

INTERVIEW WITH CLARENCE CARTER

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PLACE:

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Relations between the United States and Mexico, partially a result of the Mexican Revolution, deteriorated during the second half of President Wilson's administration, and reached a climax in Francisco Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico on March 9, 1916. The deaths of 17 persons in this raid, and increasing pressures from Congress for intervention in Mexico forced Wilson to abandon his policy of "watchful waiting."

With the reluctant consent of Venustiano Carranza, Wilson ordered General John J. Pershing to lead a punitive expedition into Mexico in pursuit of Villa, and the President called out 150,000 militia and despersed them along the United States-Mexico border. Pershing began his mission on March 15, 1916, with a force of some 15,000 troops, including soldiers from the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry, then stationed at Fort Wachuka, Arizona. The men in these regiments, blacks with white officers, were known as the "Buffalo Soldiers," a term origianlly applied to them by Indians.

Among the men in the 10th Cavalry was Clarence Carter from Georgia, whose recollections of his experiences as a trooper in Arizona and as a member of Pershing's expedition provide (furnish) a clear picture of life in the later days of cavalry operations.

Carter enlisted in the 10th Cavalry on October 5, 1915, at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. He was "almost 18 years old," he recalls, but "I didn't know I was as old as I was, because I had really never asked my parents." When he went to the recruiting office in Atlanta the recruiting sergeant "sat me down and started filling out the application." The sergeant refused to accept Carter's statement of his age. "But I was just determined to be a soldier," Carter said, and he kept pestering the sergeant. Finally the sergeant explained that it would be necessary to have the senior Carter's permission for enlistment, and the proper form was placed in an envelope addressed to Carter's father. Clarence boarded the train which would take him the 32 miles from Atlanta to his home and waited at the Post Office for the arrival of the evening mail. He got his father's letter, removed the application form, signed his father's name on it, and mailed the form to the Atlanta recruiting office. "And," said Carter, "that's the way I got in the army."

Carter and other recruits from the Atlanta area were sent to Fort Wachuka, Arizona for basic training. This training, which included traditional military training to which was added horse-handling and mounted drill, lasted about six months. Carter's troop had just finished drill and was returning to the corrals on the morning of March 13, 1916, when the troop commander, 1/Lt. Selwyn D. Smith,

received a message from the regimental orderly. Lt. Smith read the message, then told the troop to dismount, groom horses, have lunch, and then go to quarters and begin packing gear for a march.

James Bennett: Mr. Carter, when and how did you get into the army?

Clarence Carter: I enlisted in the 10th Cavalry on October 5, 1915 at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. They sent me and several other recruits - enlisted men - to Fort Wachuka, Arizona. There we took our basic training, which was approximately six months and, of course, it involved horses and all- riding horses and cavalry training. And we went out on drill, as I remember, on March 13 - 12th or 13th - I'm not sure about the date. Anyway, when we drilled that morning and came back to the stables, to the corrals, before we dismounted, our troop commander, 1/Lt. Selwyn D. Smith, received a message from the orderly. The regimental orderly rode up on his horse and handed him the message. And he read it and then he turned and read the message to his troops. And he said that we were to dismount, unsaddle, groom our horses, go to the quarters as usual and have lunch (dinner) and then start packing our gear for a march. And it was possible that we were going to cross the line into Mexico after Pancho Villa. And we were to receive three days rations from the cook. And we did that and the next morning, as I remember, we were ordered out. We saddled up and we marched to Nogales - I believe we went as far as Nogales, Arizona that day - and the next day we went into Douglas, Arizona. We went out east of Douglas, oh, I suppose three or four miles, and we camped there overnight. On the night of the 15th, we were to cross the border at midnight. And we rode for several miles until daybreak and we stopped and went into camp for the day, and as well as I can recollect it, this was on Saturday, for I know that the next day, Sunday, we saddled up the two squadrons of eight troops, saddled up and marched to Colonia Dublan and that was 65 miles away. And that was a hard, hot, dusty march that day. When we got into Colonia Dublan, we got orders to turn over our field rations that we had - which was hardtack and coffee, sugar, and a little bacon that we had - to, I believe it was the 13th Cavalry. I'm pretty sure of that. And then we were to board a train, 10th Cavalry was to board a train and go south to some little place. I can't remember the place now, it's been so long ago, and we would detrain there. And enroute there, we had to stop, oh, three or four times to go out and gather wood for the locomotive. And when we got to this place - it was some time during the day on Monday, and I'm not clear on these days and dates and those kinds of things because it's been a long time ago - we detrained there, pitched camp, why - there was just a small village, you know, few families living our there - next morning one of the villagers came over to the officers' quarters and complained about some of his chickens being missing.

