

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU World War I Project

U.S. Cavalry Experience

O. H. 101

GUY E. ROSENBERG

Interviewed

by

James E. Duffey

on

April 29, 1975

GUY E. ROSENBERG

Guy Elton Rosenberg was born September 3, 1898 in Coalsburg, Ohio. The son of Albert and Mabel Rosenberg, Guy received some of his education in his hometown and finished his schooling in the Army at Fort Sam Houston.

In May 1917, Guy enlisted in the Army of the United States and became a member of the Regular Army Cavalry. Guy spent the next two years in the cavalry, patrolling the border of Texas and watching out for the illustrious villian, Pancho Villa. On September 22, 1919 Guy was discharged and returned to Ohio where he found employment with the U.S. Steel Corporation.

Guy and his wife Ruby, whom he married on January 26, 1929, currently live in Girard, Ohio. Guy retired from the steel industry in 1963 and lists gardening and various organizations as his interests.

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INTERVIEWER: James E. Duffey
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D: This is an interview with Guy Rosenberg for Youngstown State University by James Duffey at 6:00 o'clock in the evening on April 29, 1975. I'll be talking to Mr. Rosenberg about his experiences during the World War I period on the Mexican border.

Mr. Rosenberg would you give me a little biographical information about yourself?

R: I was born out here in Coalburg, Ohio. They moved to Greenville and then I joined the army from Greenville on the ship to Sharon. From the Sharon barracks we went to the Columbus barracks. Then we were inducted into the Cavalry. We didn't know for sure what we were going to be into when we went down there. Then, from Columbus barracks we went to Del Rio, Texas, at which time we had our basic training. From Del Rio, we were there for quite some time, and went on outpost duty. Of course, we had our basic training there which took quite a while.

D: What caused you to join the service, why did you join the army when you did?

R: I joined the service because a bunch of the boys were joining from the U.S. Steel plant in Greenville and they said if we joined up we'd get half of their pay. So Charlie Clifford, Ed Clifford, Hubbard, and there were a few more, I can't recall their names today, but we went and joined together.

D: How'd you happen to join the Cavalry?

R: The Cavalry? We didn't know what we were going in to, except that they said if you went into the Cavalry, why if you didn't go across you'd be a messenger, carrying messages from one outfit to another during war. Well, that sounded good, so that's what we did.

D: As far as when you went in, did you think you were going to go overseas then?

R: We thought we were going to go overseas.

D: Were you disappointed that you didn't?

R: In a way, yes. Then after awhile it didn't matter so much after you heard of so many people getting killed.

D: You said, you went to basic training. What types of training did you get? Was it all strictly with the Cavalry or did you have other training?

R: We had, at the beginning, most of your training, of course you're in the Cavalry and most of it's mounted. Then you have wig-wag and semaphore and learn how to throw a hand grenade. Then you had your foot drill, something similar to the infantry. They keep you busy.

D: You mentioned wigwag. Would you explain what a wigwag is?

R: Wigwag is just like the Morse code, dots and dashes. So many wigs or wags to the right means a dot and a dash the other way. Then in semaphore of course you used two flags.

D: Mr. Rosenberg, being in a Cavalry in Texas, what was the activity that you were engaged in? What kind of things were you doing down there?

R: Most of our time, we were on outpost duty and riding the river. We were stationed from Del Rio. About fourteen miles from Del Rio, is Sycamore Creek and that was our outpost between Browns and White's Ranch. Our basic job there was to ride the river, to keep the single-line telephone system going. So that if they did have any trouble they could call each other.

D: What kind of trouble did they expect?

