

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JOHN PAVLIK
Ambulance Driver, Army, World War I
1989

OH
464

OH
464

Pavlik, John, (1900-1991). Oral History Interview, 1989.

Approximate length: 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, John Pavlik a West Allis, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War I service as an ambulance driver with the National Guard 32nd Infantry Division in France and Germany, his return to his post-war life, work, and involvement with the American Legion and VFW. Pavlik enlisted into service and talks about National Guard basic training in Milwaukee (Wisconsin), Army basic training in Waco (Texas), trip overseas to Alsace-Lorraine (France), and time in the Army of Occupation in Germany after the war. Pavlik discusses the work of ambulance drivers on the battle front. He compares the experiences of veterans returning from war in Vietnam, with those of veterans who returned from service WORLD WAR I. Pavlik also discusses his work with the Milwaukee Fire Department. He explains his life's work in Veteran's associations, and the difficulties experienced by such groups to secure adequate pensions.

Biographical Sketch:

Pavlik served with the 32nd Infantry Division during World War I. He was involved in France and Germany. He returned home after serving as part of the Army of Occupation in 1919.

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Cliff Borden, 1989.

Transcribed by Matt Flunker, 2012 and Elisabeth Bownik, 2011.

Reviewed and abstract written by Robert Brito, 2016.

Transcribed Interview:

Borden: Okay, we're talking with John Pavlik, World War I veteran from West Allis [Wisconsin]. John, let's begin this oral history with a little review of your early childhood days. I understand that you were born in Pennsylvania, and your father was in mining. Is that correct?

Pavlik: Correct. Right.

Borden: Tell us about some of your early recollections.

Pavlik: Well, the earliest recollection that I have is that we moved to Crystal Falls, Michigan where he worked in the iron ore mine and later on in Iron River, Michigan in iron ore mines. And I had left home earlier to come to Wisconsin, to Milwaukee rather, to find a job.

Borden: How old were you at this point?

Pavlik: Oh, about fifteen, fourteen.

Borden: Mm-hmm. You were then on your own at that point?

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: You were earning your own living.

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: You weren't married, though.

Pavlik: No.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: And I had worked at the Illinois Steel Company making steel I-beams and so forth. They had a lot of war material that they were making, and of course, as you know, 1914 is when World War I started. They assassinated the Duke [Archduke] of Austria, and the feeling was high that possibly we may get into a war. At least we were making some materials. And, of course, the place that I worked at, the Illinois Steel Company, we employed a lot of young people. We knew what was coming and sooner or later that we would be getting to that age where they would be asking us to join. Of course, the closer we got to possibly participating when they sank some of our boats, the enemy sank some of our boats, and so forth. They set up a recruiting office down at the Milwaukee Plankinton Arcade where—

Borden: Was this down near the site of the former Plankinton Hotel—

Pavlik: It's next to it.

Borden: Many people are familiar with. Mm-hmm. Next to it.

Pavlik: Right across the street from the Gimbels. And they had all kinds of services recruiting. They were recruiting for all kinds of services, Marine Corps, Navy, Army, various.

Borden: This would've been 1917 or '16?

Pavlik: This is 1917.

Borden: '17.

Pavlik: This started early in 1917, about January, that they set up the headquarters because the feeling was then great that we were mobilizing for possible war. And several of us who work at the plant went down one Saturday afternoon, and we all enlisted in various services.

Borden: Why? Why did you feel that you should enlist rather than be drafted?

Pavlik: Well, being only sixteen, I know that I wouldn't be drafted for a couple more years, and by that time I wanted to get into the action and I wanted to serve my country. I felt that I was able to, and I wanted to do it that way.

Borden: You felt that most of your friends and companions felt kinda the same way, an obligation to serve the country.

Pavlik: Right, right, because when we were enlisting they were recruiting so many of our young people that they over-recruited in some areas and had more people sign up than they were supposed to have for that.

Borden: Now, your ultimate decision, you decided to join the National Guard rather than the Regular Army or Navy, right?

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: Why?

Pavlik: Well, it seemed that the National Guard was your feeling for your own state, and you want to be part of the National Guard. You want to be part of your own people with your own people in your own state, where if you

joined the Navy or something else you were mixed in with all kinds of other people from all over the country. We felt that we'd want to serve our state more so in that respect.

Borden: And, of course, you ultimately joined a unit which became a part of the famed 32nd.

Pavlik: That's correct.

Borden: Wisconsin's own 32nd Infantry Division.

Pavlik: That's right. That's right.

Borden: Uh-huh. Did you know that at the time, that you would be joining the main element?

Pavlik: No, we didn't. When we were given basic training, and we knew that eventually the National Guard would become part of the Regular United States Army, and that became a fact because the Michigan National Guard and the Wisconsin National Guard were united to form the 32nd Division. When that was done, we were all sent to Camp MacArthur at Waco, Texas.

Borden: Well, before we get to that, what was the unit that you joined when you actually signed up?

Pavlik: Well, the—

Borden: In Milwaukee.

Pavlik: The unit that I wanted to be in was the Ambulance Company. That was the first time that the motorized Ambulance Company was being organized. Here before we had mules and wagon ambulances, and this was a mechanical—I was always liked to drive.

Borden: How old were you when you learned to drive?

Pavlik: About fourteen.

Borden: About fourteen. And what were you driving at that time?

Pavlik: A truck that was made in Menominee, Michigan, called, well, it was called a Menominee. It was made in [unintelligible]. And it was for a grocery store, delivering. It was a lot of fun. Solid tires.

Borden: So the great love affair with the automobile—

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: Bit you early, huh?

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: Uh-huh. And so, of course, when you went into the service, this was your opportunity to drive.

Pavlik: Further. Yes.

Borden: Ambulances.

Pavlik: Have your own vehicle that you could really use and clean and keep and drive, and so forth.

Borden: Back a generation before, you probably would have joined the cavalry, taking care of horses—

Pavlik: That could—

Borden: And groomed the horses. And I understand they used to have a horse of their own, right?

Pavlik: Right. That could be—that could've been true.

Borden: Yeah. And the horse became—the motor vehicle became the substitute.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: And so what was the unit designation in the Guard, and what community—in those days, the units were closely identified with a community, weren't they?

Pavlik: Right. Right, like in Milwaukee, we had the field artillery. We had the 107th Sanitary Train Field Hospital. We had the ambulance companies, and so forth.

Borden: What was the unit designation on the ambulance company?

Pavlik: When we formed the Division, it was then changed to 125th Ambulance Company, but originally, in the National Guard, it was only Ambulance Company No. 2, because Ambulance No. 1 was from Racine [Wisconsin]. They still had the mules, and we, in Milwaukee, had the motor vehicles. Of course, the other two units were from Michigan.

Borden: And when you went on active duty what time period are we talking about? When did you enter active duty?

Pavlik: Well, right after we enlisted we were given basic training as far as squads right and squads left and the facts about being a soldier and—

Borden: Right.

Pavlik: We trained at the Goldsmith Building in Milwaukee.

Borden: Oh, this was actually Guard training.

Pavlik: Guard training.

Borden: Guard training, not Army training.

Pavlik: Right. No, this is Guard training.

Borden: Right.

Pavlik: We continued that, and in fact we even slept in pup tents out at Whitefish Bay [suburb of Milwaukee] for a week just to get the feel of—

Borden: Right.

Pavlik: How we go. And then—

Borden: How long was it before the unit was federalized? Before you became part of the Army.

Pavlik: Federalized?

Borden: Yeah, before it became part of the Army.