J. Crawford Crowe: That's an old army trick.

CC: Major Charles Young, now he was a black man, he lined up every trooper in the command and collected 15¢ from each one of us to pay for those chickens. And that satisfied the Mexican. And we left there and we began to ride south. Going through villages and over mountains, plains, through the hot, dusty prairies, mesquites, and the alkali dust, horses were snorting, you know, because it was hard on the horses, and hard on the horses' back because we were making a forced march, a hard march, and we - on this march we went into one little town down in Mexico that was the prettiest place I believe I ever saw. It was on a river bank and they took us over to see this little Catholic church. It was just like a picture. It was the prettiest church I ever saw. And you walked in there and you couldn't say anything because it was so beautiful; and the people were so nice in all the towns that we went to because I think they were glad to see us because they figured we were going to either catch Pancho Villa or wipe him out - his outfit anyway. Anyway, we scattered'em. And on the morning of April 1st, we run into a bunch of Pancho Villa's men and when we rode into this town, this little village like, the name of it was Oaguo Palante, they fired on us. We went along and they fired on us. And the colonel gave orders right away for us to dismount and fight on foot. I wish we did. And it just so happened that my troop, E troop, was on the advance guard that morning, and when we got down on the ground and got our rifles ready to fire, we could see some heads up on a hill like, behind a stone wall. You know, down there you uh, they uh, the Spanish people around their estates, you know. And they were up there behind those stone walls shooting at us. And a man rode up on his horse to this wall and was looking over at us and Lt. Smith, our troop commander, says, "Fire at that man on that horse battlesight." That means that you sight down lying down like that. And, Sergeant Marino fired the first shot; we were lying right beside each other. And, uh, I fired the second shot. If I'm gettin' this right. Anyway, when- might be that I fired the first shot and Sergeant Marino fired - I'm sure it was that way - I fired the first shot, he fired the second shot, and I fired the third shot, because when I fired the third shot the General seemed to kind of duck, you know, and someone said, "I believe you've hit him." And later on that day we captured his horse, an iron gray horse, a beautiful horse, and a silver mounted saddle. And the horse was about, I'd say, 4-4½ feet high. And Lt. Richmond, who was second-in-command to the C troop commander, I forget now who he was, he was captain, he took the horse. And someone told us - we heard in one of the villages that General Lopez came through there. They were carrying him on this Indian outfit, you know, with the chairs upon each side, one of them on one side

of the horse and one of them on the other, and he was lying on this thing and they were in a hurry, and General Lopez was wounded. And then the fellow said, "Well, you must have hit him; you must have hit him when he ducked like that. That's probably when he fell off his horse." But I never claimed credit for that 'cause I wouldn't like to know that I shot a man like that, you know.

JCC: Did the army ever make any effort to find out who did shoot him?

CC: No, no, they never did. Because, I don't know, a lot of things happened, you know, down in there that the army never made any effort to correct, to find out the facts about, or anything like that.

We rode on then and we come into another town which was a very beautiful town. I'd like to go back there some day, which was Concho, and the people were just nice to us there. Most everything that we would go into these little towns to buy, you know, individual soldiers, you know, they'd let us have it about half price. And we left - I think we spent two nights there. We were camped on the side of a river and I think we spent two nights there. Then we saddled up and we started-continued south. We camped that night on the side of another river. You know, just a small stream down there is a river, but it's a raging torrent in a big rain. And before we got settled - I think we were grooming our horses. Anyway, somebody looked up and saw two riders coming down the hill from the north. And they were two white troopers from the 13th Cavalry, and they rode into Col. Brown, who was in charge of the regiment and said that the 13th Cavalry had been shot up at Parral. And Major Young, he didn't wait for any orders from Col. Brown or anything, he just yelled, "Saddle up! Saddle up!", and everybody, as tired as we were and the horses as tired as they were, we saddled up. And we went from there to a town, a little abandoned village on the way to Parral, and we run into a outfit of the 13th Cavalry and they had a couple of fellows who were very seriously wounded, and one of them died within a very short time. The other one died sometime during the night, and we buried them the next morning there inside this adobe wall. It was once a house. And we spent a week there, I guess, and the Mexicans sent word out and dared us to come into Parral. Of course, we didn't go, but we could have; we could have. When they sent the dare out, why, a lot of fellows wanted to go in, you know, but we would have run into a lot of gunfire. And we stayed there, I don't know, I guess it might have been a week, then we left there and started back north. Everybody thought that we were going out of Mexico. Everyday we'd ride 15 or 20 miles and camp until we got to Colonia Dublan, and that's a kind of double town like. One of them is Colonia Dublan, and the other one is - I have to think

for a minute - anyway, we camped there. We got there sometime in July, I guess. It was one of them warm summer months, and we stayed, we stayed, and we stayed. We stayed there until Christmas Day and afterwards. Well, we come out in February or March, anyway, every man that was camped in Colonia Dublan on Christmas Day in 1916 will always remember, because we had a dust storm.

I mentioned the dust storm, and we had Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. If anyone, like you, Mr. Crowe, who's been in the army, you know you always have a big feed on - turkeys - on Christmas Day and Thanksgiving - and mincemeat pie. Well, our mincemeat pie, when they cut it and served it to us, had an eighth of an inch dust on top of it. We had to blow the dust off it to eat the pie, but we were hungry enough to eat dust and all. Well, we had a lot of fun there. We played baseball; we had prize fights; we played football. In fact, it became a regular kind of a post like, you know.

