in the Soviet Union, nearly 8 million in China, and more than 6 million in Poland.

19th In the U.S., rationing of gasoline and fuel oil comes to an end.

SEPTEMBER 2nd General MacArthur accepts the formal, unconditional surrender of Japan in a ceremony aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

NOVEMBER 23rd Butter rationing comes to an end, and sugar is the only item that continues to be rationed in the U.S.

DECEMBER 15th A new election law is passed in Japan, at the urgency of the occupying Allied forces, which gives Japanese women voting rights.

27th The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development is created. Of the more than \$7 billion contributed by 21 countries, the U.S. has subscribed more than \$3 billion to the World Bank.

Adapted from: eHistory at The Department of History at Ohio State University website, <http://ehistory.osu.edu>.



Glossary

Latinos and World War II

Sources: Handbook of Texas Online and Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition by Merriam-Webster

American G.I. Forum American G. I. Forum is a civil-rights organization devoted to securing equal rights for Hispanic Americans and addressed veteran concern such as hospital care. The G.I. Forum was organized on March 26, 1948 in Corpus Christi, Texas and led by Hector P. Garcia. The first issue they dealt with was the failure of the Veterans Administration to deliver earned benefits to Mexican American veterans. The G.I. Forum became known nationally for its role in the Felix Longoria Affair. In this incident, the body of a soldier who had been killed in action in the last days of the war was being returned to his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas. The local funeral home refused to let Pvt. Longoria's family use its facilities for the wake because he was Mexican American and the funeral director worried that white customers would object. Through support of G.I. Forum and help by LBJ, Longoria was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. This event established the Forum as a civil rights advocate for Hispanics.

Civilian Conservation Corps President Roosevelt called an emergency session of congress on March 9, 1933 to hear and authorize his Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act, or more commonly known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program. The President proposed to recruit thousands of unemployed men into this program to do battle against the destruction and erosion of natural resources. CCC enrollees across the U.S. were credited with renewing the nation's decimated forests by planting an estimated 3 billion trees between 1933 and 1942. By the end of the program, over 3 million young men engaged in a massive salvage operation.

Civil Service The Civil Service are government jobs that are prized because they provide a steady paycheck and are generally well-paying. Examples: *police officers, fire fighters, civilians who work on military bases.*

The Draft Government policies that require citizens to serve in their armed forces. It is also known as mandatory military service, selective service or conscription.

D-Day June 6, 1944 is known as D-Day, the day 150,000 Allied forces invaded France on the beaches of Normandy during World War II.

Discrimination Prejudice; treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit. Examples: *racial discrimination; discrimination against foreigners.*

Great Depression The economic crisis beginning with the stock market crash in 1929 and continuing through the 1930s. With World War II came better economic times for Americans, as the war industries which provided supplies for the war resulted in new jobs.



G.I. Bill The G. I. Bill of Rights or Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for college or vocational education for returning World War II veterans (commonly referred to as GIs or G.I.s) as well as one-year of unemployment compensation. It also provided loans for returning veterans to buy homes and start businesses.

Honorable Discharge Discharge given to a soldier whose service has been honest and faithful, and who has been given a rating of ‘good’ – ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. Also called a White Discharge.

Mexican Revolution A popular revolution inspired by calls for social and political reform that led to the overthrow of dictator Porfirio Díaz of Mexico. Fought over a period of almost ten years from 1910; resulted in ouster of Porfirio Díaz from power; opposition forces led by Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. As a result of the unrest of the Mexican Revolution, many Mexican people fled to the United States, resulting in increased immigration of Mexican nationals in the early 1900s.

Patriotism The act of being loyal to one’s country and having pride in it. Especially relevant during periods of national turmoil, such as war.

Pearl Harbor On the morning of December 7, 1941, planes and midget submarines of the Imperial Japanese Navy commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, carried out a surprise assault on the United States Navy base at Pearl Harbor, and against the Army Air Corps and Marine air fields nearby on Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, now the State of Hawaii. This attack has been called the Bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Pearl Harbor but, most commonly, the Attack on Pearl Harbor or simply Pearl Harbor.

President Roosevelt Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States; elected four times; instituted New Deal to counter the great depression and led the country during World War II (1882-1945).

Rationing The system set up during World War II to make sure goods in short supply were available equally to all at fair prices. Purchases of about twenty products including sugar, meat, coffee, butter, and gasoline were controlled with special government coupons. The coupons had to be turned in as the items were purchased. The system is a good example of one way Americans on the “home front” shared the sacrifices needed to help win the war.

Squadron A Squadron is a grouping of aircraft, naval vessels, armored fighting vehicles or soldiers.

Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, or WAAC Over 150,000 American women served in the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), which was eventually shortened to WAC, during World War II. Members of the WAC were the first women other than nurses to serve within the ranks of the United States Army. Political and military leaders, faced with fighting a two-front war and supplying men and material for that war while continuing to send lend-lease material to the Allies, realized that women could supply the additional resources so desperately needed in the military and industrial sectors.



