

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
ROBERT H. ADAMS
American Friends Service Committee, World War II
2005

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Adams, Robert H., (1924-), Oral History Interview, 2006.

User copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Robert Adams, a Spring Lake (New Jersey) native, discusses his service in the American Friends Service Committee during post-World War II. While enrolled in ROTC, Adams describes coming to the conclusion he was a conscientious objector based on the Gospel and religious pacifism. He talks about his captain's understanding attitude and mentions his seminary training at Garrett Seminary before receiving an offer to work with American Friends Service Committee in Italy. He mentions his training at Pendel Hill (Pennsylvania) and courses taken to prepare him for post-war overseas work from May 1946 to December 1947. Adams arrived in Rome and was immediately moved into the town of Carrara (Italy) to help with transporting tiles to the northern part of Italy. This work was done in coordination with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Adams recalls distributing CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) packages and turning over the tile transportation to local Italians. He describes his work helping to rebuild Palena, which had been destroyed by the Germans. After his work in Italy, Adams touches upon his brief time in Oberhausen (Germany), the assistance received from the U.S. Army, and his return to the United States in time for the holiday season. Adams stresses that neither the services he provided nor his experiences were dramatic or heroic, he professes a great fondness for the Italian people from whom he still hears.

Biographical Sketch

Adams (1924-), a conscientious objector and seminary student, worked with the American Friends committee after World War II in Italy and Germany. Adams settled in the Madison area upon his return.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcript edited by Hannah Gray & John McNally, 2007.

Interview Transcript

John: This is John Driscoll, and I am with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Archives, and this is an oral history interview with Bob Adams. Bob was a member of the American Friends Service Committee during and after World War II, and today is March 7, 2006. We are at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum conference room, and, Bob, good morning and thank you so much for agreeing to the interview.

Bob: Oh, it is my pleasure, John.

John: Okay. Why don't we start at the very beginning, Bob? When and where were you born?

Bob: I was born in Spring Lake, New Jersey.

John: Okay.

Bob: And grew up in a town called Asbury Park, right on the seashore. Went to Asbury Park High School.

John: When were you born?

Bob: 1924.

John: Okay. The date?

Bob: September 10.

John: September 10. Okay. And family? Home?

Bob: Yes. My father was, he ran a blue print business. The American Blue Print and Supply Company. And those were the days when they really made blue prints. And he did that for architects up and down the Jersey shore. He also was in a photography business, commercial photography, with a man named Hap Brown. And Adams and Brown took many, many pictures in the early history, or the history of his lifetime of Asbury Park. I had two brothers. A younger one who, along with the youngest one, my younger one, Ted, who was born in 1928, Bill, who was born in 1934. They eventually ran the blue printing business.

John: Okay.

Bob: But in high school, Asbury Park High School, I decided, thanks to a very winsome, wonderful pastor that we had in the church at that time, that I really wanted to go, I felt really called to go into the ministry of the church. Which changed my plans. I was enrolled in the Wharton School of Business, in

Philadelphia.

John: Oh, wow.

Bob: And I changed it to Western Maryland College, which is not called McDaniel College, in Westminster, Maryland, just outside of Baltimore. And I went there, right straight through the year, for three years. Now, of course, I was on an age where I had registered for the draft. And the local draft board, at my minister's suggestion, gave me a deferment. I've forgotten what they called it right now. 4D, maybe, or something? I don't know. So that I could finish the education during that period of time. Which I did. And I went directly from college, then, to a seminary out in Evanston, Illinois. Garrett Seminary.

John: When did you graduate from college? What year?

Bob: 1945.

John: Okay.

Bob: Is that right? Yes. Definitely. Had to be.

John: Okay.