One bad thing happened while we were there. C and K troop was ordered to go east of there into a town they called Carrizal. And, uh, there they run into a Mexican force there that wasn't going to let them go through the town. And Colonel - uh, I take that back - Captain Holcomb, I believe it was, of C troop, he was in charge; he was in charge of the two troops. That was Captain Holcomb of C troop and Captain Myers of K troop. And they attempted to go through, but the Mexicans stopped them and shot them up. Well, they really shot 'em up, and they captured thirteen of the troopers - I believe it was thirteen - and a guide, a fellow by the name of Pillsbury. I've always remember that name because of Pillsbury flour, you know. And they took them to Mexico City, I believe, and President Wilson demanded that they free them and bring them back, you know, north to the United States, and he gave them so many days to do it or he'd send troops in there to get them. In fact, I think he said he'd declare war on Mexico, and they brought them back to El Paso, but they'd taken all their uniforms off them and they had all of them in denim clothes. And when they arrived in El Paso, so the papers stated, and we saw some pictures and all, why, they were greeted by hundreds of people. And, uh, I don't know how many of our troopers lost their lives at Carrizal, but I do know that we had a Lt. Adair; he was killed. He was under Captain Holcomb of C troop and, some retreated, you know; in fact, they run. We were quite upset about that after we got the message one of the troopers that had rode back - I think it was a fellow by the name of Duncan that had escaped and come back - and General Pershing issued orders, especially for the 10th Cavalry, for them not to let more than three men stand around and talk at one time. He didn't want us to go back over there to avenge the killing of these fellows.

Well, that blowed over, but while we was at Camp Dublan, we had a lot of fun

there. They would used to, the trucks would come in from Columbus, New Mexico where this all started. Where Pancho Villa and his outfit went over there and raided Columbus. I never will believe Pancho Villa was in that.

JCC: Is that right?

CC: I'll never believe that he was there that night; his outfit, but I don't believe he was there, because I don't think they would have taken a chance on him getting killed on the American side. Anyway, the truck trains used to come in, and they'd come in a long column, sometimes fifteen or twenty of them, you know. And we could see them coming; we could see the dust, just a long string of dust coming. And somebody'd holler, "Truck train from the north." We knew we'd be getting mail and other things like that - presents, stuff like that. And when the order got out, or when the word got out that we were going out of Mexico - I don't know how the Mexican people found it out - but they began to stream north ahead of us, you know, refugees. They were going over the line if they could into America 'cause they were afraid, you know, that Pancho Villa's men, you know, would slaughter them. Because they figured they'd helped us, done what they could for us, you know. And then when I saw this, that picture years ago during the First World War of the Anschluss of the German army and they went through Belgium, and the Belgium people were streaming in all directions, you know, refugees trying to get away from the Germans. And I saw these Mexicans going north, just long, long lines of them, you know, with their donkeys and their wagons and walking with their kids and things like that, we used to go down and stand on the side of the road and see them pass. It was pitiful. It was pitiful. I hope we never have another war no place on the face of this earth.

JCC: Those people were poverty stricken, too, weren't they?

CC: Yeah, yeah they were. Just poor, poor, poor. Having nothing and running like that. I don't know how they'd - After we'd eat, you know, lots of fellows, both the white and the black soldiers, would take something down there, you know, they'd snatch something from the table and take it down there and pass it to them, you know, as they went by. The soldiers will always make friends if you let 'em alone; they'll make friends with people and especially dogs. Dogs are goin' to come around soldiers. When we left Mexico, left Colonia Dublan, broke camp and left there, I think we camped, I forget how far, I think it was something like about 60 miles to the border. I know we camped one night and the next morning

when we saddled up, and the whole outfit, every troop that was within Mexico was leaving. When we went across the border there was a news reel in a plane, and this fellow with them old grinding machines, you know, like they had like that, you know, he was flying over the troops taking pictures. But, mind you, when he, when this plane passed over the 10th Cavalry, the black troops, he stopped grinding them. He only took the pictures of the white troops. Now, that's as true as I'm sitting here. Now, he only took the pictures of the white troops; he didn't take pictures of the black troops, you know, that was in that command. And I know the people who saw that, uh, never knew that he cut us out. Well, we camped in Columbus that night, and we might have stayed there two nights, but I don't think we stayed there more than one night, and then we started moving west back toward Fort Wachuka. And we stopped at Deming, New Mexico and another town in New Mexico and then we went into Douglas, Arizona. I think we were about five or six nights going from Columbus back to Fort Wachuka.

JB: Now, were you still traveling by train?

CC: No, horseback. And, you know, it's just like if you'd been away from home, for say, three or four months, you got back home, you just glad to be back home where you could get a clean shower and get between clean sheets and like that and you wouldn't - Oh, and another thing, I didn't mention this. Down in Mexico, several times the trooper would get up in the morning and there would be a rattlesnake in his blankets. See we, you put your horse blanket down on the ground, then you put your bed blanket that you had in your roll, you'd put that on top of that, and then the other - there'd be two fellows together - then he'd put his blanket on top of the bed blanket and then the saddle blanket on top of that; so, you'd have two blankets under, two blankets over you. And the snakes, you know, those rattlesnakes, you know, they'd come out at night, you know, and they were looking for a warmer place to snooze all night. And they'd crawl between the two first blankets. And the second time that happened then the Colonel issued orders for the men to get up in the morning out of their beds carefully and then catch ahold of the corners of the blankets to start running and shaking. And it was a sight, you know, to see fellows running and shaking a blanket. And occasionally, they'd shake a rattlesnake out. And come a rain, and after a rain down there in Mexico, most every mesquite bush you'd come to of any size, there'd be a rattlesnake under it. When the rain was over, they'd crawl out to sun. Beautiful country down there. You could ride for miles and miles and miles and never see a human being.

JB: All the time you were in Mexico you were sleeping in the open, that is, on the ground.

CC: That's right, in the open. Except when we got to Colonia Dublan and pitched camp there, you know. We fellows would go and cut the mesquite and make us a bunk off the ground. We did that in order to get away from the snakes.