- R: They had Pancho Villa as they called them. It was for Villa. It was quite active in that part of the country. They were stealing a lot of cattle and we were afraid they were coming over. Then another thing is they did not know whether there were any spies or anything coming over from Mexico into the United States. We had to keep track, quite a bit, of the river and watch for anything that didn't look just right.
- D: Did you ever see any activity across the border?
- R: We saw small groups over there with rifles but they hadn't crossed over on our side so we weren't allowed to go over there after them. They did shoot our telephone line down, which we had to fix, but outside of that it wasn't too bad. We'd see the Rangers every once in a while. They were stationed on the same ranch only I guess they stayed with ranchers, I don't know, but we didn't see them much, only on our tour of duty.
- D: How long was your tour of duty on the Border Patrol? How long were you out there?
- R: About a month or six weeks at a time and then there'd be another sixteen or eighteen men going out, from our troop, which is a Cavalry troop with around 110 men in it.
- D: In your Border Patrols now, how did you spend the course of the day?
- R: Well, you'd get up around five-thirty and have breakfast. Then you'd go out and drill until about noon--that is mounted drill--and then after dinner they'd put the horses up because it was too hot for the horses, and we'd go out dismounted, take our wigwag and our marching foot drill.
- D: It must have been awfully hot to drill in the afternoon?
- R: It was, it was terribly hot. It was, sometimes it'd be 100 degrees there. You'd stack your rifles up and go get them and you'd burn your hand on them, I'll tell you. You could fry an egg right in the street, that's the truth.
- D: Along the Mexican border, I'm wondering if there might have been some reason for you being there, other than just Pancho Villa. Is there anything else that they might have been concerned about since this was the time

of World War I? Were they concerned about any kind of invasion attempt?

- R: Well they were, later on we got into that, we went down to Ruidoso, but right between Del Rio and Eagle Pass well, we didn't run into that until later. At the time, we didn't know what it was all about. We just thought all we were doing was watching telephone lines and watching the man's cattle and so on. But I have an idea that we were watching for invasion, spies and so on.
- D: When you were out on Border Patrol, what provisions did you take with you? Was it pretty much that you were on your own getting food? When you were on patrol, did you have food and supplies and everything?
- R: It was only fifteen miles down and fifteen miles back. So we'd always be back for supper. You'd maybe take a sandwich or something with you.
- D: You had like a home base on patrol?
- R: Well, on our outpost we had three tents and we had our own cook and everything there in our supply.
- D: Was the food very good?
- R: The food was very good. Our mess sergeant was one of these fellows that had a feast one day and famine the next, because we would use all our money up in the fifteen days and then on the last days we had to forage for ourselves, and go out and shoot wild duck or turkey, or fish, or deer. We fished from the Rio Grande River, there. We used that sixty foot seine and that's the only time the rangers did say something to us. They said that it was against the law to seine the river. But they never stopped us so we kept on going.
- D: Mr. Rosenberg, you have been giving us some information about your work as part of the Border Patrol, did you do anything for recreation? Did the men do anything when they didn't have duties?
- R: Did they have any off-hours? Well, there wasn't anything there. We were too far away. Del Rio was fourteen miles and on horseback, that's a little bit far, so all we did was read and write to those back home. There wasn't much recreation outside of riding. Of course we got a big kick out of that everyday. Well, we had to take the horses out to exercise them. There were no

stables for them, they were just put out on a picket line. At night they would kick-up, if they'd hear a mountain lion or something, then you'd have to go out and see what was wrong.

D: Did each man have to take care of his own horse, was he responsible for it?

R: Well, he did have to take care of his own horse as far as grooming. They didn't have to feed them because they had duty men that did that. Fellows that were on stable call would do that part.

D: Was that a rotating kind of thing? Everybody got stable call?

R: Yes, everybody had stable call. When you had stable call that was when you had to go down and groom your horse. When we were on outpost duty, we didn't follow-up on the same drill with everything as we did when we were in garrison post. We were more or less rougher up there. It all depended on what our sergeant wanted to do at the time. We had two sergeants at that time. I was a lance corporal and I had a little bit of duty. Then, later on they made me corporal, but most of the time you had things to yourself after you got done with your trip down the river. You didn't make that everyday because just two men went down everyday and there were fourteen of us besides two sergeants. Otherwise, we didn't do anything but fish and hunt, you might say.