Pavlik: I think it was federalized when we went down to Waco, Texas. This could've been, probably, let's see—April, May, June—about June—end of June or beginning of July.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: As a matter of fact, this is rather interesting, we had the motor vehicles, and we were leaving Milwaukee with our vehicles to go to Camp Douglas [Wisconsin] and we traveled at that time dirt roads. We made Madison the first day, and we pitched our pup tents and stayed at the Camp Randall field.

Borden: Oh, yes.

Pavlik: Then from there, next morning we had our breakfast, and we traveled on to Camp Douglas. Took us two days.

Borden: Two days to go from Camp Douglas to Milwaukee.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: And you were traveling by what means of transportation?

Pavlik: Why, by our own White vehicles. The motor vehicles that were issued to us.

Borden: But it was just the roads were not up to—right.

Pavlik: That was issued to us or National Guard issued them to us. And then, of course—

Borden: These were White ambulances.

Pavlik: Whites.

Borden: White Motor Car Company.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: Yeah, mm-hmm. No windshields, no side curtains, and you carried either eight patients sitting up or four on litters.

Borden: What was the cruising speed of those ambulances, considering the dirt roads? How many miles per hour?

Pavlik: Oh, we didn't—well, if you were—

Borden: Fifteen, twenty miles an hour?

Pavlik: No, if you were second and third you just were feeling your way because of the dust and so forth. You had no clear vision of the road, and—

Borden: No windshields?

Pavlik: No windshields, no—none of that. If it rained, it rained in on you, and you put your poncho in front of you to keep water off your legs and feet.

Borden: How many flat tires did you have between Camp Douglas and Milwaukee?

Pavlik: I don't remember whether we—[Borden laughs] our vehicle had no flat tires that I was—

Borden: These were not pneumatic tires. These were solid rubber, right?

Pavlik: Solid rubber.

Borden: Solid rubber. Pretty hard, pretty hard ride, huh?

Pavlik: Well, yes, it was hard riding.

Borden: Uh-huh.

Pavlik: Really.

Borden: And then you went to Waco, Texas for advanced training in the—

Pavlik: Right. Yeah, as you know WORLD WAR I veterans were trained—our style of warfare was like we had during Spanish-American War, open field type of training. They never dug any foxholes or things like that.

Borden: Not trench warfare. Yeah.

Pavlik: This is right. And they had little artillery, and it was differently set up. Well, when we were mobilized, federalized at Waco, we had some French and some English officers come up there and tell us what the problems are when in trenches, because they had already been three years in trenches at that time. And so we had to dig trenches in order to—so that we could understand what we were—and those trenches that we would be—in would be already had been dug. So we were given that type of training plus other type of training. They had us improving on the open warfare of chasing the enemy, so to speak. The reason, I think, that we were so successful in our winning the war the way they did is because we had the original basic training of keeping the enemy on the run, that we learned that was our style of fighting. Then when we were in the trenches, just as soon as we could get out of the trenches, we went to our style of fighting, and our enemy was not used to our style of fighting. They were in trench type of warfare, so forth. So that made the difference 'cause you kept them off balance all the time, and they had no chance to dig in, and so on. I thought that type of training proved very, very valuable to us.

Borden: What type of life did you have when you were down at Waco, Texas? Were you living in tents?

Pavlik: Yes. We lived in tents, eight men to a tent. Of course, you had routine inspections, weekly inspections of everything, and drilled. And, of course, at that particular place they gumbo [wet, sticky soil] is real. When it rained it was really rough. They built a lot of buildings there, and this they the [inaudible], in fact, we had our whole Division in this particular camp. The people were very good. They were very patriotic. We got passes from time to time to go out by bus downtown, and we were given very courteous type of treatment, you'd say, in stores. We were there during Thanksgiving, and the people opened their homes to us and invite us to come out have Thanksgiving dinner with them, which I took advantage of with a family. They brought me to the—they picked me up and brought me back to the camp there. So the people were very fine. They appreciated what was being done for them. I think you might say they were very, very patriotic 'cause we come in here—and concerned about us.

Borden: Well, what the pay, of course, obviously was a lot less than it is today. An American private today makes around \$600 a month.

Pavlik: Really?

Borden: That's right. Now, what was the pay for privates—

Pavlik: Oh man!

Borden: Back in 1917, when you were federalized?

Pavlik: My pay was fifteen dollars a month for National Guards. Then, when we were federalized, we got thirty dollars a month. We had one hundred percent increase in pay. And then when we went overseas they increased that by ten percent, so thirty-three dollars, and out of that they took ten dollars for your life insurance, ten dollar allotment, and when you wound up you probably had fifty Francs, which was about five dollars' worth of French money.

Borden: Well, you had three squares a day the Army provided for.

Pavlik: Oh, yeah. I would say this, that they fed us real good. It was no problem.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: There were times when you were out in the field that you had to use your rations, but the only rations that we had that we carried was hardtack and corned beef, canned corned beef. And that was good. I mean, we were never in want of real food. Never went hungry.

Borden: You didn't have canned food. You didn't have the C-rations.

Pavlik: K-rations, C-rations, none of that.

Borden: Yeah, C-rations. You didn't have any of that.

Pavlik: None of that.

Borden: This was a period when you had a lot of troops die from disease.

Pavlik: Yes.

Borden: At least that's what I've read in my history.

Pavlik: Yes.

Borden: 'Cause I wasn't around then. What were some of the illnesses that beset them?

Pavlik: In 1917 and '18, late '17 and early '18, we had a flu epidemic hit the United States, and many of our soldiers, in fact, civilians, died at that time. There were no drugs, no special drugs, or anything at that time. The only thing that we did in the Army was we isolated those people that had those symptoms, knowing that the casualties would be high, and kept them separate. But we accepted all that. That's part of what was our lifestyle for our country.

Borden: What did you have, if any, in the way of field sanitation measures taken?

Pavlik: Any what?

Borden: Field sanitation measures.

Pavlik: Oh, yeah. Yes. The way they operated was this way, when a wave would go over or when you went over the top—in other words, when you got out of the trenches and you start making headway, there were several obstacles you had to overcome. For instance, you had to overcome barbed wires that was in there. Then there was different kinds of instruments that were used for detecting noises, making noise, indicating that something is going on. At nighttime flares would be shot so that it'll light up the area.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: When you went over the top and you start advancing, usually it was a barrage ahead of you. The artillery would fire so many shots, so many

shells ahead of you, and you stayed behind them, and kept following the barrage. And of course if you had come up on to a strong machine gun nest or something like that you had to skirt around it or crawl up there and throw hand grenades and things of that sort in order to get them out of the way so we could continue the advance. And of course at nighttime you would dig in a foxhole for yourself, not making a trench, just a little foxhole, and of course there'd be some other guards stationed ahead, advanced guards, in case there would be counterattack, and so forth.

Borden: Right. John, how were the wounded evacuated to the rear?

Pavlik: Well, if the companies were advancing rapidly the wounded would remain in their spot until the rear units would come up and find them and then take them to a dressing station which would be improvised. Then if it was safe and the roads were passable then the ambulance would come up that to that point, and they would load as many as they could in the ambulance. Then he would go back to what would be called not a field hospital but a field, sort of a service station, where they would get better treatment. And then identify—

Borden: At this point were there any doctors, or only medics?

Pavlik: No, all medics up at the front.

Borden: Just medics. You had to get back to the field hospital before you had doctors.

Pavlik: That's right, that's right. And at that point they would then be sorted out and be treated according to the injuries that they received and so forth and whether they could stand the trip back. Then they had other ambulances and trucks that were going toward the rear would take these casualties and towards the field hospital. The field hospital, they would get professional services. Then later on they would be transferred to the base hospitals. It was—it took-sometimes it was—

Borden: Mortality rate was a lot—

Pavlik: Was high.

Borden: Was high.