JB: Did they have mess tents where you ate when you were -

CC: No, no. The cook was under a tent and you'd just pass under there with your mess kit and he'd serve you your food in that. You'd go to your tent and sit down in there and eat or go sit out on the ground someplace and eat.

JB: Now, what did you do when you wanted a bath when you were down there in Mexico? Just do without, or find a creek or a river?

CC: No, we'd go to a river. Yes, we'd go to a river. One place we camped, and uh, on the side, of course, we'd always find, you'd have to find water, you know, for the horses. And one place we...

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And we camped on the side of this river, and I think we spent a couple of days there. And one or two of the fellows just happened to walk up around the bend of the river, oh, I guess maybe two or three hundred yards, something like that, and they saw this horse's head sticking up out of the river. And they went up, when they got to it there was a man and a horse, a Mexican soldier and a horse, in the river. And we'd been drinking water and taking baths and watering the horses and everything out of there. But, uh, we were told that water purifies itself if it runs a hundred yards. Is that so?

JCC: Well, I recall having heard that on the farm when I was a kid. But I just wonder if they did anything to the water to purify it. Did you put any chemicals in the water or not?

CC: No, in fact, we were leaving that same day, so they got ahold of the Mexican authorities and they got him out. They came down there and got him out, but we were gone by the time they got him out, you know. Lot of things happened down

there that, uh, was exciting.

JCC: Payday. Were you paid once a month?

CC: That's right. We were paid once a month except, I believe, let's see, we crossed in March, now we didn't get paid on the first of April. I don't think we got paid until the first of May. It might have been June, but I know it was as much as two months.

JCC: Did they pay you in silver dollars?

CC: In silver dollars and gold.

JB: What was the pay?

CC: Eighteen dollars a month. See, you got three dollars a month for foreign service. Fifteen dollars, that was private's pay.

JCC: I'd like to ask you something about that horse. You mentioned when you got off the horse, dismounted, to fire at these Mexicans. Did you tie the horse up after you got off, or were the horses trained to just stand there? or what?

CC: Oh, our horses? Oh, no, you turn 'em over to one trooper and he carries the horses back, you know. And, I forget just how that is now, but I'm sure that one trooper of a squad of four takes the horses back to the rear. And they stayed right there with the horses until they got a command to bring them up or the men have to retreat back there and get on them.

JCC: Well, the reason I asked that, they don't use horses today; if so, very few. And forty or fifty years from now, no one would know what happened to the horse when a person dismounted. Did you have the same horse while you were in Mexico?

CC: Yes, you had the same horse. You have the same horse from the time we went into the cavalry unless something happens to him that they have to destroy him or retire him or something like that. You have the same horse from the time you go in there 'til the time you come out.

JCC: Was there ever - no horse swapping?

CC: No horse swapping, no. No horse swapping. And we got our - when we needed horses, we got re-mounts from Wyoming. And what they called re-mounts were wild horses. And they'd come in there with no shoes on and hooves spread out side and some of them were wild-eyed and mean as they could be, and we had to break them.

JCC: Were you ever given the opportunity to select your horse if the time came that you needed a horse?

CC: I was given the opportunity one time, and I'll never forget it. I didn't have a horse and the captain says to me - I was a sergeant then - so, he says, "Sergeant Carter, you haven't got a horse and you're the only ranking soldier here without a horse. And I want you to go in this car and pick out you own horse." I walked in that car and there was a beautiful bay horse standing there, just as slick and pretty as you'd ever want to see a horse and I walked out with him. And I always regretted it because every time I mounted up on him and tried to lead him away from the other horses he started bucking, but, you know, he trained me how to ride a bucking horse. And after that, anytime they'd have remounts to come there and they had a horse that was kind of hard to handle, why, they'd assign me to break him. Some of them would try to break me, but I got along pretty well with them.

JCC: What type of material did the typical soldier have, say, when he rode into Mexico? What type of material did he have on the horse's back?

CC: Well, first of all, of course, you had your blanket and saddle...

JB: Was that a Maclellan saddle?

CC: I think so. I believe so.

JB: I think that was the saddle they used, because there was a wooden body to it covered with leather, but not very much and there was an open space at the top, wasn't there?

CC: That's right. That's right.

JB: So that the horse's backbone showed through.

CC: That's right. It had slits in the back part of the saddle; I forget what you call them.

JB: Skirt part.

CC: Yes, where the straps go through to strap your roll on, and it had a pommel, you know. And you'd have a bridle and what we call a watering rein and a curved bit. We carried the curved bit in our saddlebags most of the time. We used curved bits mostly on horses that are kind of hard to control, but once you got them under control we'd take the curved bit off of them and put it in the saddle. But we used curved bits on inspection, when they'd have general inspection, like that. You had your saddle bag and in your roll you had to have your razor, comb, brush, toothbrush and tooth powder, and maybe one or two other articles we had to have.

JCC: What type of rifle did you have?

CC: We had Enfield and Winchester. I think they were mostly Enfield that we had.

JB: These things that you mentioned, comb and brush and all, was that all government issue?

CC: That was all government issue.

JB: Let me ask you about the uniform now. What did that consist of? What did it look like?

CC: Now, when we went into Mexico - well, we had khaki uniforms for summer. Khaki shirt, I believe, and we had, well, underwear. And underwear was cotton and it was long...

JB: Long sleeves and long legs.

