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4700.2606 Tape 4558
Session I
February 12, 2016

[Begin Tape 4558. Begin Session I.]

CHELSEA ARSENEAULT: Alrighty.

REBECCA COOPER: Wait. Can you hang on one second?

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

COOPER: I need to just start the camera.

ARSENEAULT: **[00:06]** Okay. Sure, just let me know when you're ready and I can start.

COOPER: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: Kyle [Tanglao] will cut this out. Good? Okay. All right. Today is February twelfth, 2016. I'm Chelsea Arseneault with the [LSU Libraries] T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History. Today with Mr. Morris Prater in his lovely home in Iowa, Louisiana. We're here to interview him for his history for the Mossville oral history project that we're doing with . . . in conjunction with the Imperial Calcasieu Museum and Bill Shearman. So I just want to thank you so much today, Mr. Prater, for agreeing to be interviewed. We've been looking forward to this

interview for, feels like years now, but it's been months. Could you state your full name just for the recording?

MORRIS PRATER: My name is Morris Prater.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. And when and where were you born?

PRATER: I was born in Mossville in 1929, the twentieth of January.

ARSENEAULT: [01:19] Were you born in your house?

PRATER: Yes. Midwife.

ARSENEAULT: There was a midwife?

PRATER: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember who it was?

IRENE PRATER: Probably Ms. [. . .?] or Aunt Adeline.

PRATER: Adeline, probably. Yeah, probably Adeline. I don't remember.

ARSENEAULT: Did your mom ever talk about your birth?

PRATER: [01:45] She did. You know, I don't remember too much about it.

ARSENEAULT: No difficulties or complications or anything?

PRATER: No. No, I don't think so. I did not know. She did not say, so I don't know. Back then they didn't tell you too much. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Very private.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: But I know a lot of kids were born in the homes.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: [02:41] What were your parents' names?

PRATER: My mother's name was Eunice Towner Prater. My dad's name was Erthy Prater.

ARSENEAULT: Could you spell Erthy?

PRATER: E-R-T-H-Y.

ARSENEAULT: Where in Mossville did they live?

PRATER: Right off of Prater Road there. Wasn't on Prater Road, but right off Prater Road.

ARSENEAULT: Can you describe the house?

PRATER: [03:26] No. We moved from there before I was old enough to see it . . .
remember anything about it.

ARSENEAULT: Do you know why they came to Mossville?

PRATER: No, I don't know why. They just moved there. I don't know why, but they moved from where I was born over on Old Spanish Trail. That's east of Evergreen. Had a great big house there. They rented that and that's where I kind of remember some of that. It was a real large house. That's where we stayed there until in the '40s. And then we moved from there to Prater Road. So my dad was the first on Prater Road, so that's when they give it the name Prater. Prater Road. We were the first on that in the '40s. Sometime in the '40s. I don't know when. And stayed there.

My dad died there, and my mother died there. And it's about . . . I don't remember what year. Probably . . . Dad died in the '80s, Mom died in the '90s, but I done forgot the dates on those. And I started work when I was about sixteen years old. Got my social security card around

sixteen years old. My first job was we cleared a right of way from [Highway] 90 to [Starks?] . . . Utility line. My brothers . . . I have . . . Eleven of us children was born all in Mossville. I'm the oldest. The baby is Karl Ray. Me and him have the same birth date, January the twentieth. I was born in '29. He was born in '51. My first job I think I was cutting firewood. We had two wood yards in Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: Do you know who owned them?

PRATER: [07:25] Two wood yards was in Mossville. One was . . . The Smith had one.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: And Rigmaiden had the other one. My mother and dad said that we had a store out there, way back. I don't remember it but it was Moss had his store. Probably already got all that history from Moss.

ARSENEAULT: Pete Moss?

PRATER: Pete? No, not Pete Moss. It was Jim Moss.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Jim Moss was the daddy of Pete Moss. Jim Moss had his store there and they said

they brought the mail at least once a week. That was the mail . . . That was the post office.

ARSENEAULT: Do you know where that was located?

PRATER: [08:17] It was located around right there in Mossville, but it was just around across . . . What's the name of the church there, Mama? Can you remember? Clover Church?

ARSENEAULT: Miracle Deliverance?

PRATER: It was right across in front of Clover's Church.

ARSENEAULT: Not Mount Zion?

PRATER: No, it was east of Mount Zion. See Mount Zion was all that strip where his Moss was, because Moss the one that give the property for the church. They say that . . .

ARSENEAULT: Jim Moss?

PRATER: [08:57] Jim Moss gave the property for the church. That's what I was told. And it was east of that. East of the church there. And they brought the mail there once a week. I don't know. I don't remember. I was too small to remember. Too young. And after his store went out he had a sugar mill there. He'd grind cane and cook the syrup there.

ARSENEAULT: Did he grow the cane?