Pavlik: It was very high.

Borden: Much higher in WORLD WAR I than it was in WORLD WAR II or Korea or Vietnam. Would you like to reflect on that a bit?

Pavlik: Well, the reason for that is because we weren't able to get the medical treatment, and we didn't have the medicines that we now have. There was no such a thing as penicillin or sulfa or drugs and those things. [Momentary pause in recording—some dialogue may be missing] Okay, now when we picked this gentleman up, this soldier, he had been laying there for quite some time, wet, and we discovered that there were maggots in around the wound and so forth, indicating that he had suffered some very serious wound. We were able to get him back, and as to what I understand this that came out all right. Now, of course, it takes some time for him to get back. Our evacuation was very, very slow, as you compare that with today's Vietnam War, for instance. Our people had to either walk back, be carried back by truck, or ambulance if they could get up far enough. Then later on by truck again to a railroad station where they could get him to the railroad cars to transport to the base hospital. Today, at Vietnam the helicopter comes down, he picks them right out of the—right off the battlefield—and takes him right in to the hospital within fifteen minutes, where it took us probably fifteen hours before you could even get professional services.

Borden: And all that time, of course, he's not only suffering, but he stands the chance of dying from his wounds, his diseases, his other injuries.

Pavlik: Definitely.

Borden: Right.

Pavlik: Oh, they simplified our work so that we could do a better job of taking care of the wounded by giving us a bandage, with the cotton and sterilized bandage in the center, and then all we do is apply it onto the wound and tie the two ends together, stop the bleeding, and cover the wound, so prevent it from getting any germs and stuff like that in it. That's all we had to do, and there was no giving of iodine, no pills, no nothing. You just get him back to the field hospital where professional people take care of him.

Borden: Now, all this while, while you were serving as a medic and as a transport person, that is driving the ambulance to the rear, these were two of your duties—

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: And at the same time you were also serving as a combat infantryman, were you?

Pavlik: Well, not really, because when we were at the front we carried a Red Cross banner on our sleeve. You'd put that on if you were doing first aid

work, but if you were not doing first aid work, then you were considered as—

Borden: Infantryman.

Pavlik: Infantryman, right.

Borden: I see. Were you armed?

Pavlik: No, they didn't give us no, other than just a belt with the knife—bolo knife, and no gun or ammunition.

Borden: Right. John, tell us where you were fighting.

Pavlik: Well, as you know, when we got to France we went into a Alsace-Lorraine sector for some basic training, trench training. Then shortly after that, when the Germans were making progress towards Paris, we were then taken from there and put near Paris. After the Marines had stopped the flow of the Germans coming to Paris and reversed it and start chasing the Germans back we replaced the, I believe it was the 30th Division, who had replaced the Marine Corps, and then we got into the Chateau-Thierry drive there and continued on until we got up to a Fismes sector. Then of course, somebody else would relieve us, and they kept on going. And then we stayed in the rest area for a week or so, and then we traveled up to another area known as the Soissons sector. We were in battle there. Then after that we remained in this area for a short period of time, and we were then again moving up to—as reserves for the Saint-Mihiel drive. That was rather fast, done very fast, and we were not been able to get right into the frontline trenches at the Saint-Mihiel, but we were in their reserves backup. Then from there we traveled on to the Argonne Woods sector, and we were there continuously until Armistice was signed on November 11th. At that time we had to—was chosen to follow the enemy since we were up at the front. As they were retreating we would be following them up, and they had to retreat beyond the Rhine River. So we kept on following them until they had crossed the Rhine River, and then we finally crossed the Rhine River and got into a town known as Sayn. Sayn, Germany. Our headquarters was at Dusseldorf. The 32nd. The 1st Division was on one side of the 32nd, and the 2nd Division was on the other side. We were the three divisions beyond the Rhine River occupying—known in the area of the Army's occupation at that time.

Borden: Right after the Armistice, were you evacuated home immediately, or did you stay there for the Army of Occupation?

Pavlik: No, all of our Division was committed to the Army of Occupation, all units of the Division. We stayed there, and then later on, three months later, four months later.

Borden: So when did you—did you come back with the unit?

Pavlik: Yes.

Borden: With the Division itself?

Pavlik: Yes.

Borden: The entire Division came home from Europe at the same time.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: And when was that?

Pavlik: That was, oh, about the—May—about in April, middle part of April when they start formalizing the people. We had to be transported from Germany, from Koblenz area by railroad cars to Brest, France. Then we were there until the Division and boats were able to take on all of our people. I had the good fortune coming back on the battleship USS Virginia. That was the boat that was sunk by General Billy Mitchell, who proved to the Army that he could drop a bomb from an airplane and sink a battleship.

Borden: And that's the one you came home on.

Pavlik: And that's what I came on.

Borden: Yeah, we've all heard about those boats that they bombed from the air.

Pavlik: It kinda brought tears to your eyes because that was a beautiful boat, and it done its duty.

Borden: Knowing that you were coming home.

Pavlik: And it had to be destroyed like that.

Borden: Knowing that you were coming on the boat was even more beautiful, huh?

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: They could've used a garbage scow to bring you home.

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: It would've been beautiful, huh?

Pavlik: After I got home—or we landed in Newport News [Virginia]. After being gone from this country for such a long period of time, one of the things that I discovered was that, I got off the boat and was walking with the group, and here we saw people lined up, and they were talking the American language. I could understand them. I could hear what they were saying. Before that, we never heard these things. People'd be alongside, they'd be talking, but we never knew what they were saying or anything. It made me, well, it really brings tears to your eyes to know you're back in your own country, the country that you love, and so on. During WORLD WAR II I registered, and if they would've taken me, I certainly would've went back in 'cause I think it's the greatest country in the world, and you can't do enough for it.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: I really do think it's tremendous. Now, one of the things that I think that made my life a success the way as it is in view of the fact that I had no opportunities to get a higher education and so forth was the fact that I was taught the very basics in the Army. Now, the Army makes real men out of those who want to become men. The thing that I learnt was to discipline yourself under all conditions, to carry out orders promptly, never question them, obey all your commands to the letter. It was through this basic training that I received I believe that many times, I think, sort of saved me from possibly getting hurt and probably even getting killed. When I got back home—of course at that time in 1919 the Prohibition Act came into being, there were fewer jobs, and of course I was fortunate to go back to the same company that I left, and they gave me a job for three months, make jobs to be, as a matter of fact, so that I could get started, and I done that.

Borden: Before we get into the postwar years, John, could I ask you a few questions relative to your arrival home? **[End of Tape 1 Side A]** What type of a reception did you find when you returned to Milwaukee?

Pavlik: Tremendous. Tremendous. The reception was great. It's almost difficult to explain because the people loved you. They were happy you were back. We were happy to be back. And, of course, I think we done more crying, smiling than we did any other way. I think it was just terrific. People realized that we were fortunate to come home, and they were so happy, so glad for us. It's almost difficult to explain because of the warm feeling, the happiness, that prevailed at that time. Everybody was great. To prove that point, all you had, if you remember, for many years, on November 11th at 11:00 o'clock, everything stopped. Whether you were

on a street car, walking, everybody stopped, faced east, and for two minutes and the church bells would be ringing, the whistles would be blowing at the factories and so forth. Proved, that proved that they were really grateful for everything that was done in their behalf by going into the service.

Borden: What was your reaction when you began to realize the treatment which was accorded American servicemen upon their return from Vietnam in contrast to WORLD WAR I and WORLD WAR II?