D: We had talked before about in the Border Patrol duties, what you were looking for and there was some talk about what's called the Zimmerman Note, where the Germans had made an attempt to make an agreement with the Mexicans. Did you hear anything about that while you were down there?

R: Well, when we went to Ruidoso down in the big bend, we heard quite a bit more of it there, because they had a high power telescope where you could look into Mexico for fifty or sixty miles of the Santa Rosa mountain pass. We knew there was some reasons that you had to be watching that. However, our Colonel said it wasn't for us to wonder why, just to go ahead and do what we were told. So even though they did talk about it, they talked behind his back. He didn't want that to be talked about.

D: What did the men think about that? What did they say about it?

R: They didn't like it. We often talked about it because we had a sentry duty that went up on the hill out of our post there, and we looked right in to Mexico. We watched that pretty well because they could have come right in and wiped us out. There were only 110 men there. It wouldn't be very much of a problem to come in there and take 110 men if they were asleep, you know. So that's the reason they had to be on the alert. When I was in charge of the guard there and I had sentries up on top; we had a telephone from the sentry up there to my post down below. They would call and tell me what they saw. Some of them would get scared up there. They'd call down and tell you this and that. One fellow did shoot himself through the foot because he was so scared. I don't know what he saw, but he shot himself in the foot. He called up and said to me, "I think I shot myself through the foot or somebody shot me, I've got a hole through my foot. I don't know if I did it or whether somebody else did it." So we had to go up and around, circle around the hilltop, you could not go straight up, it's pretty high, and bring him down. Here the guy had shot himself with a .45 automatic. He was just scared, that's all.

D: What was Ruidoso like? What was the terrain like? Was it hard living there?

R: It's pretty hard living there, because we were sixty miles then from Marfa, southwest of Marfa and we were in the big bend. It's pretty wild; it's one of the wildest parts of the country. In fact, I thought it was the wildest country in the United States. That's where the National Park is, today, The Texas National Park, and Big Ben National Park.

D: How did you like the service, did you enjoy it?

R: I enjoyed it very much. I even talked about re-enlisting to go to the Philippines for a year. I decided I'd go and wrote home and told my folks. I hadn't been home for two-and-a-half years and they told me not to do it. I said, that I'd be home for a month before they send me to the Philippines. I had enlisted for a year. Just then the people were getting the fever and one thing or another and well, that discouraged me and I didn't go. Maybe I'm better off!

D: Did they have many problems with sickness when you were in the service then?

R: The only trouble was when the flu was on in 1917, when

many people died. When we got into Del Rio after I had enlisted, I had a fever and a little bit of a cold, but I didn't feel bad. They had me in the hospital with all these people dying around me all night. I wanted to get out of there so bad, and they kept me there two days. Then, I got out of there. There must have been thirty or forty people there that died in there a night with the flu, influenza at the time. In 1917, they died here in Girard and McDonald, too, if you think back about it.

- D: What kind of facilities did they have? Did they have very many medical facilities for men when you were out on patrol? Did you have first-aid training or anything?
- R: Just roughly, when we were in outpost duty at Del Rio. Del Rio was fourteen miles away from us and most of the when we were there, there was no training at all. Nobody had first aid, except for putting a bandage on or something. They'd have to ride in to Del Rio, fourteen miles, and get the ambulance, a horse-drawn ambulance came out and you know how long that takes. So everybody was pretty good, I never saw much sickness there, except for one fellow, Dr. Wilson in Masury, he broke his collar bone there from a horse pulling him off into the irrigation ditch.
- D: Is there anything else, before we go on to this other topic, that you'd like to add about the Border Patrol, that you can think of, that you might want to throw in?
- R: You don't want to hear about us being sent to Houston?
- D: That's what I thought we'd get into talking a little bit about, you'd mentioned you'd been involved in the race riots, maybe we could talk about that a little bit? What prompted your men to go up to Houston?
- R: We were sent to Houston to quell or stop a race riot up there and that was from our home base in Fort Sam Houston. They called our troop, Rambling Troop D out of the A,B,C, and D outfits. They called our outfit "Troop D, the Rambling D" because we were always on the go.
- D: Why were you on the go so much?
- R: It seems like that outfit was always everywhere. I don't know why, I can't figure it out, only that they used to call us the Rambling D. We never stayed in garrison post over six to eight months at a time, and away we'd go.