CC: Yeah. And you had a sweater and a slicker. And some nights down there it would be bitter cold, you know, out on the plains. It's bitter cold out there at night. I don't care how hot it gets in the daytime, but at night it's bitter cold.

JB: I know that. I've been out there.

CC: Have you? Well, then you know.

JB: Now, you wore riding breeches?

CC: Well, we had leggins. We had a canvas leggin that laced up the side - on the right side - and it had a strap that went under the shoe there like that.

JB: So, you wore the regular pants then and just wrapped them around and wrapped a piece of canvas.

CC: That's right. Well, the pants were - I don't know what you would call it, but the pants were tighter down here; you laced them up.

JB: Laced them up the side. Some of them button up the side.

CC: Well, these all laced up.

JB: Did the officers wear boots?

CC: Oh, yes, the officers wore boots. Well, some of the officers wore leather leggings. I know Lt. Smith _____ he always wore leggins, but most of them wore boots.

JB: Uh-huh. And you had - what do they call them? Garrison shoes? They come up about to the knee - I mean to the ankle and laced up.

CC: That's what we had.

JB: And then the leggings fit right over the top of that.

CC: That's right.

JCC: Did you have a sword or a knife or any...

CC: Yes, we had a sword. And the machine gunners had what they call a bolo knife just about ten inches long and the other troopers had sabres. And the fit - they had a strap and a boot _____ just in front of the knee on the saddle and we'd carry it there and pull it out _____.

JB: What kind of hat did you wear?

CC: Field hat. Broad brim and yellow cord.

JB: Yeah, yellow was for cavalry, wasn't it?

CC: Yeah, yellow was for cavalry; green was for infantry.

JCC: This was 1916-1917. Of course, the German's were fighting - the Germans and the English - and we went into the war in 1917 in Europe. Did you have gas masks at that time?

CC: No, we were never issued gas masks. We were taught some of the tactics that they used in the trenches in Europe, but we were never issued gas masks.

JCC: Did the typical soldier have a deck of cards with him?

CC: Well, yes, some of them carried cards, you know. We played a game they called Monte...

JCC: I've heard of it.

JB: How do you spell it?

CC: M-o-n-t-e.

JB: That'll help the girl who's going to type this.

CC: I think that's the way you spell it, but anyway - I never was much of a Monte player and I never was much of a crapshooter. You know, you asked while ago about the paydays, and the first payday we had down there in Mexico - as I said before, I don't know whether it was the first of May or the first of June, but anyway - there was a fellow in the 17th Infantry that had two five gallon tin cans full of silver dollars. And he had a fellow carrying those cans for him and it was just like - this fellow was bent over kind of like a fellow carrying a sack of cement in each hand. And when this trooper got to his tent he says to the other one, "How much do I owe you?" He says, "Oh, I don't know. Just give me whatever you want to give me." He said, "Well, hold your pocket." He filled that pocket up with silver dollars.

"Hold your other one open." He filled the other one up with silver dollars. "Now hold your back pocket." And he filled that with silver dollars. He filled all four of his pockets full of silver dollars. And this fellow - I have never seen so many silver dollars. You know, if we had known then how valuable gold money would have been now, we could have been _____.

JCC: Did the soldiers have any drinking habits?

CC: Oh, yes, yes, they drank.

JCC: In Mexico.

CC: Yes.

JB: You went into some of those cantinas down in Mexico?

CC: No. No, we weren't allowed to leave the camp to go to them. But we had one fellow in our outfit, I don't know how he got this liquor from the states, but some of them truck drivers - some of them fellows driving trucks, you know. You can always get it somewhere.

JCC: I've heard that.

CC: Some of them truck drivers would bring him liquor in pints and he would make adobe brick, you know. And he put a pint of liquor inside this adobe brick, you know, and sell you adobe brick for so much money. But they found him and broke him up from it. But if you wanted any liquor you had to buy adobe brick.

JCC: The soldiers weren't allowed to go to the canteens there in the towns?

CC: No, we weren't allowed to go into town.

JCC: Did you see much discrimination against the blacks there? Were the whites given more priveleges than the blacks?

CC: Not in the camp. I think we got along pretty well. You didn't see any of that, because each outfit was in his camp, you know, Like the 10th Cavalry, the 6th Field Artillery, the 4th Field Artillery, the 11th Cavalry, the 13th Cavalry, the 17th

Infantry, and the 24th Infantry. Of course, there were some engineers there, too, and all our _____ stayed in there own camp, so - of course, two soldiers from one outfit would go into the other outfits and get into a gambling game or something like that, you know, but there was never any trouble.

JB: Now, the troops were they segretated? I mean, one troop would be all black and one all white or were they mixed?

CC: No, the regiments, all black regiments. We had thirteen troops, I think it was.

JCC: What was the soldiers' opinion of General Pershing?

CC: Well, we liked him. We liked him. And I liked General Pershing for this reason: Because he was strict and to the point. I like a man like that. There was no partiality in that man. Every outfit was the same to him.

JCC: Now, you worked for him one day, you say.

CC: Yeah, one day.

JCC: Could you describe an orderly's day with General Pershing? What your duties consisted of.

CC: Well, you have to saddle his horse and clean his boots. His saddle, bridle, and all the leather that goes on the horse has to be shined spic and span. And when he'd ride around the camp he wants you with him, you know. Of course, he's got his aide de camp with him, you know, and you ride with them. And when they dismount you hold the horses, hold the horse until he mounts up and those kind of things. And just for this one day - you couldn't learn much about a man in one day, you know, but I enjoyed that one day. And when the day was over I went back to the camp with my chest stuck out.