Bob: It surprises me, too. Graduated college in 1945 and started seminary at Evanston, Illinois, Garrett, the seminary, and Northwestern University. But two quarters into the seminary, they went by quarters there. I got a call from Philadelphia. I had worked for the American Friends Service Committee earlier, and had contacts there. And they had visited the school. And during the time, out of their influence, as much as anything, as well as my own reading of the gospel, I became a conscientious objector. I was already enrolled in ROTC and I remember going to Captain Capels and telling him that I was a conscientious objector. And he looked kind of stern for a few minutes. And then he said, "Well, everyone has to do what his conscience tells him to do. So go for it." So I did, but my draft board decided that they preferred me to be deferred rather than going into civilian public service. Which I was willing to do. That was the way it went. So I finished college by going all the way around the year for three years, and went to seminary for the two quarters. As I was saying, at the end of the second quarter, near the end of the second quarter, I got a call from Philadelphia, asking me if I would be interested in going to work in Italy for a year and a half, or two years. And that was in 1945 that they called. And in '46, in the spring, I left school and went to Philadelphia, and had six weeks of training at Pendel Hill, which is a training ground for Quaker work. Along with many, many other people from all over everywhere. And intensive courses in everything. Among other things I learned a little bit of Italian, and I learned how to disassemble a Jeep motor and put it back together, so it would still work. I had to do that because we were in the transportation business

in Italy, and we were supposed to take care of our own vehicles, as much as you could. I managed to do that one time, and I was quite proud of that.

John: What did the other training consist of?

Bob: It consisted in learning about Italy, and about its people, and about the course of the war. How the Americans came up from Sicily and the Germans came down. And they met down there on the beaches, and places, at Casino, and so on. And the Germans retreated up to another line. And there were these two lines. One about Naples and Casino, and that area, and the other one up from Pisa, Florence, and across the mountains up there. Now, I tell you that much about it because I arrived there in May of 1946. And went immediately to Rome which was the Friends Service Committee headquarters, in a convent up there. And got some more orientation, and was assigned to work up in Carrara, which is near Pisa, just north of Pisa a little bit. But on the seashore, on the sea there. It is also the location of the Apuanian Alps, which are great mountains of marble. Where Michelangelo got all his marble.

John: Oh, okay.

Bob: And they were still taking marble out of the mountains when we were there. I was only there a short while thought because they were establishing an out-station in a walled city called Luca. Which was over the coastal range and down in the valley of the Garfagna River. I and an Englishman, named Philip Descreet, were assigned to set up this arrangement. Our job was interesting. The southern part of that province was where all the clay factories were. Where they made tile, bricks, roofing tiles, and all that kind of thing. The northern part is where the Germans took their stand up in the mountains. Very rugged. And they systematically, and I mean systematically, destroyed everything that was there. There was a railroad that went up that valley which was mostly run on bridges or in tunnels. That is how they built it. The Germans placed mines or something under the rails every two yards the whole length of the line except in a tunnel or on a bridge. There they blew down the bridges and blew down the tunnels. And they blew up all the little villages along the way. Of course, there was shelling back and forth, and bombing, and so on. And almost every village in the place was in ruins, and the people were basically homeless. And the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration - UNRRA - had worked with the Italian government to form an organization called UNRRA-Casas, which is plural for house, of course, in Italian, for the purpose of aiding the people whose houses had been wrecked. And our job was to furnish free transportation of the tiles up to the northern part, where they were needed, and to help set up committees in the different villages who would plan on who gets these things, which was their job to figure that out. For a guy who was just twenty-three years old, that was a big assignment.

John: Sure. I was over there, not exactly there, ten years later, and there was still ruins

and wreckage left over. The place was devastated.

Bob: Oh, it was a big job.

John: Yea. Wow.

Bob: But, anyhow, Philip and I went over to Pisa, I think it was. On the shore there, there was a big army place. The American army was still there. And we managed to beg, borrow - not steal - actually, they just gave us three six-by-six trucks, I think they were called. And a Jeep, and a motorcycle. And they said, go for it. So we took these things over, with the help of some of our Italian friends, and we set up a garage where they could be maintained. We found some mechanics in the town who were looking for work. And we hired them. We had money to do this kind of thing. And then we visited as many of the tile factories and such as we could find and set this thing up. And in due course it worked. What happened was that the trucks would load up with the tiles, UNRRA-Casas would pay for them. We would furnish the transportation. And the people in the towns would build their buildings. They were all built of stone, rock, and tile, and we heavy wood-framed them. And most of that building material was laying around. In the ruins. All they had to do was sort it out and do it all over again. And I used to have some pictures that showed one village before and after. And it literally was re-roofed.

