

**GAUDIAN, Martin**  
**Interview notes**  
**February 16, 2011**

The interviewee introduces himself as Martin Gaudian, born in Paullina, Iowa on October 27, 1922; states that he had two brothers, one was born in 1920 or 1921, and one was born in 1928 or 1929; says also has a sister; tells that his parents were named Albert and Wilhelmina (Dora) Gaudian; discusses his father's background, that he was born in Pomerania in Germany, and that he came to the United States when he was nine years old; says that Wilhelmina was born in Chicago; describes how his father spoke German and how they attended a church which had services in German and English, but when Hitler came to power, the services in German were discontinued; claims that he spoke a little German at home; tells how his father fought for the U.S. in Germany in World War I in the trenches.

He talks about his nature as an American with roots in Germany; discusses how Albert's nine siblings and his parents came to the United States in 1906 through Ellis Island and settled in Iowa; recalls that some of Albert's siblings contracted influenza and did not survive to adulthood; remembers that Albert had a carpentry business; does not remember his father feeling strange about fighting in Germany; states that Dora had some half-sisters; says that she went to German school and that they spoke German at her church but when she moved from Germantown, Iowa to Paullina, Iowa, she started to speak in English more often; states that his parents married in 1919 or 1920, when Albert was 32 and Dora was 20 or 21, and that they lived into their 90's; recalls that when he was growing up Paullina had only 900 or 1000 residents; says that his town mostly consisted of farmers who came into town on Fridays or Saturdays; recalls knowing most of the people who lived in or just outside of town.

[Pause (to adjust microphone)]

He states that many people of various Protestant sects and few Catholics and Jews inhabited his town as there were no synagogues or Catholic churches nearby; explains that his town was mostly German farmers or builders; says that he graduated high school in 1941 at age 18, before Pearl Harbor occurred; talks about working for his father's carpentry business for two years until he was drafted; tells how his brother voluntarily went into the Coast Guard in 1942, and that he was stationed at one of the Carolinas on the shore and was a lookout for submarines and other suspicious activity; recalls that his brother found a few bodies that washed up on the shore; remembers that his other brother was in the Army and ended up in Belgium; talks about having all three of them (all of the sons of the family) being drafted and how that must have made his mother worry.

He speaks about how most of the people in his high school class were drafted; recalls how when he was shipped out it was only the second time that had been out of Iowa; tells that he was shipped first to a base in Utah for training; discusses the change in atmosphere in his town when Hitler first rose to power; claims that his main source of news was the newspaper (The Des Moines Register) and the radio; remembers Pearl Harbor being a shocking event partly because the people he knew did not keep up with the news; talks about how after the war started, himself and 5 other people went to Des Moines to take a test which would determine in what part of the

armed forces they would be placed; tells how he was assigned to the Air Force since he received a relatively high score on the test,

Gaudian claims that when he was drafted in April of 1943, he was first in Des Moines for two days, and was then sent to Utah to the Kearns Army Air Base; recalls thinking that he was going to be sent to the Pacific to fight; says that from Kearns he was sent to Fort Collins, Colorado, then to Long Island, later to the Fort Dix Air Force Base in New Jersey, then to Texas where he underwent a six week infantry training session, and Trenton, New Jersey, and then was sent home on a furlough before being sent to Boston, Massachusetts; tells that from Boston he was shipped to Europe; explains that during his time in training they decided to transfer him from the Air Force to the Army as they needed more men to fight in the army; recalls not being upset by the decision to transfer him to the Army as he knew it was not the result of any poor work on his part; remembers a few instances when he saw people from his high school in Paullina in at various places in the U.S. where he was stationed, which is unusual for someone from such a small town; remembers the last time when he was home on furlough before being sent to Boston and then to Europe.

He describes seeing bells in the English Channel just off the coast of France before his troop landed in La Havre, France in April, 1945; tells how they took a train across France, and was then put in an army truck where he was taken to a small town in France; says that they built up the army because of the Battle of the Bulge and that was why he was switched from the Air Force to the Army; claims twenty to thirty men from Paullina were drafted, and that a lot of those men died; discusses how he is the only man from the football team still alive; talks about seeing a farmer and others waving at them when they were riding the train through France and Germany, although the situation was not very stable yet, as there were snipers who occasionally would aim at the train; tells that he saw hundreds of mailbags of letters from the Munich mailroom from German mothers to German troops in Russia; says that the people in the Army did not follow the situation with Hitler very closely, only remembers them saying "go get 'em" referring to Hitler; remembers seeing bloody bodies on a bridge in Munich; recalls briefly staying in a small town in Bavaria; discusses how the Germans distrusted or feared the American troops and so stayed inside their houses most of the day; talks about going to King Ludwig's castle.