Narratives Story: Aurora Estrada Orozco

Themes: Personal Goals, courage, justice, discrimination, ethnic pride, education, women’s homefront contributions

Activity: The *Corrido* Challenge

Aurora Estrada Orozco was only about 4 when she came to the United States due to unrest in Mexico.

Her father, Lorenzo Estrada, was a bookkeeper at an American gold, silver and coal mining company in Serralvo, Nuevo Leon, until Pancho Villa’s men started sabotaging production. The company, known to Mrs. Orozco only as “La Fundacion,” decided to leave and offered Mr. Estrada a position in Mercedes, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley.

“We were very happy because we were coming to the United States,” Mrs. Orozco said.

Mrs. Orozco clearly remembers the culture shock she went through when arriving in the United States.

“In Mexico we were living better, but then we came to the U.S. and we had to start all over and we didn’t know how to speak English,” she said. They lived on a ranch where her older brothers and sisters worked picking cotton.

She started going to an American school but did not understand a word of English. Her parents put her in a private Mexican school until she knew how to read and write in Spanish. Then it would be easier to learn English.

When she was 9 and in second grade, she transferred to North Ward Elementary. Even then, the only time she used English was at school; only Spanish was spoken at home and in her neighborhood.

Mrs. Orozco clearly remembers she and her group of Mexican friends would sit in a corner of the cafeteria.

“The whites would make fun of us because we were eating taquitos,” Mrs. Orozco said.

During the Depression, young Aurora’s family, like most others, had financial problems. She and her brothers and sisters had to start working when they were very young. Mrs. Orozco started picking cotton with her father when she was 10.

“Even the white people from the northern states used to come down to the Valley and they used to come to the



Aurora Estrada Orozco in Mercedes, Texas, in the 1940s.



Aurora Estrada Orozco-continued

neighborhood ... asking for food," she recalled. Mrs. Orozco recalls her family giving food, but only food. Mrs. Orozco said the people in Mercedes called them "trampas" because they jumped on trains and came asking for food in the Mexican barrios.

It was a time when few people had telephones. People found out what was happening by listening to the radio. Aurora Estrada was 21 when the war started. She remembers how her father told everybody to gather around the radio in the living room to listen to President Roosevelt talk about it. People knew young men would be called to serve pretty soon.

"They called my brother and they called my cousin to go to war," Mrs. Orozco said. The Army also called her sister's husband, Lauro Galvan, who went to the Pacific. Her brother, Roberto, fought in the Battle of the Bulge as an Army infantryman. Her cousin, Amador Sanchez, was an Army medic at a hospital in England.

She said he was 45 miles away from Berlin when the war ended. He brought home the boots that he used throughout the war and told her that "sometimes they were full of blood, he said, sometimes they were full of mud, but he just kept them on." During the war, people in Mercedes often went to the train station to say goodbye to the boys who were leaving.

"We didn't have fiestas anymore," Mrs. Orozco said; the townspeople cried often and the Christmas holidays were sad. The Brownsville Herald published the names of men who were wounded or dead. In Mercedes, the first war dead was Miguel Gonzalez, a neighbor of Mrs. Orozco's, who died at "la invasion." It was the first military funeral the small town had seen.

Mrs. Orozco also talked about the rationing.

"You couldn't buy leather shoes," she said. The government wanted people to save the leather for the soldiers. She said they would go to Mexico and buy huaraches instead. They also did not have butter, so oleomargarine was introduced. They could not find sugar in Mercedes, so they went to Mexico to buy that and other supplies.

Since there were not enough men in Mercedes to do the work, Mrs. Orozco and her sisters began working in various jobs. Among the jobs available were making buttons from seashells and stitching uniforms for the military.

She also said men from Mexico started coming in.

"They were illegal, but they let them stay anyway because there was so much work and there was nobody to do it," she said.

Mrs. Orozco said war-time made a difference for her and other women. Before the war, it was considered a



Aurora Estrada Orozco-continued

disgrace for women to work outside of the home, but it became the norm during the war years. Mrs. Orozco said that during the war, she and her sisters were allowed to date, but there were no men to date. One store in Mercedes had male manikins and the owner of the store said girls went there to look at the manikins — so they could remember what boys looked like.

After the war was over, Mrs. Orozco said people went to the train station again to greet their boys.

“Some of them were crippled, some of them were blind and some of them would have one arm,” Mrs. Orozco said. But people were glad the men were coming back alive.

In 1949, Mrs. Orozco met her husband, Primitivo Orozco Vega, an immigrant from Guadalajara, Mexico, at Our Lady of Mercy’s Jamaica Dance, a Mexican fiesta.

Both Mrs. Orozco and her husband faced discrimination. One time, the couple sat in the white section of a movie theater. When she learned later about the segregated seating, she shrugged it off as ridiculous.

“My money is as good as their money,” she said.

