

Joseph D. Hutchison: And anyway I went through one month of training at Arlington, Texas. They were emphasizing that, “You ought to learn code,” because, you know, “That’s a big deal; your life may depend on it.” So, I memorized code ... and learned how to send and receive it. And just on my own. And when we finished that month of training, they made me a staff sergeant. And I was the only one of the bunch that became a staff sergeant. But, we got on... loaded on the trucks to go to the railroad station out of there. And these guys were laughing and joking, and this sergeant comes walking to the back and he started giving us a hard time about talking. He said, “We gave you those stripes and we can take them away.” And I was just mad enough I ... [Chuckle] told him, “Look, I didn’t ask for these stripes if you don’t [sic] want ‘em, take them back.” So he ... I lost one stripe. [Laugh]

Janis Kozlowski: Did you really? [Both laugh]

Joseph D. Hutchison: [Laugh] So then, the train we got on there was, [Chuckle] I think it was a Civil War thing - it had no heat. We had been down in the Gulf of Mexico for the month and had gotten used to the warm weather. The train was a coal fired engine. There were three coaches on it and half of them had broken windows; the toilets didn’t work. They were so ancient they had a stove in the corner for heat. But, there was no coal or anything to burn. So then everybody got sick on the way. And we all had diarrhea ... and the toilets didn’t work, and it was a mess. And as we crossed the; Green River in Helper, Utah, there was a freight train that was pulled over to let us go through. But, somebody forgot to throw the switch back, so we rammed into the rear end of the parked freight train. The engineer had seen it and tried to stop. He and the fireman both jumped, but the train did go in, and we went right through the caboose on the freight train and tilted a couple of cars off the tracks – boxcars. And they broke open. This was Thanksgiving Day, 1942, at Helper, Utah. They pulled us back off of the wreck area, and then took us into town. And they had to clean the train up, so [Chuckle] we had Thanksgiving dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Helper, Utah. And then they took us on to Salt Lake City.