Pavlik: Yeah. There seemed to be a difference, and I think the difference is not because they were soldiers or winning a war. It's because these people were just as good of soldiers as we were and probably better. They were certainly better educated. They had better equipment and everything else, but because in our case war was declared, and that solidified every citizen, every person, to help each other. In this one, it was a police action. It was not a declared war by Congress. People were lukewarm towards that activity. When these men came back, and they suffered there wasn't that enthusiasm for them as it was for us.

Borden: Mm-hmm. During the height of the Vietnam War, in the mid- and late-'60s particularly, you had a lot of so-called antiwar feeling, and you had a lot of ugly demonstrations on American college campuses. Now, you who takes so much pride in your country and being loyal and so forth, how did this affect you? What were your feelings toward the antiwar groups?

Pavlik: Well, my actual feeling was that the people in colleges and so forth were actually demonstrating they weren't true Americans. They might've been true Americans before, but they were given something to believe that wasn't actually true. A police action is not a war, and they were misled, I think, and they have kind of gone away from the true Americanism that they should have at all times. I think this is what caused so much trouble at that time. Some of the draftees were disillusioned. They would skip through this country and go to other countries and things of that sort. There were so many things that was wrong, and people capitalized, especially younger people who were safe at home, were not involved, yet they were willing to carry the banners for some of the other people. That was really, really sad that they done that at that time. Of course, things have changed now considerable all the way through. Those people that were demonstrating are now are citizens, and they're leaders in our communities, and so forth, and they've taken a different attitude completely from what they had before.

Borden: We have some fine young men and women today in the United States Armed Forces, as you are well aware. You probably have looked into this matter and probably even talked with some of these younger people. How

would you assess the quality of today's youth, particularly those who volunteer? And today it is a volunteer proposition.

Pavlik: Yeah, right.

Borden: Yeah, anybody that's in is in because they want to go in for one reason or another. How would you assess the young soldier, sailor, airman of today as compared to your day?

Pavlik: Oh, well, really in our generation we were a foot soldier, to be frank. I mean, all we had was some artillery. We had battleships and so forth. But I think the today's soldier is much better trained, well educated. I said this time again, WORLD WAR I veterans could've never fought a WORLD WAR II and be victorious because of the fact that we didn't have the education level that they have. When you see a young man of twenty-three, twenty-four years old, a major flying a \$2 million dollar plane, he has something on the ball. He's well educated and so forth. I would say they are better trained. They're more intelligent. They do more thinking for themselves. They would take the chance that we probably wouldn't have because we were strictly obeying orders, where, like Captain Bong [WORLD WAR II ace from Wisconsin], for instance. He's a ace pilot. He probably violated some rules, but he managed to get the target that he was after all the time. I thought he was an outstanding soldier. I think, all in all, that people are dedicated, but they fail to show it, their true Americanism in that respect, that is the campus kids.

Borden: They say, though, that there's a resurgence of conservatism. There's a resurgence in the pride of the country, if you will. Patriotism is coming back, that the pendulum is swinging the other way today in the '80s, as opposed to the '60s and '70s. Would you agree with that?

Pavlik: Yeah, I think that's true, but I'd also, I feel, because we're starting to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in school, which we haven't been doing for many years. There's a lot of things that are taking place that I think the kids are getting to be more Americanized conscious, I think. We're talking more loyalty to our country than we were before. All in all, I think we're making a lot of progress in that area.

Borden: Let's reflect back to the Army leadership in your day and the Army leadership that we see evidences of today. First, how would you assess the non-commissioned officer leadership and the officer leadership in France on the battlefield or in the training environment when you were in?

Pavlik: Well, of course this country's always been caught off guard, and we never had materials and so forth to deal with. But from the standpoint of willingness, and their spirit and so on, a soldier was just as a soldier who

was training, whether he had a real rifle in his hand or a wooden rifle in his hand, he made use of that just as though it was real, and he gave it all that he had in that respect. I think that's—

Borden: I guess what I'm saying though is the quality of leadership, those people who were instructing, those who were leading you young recruits.

Pavlik: I think that the leadership today is greater than it was before. Our war was sort of a simple type of war. You only had two things. You had a hand grenade and a gun, period. This war today, you have not only hand grenade and gun, but you also have gases that you have to contend with. You have automatic equipment. You have, oh, instruments that help you locate your targets and things of that sort. You have to be better acquainted, better trained.

Borden: Fire direction centers, this type of thing.

Pavlik: Yeah, that's right. I think we have, from the standpoint of education, I think we've got a top-notch instructors, Generals. As a matter of fact, my understanding is that what General Pershing done in France during WORLD WAR I was somewhat followed by General Eisenhower in WORLD WAR II as to getting equipped and getting to see to it that much of the stuff what we had done was being expanded on by WORLD WAR II and made more perfect as far as operations was concerned, and I'm sure helped toward the success that they had because of that.

Borden: John, before we actually get away from the battlefield in France, do you have a couple of favorite stories that you like to tell, things that happened to you while you were over there that might possibly be of interest?

Pavlik: Well, yes, one in particular. As you know, all our guns were moved up by horses. The horses and the guns were moved up sometimes very fast, and we would be in the area where when we would get shelled they would drop shells which were filled with gas. We would then hear the Klaxon horn go "oo-ah, oo-ah, oo-ah," whereby meant that you put your gas mask on. Well, the boys that were taking care of the artillery, the horses, their job was to put the gas mask on the horse first before they put their own mask on themselves. Horses were very valuable, and we needed that. The other one that I want to tell you is this. I was going through, that particular day I was driving an ambulance from the field station, field loading point, back to the field center, and this was in a swampy area, and the engineers had made a road. It was an improvised road, and all they did was cut the logs and lay them down over the swamp so we could go there. It was a rough road, and it only had room for one vehicle to get by. Of course, during wartime the vehicles going to the front always had the right of way. And of course, we were transporting wounded back so we had to

get off the road and let them get by and then get on. It just so happened that I was driving that particular time. I start going down this road, and this road was about half a mile long with the wood logs, and coming up the road was a car with a flag bearing a star on it, a General's car. I didn't know who it was, and I couldn't get off the road, and he insisted on going forward, so I had to back up about, oh, 200 yards on this road, and having a heck of a time trying to stay on the road, because it was so narrow, back up so he could get by. After he passed, when he saw the wounded, he saluted, and I saluted, and we went on. I think he realized that I had a very important load to take back to the rear. And of course, he had to get to the front to get his orders and do whatever he was supposed to do. Those two incidents, I think, sort of stand out in my mind as to what happened during the time. When you look back, you kind of think it's very funny, but it was serious business at that time.

Borden: When you got back to the United States, I presume that you had to leave right away. You went back to your hometown, back to Wisconsin?

Pavlik: Yes, as you know, we debarked at Newport News. We got on a train right after that. Governor Philipp at that time came to Newport News, because many of the Wisconsin people were on that battleship and to welcome us. As a matter of fact, I think we got a \$10 check from the State of Wisconsin at that time when Governor Philipp was present. We boarded trains, and we were taken to Camp Grant, yeah, near the Great Lakes, Camp Grant in Illinois. There they examined us, and we were given our discharge papers and got on a train to come to Milwaukee, and then—

Borden: You were discharged right after getting back from France.

Pavlik: Right, right, right. Probably within two weeks.

Borden: Before you went home.

Pavlik: Oh, yes. Yes.

Borden: So when you went home you were a civilian.

Pavlik: This is right, this is right.

Borden: Mm-hmm. And what are some of the things that you appreciated the most after getting back to the States? What did you want to eat? What did you want to drink when you got back?

Pavlik: Well [laughs], the things that I wanted most was the feeling that I was safe at home. Get back to our meat and potatoes type of meal with the vegetables. We didn't have those things there. I mean, you were eating

make-up foods, fast foods, and so forth and most of it, when it was hot—as you know the old saying, it was slumgullion [stew] type of food which was hot, potatoes, meat involved in it and so forth. It was very good. I—

Borden: What about milk? You didn't have any fresh milk over there, did you?