Another time, Mrs. Orozco and her husband needed \$150 to buy supplies for his shoe making shop. Responding to a newspaper ad, Mrs. Orozco visited a man who made short-term loans. But the man, an Anglo, told her he did not lend money to Mexicans or blacks because “they didn’t know how to pay.” She responded that he should have specified that in his ad. The man did not like her tone of voice.

Her answer: “Maybe I was the one who had to come and talk to you like that.”

The man later called and told her he was going to lend them the money. They’ve become close friends since then.

“You have to speak out in these little towns,” Mrs. Orozco said.

The Orozcós have four daughter and two sons, all college graduates. Her husband died Oct. 4, 1989.

Mrs. Orozco was interviewed at Mexic-Arte Museum by Desirée Mata on Oct. 17, 2003, in Austin, Texas.



The *Corrido* Challenge

During The 1800s in Mexico, a type of song, the *corrido*, was developed. This song, like an English ballad serves to tell a tale in a simple, poetic song. Stories told through everyday language *corridos* were often based on actual events. The *corrido* came to serve as a musical form of spreading important news, especially along the U.S.-Mexico border. Thus, *corridos* are referred to as “*musica de la frontera*,” border music.

The structure of the *corrido* follows two forms. First of all, *corridos* have 36 lines, which can be written out in 6 stanzas of 6 lines, or in 9 stanzas of 4 lines. Each line contains 7 to 10 syllables.

In the 6 stanza verse, the rhyme scheme is ABCBDB, and in the 4 line stanza the scheme is ABCD, or AABB (a couplet).

The first stanza gives the listener the setting of the story, including a specific date and place.

Many *corridos* praised the feats of heroes and the noble deeds of just men who challenged unjust men and situations. **Challenge yourself to writing a stanza or two based on one of the Latinos or Latinas you read about.** On the next page is an example about Aurora Estrada Orozco, a woman who stood up against discrimination and fought for the rights of her family and community.

Information about *corridos* was taken from the following website:

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3738/3738_mexRev_definition.pdf

To learn more about *corridos*, a suggested resource is: Paredes, Americo. *With His Pistol In His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.

TEKS Correlation:

TEKS 5.22(B): *Culture*: Student can explain how examples of art, music, literature reflect the times during which they were created.



Aurora Estrada Orozco's Corrido

From Mexico to the Rio Grand' they came,
To escape a revolution, their aim
Aurora's family sought a good life,
But instead they got a lot of strife

At school, separate they had to sit,
Being Mexican meant you didn't fit
Discrimination she did face,
Proudly Aurora stood up for her race

She picked cotton at the age of ten
The Great Depression happened then
Then came World War II
Aurora's family knew what they had to do

The men, they went off to fight,
Aurora worked day and night
Sewing a soldier's uniform
Work for women was now the norm

War ends, and soldiers were greeted,
Some crippled, blind, but not defeated
The war of prejudice continued still
But Aurora had an iron will

"You have to speak out," she said.
When talked down to, she would not bow her head
A good life she did achieve
In herself and her race she did believe

Narratives Story: Pablo Cavazos

Themes: New life experiences, military service, travel

Activity: World War II: Life Changing Experiences Exercise

Pablo Cavazos With 18 pairs of boots and 15 cowboy hats, Pablo Cavazos, 78, is a walking specimen of Texas pride.

His advice to young people is simple: Get a good start in the military.

“If they go into the military, they’ll learn a lot of things there,” Mr. Cavazos said.

In 1943, Mr. Cavazos was drafted into the service on Jan. 14, 1943, and left his family in Corpus Christi to receive training in California as a military carpenter, although carpentry was not unfamiliar work to him. At age 16, Mr. Cavazos had begun work at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station base as a welder’s and carpenter’s helper. Three years later, he was a soldier in World War II.

In 1944 Mr. Cavazos was shipped to England, where he worked as a truck driver. It took nine days to travel from Boston, Mass., to Liverpool, England, where he stayed until 1946.

Although he made only \$66 a month, Cavazos does not have many complaints. In his own words, his military experience was “pretty good.” In fact, by his recollections everything was “pretty good,” including the people and his interaction with them, the food and the ship.

After the war, Mr. Cavazos was discharged and went to work in Chicago for a time where he met Gloria, now his wife of 51 years.

In 1950 Mr. Cavazos came back home to Corpus Christi, bringing Gloria with him. The couple had a daughter, Esther, and now have a grandson, Michael.

He worked for a while as a truck driver before going into the welding business. He then worked for the Lone Star Liquor Distributing Co. for 17 years.



Pablo Cavazos in uniform, in the service 1943.



Pablo Cavazos-continued

A self-taught man, Mr. Cavazos is called “Mr. Fix-it” by his friends and family. From TVs to radios, Mr. Cavazos is the handyman people often come to for repairs. His relatives say he can fix anything.

The war is over now, but Mr. Cavazos still likes to meet with his old military friends in a café called the Taqueria Mexico. Mr. Cavazos, however, likes to call it the “Café Bengay,” because it is a hangout for “old-timers.” He and his friends get together there and talk about the old days.