John: What shape were the people in? They must have just been in tremendous shock.

Bob: They were living off the land. CARE packages were distributed there. I wasn't doing that. But they were accepting them in places.

John: Oh, okay.

Bob: And helping one another. The army helped. For instance, for making bread, they had very poor quality flour. It looked gray. I don't know what else was in it besides wheat, and something. But the army gave them flour and they would mix it half and half, and improve the quality of the bread.

John: Okay.

Bob: That was done there. So, Philip and I worked at that with a couple of Italians. I had to have an interpreter. And I found a good one, who was very helpful. He spoke good English. And, of course, spoke good Italian. He had been in the Italian army in North Africa, and then been captured and taken to India. He spent most of the war in a prison camp in India, and he had only recently come back home to Luca, where he had a home. And while we were there we lived in a tiny apartment that was owned by a lawyer and his family. And they gave us a room to use. And we ate with them regularly. So that was the first part of my job, and I worked on that from May of 1946 until through Christmas, which I spent in Rome. And for

the first time in thirty years, it snowed in Rome on Christmas Day. Just for us.

John: Back up just a bit. While you were living with this lawyer, food? Water? Sanitation?

Bob: Adequate. Lots of pasta. Lots and lots of pasta. Lots of spaghetti sauce.

John: What about medical attention for the Italians? Things like that?

Bob: There were doctors. There was a hospital.

John: Okay. Civic? Mayor? Chief of police? Fire department?

Bob: Yes. All of those things existed. The organization existed.

John: Oh, yea, of course.

Bob: They were all fascists. And they let you know some times that they were. "Things were much better..."

John: That's interesting.

Bob: Yea, they called the mayor a *sindaco*. And usually they had, what did they call it? A *palazo del governo*. A palace of government.

John: Okay.

Bob: In some places, the most lavish building in the place. For the mayor to work in.

John: That society, I guess, has existed for thousand of years. It had just been devastated.

Bob: I would say that the society wasn't so much devastated as the infrastructure.

John: Okay. Okay.

Bob: Yea.

John: Okay. Okay. Sure.

Bob: They remained pretty well organized, actually. I can't remember any case where, oh, there was kind of a comical one where there was a little village where the priest was going broke and hungry. And he found an old law that said the priest could collect toll fees for the use of the roads in the village. So he built a gate and put it out on the road, and the uproar that caused was really funny.

John: I can imagine.

Bob: The poor man. I think it all settled down to where they decided the guy was starving, they ought to give him something to eat. Feed him. So it was that sort of thing going on. There was a lot of pain. A lot of people had lost their lives, had lost family members, of course. And the destruction that the Germans had done intentionally was really pretty bad. But the water supply in the mountains especially was okay. I don't remember that ever being a problem. I don't remember any supply stuff at that time being a problem in the towns. They seemed to have themselves put together.

John: Okay.

Bob: I think they were used to living in a fairly self-sufficient way, over all the centuries, you know. And just had it put together that way.

John: Okay.

Bob: After Christmas, we changed emphasis. We felt we had done our part for UNRRA-Casas, and we recruited Italian people to take our place. And got engineers and other people who worked at it. One of the first, what interested us, we worked just wonderfully with the drivers. They were driving all this stuff, you know. And we never lost a load. Everything was just fine. And then as soon as the Italians took it over, oh, those poor people, they had to hire inspectors to ride along and make sure that the truck drivers weren't taking the stuff off somewhere else. While we were doing it, that wasn't a problem.

John: Okay.