Pavlik: No. They didn't have powdered milk at that time either.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: Powdered milk came in later. No, they wouldn't—we—while I was in France the only thing if we ever did go out to eat, all we were able to do was order egg omelets. That was all that they would understand that we would eat. That's all we wanted to eat anyhow as far as French food is—and the bread that they had. Very good. When we got home, we got home—a special train come in. The people came down to see us. Like in my case, my girl who later became my wife a year later. [Approx 10 sec. pause in recording]

Borden: John, when you got back to Wisconsin, what was your welcome like?

Pavlik: Well, it's pretty hard to explain. It was fantastic, terrific. Everybody was welcoming everybody. I mean, it seemed like one big, happy family was united. Whether you knew the people or not they would caress you. They just hug you, and it was a tremendous feeling. It was almost, as I said, too hard to describe, but it was fantastic. Appreciated, we were most appreciated people in the world.

Borden: Now, I understand that appreciation extended into the legislature which passed legislation giving a World War I veterans bonus to Wisconsin veterans of World War I or educational grants. Would you comment on these veterans benefits of World War I?

Pavlik: Yes. I think the State of Wisconsin was one of the few states that did give the World War I veterans a bonus which amounted to ten dollars a month for the months that you had served overseas, and I think five dollars a month for serving in this part in the United States. As I recall, my total bonus was 210 dollars that I had received from the State of Wisconsin. That came about by—not by the legislature didn't give it to us, but it was put on a referendum, and the people of the State of Wisconsin were appreciative and wanted to do something for the veterans, and they voted practically unanimously to give us some kind of help at that time. And they did, and we did get it. Now, the estimated amount that they would collect was something like \$22,000,000 or \$24,000,000 to pay off the bonuses to the veterans. However, many of them did not apply for bonuses, and therefore only about \$20,000,000 was used, and the other

\$2,000,000 or \$2,500,000 was then reallocated to build a—I think the Madison General Hospital was built with that money or added to that money.

Borden: Right, and then this led to the veterans' preference in the hospital.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: University Hospitals.

Pavlik: University Hospital, before the VA came into service.

Borden: Right. Now, I understand that you had a choice, if you were a World War I veteran returning, between a bonus or an educational grant. I understand some people like actor Pat O'Brien and Spencer Tracy used the money as an educational grant.

Pavlik: Yes, well, you must remember this, that the average educational level of World War I veterans was sixth grade. So there were very, very few men in service who either went through high school or could qualify for a college education. While it was offered, but so few were able to take advantage of that. Some did and turned out to be very, very fine, but—

Borden: But the state did offer.

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: To those who could.

Pavlik: That's right. We World War I veterans are so grateful to the state, our state, for for the consideration that they showed our veterans. In fact that we were always proud of the state because they had sort of led the way for other states to follow to do something for the veterans.

Borden: Wouldn't you say that's true largely today, that Wisconsin is one of the states that leads the nation in terms of state veterans' benefits?

Pavlik: I would think so. Yes. Definitely we do have our home at King for Wisconsin veterans. Although the State of Iowa has two homes and talking about building a third one at the present time, but all in all, we had set the pattern many, many years ago. In fact, 100 years ago, when King was first started, and I think this that—and I strongly feel, and I'm very indebted to the state for the things that they have done for the veterans, that they did lead the way. They did do a job, and they were appreciated all the way through. The fact that Governor Philipp came down to meet us at the time that we were coming home, indicating that an important person

like that would come to welcome home the boys from Wisconsin, knitted us very closely. I think the state has done a tremendous job for the veterans, and I would say, too, that I think the Department of Veterans Affairs is one of the leading departments, affairs organization throughout the United States.

Borden: I know we have many ambitious programs to assist veterans, particularly today with the Vietnam veterans, many of them being in need. The economic assistance grants, and direct home loan, second home loan program, and so forth. There have been many Vietnam vets, particularly in recent years, who've taken advantage of our programs, as you know. Would you, now, changing the subject, I'd like you to discuss a little bit, if you would, John, your involvement in various veterans organizations and the role that you've played in supporting the needs of veterans over the years from WORLD WAR I to the present.

Pavlik: Well, starting—

Borden: You were very active in veterans' affairs, as we all know.

Pavlik: Yeah. Well, starting with World War I, coming back, to begin with I joined the 32nd Division Association which is a veterans group. And we would meet one year in Wisconsin. Next year we would meet in Michigan, and back and forth, back and forth. Later on, as you know, the American Legion was formed in France during World War I. I joined the Legion, and I also joined the VFW. After I was married, when I had couple of children, the VFW guaranteed that if anything happened to me and my wife couldn't carry on, that my children could go to the VFW home at Eaton Rapids, Michigan and be taken care of. So that was one reason that I wanted to be sure that the children would be taken care of. Then, as time goes on, and I had helped to organize the charter member of the firefighters post of the American Legion, the next charter member to the VFW, and then later on we charter member of the Veterans of World War I, and also a charter member of the department when we organized the Department of Veterans of World War I. But it gave me an opportunity to meet with some of my buddies and time goes on, as you know. They get married, and we raise your own family. You kind of drift away from each other's activities because you're now surrounded with your own lifestyle, so to speak. I would try to help everywhere I could, and in the while since I've retired way back in 1951 from Milwaukee Fire Department I've become very active in veterans work, attend many meetings, and do volunteer work at Wood Wisconsin, a regular member of that organization, and serve on many committees all the way through. Because the age level of our World War I veterans now we are all senior citizens, and because of that, I was appointed to the—by the—well, the committee on the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging has an

advisory council, and I was appointed to the advisory council, maybe to look after, to see that the World War I veterans who are also senior citizens get the same consideration as any other citizen would get in that respect. Then of course, it has broadened out, and as you know, after I became commander. I didn't want to be commander for the World War I department commander for the simple reason that we had a lot of people who—it's an honor to be a commander, and we have people there who would like to be commander, and I was younger than some of these. I'd always say, "Well, I will take my turn later on, but give it to these fellas first." They were older, and I'd help them along. And it turned out that I said that I would step in an emergency, and emergency arose. The commander was sick, and he became hospitalized. The senior vice commander, he and his wife became very ill. They had to be transferred to a nursing home. The junior vice commander had passed away, had died. The alternate, the last man on the totem pole, he had a stroke, and he couldn't carry on. So automatically I said that I would step in, and so I stepped right in as commander to take over for a couple of years. During the couple of years we had some very active activities going on, as you already know, about the doughboy statue, and so forth.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: Then of course, that brought me into the council of commanders and exposed me to the Department of Veterans Affairs here at that level. And of course I've been carrying on with that organization right along.

Borden: When did you originally—did you join it at its founding, the Veterans of World War I, Incorporated? The organization you're now a national commander of.

Pavlik: Yeah, right now I—

Borden: Did you join it when it was first organized?

Pavlik: Yes.

Borden: When was that?