Mr. Cavazos was born in Corpus Christi on Jan. 25, 1924. His parents, Jose Guerrera Cavazos and Manuela Peña Cavazos, were originally from Monterrey, Mexico. They moved to Corpus Christi in 1915, the year they were married. His father worked in the Corpus Christi Cotton Mill to provide for his family, which included three boys - all of whom served in the military - and two girls.

In Mr. Cavazos’ home sits a framed picture of him in a white shirt and white tie, wearing his military insignia and hat. The picture was taken shortly after his entry into the service, and his parents framed it with both the Mexican and American flags, as a symbol of both his patriotism to the United States and his Mexican heritage. The plaque underneath reads: “Pablo Cavazos entered American forces January 22, 1943. May God see that he returns after performing his duty.”



Pablo Cavazos, left, with fellow soldier Jose Vegas in Los Angeles in 1943 at a ‘picture-taking place’ where military staff posed for pictures to send home.



Name _____

Date _____

World War II: Life Changing Experiences



Pablo Cavazos, left, with fellow soldier Jose Vegas in Los Angeles in 1943 at a 'picture-taking place' where military staff posed for pictures to send home.

Study the photograph above. What can you infer about how the soldiers were feeling?



Name _____

Date _____

Pablo Cavazos was drafted into the service on January 14, 1943. At age 16, he began work at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station base as a welder’s and carpenter’s helper. Three years later, he was a soldier in World War II. In 1944, Mr. Cavazos was shipped to England where he worked as a truck driver. He stayed in Liverpool, England until 1946. When interviewed about his WWII experiences, Mr. Cavazos gave this advice to young people, “If they go into the military, they’ll learn a lot of things there.”

What do you think Mr. Cavazos learned while in the military? What sort of life-changing experiences could he have had?

TEKS Correlations
TEKS 5.19(A): <i>Citizenship</i> : The student can explain how individuals participate in civic affairs.
TEKS 5.5(A): <i>History</i> : The students can analyze various issues and events of the 20th Century such as world wars.



Narratives Story: Carmen Contreras Bozak

Themes: Women's wartime contributions, life experiences, courage, world travel

Activity: One Woman's Experience in World War II

Carmen Bozak's only memory of Dec. 7, 1941 - the day Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese - is of a good friend and co-worker being stranded after her date heard about the attack on the car radio. The woman's date stopped the car in the middle of nowhere and told her to get out because he had to return to his base.

A policeman picked up Mrs. Bozak's friend from the rural Virginia road and drove her to a nearby Salvation Army office, where she was given a bus ticket home to Washington, D.C.

"She was the lucky one," Mrs. Bozak said. "She had a date. That's all I remember about that day."

Little did Mrs. Bozak know that six months later she would be pulled into World War II after enlisting as a member of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, or WAAC. The group later became known simply as the Women's Army Corps.

Today, Mrs. Bozak's life is still dominated by her experiences during World War II and her devotion to war veterans. In 1989, she started a chapter of WAC Vets in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., where she currently lives. She was the chapter's first president and also founded a chapter of the Society of Military Widows in 1998.

When Mrs. Bozak isn't attending these organization's monthly meetings, she spends her time volunteering at the Oakland Park VA Outpatient Clinic, where she does administrative work, attending Veterans of Foreign Wars meetings, playing in her church poker club and traveling. Much of her traveling includes trips to WAC reunions and conventions.

Mrs. Bozak fondly recalls her memories of traveling overseas and of the friendships she made while in the Army. What she remembered less clearly, though, is her life before she entered the service. She says that part of her life seems like a century ago.

She was born Carmen Contreras on New Year's Eve, 1919, in Cayay, Puerto Rico, near San Juan, the oldest of three children. She attended elementary school in Puerto Rico, where her mother, Lila Baudilia Lugo Torres, worked as a seamstress and raised her children by herself.



Carmen Bozak in uniform, overseas in the service.



Carmen Contreras Bozak-continued

The family moved to New York City, and young Carmen attended Julia Richman High School. Upon graduating from high school, she went to work for the National Youth Administration. Shortly afterwards, she took the Civil Service test and took a job as a payroll clerk in the War Department in Washington.

Mrs. Bozak said the job at the War Department was responsible for igniting her patriotism and excitement at the beginning of the war, and is what ultimately drove her to join the WAAC.

“Oh, I had to go,” Mrs. Bozak said. “I thought, it’ll be a change. I’ll get to travel. I was so happy that I did join, that I got a good job.”

In January 1942, Mrs. Bozak, as one of 195 members of the 149th WAAC Company, set sail from New York’s harbor for Europe. She remembers watching her ship pass by the Statue of Liberty and realizing that they were sailing off to battle.

Mrs. Bozak said the women that comprised the 149th were chosen for their ability to speak more than one language. Mrs. Bozak felt special to be among them, she said.

“I was only out of basic training not two months, and I was going overseas already,” she said. “I was so happy, even though I got seasick.”