Bob: What we decided to do from that point on was more direct work. And I was assigned then to a place in central Italy, up in the mountains, called Palena. In the province of Chieti. There were already Quaker workers there who were working over on the Adriatic Sea at Ortona. And in a boys village, in the nearby town of Lanciano. This had been organized by a priest, Don Guido Visendaz, who was a priest in the town and went through all the destruction of it, and everything. And there was this big old building of some sort. And he just went around and found a lot of boys, especially, who were homeless, and just running wild. And they lived in this building. And he found them. And he got himself in with them, and got them organized, and cleaned up the place, and planted gardens and so on. And he had a kind of Boys Town.

John: Like Father Flanagan.

Bob: Exactly. The same idea. And some of our people worked a lot with him for a while. I did not, but I knew the project. I went to Palena, and down, there was a

little river through there, the name I don't remember. And down the river a ways, within walking distance, a mile or two, there was another little town called Letto Palena. Which means "Palena's bed."

John: Okay.

Bob: And it was just a little village, and it hung on the side of a mountain. One of the highest mountains in central Italy. Snow-topped. And every so often this mountain would have a rock slide. And they would come crashing down into the village, and do a lot of damage. And people would be killed, and so on. And the Germans, there was a road high up on the side of the mountain. And the Germans had a bunch of trucks coming by loaded with soldiers. And somebody fired on them from down in the village of Letto Palena. They stopped, and came down, and the result was not a massacre but the result was all the women were taken to one camp with the children and all the men were taken to a different camp. And then they went through the village and they blew up every single solitary structure, except two. One of them was a 13th Century church, which they left standing, and the other, and this interested me the most, was a flour mill they left standing.

John: Wow.

Bob: Yea. Somebody had a heart.

John: Yea.

Bob: That would have been ruinous. So that is how it worked. And that had happened before we got there, while the Germans were still around. And our task was to find a way, the people had the idea, "Look, we are in ruins. Let's move the whole she-bang." There was a sort of a flat place across the river, and they wanted to move their village to this place. Build all new houses, everything. And keep the church and the flour mill where they were. And use the stones from the destroyed buildings to build their houses. But there was this deep valley in-between with the river through it. And the fellow, one of the fellows I worked with, Bob Forsberg, came up with the idea of building a, in Italian it's called a *teleferica*. I don't know what we would call them in English, to be truthful. They'd string a wire across and have a cart that ran on wheels, and that sort of thing. Sort of a tram, maybe. Something like that. So we got a great big barrel, and had it cut in half, and built a frame-work, and we got some wheels from an electric railway that had some wheels that were just right for these wires. And we built this device and one end of it was up where the ruins were, and the other end was down where the new village was to be. And back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth that went. And to do that, we recruited all through Europe, as far as we could get, people of college age to come and work for the summer. And we got them. We did that, not personally, but through the organizations, the Friends Service Committee. And so we had people from Switzerland, from France, from Belgium,

from Norway and Sweden and Denmark. I don't recall that we had German people there. We had English. Lots of English people. We had quite a gang, actually. And they stayed, the four of us, Bob Forsberg, Macy Whitehead, and I - the three of us - lived in the second story of an old bank building. The first story had been burned out. Had to climb a ladder to get to up. And cooked on a coal stove. Charcoal stove. And we somehow or other found some housing, tents we pitched, and so on, for the students who were working. And they were there all summer. And they unloaded a lot of rocks. And left everything there when we left. That took a lot of work putting all that together.

John: I can imagine. What a great idea.

Bob: It was a great idea, and it worked very well, indeed. We also distributed CARE packages in that town, in Palena. And one time some Argentine Catholics sent some wonderful linen, like table cloth size, over to be given to the priest in the town to distribute among the people. So he picked out the most needy ones, and divided it up, and gave it to them. Well, the town had an uproar about that. How come we didn't get any? So the priest called it all back, and he and the nuns sat down and figured out how many people there were, and how many square feet there were of this thing, and they cut it up in handkerchief size. And gave every person in town one of them. King Solomon, or something. We didn't think too much of that idea. He should have stood his ground, but he knew better. He lived there.

John: Wow.