Pavlik: That was in the early '50s. The reason for that was that after World War II, we wanted to, as you know, even before World War II started we were asking that the federal government recognize the services of World War I veterans and offer them some kind of a service pension or build more hospital at home to take care of these veterans, and it seemed like we weren't getting our message across. American Legion became very active, and they carried on, and, of course, some of us felt that we weren't getting the services from the Legion that we thought we should be, and so

the World War I Veterans sort of broke away from all other organizations. That is not really break away. What they did is they formed a World War I veterans organization, just for veterans. And in order to qualify you had to serve at least one day between April 6th and November 11th. So that organization was then developed and primary purpose to look after the World War I needs, not that we opposed any other veterans organizations, just that we want to take care of ourselves first, because as you know, time's getting away from us. It's moving by fast. And of course, as of today, we have received nothing as compared to what other organizations have received, like Civil War veterans. They not only got a land grant, but I understand they had gotten some service-type of pensions. Spanish-American War veterans got service pensions, **[End of Tape 1, Side B]** and we thought that some of our people would be getting that, too. So we've been asking Congress to help us out, to give these people some sort of a service pension. Now, I realize that all of them won't get a service pension, even if the law is passed, because of the fact that they might be under compensation or maybe having an income which is beyond what they consider poverty level or whatever. But we hope that we will do that. Now, I was elected national commander of the Veterans of World War I, and I will be spending most of my time in Washington. Of course, I take office the first of October, and carry on. Hopefully by being there, I will make many visits to up on the hill to talk to many of the congressmen, veterans affairs committees and so forth, to try to see if we can come with some kind of a bill this year. We've been doing this for probably twenty years now and haven't gotten anywheres, and some of our people are getting pretty much discouraged and disgusted, and we're hoping that at least we can get something, maybe get our foot in the door for some sort of a service pension and then later on modify it or change it or whatever.

Borden: Do you have some support from other conventional veterans organizations that are perhaps made up mostly of veterans of World War II?

Pavlik: Yes.

Borden: Are they helping you out?

Pavlik: Oh, yes.

Borden: Are they attempting to lobby on your behalf?

Pavlik: Oh, yes. All veterans organizations are more or less in sympathy with our program, what they're doing. I know the VFW for many years has, at their national convention, always has a resolution in supporting us. There's been some misunderstanding. Now, Bill 1918, has been introduced for last three or four years, has a provision in there that x number of dollars, 150 dollars, be paid to a veteran without any strings

attached. Congress will not pass a bill of that type when it's open on both ends, you might say. Strings attached. So that would mean that if I inherit \$1,000,000 from my father I'd still get a bonus or pension, which I don't need and shouldn't have. Or if I'm getting compensation because I'm wounded and gassed and so forth, that I would still be getting the same amount of money as the fella that was sitting back at a desk, whatever. So I'm sure that Congress has recognized that, and I'm sure our members are now beginning to realize that you can't get a pension of that type, although they've been trying it, and it never got to first base on it. I'm hoping to try to see if we can change that, modify it somewhat, or hoping that we can get something on the books for these fellas because after all, let's face it, the Experience Table of Mortality tells us that if your average age is eighty-eight, you've got about four to five or six years to go. You'll be—

Borden: How many World War I veterans now are alive?

Pavlik: Approximately 250,000 throughout the United States.

Borden: Out of that, how many in Wisconsin?

Pavlik: Oh, I would say close to—well, between 5,000 and 6,000 at the most.

Borden: And how many of those belong to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans of WORLD WAR I?

Pavlik: About—well, the—

Borden: What's your membership in the state?

Pavlik: Right—the last membership was a little over 2,000.

Borden: And what's the membership nationally?

Pavlik: Nationally, it's about 50,000-60,000.

Borden: Mm-hmm. You hear so much about, just a little interesting point here, in the paper, every once in a while, a hometown paper, you'll hear about a WORLD WAR I "Last Man's Club." A group of buddies get together, and they usually have a bottle of French wine, or cognac. They get together and have a little reunion every year until the last man is gone.

Pavlik: Well, our organization is a "Last Man's Club," because of the—

Borden: Do you—do you belong to a "Last Man's Club"?

Pavlik: No, we [laughs]—well—

Borden: You don't belong to one.

Pavlik: No, no. What used to be—and that was the “Last Man’s Club” was not only WORLD WAR I, but any group or club.

Borden: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: Ten fellas get together, and they’ll say, “Okay, we have a bottle of wine or something, champagne here, and the last man who—

Borden: Gets to drink it.

Pavlik: Who survives all the others will have the opportunity to drink and get—all by himself.” Now we don’t—I don’t know of any official “Last Man’s Club” in our organization. We consider ourselves all in the one “Last Man’s Club,” because of the years of service and the age levels, and so forth.

Borden: John, getting away from veterans, you have indicated that some of the lessons that you learned in the Army can be applied to civilian life. In an earlier conversation with me you had indicated that you applied some of these training techniques when training firemen. You did spend quite a number of years as a member of the Milwaukee Fire Department, and you retired, I believe, and then became the fire chief of West Allis or West Milwaukee.

Pavlik: West Milwaukee.

Borden: West Milwaukee. Would you tell us a little bit about your experience and what lessons you learned?

Pavlik: Well, sure. As you know, the police services and the fire services are quasi-military organizations. They wear uniforms, they have titles, and they pattern after the Army--

Borden: Command structure.

Pavlik: Right, right. They’re emergency type of operations the same as you do in the service, in the military service. I was very fortunate. When I got back I didn’t have a permanent job of any kind, and I did go to evening school for a short period of time, as considered by the vocational school. Later on, there was an examination gonna be held for the Milwaukee Fire Department. Due to the fact that the Milwaukee Fire Department firemen were working three days in a row, and they were off twenty-four hours, the fourth day. They wanted to change that planning position from that

point to twenty-four hours on duty and twenty-four hours off duty, known as the two-platoon system, and therefore it required more men. And so they had to advertise that they wanted firemen, wanted applicants to apply for the fireman job. Now, you could either be a pipeman, a truckman, or a driver. A driver was driving teams of horses because we were horse drawn fire department at that time. So I applied to be a pipeman, and before that, though, a year and a half I spent on a fire insurance patrol. It's a salvage company. Their prime duty is to cover materials that might be damaged due to water, and consequently we covered these materials and so forth. We were paid by insurance companies. All the stock companies paid into a fund, and that fund was used to maintain the fire insurance patrol, although our salary was less than that was in the fire department. So most of us that went around the fire insurance patrol soon learned what was required to become a fireman, and we studied and got the information and practiced for examinations, and then we were appointed. I was appointed on the Milwaukee Fire Department December 1st, 1922. My assignment was to accompany the horse drawn steam engine, and I was there for—well, we got rid of the horse. After three years we got rid of the horses and got into a crude motor vehicle with no windshield, heavy duty, solid rubber tires, and cranking by hand in order to—no batteries, self starters, things of that sort. At this particular company that I was sent to the captain asked me [laughs] if I knew anything about horses, and of course I said, "No." I didn't know anything about horses. He says, "Fine." He says, "You will have a job for next six months to go to the barn and take care of the animals." You always had to curry comb and brush two horses before you went home that morning, and the next day you come back and took care of the two horses again, and that kept on. Well, the fact that—I start studying to advance 'cause I didn't want to stay in the barn all the time, and of course [Borden laughs] as you well know, anybody that works around horses absorbs so much of the odor of the animal order, and he brings that home, and your family is practically indoctrinated with the same odor. So I began to study, went to the libraries, got all kinds of books and periodicals and so forth, and the thing that the officers noted in me was the fact that I was self-disciplined. I carried out orders. I was first to volunteer. If we went to a fire, somebody had to remain or do—I'd be the first one to volunteer. When I was given an order I carried it out to the letter without questioning it, without changing it, and anything else. And that was very noticeable, and the officer at that time told me, he says, "You just start studying." He says, "You'll be advanced quickly." I had no problem carrying out the order, no problem of discipline of doing the things that I was supposed to do. The end result was that after six years on the department I was promoted to lieutenant. Then later on I was promoted in October, I was promoted in '34, rather, I was promoted to captain, and then later on I was promoted to battalion chief. At all times I used my same philosophy of self-discipline, carry out orders, obey orders right to the letter.

