

ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

HAYDEN BARKER

An interview conducted on

February 16, 2017

Interviewer: Paige Bell

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

“War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, War World I to the Present”

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Hayden Barker are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on January 24, 2017.

This interview was conducted as a course assignment for a class in the Department of History at Angelo State University in collaboration with the *War Stories* Project.

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The electronic file and complete transcript of this interview were processed in the Department of History at Angelo State University and are available at the Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

BARBER: Okay.

BELL: Okay, we're good. Okay. So, what is your name?

BARBER: Hayden Hermann Barber.

BELL: When and where were you born?

BARBER: Junction, Texas in 1931.

BELL: Where did you grow up?

BARBER: I grew up in Sonora, Texas.

BELL: Um-hum, okay. And how do you define West Texas?

BARBER: The only place in the world to live.

BELL: Where does it begin?

BARBER: I guess when I was a little boy. I never wanted to live anywhere else.

BELL: What do you think the difference is between West Texans and Texans from other regions of the state?

BARBER: West Texans are probably more . . . well-mannered.

BELL: I agree. Um how would you characterize West Texans' relationship to the military?

BARBER: I didn't like it at all. I don't know about the rest of them. [Both laugh]

BELL: Oh gosh, okay. Um when and where did you enter in the armed forces?

BARBER: At Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

BELL: And which branch did you serve in?

BARBER: In the Army.

BELL: And what were your years of service?

BARBER: Fifty-two and '53.

BELL: All right. Uh during your years of service, were you primarily in the enlisted ranks, a non-commission officer, an officer, a warrant officer?

BARKER: I . . . I wound up as a . . . I started out, of course, as a non-commissioned, but I wound up being a corporal at the end.

BELL: Really? Um in which military conflict did you take part?

BARKER: Korean.

BELL: And why did you enlist in the armed forces?

BARKER: I did not enlist. I was drafted.

BELL: Oh, really? Okay . . . well, then . . . I didn't know that. That's pretty cool.

BARKER: [Laughs]

BELL: I guess that's not cool for you, but . . .

BARKER: [Laughs] No.

BELL: What was your training like?

BARKER: Uh I trained in California, and it was so cold and wet . . . it just seemed like it rained every day. But that's uh . . . uh I wasn't happy. I'll just say that.

BELL: Yeah. Um what were race relations like when you were enlisted? Or when you were drafted?

BARKER: We were still pretty . . . Well, uh we had people, lot of people, coming in from the East, and the West Texas boys just . . . We didn't get along very well at all.

BELL: Really? Did you find . . . oh, wait. Were you going to say something? Were you going to say something?

BARKER: No.

BELL: Oh, okay. Did you find your service challenging?

BARKER: Very challenging, yes, because I didn't like it.

BELL: You didn't like it? Why?

BARKER: I just didn't like for them to tell me when I could eat, when I could go to the bathroom, when to get up, when to go to bed. I just didn't like that.

BELL: What conception did you have of the United States at the time of your enlistment?

BARKER: Well, I loved it. You know, I . . . yes.

BELL: What did America symbolize to you?

BARKER: Well, it's the only place in the world to live.

BELL: Um-hum. What did you think it stood for?

BARKER: Well, I think it takes care of its people and, you know, it's . . . it's not like dictators. You kind of have a . . . you have a kind of say in what goes on.

BELL: Yeah, I agree. Um so, were you deployed overseas?

BARKER: In Korea.

BELL: Um if so, what did you understand about the mission you were being asked to complete?

BARKER: Uh, it was a . . . I really didn't understand why we were there. Uh, I just really didn't understand why we were there. It was "conflict," they said, it wasn't a war. I just didn't . . . I didn't really understand why we were there.

BELL: Okay. What unit or units did you serve in during your deployment?

BARKER: What?

BELL: Say it again?

BARKER: Yeah.

BELL: Okay. What units did you serve in during your deployment?

BARKER: Oh, gosh . . .

BELL: If you can't remember, that's okay.

BARKER: Honey, I can't. It's been so long.

BELL: That's okay.

BARKER: I can't . . . I can't remember what unit I was in.

BELL: Um, did you . . . did you serve in direct combat during your deployment?

BARKER: Yes, for eight months.

BELL: Really? What was that like? Hard?

BARKER: Yes, very hard and scary.

BELL: Scary . . .

BARKER: If somebody tells you they weren't scared, they're . . . they're lying to you. I'll tell you that.

BELL: I bet. Were you wounded in action?

BARKER: I was twice, but it wasn't bad enough to get a Purple Heart. I was . . . I was a martyr. Shrapnel got . . . I got hit in the back with a . . . with a concussion grenade and then I got . . . some shrapnel hit me in the back of my leg, but it wasn't good enough for a . . .

BELL: Wow.

BARKER: . . . for a Purple Heart.

BELL: Um did you become a prisoner of war?

BARKER: No.

BELL: No. That's good. Um, what did you think of the local inhabitants that you encountered?

BARKER: They just really had it tough. I'm sure it's better now, but it was just . . . They were . . . they were so far behind everybody.

BELL: Um, when you interacted with the local inhabitants, what did you think their conceptions were of the United States?

BARKER: I felt like they were very happy we were there, I really did.

BELL: I imagine. Um did you ever engage them in a conversation about what America meant to you?

BARKER: No.

BELL: Okay. How did your service influence or affect your family at home?

BARKER: I was single and my mother uh wrote me a letter every day I was in the service; she never missed a day. So, I'm sure it was very hard on my parents, being the only one in the family.

BELL: Oh, I bet. Uh, what are your most vivid memories of your time in service?

BARKER: Probably the . . . the uh . . . my very best friend that I met over there, we were on Heartbreak Ridge, and uh he came over there a couple of months after I was over there and we

became very good friends and still are. He lives in New Albany again, but we're still very good friends.

BELL: That's awesome. What sorts of technology did you use in the service?

BARKER: Just the M1 rifle.

BELL: Um did you expect to face any challenges when you returned to civilian life?

BARKER: No, I did not.

BELL: Okay. Um *did* you face any challenges when you returned to civilian life?

BARKER: No, I did not.

BELL: Did being from Texas shape your years in service in any way?

BARKER: I think so, because we were pretty well . . . you know, we were . . . we were disciplined very well, and I think it helped. I really do. Okay, okay.

BELL: After your time in the military, has your conception of Texas changed?

BARKER: It didn't. I was still very happy to be here.

BELL: Um-hum, okay. Um so, why or why not? Why or why not that your conception . . . Like, why did your conception not change?

BARKER: I guess I was just a true Texan . . . true . . . true West Texan.

BELL: I agree. Um after your time in the military, has your conception of the United States changed?

BARKER: It didn't, except that I just always thought we stuck our nose into some places that we didn't need to.

BELL: Um-hum. Um how do you feel about your military service, looking back?

BARKER: I wouldn't take a million for it and I wouldn't go back for a million.

BELL: Really? Um do you have any advice for the young men and women who are just entering the service?

BARKER: Yes. I think they need to be very disciplined, and they'll get along a whole lot better if they do what they. . . uh your senior people tell you to do.

BELL: Okay. And do you have any items that you wish to share with the project?

BARKER: No.

BELL: All right. And would you like to share anything else about your service?

BARKER: Not really. I just uh . . . the only thing . . . I just uh was so happy to get out [both laugh].
That's all.