Mrs. Bozak was stationed in Algiers for the majority of her time overseas. While there she performed the duties of a Teletype operator, transmitting encoded messages to the battlefield.

Algiers was not far from battlefield action. Mrs. Bozak recalled that during her 18 months there she witnessed four air raids and the dropping of a bomb near one of the residences.

Mrs. Bozak said she and one of her friends seldom sought cover like the rest of the women in her unit. She said they liked to go up on the roof of the hotel where they worked nights to watch the artillery fire.

“We were never afraid,” Mrs. Bozak said. “Some girls were scared, but I never was.”

After her time in Algiers, Mrs. Bozak spent a short time in Italy before she returned to the United States.

She was discharged as a Technician 4th grade, and earned several medals, including the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, 2 Battle Stars, a World War II Victory Medal, an American Campaign Medal, a WAAC Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

After coming home, an eye infection she had contracted in Algiers flared up, and she was sent to Valley Forge General Hospital in Pennsylvania in July 1945, which turned out to be a fortunate twist of events.

During a trip back to the hospital from Washington, Mrs. Bozak met her future husband, Theodore J. Bozak, who was also a patient at the hospital. After dating for less than five months, the two married.



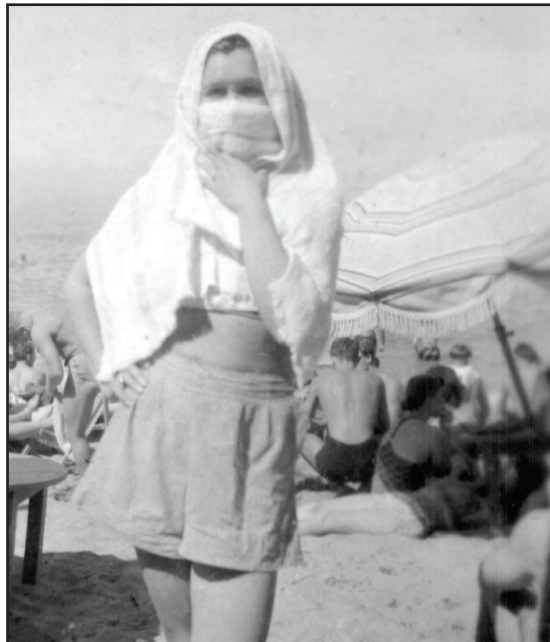
Carmen Contreras Bozak-continued

“That was my lucky day (the day he was transferred to Valley Forge),” Mrs. Bozak said. “That was the day I met my husband.”

The couple was married for 46 years until his death in 1991. They had two sons, Brian and Robert, and a daughter, Carmen.

Mrs. Bozak said her Puerto Rican heritage never deterred her from accomplishing any of her goals and that she was never the victim of discrimination based on her culture or her gender.

She said she did not teach her children to speak Spanish because her husband was of Polish decent and did not speak the language. In retrospect, Mrs. Bozak said she has some regrets about letting her heritage slip away, “and not teaching the children the Spanish language.”



Carmen Bozak at France Beach outside of Algiers in 1943.

Carmen Contreras Bozak-continued



Carmen Bozak in Rome with a carabinieri in 1944.

It has been more than 60 years since Mrs. Bozak served the U.S. Army in World War II, but her time in the war continues to be a part of her everyday life.

Whether she is remembering her days of USO dances and of meeting the pope while on a pass in Italy, or is attending one of her many meetings, Mrs. Bozak is living a life whose course was determined by a simple decision to enlist in the Army.

At the time of this interview, Mrs. Bozak was looking forward to attending the 60th anniversary of the 149th WAAC Company in Des Moines, Iowa. She said the number of participants at the reunion was expected to be less than half of the first reunion in Hot Springs, Ark., in 1960, as many participants are “too old, or too sick to travel.”

But Mrs. Bozak said she wouldn't have missed the event for anything.



Name _____

Date _____

Carmen Contreras Bozak
One Woman's Experience in World War II

Study Carmen Bozak's photo of her in Rome in the *Narratives* article. After reading her story, what do you think she might have been feeling?

What do you think Mrs. Bozak learned while in the military? What sort of life-changing experiences could she have had?

If you could talk to Mrs. Bozak, what would you want to tell her? What questions might you ask her?



Name _____

Date _____

Today it is very common for women to serve in the military. Does it surprise you that women served in the military during World War II? Why or why not?

What role did Mrs. Bozak play in helping the United States during the war? How do you think her experience might have been different from that of a woman who was not Hispanic?

TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.26: *Social Studies Skills*: The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.

TEKS 5.25(A) and (B) *Social Studies Skills*: The student applies critical thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including interviews (A) and (B) draw inferences and conclusions

Narratives Stories: Richard Candelaria

Themes: Military service, honors, heroism, courage, new experiences

Activities: Roles of Latinos & Latinas in Films of 1940s, Film Strip Animation

Growing up in Southern California during the 1920s and 1930s, Richard G. Candelaria would bike up to the top of Mulholland Drive to watch the P-38 twin-engine fighter planes take off and land from Burbank. He read magazine articles about World War I bi-planes, about people like the Red Baron and the Lone Eagle; they inspired him as a boy.