Borden: You can't give orders if you don't—

Pavlik: That's right, and when—

Borden: That's right, if you can't take 'em.

Pavlik: When the men would say, "We want to do so-and-so," I'd say, "Well—" For instance, they said, "It's awful hot out. Can we take off our vests or take off our ties?" "If you see me doing it, you do it." And that would be the answer.

Borden: Like the old Army adage: Don't make your men do anything you wouldn't do.

Pavlik: That's right and same thing with leaders. The leadership going into fires. The old saying used to be: "Go on, get in there." My philosophy was: "Come on in with me. Come on. Let's go." and so forth. I created a good image of the services, and it was all due to what I've been taught in the Army. The Army taught me all these things.

Borden: That's great. That's great.

Pavlik: And I'm so grateful, again, to the Army for giving me the opportunity to serve my country, train me to do these basic things that made my civil life a happy, a good one. It's because of my promotions and things that I've done, I still, I serve on, president of the firemen's annuity and benefits, and I give back to the city everything that I can because the city was good to me. The City of Milwaukee was very good to me 'cause I had a job, a good job. I'm very proud of the fact that I have been able to serve the city. Then, of course, when you learn and are trained to do a lot of things and study beyond is what required, when the village of West Milwaukee wanted to organize a fire department they had no fire department, not even a volunteer. The industries contracted with the city of Milwaukee, and my battalion was bordering the village of West Milwaukee, and we had some pretty nasty, large fires in that area. So they decide that they would want a fire department of their own.

Borden: You were the first chief, then.

Pavlik: And then, yeah, they advertised in the paper for a fire chief.

Borden: When was this?

Pavlik: This was in '51.

Borden: Oh. That late.

Pavlik: In 1951. And of course, I paid no attention. I loved my work. I had a nice battalion, seven or eight company of ninety-two men to look after, and I was real happy and liked my work. Well, finally they weren't able to get enough applicants, and the applicants they did get, I guess, weren't satisfactory, so the president of the village and the secretary of the fire and police commission came over to visit me at my station while I was on duty, and they want me to come over and take over the job. I said, "No." I says, "I'm happy where I am," I says. A matter of fact, I was considered for the chief's job at one time, when Steinkellner left as chief of the fire department. I was one of the runner-ups in that thing, and in the meantime Wischer wanted to promote me to the deputy. But I said, "No. I'll stay where I am." Well, the end result was that, "Well, come on out and help the commission select somebody." I says, "Well, I'll come out and give them a lot of information." Which I did, and of course, then they started asking these fellas questions about the water supply, about insurance rate, evaluations, and the capacity of pumpers that you need, the drawing of specifications for the house, and for the manpower, the training in it, and these people couldn't answer. So they finally come up, and says, "Look, come on out." He says, "You've got the job. We give it to you with a blank check, you might say." And we outfitted, well, my son said, "You go on out there. You've got a lot of good ideas, and you'll help the fire service in the state because of your ideas. A lot of the departments are still in horsedrawn era."

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: My wife, my daughter, they were happy where I was, where they were living, and so forth. So finally I went out there, and I drew the specifications, done all my own engineering work, and brought it up, and got a lot of honor. We set some very high standards for the State of Wisconsin. I've got to be known pretty well throughout, in fact, I've got not only known through the state of Wisconsin, but all over the international, because I served on the International [Association of] Fire Chiefs Board of Directors for several years, and as a matter of fact, I've got citations as a Kentucky Colonel from the Governor of Kentucky, Lieutenant Colonel from the Louisiana. The French government gave me a medal, and it's like a Croix de Guerre [laughs], which I couldn't win during WORLD WAR I, but I got it for my services—

Borden: While we're talking about it, what WORLD WAR I medals and decorations do you hold?

Pavlik: Just the Victory Medal with the four bars on there for the battles that we participated in the Army of Occupation.

Borden: In the Army of Occupation.

Pavlik: Yeah, right. Right.

Borden: Listen, let me talk about your married life. I understand that your wife is still living?

Pavlik: No.

Borden: Your wife is not living.

Pavlik: No, my wife passed away about thirteen years ago.

Borden: Oh.

Pavlik: I was married in 1920, and we would've been married fifty years within six months of when she passed away. And she had heart trouble for thirty-five years, and it was touch and go all the time.

Borden: How old were you when you met your wife?

Pavlik: How old was I?

Borden: When you met your wife, how old were you?

Pavlik: I was sixteen. I was still working the steel mills with her brothers.

Borden: Before—

Pavlik: Before I went in the service.

Borden: Before you went in the service.

Pavlik: Yeah, right.

Borden: So, when you went over to France, then you left her behind.

Pavlik: That's right. And we communicated. We wrote back and forth. The interesting thing is when I got back from France she wanted me—we wanted to get married, and we wanted Reverend Gustav Stearns to marry us. Reverend Gustav Stearns, Protestant or Lutheran church, he was in Camp Douglas with us, and I had a three-day weekend pass, but no money to go to Milwaukee. So I went to him, I knew he was a chaplain, but I didn't know who he was at the time, and I asked to borrow from him to get railroad fare to get back to Milwaukee. And I said, "When I get to

Milwaukee, I got money there. I'll bring it, I'll pay it back," and so forth. So he did. We took a liking to each other. And when we were in France I walked some fifteen miles one time just to go to visit him 'cause I knew he was in that particular area, to see him and to just say hi, and everything was under control in the village (??).

Borden: What's your wife's name?

Pavlik: Agnes.

Borden: Agnes.

Pavlik: Agnes Mertes [possibly Mertus]. Her maiden name was Mertes. M-E-R—

Borden: She was from Milwaukee, also.

Pavlik: Milwaukee girl. Right.

Borden: Uh-huh, and you were married in what year?

Pavlik: 1920.

Borden: In 1920.

Pavlik: And my daughter was born in 1923.

Borden: I see. You just have the one child?

Pavlik: No, well, then I have a son that was born in 1926.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: And my daughter teaches school. She's a school teacher, and my son, he was in WORLD WAR II.

Borden: He was?

Pavlik: He also was called back for Korea, but he had been married since that, and so he was relieved from that. He is a professional electrical engineer for the city of—he has charge of the street lighting for the city of Milwaukee. And so, as I say—

Borden: And just for the record, what is your daughter's married name, first name—

Pavlik: She never married.

Borden: Oh.

Pavlik: She always stayed home.

Borden: I see. So she is the woman who answers the phone when I call?

Pavlik: That's right.

Borden: That is. Some reason I thought that was your wife. I don't know why [laughs].

Pavlik: No [laughs]. So when my daughter, when my wife passed away—because my daughter stayed home and never married.

Borden: What's her first name?

Pavlik: Audrey.

Borden: Audrey.

Pavlik: She always took over. She learned the kitchen, the making of meals, the same as my wife, and so there's been no change as far as preparation of meals and things of that sort since my wife had passed away.

Borden: And what about your son? What's his name?

Pavlik: John Robert, and he has three children, which are two girls—

Borden: So those are your three grandchildren.

Pavlik: Three grandchildren. Two girls and a boy. They're all married. The boy, the youngest one of the group, he's married, and he has three children of his own. So I'm a great-grandfather to his children. He has two boys and a girl. So right now there's four John Pavliks in rotation.

Borden: [Laughs.] That's wonderful. Are any of the grandchildren, have any of them entered the service?

Pavlik: No, well, no, the second one, Debbie or Betsy, she is working for the Army doing—well, it's sort of a—she worked at the out of Des Moines—not out of Des Moines—oh, in Illinois on the Mississippi River they have an island [Rock Island or Arsenal Island] in there, as you recall. The government owns that island, and that's sort of a—well, it's a base for—

Borden: The Corps of Engineers?