Bob: The women were very, very good at making crocheted things, so we found over in Philadelphia, where the Friends Service Committee headquarters was, that we could arrange a market for these. And that we did. And that seemed to thrive. It was beginning to thrive when we left. After the work camp was over and everybody dispersed, we were called back to Rome and told that the Italians, who are an extraordinarily hard working people, were taking things in hand, in great shape, and they thought that if some of us wanted to transfer somewhere else, we could. Or we could go home. I chose to do both. And I left Rome and took a train to Switzerland, and in the middle of the night changed trains to one that took me to Dusseldorf, in the Ruhr area of Germany. And from there went to a nearby town called Oberhausen.

John: Okay.

Bob: I knew no German. None. And so it was fun when I had to make a phone call from the station to get a ride over to Oberhausen. She said, "Number, please?" in German and I didn't know how to answer. I found a man on the platform who told me how to count to ten and handed the phone to me. And I now can count to ten in German.

John: Okay. This would have been about what?

Bob: Yea, this was in, let me see. I started in May of '46 in Italy. And worked at Carrara, and then Luca. Wait a minute, I didn't come home until November of '47. So, yea. Luca till Christmas, and then out to Palena through the summer, of '47, and the fall of '47. And then back to Rome and up to Germany. November of '47.

John: You could do that by rail?

Bob: Yea.

John: I know the railroads...

Bob: Well, not from Palena, you couldn't.

John: Okay.

Bob: There was a railroad there, and there is now, but it had all been blown up. No, we had to drive the Jeep. We had the Jeeps and the army trucks. The British Army and the Indian Army and the American Army were good to us in that way. We had all these trucks. We had to ride that way most of the time.

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

John: Okay, there we are. So, Dusseldorf.

Bob: Dusseldorf, to Oberhausen, and there I stayed for several weeks working with German students, which was great fun since I couldn't speak German. But a lot of them could speak English. Through all over Europe, actually. Now I am just fine. We were in a cement factory in Oberhausen that had been used by the Germans to make cement, but they had slave labor. They got prisoners, and people they didn't like, and so forth.

John: Yea.

Bob: And they put them to work. And they had lived in dreadful dormitory-kind of places there. And, well, that is where we stayed, too. They had gone. And it was being used, increasingly, by refugees from East Germany coming to West Germany, and there were a lot of these people without any means of support, and so on. So we were struggling to get arrangements for food and CARE packages and so on. And there was no German government you could really work through. Again, the army was extremely helpful, furnishing all kinds of supplies, and working with us. And I stayed there for, the best I can remember, five weeks. I got home in time for either Christmas or New Years. I forgot exactly which. Travel in

those days, of course, was by ship. Going and coming. Ten days over and ten days to get back. And somewhere down in the hold, on the top bunk of three or four in a stack. I felt very fortunate that somehow or other I didn't suffer from motion sickness, and I could enjoy it. We got into quite a storm going back.

John: Oh, yes.

Bob: A smaller ship. And I remember I thought being at sea was a great thing to be. It was something I could have done through my life. But, anyhow, that about sums it up. Nothing very dramatic. Nothing heroic. And lots of interesting experiences. Wonderful, wonderful people that I still hear from.

John: You were helping people to get it together again, their lives.

Bob: We tried to do another reunion. We had two reunions down in Indiana. And the third time didn't work. People were just not able to travel.

John: When you were in Italy there, how many, you mentioned three or four.

Bob: There were fifty-five in our Italian unit.

John: Okay.

Bob: The head of our unit was a Presbyterian minister. There were in the whole fifty-five, only three Quakers. All the rest of us were across the board Catholics and Baptists and Methodists and whatever. The Church of the Brethren had a separate organization that they sent over, and we worked with them. So we were all one unit, really, in Carrara. When we were there.

John: But you were mainly a few people here and a few people there.

Bob: That's right.

John: Remarkable.