- D: What were the conditions in Houston when you got there?
- R: We got there when they were taking the guns off of the militia and they sent us there, and of course, the regular army being better trained, they didn't take them off of them. We had a little bit of trouble, but then we stayed there a couple of months to see that things stayed quiet, and everything was all right.
- D: How bad were conditions up there, how much violence and shooting?
- R: Well, there were several killed, on both sides, the black people and the white people. Some of them were lost. So I don't know, just how much.
- D: Were you aware of any reason for this riot in particular?
- R: I don't know exactly what was the trouble, but it wasn't jobs then, because there was plenty of work. People just didn't like each other, that's all I can figure.
- D: How long did the riot last?
- R: When we were sent from Fort Sam Houston to Houston for about ten days, I guess. Then when we got there it was over right away.
- D: What did you actually do when you got there? Was there any procedure that you had to follow?
- R: We were stationed in the Houston Camp, we got our horses all stabled up and went up town and mounted, just right up the main street in Houston. Then they shoved the crowd back and they had Pathe News, which was taking movie pictures of it. My folks saw it here in Girard. They used cameras with a crank, they didn't have these automatic cameras like they have today. They were taking pictures of us pushing these people back, taking their guns off of them, and stopping them. We didn't use any clubs on them either.
- D: What kind of feeling did you have getting involved? Were you afraid or did you wonder what was going to happen?
- R: We did wonder. They didn't tell us, they never tell you too much when you start out. We knew there was a race riot, but we didn't know just what scope it was, how big it was, or how small it was. They didn't bother us

very much. We got saddled up in about one day, I think. Then we went back the next day to San Fillipe, they call it, the colored district there, patrolled that and everything was quiet. They all went underground, I guess.

D: Where did you go after Houston?

R: From Houston we went back to San Antonio, then from San Antonio we went to Fort Clarke for six months. Fort Clarke's an old fort, my God, it had some walls in there that were about two feet thick.

D: Where's Fort Clarke located?

R: It's between San Antonio and Del Rio. We rode that, we didn't have to use the train. We just hiked that. In fact, we did most of our riding at night because it is too hot in the daytime.

D: Did you have specific purpose for going to Fort Clarke?

R: The river was about eight miles from there but we still went around and rode the river. We rode the river some and did a lot of drilling, and I think they were getting us ready to go to Ruidoso, because we only stayed there about six months. Then we went to Ruidoso, that's where we had the most trouble with Mexicans there. We were sent to watch a pass.

D: You had mentioned to me before in a previous conversation that you had gotten into the training of troops. How did you happen to get into that? Where you were actually training the men?

R: Right after the war, after the Armistice was signed, I thought I was going to get out like the rest of the fellows, but I didn't get a chance to get out because I was training replacements. I said to my colonel, "How come I can't get out?" He said, "I need you, I need you for training, because you got fellows from the infantry and you got fellows from the artillery and they don't know a darn thing about the Cavalry. It's up to you to teach them." Well it wasn't only just me because there was a sergeant, but most of that training came on my shoulders. I don't know why. Then I didn't get out of the army for ten months after the war was over. I enlisted for the duration, which it says on here, on this discharge. Charlie Clifford and Ed Clifford were home, and had been home for a year before I had got home.