Pavlik: What is it?

Borden: Army Corps of Engineers?

Pavlik: Yeah, right. Something of that sort. She's working there doing work there, but her office has been transferred to St. Louis now, and she's living in St. Louis at the present time.

Borden: So you do have some family besides your daughter that sees you then.

Pavlik: Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, definitely.

Borden: What do they think about you becoming a big deal and going to Washington?

Pavlik: Well, they are very bit surprised, and they're real happy. They've often heard me talk about the different things and so on, and they're real happy. They think this is fine. Feeling as though that I'm being rewarded for some of my efforts that I've been always sponsoring or been working with or for all these years.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: They're real happy. As a matter of fact, when I was installed my daughter and my son, my daughter-in-law, and my sister, they came to Des Moines, Iowa to the installation at the time.

Borden: What do you feel now, looking ahead? What do you feel will probably be the thing that'll give you the greatest satisfaction during your term of office for a year as national head?

Pavlik: What would?

Borden: What thing are you looking forward to the most, as far as what you'll be doing in the next year?

Pavlik: Well, the thing that I'm primary interested right now, and I'm going to form some committees, is if we stay the way we are we're certainly going to be the "Last Man's Club." And that our organization will dissolve, and that'll be the end. I'm looking forward to, and I'm appointing a committee, it's sort of a ad-hoc committee, long range program. I think that we need to do like the Civil War veterans did. They had their sons come in to the organization, the daughters of the wars, to carry on the tradition. Our charter calls that when we were chartered by the federal

government that we were to establish a permanent organization. Now, we can't have a permanent organization, unless we take in some, expand our thinking as to getting sons or daughters and things of that sort, auxiliary it has to take in daughters. I think they're thinking gonna take granddaughters into their organization so they can carry on. One of the things that I want to do, and that would be the important thing, is to expand for the future that our organization can continue on, even if we have to take in our sons to carry on. The AMVETS [American Veterans] has got a program similar to that, although theirs is a separate organization sponsoring them like an auxiliary, so to speak. But I think, in our organization, I'd rather see it go like the Spanish, not the Spanish, well, Spanish-American War, but the Civil War Veterans, the GAR [Grand Army of the Republic] whereby they take in the sons as part of the organization to carry on the traditions of the World War I veterans.

Borden: Mostly so that the WORLD WAR I veterans will not be forgotten.

Pavlik: That's correct.

Borden: And the contribution that they made to preserving freedom.

Pavlik: Right. Right. Right. And I think that's one of the goals, and the second one would be to get some kind of legislation to satisfy so many of our people as to some sort of a pension deal. Probably they all won't get it, but at least there'd be something on the books. You know, the federal government has been very good to its veterans, all the time. They had Civil War veterans got land grants. Spanish-American War got pensions. We come along with nothing. But I think the reason that we're not getting ahead is, this is my personal opinion from the way I sum it up, is the federal government is looking at 32,000,000 veterans today and their spouses and so forth. Whatever they do for us, they'll have to do for the World War II veterans. The longer they can keep from giving us a pension or setting some kind of a criteria so they can have a crutch to lean on to say when the World War II veterans come up, they'll say, "Yes. We'll give you the same, we'll give you a pension under same condition we give to World War I." If they set the criteria up to be that you gotta be ninety-five years old, or 100 years old, when you're that old, you'll get a pension. See? So or, when there's 25,000 of you left, then you'll get a pension, see? This is what I think is happening, and I feel that probably Congress is doing something that it's hard for us to accept, but probably for the good of the country. That might have to be the way they go. So we're being sacrificed again for what may happen in the future. I don't know. But this is my personal feeling, and I'm probably all wet anyhow on that thinking.

Borden: I want to leave a pause here, and I want to ask you a couple questions about things in history and what you thought of them, and then—because we're going to run out of tape here in a minute. The Bonus Marchers, General MacArthur, Regular Army forces, put down the Bonus Marchers.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: Threw them out of Washington in 1932, I think it was, somewhere around that time.

Pavlik: Yeah, during the Depression—

Borden: General MacArthur had no sympathy whatsoever. In fact, he called them a bunch of bums.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: Do you agree with the General?

Pavlik: Well, being he had a duty to perform, and he was given that duty by the president, and he carried out his duty. I don't agree with saying that, what he did say, because some of the people—

Borden: I understand he made a lot of them very angry there.

Pavlik: That's right, and they—

Borden: 'Cause he'd been their leader, or leader of some of them in World War I.

Pavlik: Yeah. In WORLD WAR I he commanded the 42nd Division.

Borden: That's right. Rainbow.

Pavlik: And these same people that he commanded, now, he praised before, now he's calling them bums. This was not right. This is not proper to do, MacArthur's blunder (??). Yet, on the other hand, he was one of the brilliantest strategists that this country's ever had.

Borden: Now, you're a Milwaukeean, and General Douglas MacArthur was a Milwaukeean, as was his father and his grandfather.

Pavlik: Right.

Borden: By the way, what did you think of the Board of Veterans Affairs choosing to name the new clinic and skilled nursing care facility MacArthur Hall after the three famous—

Pavlik: I think it was great.

Borden: What'd you think about that?

Pavlik: I think we done an honor to the MacArthurs in the State of Wisconsin. And that's what the state is known for, is for recognizing people, the things that they've done, and so forth. Sure, you go through life making some mistakes, and I think MacArthur made that mistake when he said they were bums, and I think he realized that after he commanded World War II that he had made a mistake, and the people that he thought that he had to command now were some of the offsprings of the people that he commanded in Europe.

Borden: He was Army Chief of Staff at the time he made that statement.

Pavlik: Right. Right. Well, not only MacArthur, but you had Omar Bradley.

Borden: Mm-hmm.

Pavlik: And I don't know if it was Eisenhower or if it was somebody else. But, I know MacArthur and Bradley were the two. There were three Generals involved in this Bonus March deal, which was unfortunate. And when you stop and think, maybe we were mistreated, but we set a pattern that nobody else has ever been mistreated like we were. Look at when the colored people had their big doings in Washington. They put up private privies for them all over the ground. They let them sleep on the grounds. Here, we were in the dumps, in actually dumps.

Borden: Shanties. Shanty—

Pavlik: Yeah, right. And we were driven out of there by the officer—

Borden: Were you in the Bonus March?

Pavlik: No, I didn't—

Borden: You didn't take part.

Pavlik: I was in the fire service then.

Borden: You were in the fire service.

Pavlik: Mm-hmm. No, I didn't go.

Borden: But this was during the depths of the Depression, and there was much unemployment—

Pavlik: That's right. That's right.

Borden: And the programs, social welfare program set up by the Roosevelt administration had not yet come to pass. I believe, was it MacArthur, was appointed Army Chief of Staff by Herbert Hoover.

Pavlik: I know he was way up—

Borden: Herbert Hoover appointed him Army Chief of Staff.

Pavlik: Yeah, right. Right. One other thing too, the federal government, and this is kind of overlooked. We wanted some sort of a pension, the government couldn't give us a pension. So what they said, we'll do this, we'll give you a certificate, a twenty year endowment certificate. At the end of twenty years you can collect x number of dollars. I recall my particular certificate calls for receiving something like seventeen hundred dollars as a insurance policy payment. But in **[End of Tape 2, Side A]** the meantime with the Depression on I was borrowing on that all the time. So by the time they said, "Let's pay it off altogether," everybody had borrowed up to half of it and lost on interest and so forth. So it didn't—it just carried you over for a short period of time, and that was it, unfortunately. This is what we're still trying to do, get this type of a service pension. **[Interview ends abruptly]**

[End of Interview]