Bob: We were scattered all over. Between Rome and Naples, of course, there were other areas in Italy. Where the Germans stood and tried to. And we had several units down there. And among their jobs was, for instance, there would be a village with no water supply. So we built a pipeline from a well and run it into the village. And transportation was another thing. Food supplies. Working with children. Had some people who were good with that. Some of them still write. I don't hear from any of the people I knew any more. The Italians. I used to. And some of my friends that I keep in touch with, they still hear from some of the people. And a few of them have been lucky enough to go back and have seen how it has changed. One thing that changed was you could drive all the way from

Naples to Pisa, north, Pisa on the highway which is the old Roman road, nicely paved, and about the only thing you would run into was an occasional car, once in a blue moon a truck, and ox carts. And people walking.

John: Okay.

Bob: And very little traffic. And I guess now it is a whole different story, and you take your life in your hands. There were a couple of interesting stories that occurred to me tell me something. A lot of the villages that I worked in were deliberately built in the Middle Ages up on top of the mountains. Safe place. And there would be a little roadway, just a walking path, or mule path is what they call it in Italian. Up and out. Sometimes it would take an hour and a half, or two hours, to get up to a place. But every time we came, welcome, what can we do? Well, there was one of these places where they mined stone and we had never been in there. And we wanted to go up and see whether it was anything we could work with. And there was a little railway that carried the stone down to the seaside. That also rode in the street. In the road. From time to time it just went up the middle of the street in the town. And there was a tunnel that went to this town, and you had to go through the tunnel. But the point I wanted to make about that place was that at the other end of the tunnel, they had absolutely smashed the village to bits. And there was a lot of work to do up there. People were really in bad shape. But they had water and they knew how to build things. And I don't think it took them very long to put things together enough to establish their town.

John: Wow. What a remarkable story.

Bob: Let's see. Like I say, there is nothing. In a place where you are collecting stories about guys who really put it out. It's just part of a story.

John: It is.

Bob: I just recognize the fact that a lot of people did a whole lot more.

John: Sure. But still, how many hundreds of lives did you have an effect on over there?

Bob: All of us put together.

John: I think it is a remarkable story.

Bob: It's just part of the story. I would say a little bit more about conscientious objectors.

John: Sure. Please.

Bob: It was in the law. I think it still is, in the Selective Service Law. That is one of the provisions, that for religious reasons, this is a recognized standing. And, of

course, during war it is a serious thing. There was, the government set up an organization called Civilian Public Service. CPS. Which I did not get into, but many of my friends did. And it would be assigned to do jobs much like what the old, what did they call it during the Depression?

John: The CCC?

Bob: Yes. Is that it? Yes. They built parks, much like that sort of thing. Some of the guys felt it was sort of meaningless work. And I expect it was. Like a lot of things in those days. It might have been thought of that way. I had, I was kind of a fundamentalist back in those days. It said in the gospel that Jesus said they that take to the sword will perish by the sword. And if your enemy does this, you do a good thing to him. And so forth. Love your enemies, be good to them. And so forth. I took that literally, and seriously, and thought, yea, that is my plan. I also had to fit in with my country and my society, and do my thing, in accord with the law. I did have friends who did not do things according to the law who refused to register for the draft, and ended up in Samsong Prison.

John: Yea.

Bob: That, one I am thinking of became a high ranking clergyman in the state of Wisconsin some time after he finished that.

John: Okay. That is very interesting.

Bob: It's not an option you hear very much about these days. You know, we had come from the First World War to the Second World War through a period of time, half of which I lived in, or part of which, where peacemaking was very highly regarded. You know, we had the war to end wars. The League of Nations had been formed but our congress wouldn't go into it, Though. And pacificism was quite common in the churches in those days. It was something I knew about before I knew what it was, really. I heard sermons on it. And so on. And I think that really was ingrained in a lot of us who had become quite serious about the church, and following Jesus. And it was strong enough to buck the tide, you know. Even within themselves, the feeling, here, my friends are doing it.

John: Do you feel that you paid for that in any way? Paid a price for that?