PRATER: [09:37] No, he didn't grow the cane. Everybody just brought cane there from all around.

ARSENEAULT: He just processed it.

PRATER: He did. And I used to go down there and sit around there. I got old enough to run around and watch him do that. It was something to go do. We didn't have . . .

ARSENEAULT: How did he . . . What . . . I've never seen it done.

PRATER: [10:04] Well he had a . . . it was a little . . . probably a little . . . It was built with a two big drums like. And the drums turned and he had a . . . well like we call it a [thumb?]. Well anyway, it had a piece come out from it and you put a horse went around with it, went around and around and that . . . Them drums, they put the cane in it and the drums squeeze the juice out . . . the cane, you see. And it would . . . Had a barrel in. Put a barrel in when you got through with that he would . . .

ARSENEAULT: Boil it maybe?

PRATER: You would cook it. Had two big cooking boilers on the inside there. They was possibly eight by eight or six by six around. And it was so deep. And he cooked the syrup, and

after he got it cooked they'd come and get it, whoever he was cooking it for. So . . .

ARSENEAULT: Did he charge for . . .?

PRATER: I don't really know what happened then. I couldn't say. We had a store in Mossville. That was the Garrett's had the store. So back then you could buy as much as you want, but you got to buy what they want you to have because they packaged it you see. But then you could buy a dime worth of beans or dollar worth of beans or whatever back then. But now it's. . .

ARSENEAULT: You mean it was like loose?

PRATER: [12:09] Yeah, it was loose. Everything loose and you'd say you wanted say so much. And he would weigh up so much and put it in the bag. So we used to go to the store, you know, and buy like that. So it . . . Back then it was a whole lot different to what it is now. It's . . . Everybody loved everybody. Mossville was a good community. Real good. And all the people, you knowed everybody. Everybody around knowed each one like that. And if I were somewhere and I did the wrong thing they could whip me and go home, and you tell your dad or your mom that you got a whipping down at so-and-so's house it was nothing said what you did. It was fine. But not now. It's not like that now. So it's a whole lot different. So I can say I was blessed. I never went to the jailhouse to visit nobody let alone be charged for something so I think I'm blessed. I think I was raised pretty good.

ARSENEAULT: What about your grandparents? Do you know what their names were and where they were from?

PRATER: Yes. My mother's mother was named Irie . . . Irie . . .

ARSENEAULT: Irie?

PRATER: Yeah Irie. Irie Potts Towner.

ARSENEAULT: I-R-I-E?

PRATER: [14:01] I think that was it, yes.

ARSENEAULT: That's . . .

PRATER: Potts Towner. And my mother's dad name was David Duff Towner. That's on my mother's side. On my dad's side my grandmother's name was [Belzoni?] Lyons Prater. My grandfather's name was Henry [Stafford?] Prater.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about them?

PRATER: Well on my mother's side I learned that they . . . you got some that you can . . . I used to go up there and stay up there lots through the summer and around like that. My mother's

parents.

ARSENEAULT: They were in Mossville?

PRATER: Yes. They lived right up . . . It was in Mossville, but it was up the Evergreen [where they work in there now, Evergreen?]. And I used to go up there and my grandfather he planted a truck patch, a garden. So that was fun to go up there and he planted watermelons and all that, cantaloupes, everything he planted. So it was fun to go up there. And I had my uncle was . . . It was teenage boys and all and so I liked to follow them. So it was good. On my dad's side it was a whole lot different. I don't know what. Grandma, she was kind of strict. So I just wasn't comfortable with Dad's people.

ARSENEAULT: Did they have a garden too?

PRATER: [16:15] No, I don't remember planting nothing there. I don't remember that. That was in that area right there where the water well is where they lived right there.

ARSENEAULT: Where is that?

PRATER: Right there, just west of . . . Well it's right in there where the rec is. You know where the rec is in Mossville? Well it's that little patch of woods right in there. The water well is right there. Well that's where my dad's . . .

ARSENEAULT: Is that called the Brimstone? Is that the Brimstone area?

PRATER: Well the Brimstone is behind there. Brimstone area, where we used to call the Brimstone, is just behind there. That's the railroad track like run behind that back there. But the Brimstone area, that was way out back. That was probably around Sulphur and sulfur mines, they used to call it I think. That's salt mine or something out there. Yes, so it's . . . Mossville was good. It's good, but it's gone now so all my . . . I was born and raised there so I stayed there too. I went in the service in 1951.

ARSENEAULT: What branch?

PRATER: Army. I spent two years in the service in there, and when I come out I was in reserve for six years. When I come out in '53, me and my wife Irene we was courting during that time and we got married about six month after I come out of the service. We've been married ever since.

ARSENEAULT: Where did y'all meet?

PRATER: [18:55] We met . . . Where did we meet? It's been so long I done forgot. Mama can you remember when we met?