JB: Don't blame you; don't blame you.

JCC: Did they select one man or the same man or from the same company for the orderly? Do they rotate that?

CC: Well, no. No. He kept the same man. What we called the orderly was the _____. A lieutenant, when he goes to an outfit, you know, he has to have a man to look after him, kind of a _____. In those cases, he has to be kind of a half-way cook, you know, to cook his meals and those kind of things.

JCC: I've heard rumors that Pancho Villa liked white horses, and the rumor got out that he was confiscating all the white horses in Mexico. Had you heard anything to that effect?

CC: No, I never heard that. I knew he liked white horses and he liked Arabian, if he could get them - but I don't know that - He might have done it. He might have done it. You couldn't put nothing past them people.

JCC: Did the Mexicans ever give you any idea of the opinion of Pancho Villa?

CC: Oh, yes, yes. They'd tell you quick, you know, that - Some of them would tell you quick that he was a friend of theirs, and, "We hope you don't catch him and kill him."

JCC: He had more friends among the poor.

CC: Oh, yes. That's right. That's right. And poor people down there, they are poor.

JB: Of course, he was a native of northern Mexico, too. He knew all that country up in there. When you were mounted and riding, did they give the commands by bugle calls then or not?

CC: Some. Of course, most of the commands were given by mouth. Of course, when we were out on drill, you know, some officers would like to hear the buglers - like trot, gallop, and halt and to horse. Of course, when you got that call that was usually at night when everybody was in bed or fixing to go to bed, and then the regimental bugler, the man who's on guard - the troop who had to assign the guard for the garrison that day and night, their bugler would have to wound taps and reveille and that kind of stuff. And sometimes the colonel would - maybe once, twice, every three or four months, you know - would sound call to horse. And Great Scots! You talk about running over each other to get your gear together and get to your horse. We had one colonel, Colonel Rodney, he did that. He did that

and he'd praise the troops, and then he'd have his majors, who were in charge of four troops or a squadron, to check and time each troop to see how fast they got to the horse and got saddled up and got mounted up. And some of the troops - F troop. F troop was the troop that nobody could beat. They were the fastest guys you ever saw at that, and we accused them of sleeping on their horses.

JCC: After you got back into the United States, you stayed in the west for awhile.

CC: I did.

JCC: Yes, after you crossed over from Mexico.

CC: Oh, yes - you mean the outfit?

JCC: Yes.

CC: Well, we went back to the post, you know.

JB: Now, that was Fort Wachuka.

CC: Wachuka.

JCC: Did you hear any rumors in those days - 1917 - about any possible conflict with Indians? Had all this died out in the West?

CC: No, it had all died out. In fact, we had Indian scouts with us. Of course, they stayed to themselves, you know. And occasionally, Colonel Young would come over to our troop and ask that I join him for the day for scout work. And I never liked it, because you ride somewhere way off by yourself behind some hill or down in the plains all by yourself.

JCC: It was dangerous.

CC: Yeah. And I didn't like it, but he didn't care. He'd ride. I know one little village we went into down there in Mexico, they had these drainpipes like. They're made of wood - from the roof, you know. And they look like guns off a distance. And Colonel Young says, "Come on, let's go see what it is. There may be guns, but we're going in on them." And I said, "Colonel, those are guns!" "Let's go see if

they're guns."

JB: Can you describe Fort Wachuka?

CC: Well, Fort Wachuka sat right at the foot of the - I can't remember the name of the mountains.

JB: Sanga de Cristo?

CC: No, no. I can't remember the name of the mountains, but anyway, it sat right at the foot of this range of mountains. And right from the fort, south, right up through the mountains and over the mountains was Mexico. And there was a canyon up in there and it's a lovely place, a healthy place. Of course, you know, it's expanded now, but it was lonesome out there.

JB: Was the fort laid out in a square? Did it have a wall around it?

CC: No, no. No wall around it. It was laid out in kind of a U shape. No, I'll take that back. It was a kind of a circle. The hospital was at the north end of the parade ground. The canteen was at the south end, and headquarters troop was at the northeast corner. And the officer's quarters was on the east side and the troop quarters was on the west side, and the ordinance building and the guard house. And we had this huge parade ground there, you know, where we'd mount guard everyday.

JB: What were the buildings made of?

CC: The older buildings, the ones that I just described, were made of wood. But the newer buildings, after you passed the hospital and went down on the north end of the parade ground, they were made of cement. That was headquarters troop K, L, and M. Headquarters troop K, L, and M were down there.

JB: About how many men would be at the fort and all that?

CC: Well, approximately 900. That's about what we had, 900.

JB: After you got back to the fort, did you spend the rest of your army time there?

CC: Yeah.

JB: And were you mustered out there?

CC: I was mustered out on October 5, 1920. I re-enlisted for a year in 1919; I re-enlisted for a year.

JB: What was your original enlistment term?

CC: I believe it was three years or four years. You could spend three years in the army and one year in reserve or you could spend the four years. And then you could re-enlist for one year or three years. I forget now just how that went, but I know you could re-enlist for at least one year.

JB: Now, you may have told me at the beginning and I maybe have forgotten it, where did you enlist? In Cleveland?

CC: No, in Fort Oglethorpe.

JB: Fort Oglethorpe.

CC: That's right out of Chattanooga.