- D: What kind of pay were you making at this time, what was the army paying?
- R: It wasn't too much. I was a corporal, I think I got \$33.00 plus \$4.00 or \$5.00 for shooting for my Marksmanship, that's all. About \$35.00 a month, that was in, I remember, 1919.
- D: Was there any change in routine? Did the border patrols continue?
- R: They kept bringing these fellows in and I'd train them for thirty days of basic training, and then I'd get another bunch. It made me so mad because I'd just get this gang where they responded to your commands and everything and it's look like an army, then you'd get another bunch. It wasn't too bad, the only thing is the rest of the fellows that I had gone in with went home and I had to stay. I couldn't figure that out.
- D: Did you have any particular problems in training men? Is there anything that you ran up against, any particular problem?
- R: Well, you get some trouble with people that are having an awful time riding. They are sore all the time. Of course, if you ride all the time, like we fellows in the cavalry, why you'd get a pretty tough hide, but you get fellows there that had a hard time. I've seen a fellow, young Jewish fellow, that had fourteen boils on his behind from riding. He didn't tell me that he had that trouble until I saw the blood running down him and I said to him, "Why didn't you tell me? Get to the infirmary and get fixed up." He said, "Well I didn't want to bother you." He was an awful nice kid, but my gosh with fourteen boils on him. That was from irritation, from riding.
- D: How long did the training last?
- R: It lasted until I got out and I don't know what happened then. I came out on September 22, 1919 and they were still training replacements for the fellows that were getting out, and for the regular army.
- D: They were going to motorize vehicles at that time, was the Cavalry kind of a dying thing, then?
- R: The Cavalry was going into motorcycles at the time, but down in that part of the country they didn't because they

had all horses and stables and everything else.

D: Now that we've covered some of the areas of your training, do you have any comments about some of the people that you served with?

R: We had a fellow in our outfit, his name was Kraus, he was a likeable fellow, but he wouldn't keep himself clean. So the fellows got a hold of him and took him down there and they had this GI soap and scrub brushes and they scrubbed him down until he was pink. We did not have much trouble with him from then on.

D: Did you have much trouble with keeping clean? Being out on patrol and that, how did you take a bath?

R: Well, you didn't unless you came to a creek or something like that. When we were along the river we just jumped in there, take your clothes off and go in the Rio Grande River. We had some pretty rugged training there out at Ruidoso because it's pretty mountainous there. What we did do is take these trips that would take us up on top of pretty good sized hills, I'm telling you, then ride your horses down and you've got to be careful to keep them straight. If you make them turn they'll start rolling. We had an Irishman, Cochran was his name, and when we got to the top of the hill he looked down and he said, "Oh me goodness, somebody lead me horse and I'll walk down." (laughter) The captain said, "Get on that horse and get going!" I thought that was funny!

D: Did they have any problems with horses? A lot of these guys have probably never ridden before.

R: Oh, yes, when they first start to ride. When we first went in, they didn't give us a saddle. They just gave us a surcingle, that's a big belt like, that goes around the horse and holds the blanket on him. That's all we had. Then they said, in order to see if you're a good rider and they'd blindfold you and you make a jump. It wasn't a very big jump this time and the horses were trained. They made us jump those wooden jumps without being able to see. The reason for that was because you had a tendency to pull in on the horse when he wanted to take off himself, because the horse knew when to take off. So they blindfolded them so they'd know to let the horse have his head.

D: Once the war was over and you had gone on your training period, now you were just about ready to be mustered

out of the service, where did you go from Texas?

- R: When I got mustered out I went to Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky. I was mustered out there. It was September 22, 1919.
- D: Just one final question. During the time that the war was going on in France and you were in Texas, did the men talk much about what was going on in France? Did they have any opinions about what was taking place there?
- R: Some of the fellows did get shipped over that were bad actors and they wanted to get rid of them out of our outfit. There were a couple of them that were shipped over. This Hubbard, that I told you about before, he was a nice fellow but he was always in trouble. The company commander said, "Well we'll just ship him out." A couple of us fellows wanted to go with him but, we were told to stay there. They shipped him and another couple of fellows that were troublemakers, in other words, they wanted to get rid of them. Well, he came home all right, he came home as soon as the war was over, that would be in 1918, November 11. Well, it was shortly after that.
- D: What did they do as far as discipline? What kind of discipline did they have?
- R: The discipline was very good because most of our men, our officers were West Point men and they didn't condone swearing or anything like that. In fact, they frowned upon it and if they'd hear you swearing they'd call you over and say, "Now that's not necessary and if I hear that again, you're going to be disciplined."
- D: What did they do if somebody did disobey the rules?
- R: They got time in the guardhouse, some of them did, you see. They don't get an excellent discharge. All that stuff goes against them when they're discharged. One time, I don't know if they hung them or shot them. Two colored fellows killed somebody and I was in charge of the guard that night. They had a regular prison, you might say, but our guards changed, they didn't have the same. When I was on guard, I was officer of the guard and had to put my men out on their own posts. Well, these two colored guys that were going to be shot the next day were in that jail. I felt bad about that because the fellows seemed very nice and I had talked