Bob: I think part of my motivation for going to, I know that part of my motivation for agreeing to go with the American Friends Service Committee was, hey, you know, this has been a big show, and I want more of a part of it than sitting up on College Hill. And I want a part of it that will fit in with my religious convictions. This is it, and I am going. And they called me from Philadelphia, I said yes, right on the phone. And called up my parents and told them.

John: How interesting.

Bob: Yea, I am sure that was part of what motivated me. That was a part of the war effort, and the part of any war effort is the peace effort afterwards. And I got to be part of that. But I, then and now, never has had antipathy toward the military as such, or to those who have given of themselves in the military. I have great respect for that. I do support the troops. I don't think this war, well, we won't get into that.

John: People have a lot of feelings on that.

Bob: A lot of trouble with that.

John: During World War, as compared to today, today we have a professional military. Call them what you will, they are mercenaries. Back then, they had civilians. Most of the guys were drafted. They didn't want to go. But they went. They had to go. It was a much different mind set, back then. They had something to do and they did it.

Bob: It was definitely a citizen army, and when they got out of it, they got out of it.

John: But this is just remarkable because it is something, you think of war, and war is devastation. And you were doing recovering and healing, and helping people get back on their feet.

Bob: That was a part of it, I suppose. I did the best of my ability, for a young guy who didn't half know what he was doing. Couldn't speak the language for a while. I got to where I could speak it pretty well.

John: Well, not knowing what you are doing doesn't slow a lot of people down. But you learn. You learn. And you find out a lot of time it is just not that complicated, once you get your hands on it. Fixing a Jeep motor.

Bob: The Italian people gave me more than I gave them. I am very thankful for that. I understand now, if you go over there, you would never know they were in World War II.

John: I was there in the mid-'50s, and there was still a lot.

Bob: Still a lot.

John: Oh, yea. And things, the economy had not come back. They weren't starving but they were hard up. And there were still a lot or ruins and rebuilding going on.

Bob: And a lot of stirring around of the government. I happened to be there when they

had a vote, and they had a big referendum in the whole of Italy, and abolished the king. And he had to leave. And there was a great celebration. I was in Carrara at the time and, oh, they had a great celebration there because Carrara was a really communist town at that time. And there was lots of red flags and stirring songs, and all that sort of thing. We didn't think much about communism then. They were allies, after all. And they had really taken a terrible beating during the war.

John: And there was all these, there was never a close association between European communists and Soviet communists.

Bob: No, not really. I suppose not.

John: Today there are still communists parties over there but they are not subject to, well, none of them are subject to Moscow any more. Well, what a remarkable story. I didn't know what to expect, you know.

Bob: Well, it's not remarkable, but it is my story and my part in that great victory of the time. After you have been in a war like that, you have been in several wars and skirmishes since, but it is never as much of the whole population as that one.

John: Yes.

Bob: Never. That was real change in life style, all the way down the line.

John: Well, if you take a look at the whole world, 1935 to 1945, everything is different. Tremendous what that decade did. This is remarkable.

Bob: I appreciate your saying that. I hope it was. Here are some pictures. You can't put these on the tape but you can thumb through.

John: Oh, this is the tramway? Now was it going up or down loaded?

Bob: It went down loaded.

John: Fortunately. I was thinking while you were describing it. Isn't that something.

Bob: I didn't have color film then, and a camera that would use it.

John: You know those GI trucks, and the Jeep. I spend a year off and on in the Padua-Pordenone-Vicena area. I was training the Italian army up there. It's beautiful. Golly, that place gets cold in the spring.

Bob: Sort of northern Italy.

John: Yes. Wet. Damp. And it was very interesting. Oh, these are interesting. Gayle

would love to take a look at those.

Bob: I'll be glad for her to do so. I want it back.

John: Did you keep an affiliations with the Friends Society afterwards?

Bob: I still am in touch with the American Friends Service Committee. And most of the people that I knew, well, that is almost sixty years ago.

John: My granddaughter is going, the Friends still have the student exchange. Okay, this is remarkable. What we will do, I'll type this up. It'll take me...

Bob: You mentioned Westminster, Maryland. I am going to shut this off.

[End of Interview.]