He states that he went to Dachau after it was liberated, and that they were not given any advance orders of how to proceed at the camp; talks about the first day inside the camp he remembers seeing a boy with photographs of the stages of use of the gas chamber showing a soldier the furnace with the door open with gray and some black hair on it; recalls seeing the water tower where they supposedly did experiments; says that months before he came to Dachau that he heard about some of what they did at the camps; remembers the water tower as being an 8 foot by 12 foot tower that collected rainwater; claims that he saw jars of every imaginable body part, including ears, hands, a liver, and breasts, in a warehouse that he entered the first day in the camp; tells about seeing live rabbits; describes the warehouse as a being the size of a football field, and in the first part of it there were various medical instruments on a table.

He discusses how the troops and himself stayed at a small town called Wasserberg (assumed to be Wasserberg am Inn) before going to the camp; mentions how they went by truck to the camp; recalls trees and fences everywhere, and of first seeing the boy talking to the soldier and remembers how he sold the pictures to the soldier; does not recall seeing a sign saying "Dachau

Konzentrationslager" upon entering the camp; talks about seeing women from the town of Dachau on the other side of the camp's fence; says that he did not see the trains that carried prisoners to the camp; comments that he came to the camp in June and stayed there into July; states that he did not go into the hospital where he assumed survivors were being treated; explains how he remembers certain instances regarding his time at the camp, but that he does not remember doing everyday things like eating in the cafeteria; remembers seeing girls from the town of Dachau who were about seventeen or eighteen when he was wading in a river, but besides that incident, that he was rather isolated.

He describes further the instruments he saw in the warehouse; recalls burying some of the tools from the warehouse; claims that the troops did not really talk about everything that they saw in the camp; states that he did not see other troops besides his group at the camp besides the day they arrived when he saw the boy showing the soldier the furnace; says that they were told to stay away from things; discusses how the day after they went into the building with the body parts, that someone closed it off and they could not go in there again; says that there were no more corpses in the camp; explains how he asked himself how his people could have run such a camp; says that the camp did not smell funny anymore when he was there; states that they did not leave the camp except when they went wading in the river, and that they were at the camp for at least 3 weeks.

He tells how their job was to build a stockade, which they left unfinished; talks about how the camp changed the way he views humanity; explains more about the tools; says that he saw one Jewish person in one of the small towns that they were in; remembers being in the barracks in the woods, how he sat on a log a lot and wondered where he was going to be 50 years from then; states that when they landed in Europe that he felt like he was in danger as when he was on the train he heard sniper shots; explains how he was afraid a bit when he saw people in Munich; recalls that when he was in Dachau he kept thinking that he was standing where men lived the last moments of their lives; claims that the Army did not tell them much about what to do in the camp before they arrived, which was bad since they were in an information vacuum; discusses how the trees hid most of the camp from sight, but from what he did see, that it was a perfectly set up concentration camp.

He describes when he went on the honor flight, which is done by a group that collects money to send World War II veterans to Washington, D.C. to see the monuments and talk about their experiences; mentions how he tells people about his experience at Dachau now but that he did not use to talk about it much, and now he wants to talk about it; recalls being in Germany for 7 months after being in Dachau; talks about wanting his points to build up so he could get sent back to the U.S.; remembers seeing troops entering and exiting Europe when he was in France and Germany; claims he was only in Bavaria when he was stationed in Germany; [looks at a picture of the camp].

He tells how he was shipped back to New Jersey in April 1946, where he then took a train to Fort McCoy in Wisconsin, and then another train to a station twenty miles away from his town in Iowa, where his parents came to pick him up; recalls being shipped out of Germany from Bremerhaven; describes feeling that he grew up in the Army; remembers being at the camp for 6 or 7 weeks; claims that the body parts were on three shelves of 20 or more jars; states that there were 20 other troops who were with him in Dachau; comments on how he wishes he could have spoken with the victims who were still at the camp.