JB: That's right; you mentioned that. Then you went from there...

CC: That's right. I went from there...

JB: How did they transport the troop? By train?

CC: By train.

JB: Was the food pretty good generally?

CC: Oh, the food was good.

JCC: In Mexico, what was the typical breakfast for a soldier?

CC: Breakfast.

JCC: Yes.

CC: Bacon, eggs - that was the typical breakfast. Now, that was after we got in-
to Colonia Dublan. But the typical breakfast while we were on the march was any-
thing you could get.

JCC: Like those chickens.

CC: Yeah. And, you know, I never got a feather of those chickens.

JB: After you'd paid your fifteen cents.

CC: That's right, I'd paid my fifteen cents. We'd get beans from the Mexicans and
we had parched corn and bacon. We had it rough.

JCC: You had parched corn?

CC: Yeah, we had parched corn. We'd get corn from the Mexicans and we'd parch it
in our mess pan. And we'd fry bacon and put hardtack in this grease - gave it a
flavor - and we'd have this parched corn. But we made it.

JB: Did you always have coffee?

CC: Yes, we had coffee most of the time. One time I know we got a hold of some
green coffee that hadn't been roasted, you know, and that stuff was terrible. But
if you wanted coffee, you had to drink it.

JB: In the normal course of things when you were at Fort Wachuka, what time did
they sound reveille?

CC: At the fort it was, I believe, six o'clock in the morning. I think that was
reveille. No, no, no! Reveille is in the evening, isn't it? I think it was a-
round 5:00, 5:30. Is it in the morning? You've been there since I have.

JCC: You can't get 'em up, you can't get him up...

CC: You can't get 'em up this morning. That's right. But anyway, you had to hit
the floor.

JB: Yeah. And that was about 6:00, huh?

CC: Yes, that was about 6:00.

JB: That period of time from reveille to taps was pretty much your own time, wasn't it?

CC: Well, no. No, that belonged to Uncle Sam.

JB: You didn't have any time of your own, huh?

CC: No. In the morning you'd get out of bed, get dressed, and got out for calisthenics. And then you go back in, shave, wash up, and have breakfast. After that, you go brush you teeth. The next thing you had to do was clean up around the quarters, and you had to pick up everything - cigarette butts, match stems, everything. It had to be spic and span; you left nothing. Then we would got out and drill. Go to the stable, groom your horse, saddle up, and go out and drill. Come in, unsaddle, groom your horses, turn them loose in the corral so they'd get water. Then the stable man would feed them, and you'd go eat your lunch. Then that afternoon, you had most of the afternoon to yourself. You'd play ball, football, that kind of stuff. Some fellows would. I like to hunt a lot, so I used to go out hunting a lot. _____ standing forward, looking as far as you could look, turning round and round and round I've hunted. And I like to hunt now, and fish. In them days, a soldier had to be a soldier, and nowadays...

JCC: It's changed.

CC: It sure has changed; it sure has changed.

JCC: Did you notice any change in the life activity of a soldier after we went to war with Germany in April 1917?

CC: A little, a little. He got to be just a little bit more independent after we went to war with Germany, 'cause they went over there and they brought it back from Europe. But you still, when you were on the fort, you know, when you were in the fort, you had to still be a soldier, carry yourself like a gentleman. Of course, there's always going to be somebody that's not going to do that.

JCC: The day you left the army, when your term expired, was there any ceremony? Did he just hand you a piece of paper or...

CC: He just handed you a piece of paper.

JCC: Your honorable discharge.

CC: That's right.

JCC: Did they tell you then that if you had any illness or anything in the future or injury that might have been caused by the army, to check with the government?

CC: No. I don't remember them telling me that. The troop commander just signed your discharge, and your first sergeant or whoever was in charge would give it to you.

JCC: Did you have any mustering out pay in addition to your regular wage for the month?

CC: Well, I believe when I was discharged, I got \$60.00, and you got your transportation home or the money. Whatever one you wanted. They'd give you the transportation or they'd give you the money.

JCC: Well, that army experience helped you later on in life, didn't it?

CC: It sure did. I wouldn't take nothing for it. If I could sell it, I wouldn't sell it.

JCC: Did you ever have the necessity of going on sick call while you were in the army? Did you ever have to go see a doctor?

CC: Oh, yes. I had to go to the hospital once or twice. Once, I know for three or four days, something like that.

JB: Was the treatment pretty good, facilities pretty good?

CC: Well, just about as good as they had in those days. I know one thing. I went out to borrow the reveille gun one afternoon, and I forgot to put the _____ in my ear. And I got a ringing in my ear right now from that.

JCC: If a person went to a doctor with just an ordinary bad cold, ordinarily, what did the doctor do?

CC: Oh, he'd give you some kind of medicine. It was probably a disguised aspirin. Usually, the fellow in the dispensary - we'd know him, you know, and we'd go say, "I've got a headache" and he'd give you something and put it down.

JCC: Well, there are many people in the army, many different types of individuals. I suppose most of us who got out of the outfit like you did just went home. But what if a person developed a certain type of attachment for his horse? If he liked his horse, was there any possible way he could buy that horse when he went out of the army?