“I wanted to be a fighter pilot,” Mr. Candelaria said. “That was my one wish.”

Years later, Mr. Candelaria lived out his wish when he served as a World War II fighter pilot, destroying German Luftwaffe fighter planes. He shot down six enemy planes, a feat that earned him the distinction of “ace.” It’s an accomplishment that he is proud of.

“It’s the most exclusive club, or association, in the world,” he said of the American Fighter Aces Association, of which he is a charter member. “You can’t buy your way in. You can’t influence your way in. You can’t talk your way in. There’s only one way in: aerial combat.”

Mr. Candelaria was born July 14, 1922, in El Paso, Texas. When he was only 9 weeks old, he and his mother returned to California.

“My parents wanted me born in Texas,” Mr. Candelaria said. “They were on an extended visit to Texas where both paternal and maternal grandparents lived.”

He was the only child in his family. Mr. Candelaria was 7 years old when his father, an architect, died. His maternal grandmother, two aunts and an uncle then moved to Southern California to live with the family. For four years they lived comfortably despite the Depression of the 1930s, Mr. Candelaria said.

After he graduated from Theodore Roosevelt High School in February 1939, Mr. Candelaria passed preliminary entrance exams for the Air Force flying program. He began studying at the University of Southern



Richard Candelaria on April 7, 1945 at the Royal Air Force base in Watersham, England.



Richard Candelaria-continued

California seven months later to meet the two-year college requirement. During this time, he maintained his interest in airplanes by working part time at Miller Dial & Instrument, a company that produced instrument dials for aircraft.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, Mr. Candelaria knew his time to fight for the nation soon would come. After years of waiting, he was accepted into the flying program of the Army Air Force in January 1943.

Mr. Candelaria began his training at the Santa Ana preflight base in Southern California and traveled to several training locations in California and Arizona. In January 1944, Mr. Candelaria graduated as a second lieutenant.

“I was selected and assigned to Williams Field and Luke Field, Arizona, as a flight instructor, teaching advanced pilot instrument flying and fighter aircraft gunnery,” Mr. Candelaria said.

In May 1944, when the call came out for fighter pilots, Mr. Candelaria rushed to the nearest headquarters to register.

“That may sound funny, but this is what you wanted to do, this is what you trained for, this is why you even joined. So therefore, I was happy,” Mr. Candelaria said. “I was eager to sign up. I was hoping they would take me — and they did.”

Mr. Candelaria’s career as a fighter pilot took off from there. After a series of fighter tactics training programs across the country, Mr. Candelaria was assigned to the 435th fighter squadron, of the 479th fighter group, 8th fighter command, and based at the Watersham Royal Air Force Base in Ipswich, England. He was one of only two Latinos in his squadron, and one of only three Hispanics in the entire group — there were three squadrons, or 10,000 to 12,000 men, per group, Mr. Candelaria said.

He recalled the camaraderie of the Air Force fondly.

As a fighter pilot, he flew P-38s, twin-engine fighters, and P-51 Mustangs, long-range fighter planes. His mission was to escort and to protect bombers to their targets and back.

His greatest personal victory occurred April 7, 1945, when he shot down four enemy aircraft. That day, because of a slight mechanical problem, Lt. Candelaria flew separate from his squadron, and while alone he encountered two jet fighters and fifteen ME-109s, top German fighters. As he radioed his squadron for help, he engaged the lead aircraft of the group. Eventually, Lt. Candelaria shot the lead aircraft down, along with three others, before his squadron was able to help.

One week after that momentous personal triumph, on Friday, April 13, Lt. Candelaria’s good fortune reversed when his own plane was shot down over Germany.



Richard Candelaria-continued

“For those of us who are superstitious,” Mr. Candelaria said, “it was a good day to stay in bed.”

That morning, Lt. Candelaria had flown with his squadron to East Prussia, east of Berlin. Spying enemy aircraft parked on the ground in Rostock, he decided to destroy as many as he could. But he broke a cardinal rule: He made a second pass on a ground target, which enabled the anti-aircraft artillery ground troops to zero in on him.

As he flew across the airfield, guns shot up everywhere, along with many cannons — “the famous and feared 88 mm artillery guns” Mr. Candelaria said. He saw his engine catch fire and steered his plane southwest, toward Allied lines on the other side of the Elbe River. He bailed out of his aircraft.

“The chute opened and I came down,” Mr. Candelaria said. “All of a sudden it was so quiet and peaceful. ... I almost enjoyed it.”

He was slightly wounded; glass and metal shrapnel had punctured his skin, but his helmet had mostly protected his head.

“I felt pretty lucky,” he said.

As soon as he landed, Lt. Candelaria saw a truck of German soldiers firing at something, perhaps him. He ran into a nearby woods and buried his parachute, waiting until dark to start walking out.