to them before. I knew they were going to be shot the next day; boy, I didn't like that.

D: Did you talk to them during that period?

R: I talked to them when I was in charge of the guard, there. They didn't cause us any trouble, they were all right.

D: How long were they held before they were actually executed?

R: They were held a couple of months because they were soldiers, of course you know. They had to go through the military court.

D: In the course of talking to them, did you talk in any substance about how they felt about their sentence?

R: They didn't say that they were not guilty. They admitted they were guilty, but they had provocation. So, I don't know. I didn't hear the other side of the story, I only heard their side. I didn't, in fact, go to any of the trials because I wasn't on then. You don't go unless you're on duty. You have to take them out and take them up there on trial. And they were pretty well guarded. That was from Fort Sam Houston.

D: That was in Fort Sam Houston where the trial took place?

R: Yes.

D: The men were finally then executed?

R: Yes.

D: What year was this, do you recall?

R: It must have been in the early part of 1918, because that's when we went to Ruidoso. It was spring of 1918, or, the tail end of 1917. A fellow by the name of Sullivan was in the army with me and that's when we were at Fort Sam Houston, and he'd been drinking quite heavily. He was an oldtime soldier, he'd been in the army for thirty years, and no doubt, he had a good bit of money because he often talked to me that he didn't have any heirs. He said the state's going to get the money. He said, "I like you." I said, "I'm glad of that--that you like me,--but I don't want any of your money." He had a room off his squad room downstairs

and I had one up on the second floor. It was right under his. It was right after we ate lunch and we had not started out to drill in the afternoon and I heard a bang. It sounded just like a screen door banging and pretty soon a fellow came up and said, "Old Jerry just shot himself; he's laying down there in a pool of blood." I said, "I heard that." This bullet came right up through the floor, right past my bunk, and was in my ceiling. A forty-five automatic went right through Jerry's chin, through the bald head and it came out here. (must be showing him) That was a tough one. There's one of your buddies that you had to bury, taps and all that. I'll tell you, you don't really know what it is until you go through it. The state did get his money. He had \$30,000, the state of Texas. He called me down but I thought he wanted to give me a drink and I didn't drink in those days, I never touched it. I didn't smoke, or either he wanted me to go and get him some, and he paid as much as twenty dollars a quart for whiskey down there, because when he was on that toot, you know. He was our supply sergeant. He said, "I want to talk to you," and that's right after we got done with our dinner and on the steps out in the back--the steps I showed you that I think--anyway I did not, I went on and up to my room and he went in. He wanted to tell me something, but he didn't get the chance because I didn't stop. I don't know what he wanted to tell me. When they said old Jerry just shot himself, then I looked and I saw that doggone hole went right through the floor. It went clear through him. Well, a forty-five automatic has a lot of force; a lot of power. I went down there and sure enough old Jerry was laying there in a pool of blood. He might have wanted to give me some money or something that he had on him, but I don't think he had much on him because it was all in the bank, you see. Or he might have wanted to borrow money off of me, I don't know.

D: I'd like to thank you a lot for this interview. I appreciate it and I'm sure that the information is going to be of great value.

R: I'm glad if it will help you and help you in your school.

END OF INTERVIEW