CC: Not from the army, unless the horse was retired or something like that. He could probably buy him then. But, usually, when the horse got to the place that he couldn't serve, they'd shoot him. _____

_____ Talking about shooting animals, I was _____ - that's military police _____. And I was the chief, you might say, and the colonel issued orders for all stray dogs to be shot and the military police were assigned the job. And that was the only time, except one other time, that I can remember that I disobeyed orders. I wouldn't shoot a dog. I'd let the other men do it, but I wouldn't shoot a dog. I wouldn't even go to look for a dog. I just told them, "You go out and round up the dogs and you go shoot them like the colonel said." But I wouldn't.

JCC: What was the longest number of hours during the day that you had to ride those horses there in Mexico?

CC: Well, the longest ride we had, I said before, when we left this camp after crossing over the borderline was 65 miles from there to some mine there where we camped. Of course, the Mexicans have a name for all them places, you know. And I know when we rode into camp that morning I know that we could look to our left way down there and we could see this mine. And we could see five or six fellows running all around, running up on a mound of dirt, you know, and looking to us and running back. And I don't know why the colonel never investigated that place, and I never did figure out why he didn't. I guess they were just men who worked at the mine, though, and I guess the guide we had - a fellow by the name of Fox. He probably knew it was just a mine with no trouble there or anything. But he was our guide and he went with us all the way to _____, or almost there, and back. He took us there _____ because he knew the country.

JCC: Was there any temptation among the troops to race the horses with each other?

CC: Oh, yes, we had horse races; that was fun. And some of the fellows had some pretty fast horses. Some of the horses were what you might call quarter horses, would run a certain distance and then they couldn't go any farther. And then we'd have horses that could run a lot. Now, I had an old long tall horse that could run from here to Fountain Run and back, I believe, but he couldn't outrun them other horses. The distance that they measured off he would always lose.

JCC: The officers went along with this. They would let you...

CC: Oh, yes. They encouraged us in it. They encouraged sports, you know.

JB: You said you had some boxing, too. And football.

CC: Yes, boxing and football. We had football down at Colonia Dublan with the 10th Cavalry. The 10th Cavalry played the 4th Field Artillery, the 6th Field Artillery. Well, they played all those regiments, you know. And we had the best football team down there, because we had a coach who was from West Point. A Lt. Hoague, and he was good. He was a good football player at West Point. You had to do everything he said if you wanted to play football on his team and with no fooling around. Them West Point officers can be tough.

JCC: Did the typical soldier who went into Mexico with Mr. Pershing on his _____ expedition, did the typical soldier think it was worthwhile after he got back? Were they disappointed with their trip down there or not?

CC: Well, they weren't disappointed with their trip, but it was a useless trip, you see. That's right. It was useless, because we - most of us and I'd say the oldest of us and I won't include myself in that because I was just a rookie - but most of them old fellows that had been on the border running between Fort Wachuka, _____, Douglas, and Nogales and San Fernando (up and down the border, you know) - everytime the Mexicans would move up and down the border, you know, with their revolution and their fights and all, why the American troops would to, too, you know, to keep them from coming over on this side. And they said, "We'll never catch Pancho. We'll never get our hands on him." Because the Mexicans would hide him.

JCC: When these immigrants or Mexicans were marching toward the United States bor-

der trying to get out of the way when the soldiers were coming back to the U.S. ...

CC: You mean the refugees?

JCC: Yes. Did the United States let them in?

CC: I don't know; I don't know. They might have let some of them in. But I know when we crossed the border that morning there was a large camp of them there. And they might have let them just over the line to protect them from Pancho Villa's rebels.

JCC: In those days did people in the army have to fire for record? Did you have to go out on the rifle range and...

CC: Oh, yes, we had target practice. Sure. And that's where you added to your pay. A marksman got \$2.00 a month; a sharpshooter got \$3.00, and an expert got \$5.00. I was always pretty good with a gun - rifle, shotgun - because down in Georgia where I come from, I hunted a lot, you know. And our next door neighbor, their boy - they were white - he had a single shooting .22 rifle. And we used to buy cartridges for that thing and we'd go out and practice and everything. And we got to the place that we could shoot pretty good, you know with it, and that helped me a lot when I went into the army. In fact, it helped to add to my pay.

JB: Yeah, I guess so. You may not want to answer this question; if you don't, it's all right. I was just wondering what age you were when you enlisted first.

CC: When I enlisted in 1915? I was almost eighteen years old. I was born in 1897. In fact, I didn't know I was as old as I was, because I had really never asked my parents. When I tell you this - maybe I shouldn't say this, because it might get me in trouble. But you know, I was just determined, you know, to be a soldier. And I went down to Atlanta and went into the recruiting office and went up to this officer there, a sergeant, and told him what I wanted. He sat me down and started filling out the application. He got to age and he said, "How old are you?" I forget what I told him, but anyway, he didn't believe me, so, because, you know, he's enlisted a lot of men. So, he says, "You're not that old." I said, "Well, I want to join the army." He said, "Well, I'll tell you what you have to do. You'll have to get your father to sign your application. Do you think he will?" I said, "Sure he will." So, he said, "All right." He addressed it to my father,

put it in the envelope. I got on the train and went home just 32 miles from Atlanta. And that night when the mail train came in, I was down at the post office, and I got the application, took it out, signed my father's name to it, put it back in and mailed it back, and that's the way I got in the army.

JCC: That won't get you in trouble. Well, Mr. Carter, it's been nice talking with you, and we've learned a lot about the experiences of a soldier.

JB: I can't think of anything else to ask you. We've asked you a million questions.

JCC: We'll make you a copy of this, a typed copy, and send it to you, and you can read it over.

END OF INTERVIEW