Under cover of dark, with the help of a compass so small he could fit it under his tongue, he made his way southwest, in the direction of the Allies. On his second day, Lt. Candelaria encountered two German soldiers in a field of tall grass. He tried to surrender — waving a white scarf — but they fired at him. He fired back, and killed both.

Lt. Candelaria then changed directions and headed south. A day and a half later, he came upon a stream he could drink from. However, two civilians, using pitchforks to bale hay, saw him and charged. Lt. Candelaria shot and killed them.

Lt. Candelaria buried his cartridges and changed directions again — this time taking refuge in an abandoned cabin. Local civilians, however, reported him to military authorities and were ready to lynch the American themselves. The German military, however, got to him first and took him prisoner, where he said he was treated well.

One German officer noted that he had relatives in Wisconsin, Mr. Candelaria said. A German doctor treated his wounds, using Schnapps to sterilize the cuts.

He recalled one driver saying, “You’re a soldier. I’m a soldier. When the war is over, we can go home.”

Lt. Candelaria was a prisoner of war for 31 days, until he and a few other POWs decided to escape. They hijacked a German automobile, taking a German captain hostage to reach Allied lines. Mr. Candelaria made



Richard Candelaria-continued

it safely back to his squadron, his country and his family.

Mr. Candelaria later became a charter member of the American Fighter Aces Association, one of his proudest accomplishments. He also earned many awards, including the Distinguished Flying Cross, Silver Star, the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, the Purple Heart and three Presidential citations.

Mr. Candelaria married Betty Jean Landreth in 1953. The couple recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They had two daughters, Camdelyn Marie and Calia Monique.

Mr. Candelaria has also had a very successful business career, establishing various business enterprises and working in business management and administration, all without the benefit of a college degree.

“I never received a degree, a lot of education but no degree,” Mr. Candelaria said. “I pulled a, at Microsoft, a Bill Gates thing.”



**Richard Candelaria, 1st Lt. 435th Fighter Squadron
U.S.A.F., December 5, 1944**



Narratives Stories: Saragosa A. Garcia

Themes: Military service, honors, heroism, courage, new experiences

Activities: Roles of Latinos & Latinas in Films of 1940s, Film Strip Animation

Saragosa A. Garcia always marched to the beat of a different drummer.

And his ability to play music, to change the tempo of his life, along with the assurance from carrying a treasured Holy Bible and his mother's prayers, may have helped him through tough times in World War II and in a segregated Texas.

Mr. Garcia born on Oct. 22, 1922 in Corpus Christi, Texas, to a family of musicians. From what he says, Mr. Garcia was destined to play the drums.

He had four older brothers, and his parents had a brand-new Model "T" Ford. His family moved to a small farm the family called El Rancho Colorado (The Red Farm) in Rosenberg. The dad worked part-time as a carpenter in the area.

Mr. Garcia smiled as he revealed his father's other job title, playing music.

And sometimes, his dad had another sideline.

"I'll tell you this, he was a bootlegger. He sold whiskey," Mr. Garcia said.

He started school at Robert E. Lee Elementary in Rosenberg and had problems from the very beginning with his teacher who "was about 90 years old."

"She didn't want us to play with the (what Mr. Garcia called) Bohemians — you know, the white folks," he said. The school was segregated, and his teacher wouldn't promote him to the next grade level at the same pace as the white students in his class. He remembered how the Hispanic students — including his brothers and sisters — learned how to dig holes with a shovel outside, instead of taking a recess. And while the Anglo children took their recess, the Hispanic children were in the classroom.

"I was in the third grade for three or four years," Mr. Garcia said. His dad finally got fed up with the discrimination his kids received at school.



Saragosa Garcia on the border between Luxembourg and Belgium in 1944.



Saragosa A. Garcia-continued

“My children didn’t come here to learn how to dig holes,” he told the teacher. He took the kids out of Robert E. Lee and moved the family to Houston to attend Jones School. In 1935, at age 13, Mr. Garcia finally passed to the fourth grade.

Mr. Garcia remembered a certain teacher he had, a Mrs. Smith, who gave him a Bible. “I still have that Bible today,” he said.

Shortly after they moved to Houston, Mr. Garcia’s dad stuck a nail right through his hand and was not able to work. The family moved again to Rosenberg, a “Bohemian” town to pick cotton on a farm for a month. Then they moved to town.

“I was the oldest, so I had to start working,” he said. He sold candy, delivered newspapers and worked at a fruit stand in Houston until he turned 20. “I didn’t want to go to school anymore.”

Along the way, he discovered his love for playing the drums. “I learned music from watching my brothers,” he said.

In 1942, Mr. Garcia’s entire life changed when he was drafted into the Army. He was sent to Fort Bliss in El Paso for training with a crew of four other men to be anti-aircraft gunners. He remembered learning how to shoot at a moving target. He said it was difficult because if they missed the target, they could do some real damage, “If we shot too far off, we’d shoot the plane!”

“Sometimes, we took a week or two of infantry training in the desert — with all the snakes,” he said. This desert training was in nearby Las Cruces, N.M.

In 1943, his unit took an eight-day train ride to Camp Pickett, Va. Compared to the hot climate of El Paso, the weather in Virginia was almost unbearable. “It was so cold there!” He said.

As part of their training, they had to swim in frigid water. “We would swim with no clothes. Nothing,” said Mr. Garcia. “We were planning for D-day.”

Shortly after celebrating New Year’s of 1944 at Camp Kilmer, N.J., Mr. Garcia joined more than 15,000 troops on a ship to Europe.

“We went across the Hudson River and saw a big old ship with 20,000 soldiers on it,” he said. He boarded the Queen Elizabeth, the world’s largest ship. Eight days later, on Jan. 8, the Queen Elizabeth docked in Scotland.

British and American officials welcomed the troops aboard the ship, and Mr. Garcia remembers hearing Bing Crosby singing “The Funny Old Hills.” Nearby, women from the Red Cross served coffee, doughnuts, candy and cigarettes.



Saragosa A. Garcia-continued

Once arriving in Scotland, they took a train to the south of England in preparation to cross the English Channel. On Feb. 20, 1944, Garcia was assigned to Battery B of the 197th Anti- Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons (AAA-AW) Battalion (Self-Propelled) attached to support the 16th Infantry Regiment of the First Infantry Division. They trained in England until heading for Normandy's Omaha Beach.

June 6, 1944, the first day of the Normandy Invasion, Mr. Garcia's captain said, "This is the day you need to start praying."

Mr. Garcia came from a strong Pentecostal background, and he believed that he had his faith to thank for his survival. "I carried that Bible Mrs. Smith gave me on all the time," he said.

In remarks to the Project after the interview, Mr. Garcia wrote that he was in the second wave of American soldiers to land in Normandy.

"We were supposed to land after the combat engineers," he wrote. "So we had a hard time getting over the hill; we had to wait 'til the engineers make a road.

"A sniper shot at me from a hill and just barely missed," he said. "And I was laying down and praying for some guy to make a road so we could get by." His prayers were answered when an engineer cleared a road for them to cross. "There were bodies all over the place and ships burning," Mr. Garcia said.

After his close encounter with death, Mr. Garcia saw action in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland before entering Germany.

On Dec. 16, 1944 in eastern Belgium, Garcia heard a voice on the radio warn, "Everybody, get out of here now. The Germans are 10 miles away." This marked the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, which has been called the worst battle in history in terms of losses to American forces. More than a million men fought in the snow, and at least 19,000 Americans died.

One leader said to his men, "There are two types of people who will stay: the dead and those who are going to die." Mr. Garcia was one of the lucky ones. He put his half-track into four-wheel drive and made it out of the battle with no wounds. He was with an antiaircraft artillery battery attached to the 16th Infantry Regiment. His unit, Battery B of the 197th AAA-AW Battalion (SP), protected the soldiers from the with air, protecting the quartermaster transporting ammunition to the front lines.

When the war ended, Mr. Garcia did not go home immediately. First, he had to guard a prisoner of war camp in Germany. He remembered one night when he was on guard by himself. His sergeant said, "Anybody who comes through here — kill him."



Saragosa A. Garcia-continued

Mr. Garcia heard footsteps early in the morning, and he started shaking as he said, “Oh Lord, please help me.” It turned out that it was just a group of people going to church. Once again, Mr. Garcia had his religion to thank. “The Lord helped me not to fire,” he said.

Cpl. Garcia was discharged in 1945, having earned an EAME Campaign Medal, with five Bronze Stars, a Victory Medal with one Bronze Arrowhead, a Sharp Shooter medal, a Half Track Medal, for being a driver, and a Good Conduct Medal.

He moved back to his home in Rosenberg where he could resume life as it had been before the war. He combined his love of music with his faith by playing for his church and even played the drums in a country-western band. “We used to play all over the place,” he said. His band played at parks, parties, weddings and hotels.

“I even played with a symphony. I didn’t know how to read the music so I just followed signals,” Mr. Garcia said.

In 1952, he was married and moved to Houston, where he and his wife, Ophelia (Turnini) still live today. They had two sons and a daughter.

Mr. Garcia later worked at a shipyard, where he said discrimination was apparent. His supervisor assigned him to “Mexican labor” and only gave the white workers the good jobs, he said. They had separate facilities for the “whites,” “colored” and “Mexicans.”

Mr. Garcia sued the shipyard for discrimination, and won. His action changed in the way the company treated minorities, and the shipyard was forced to grant everyone equal facilities.

Mr. Garcia decided he wanted to do something more with his life. He applied and was accepted as an automotive mechanic for the U.S. Postal Service. While still playing music all over town with his band, he retired after 28 years with the Postal Service.

“My wife asked me, ‘How in the hell did you do all this with only a fifth-grade education?’ ” Mr. Garcia said.

Saragosa Garcia just marches to the beat of his own drum.