IRENE PRATER: Yes, I was working in the cafe.

PRATER: Well yes.

IRENE PRATER: And you and Oscar came by.

PRATER: Yes.

IRENE PRATER: To eat or something.

PRATER: Yes.

IRENE PRATER: Something like that.

PRATER: [19:18] I was about to say I done forgot. I can't remember half of the things. Yes, well I guess that's what it was. But anyway, we wrote each other when I was in the service. And when I got out in '53 . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was this for Vietnam?

PRATER: No, I didn't go overseas. I spent the two years in the states, in Virginia where I was stationed in Virginia. And I come out we was married in '53 in July. July the eighteenth we got married. And we have three girls: Vera, and Margaret, and Deborah. Three girls. We got three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and four great-great. That's them over there.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Is this your father right here?

PRATER: Yes. That's Dad there. That's my dad.

ARSENEAULT: Where did he work?

PRATER: [20:54] Well he worked . . . First he was at . . . I guess his first job was probably . . . See back in the '30s that's when the Depression was and they come out with what you call the WPA.

ARSENEAULT: What was that?

PRATER: Well it wasn't no money then back in that time. And the governor, I now done forgot who was the governor back then, now the president know the governor back in that time, the governor. But anyway, they didn't have any work. And what happened, they had to put the people to work. So what they did . . . the government built roads and stuff like that. Now Houston River Road up there that was all built with mules and men with shovels. They worked like that, but they didn't get any money. They had a set up in the store that was in Westlake [Louisiana] and they had . . . they could go and purchase whatever they needed at the store like

that. That was about his first job I can remember. Then after that he did sawmill work. Cutting, you know, sawmill, like where they [lay?] boards out and stuff like that.

ARSENEAULT: Wasn't there a saw mill in Mossville?

PRATER: No, it was in Westlake. But he stayed in Mossville, so he rode his horse to Westlake to work. Then after that went out I guess he went then he got on at Firestone. He worked at Firestone rubber plant. He retired there. Yeah, sure did. And my mother over there they . . .

ARSENEAULT: Which one was that?

PRATER: You mean her's together?

ARSENEAULT: Right here?

PRATER: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: What did she do?

PRATER: [23:31] She did house wife. She stayed at home all the time. Yeah that's them there.

ARSENEAULT: That's them? Do you think I could take a picture of that?

PRATER: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: And that's Irie and Erthy?

PRATER: Eunice.

ARSENEAULT: Eunice.

PRATER: Eunice and Erthy.

ARSENEAULT: Eunice and Erthy.

PRATER: Yeah. That's Irene there, my wife. [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Getting my names mixed up.

PRATER: Yeah. Yeah that's Eunice there.

ARSENEAULT: [23:57] Eunice and Erthy.

PRATER: Yeah. Eunice and Erthy.

ARSENEAULT: She never had a job?

PRATER: No. She never worked. No, she stayed at home and took care of us children.

ARSENEAULT: Full time job right there.

PRATER: It were. It were. Yes.

ARSENEAULT: What sort of things would she do, your mom?

PRATER: She what?

ARSENEAULT: What kind of things would she do?

PRATER: Oh she did the housework. Washed. Cooked.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of things would she cook?

PRATER: [24:39] Well it was beans, cornbread, rice, biscuits. Back then it was . . . You know what I mean. I can say that Dad always provided for us. And she always . . . I never went to bed hungry. That was one thing— I never went to bed hungry. Never went to bed hungry as kids like that so it was . . . Had a good life. Good life.

ARSENEAULT: Did y'all have a garden growing up?

PRATER: [25:20] No. Probably a few times they'd plant something. But my grandfather, he planted . . . on my mother's side. So we could get stuff from up there. They was . . . He planted everything. He planted sweet potatoes and stuff like that. Had hogs. Killed hogs and butchered hogs like that. He had bacon and stuff like that. I had a good life. Just hard times back in that time. So yes, that's my grandkids all over there.

ARSENEAULT: This one?

PRATER: Yeah. That's all.

ARSENEAULT: All the grandkids?

PRATER: All the daughters. My daughters and grandkids.

ARSENEAULT: [26:29] Let's see if I can find Vera. Here she is.

PRATER: There she is. That's Vera. That's my other daughter there and that's the baby daughter there. That's Vera's daughter.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: And that's her son right there. And that's him. That's my grandson. That's his son.
His daughter and his daughter.

ARSENEAULT: So beautiful. So many girls.

PRATER: [27:01] And let's see where else them at. Okay. He had five he got five.

ARSENEAULT: Look at him. How cute.

PRATER: Yeah, he got five.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: This one . . . Where the other's at.

ARSENEAULT: Oh look at those little precious . . .

PRATER: I can't find him. Anyway this one here. That was [Brittany?]. That's her.

ARSENEAULT: [27:22] That's her daughter.

PRATER: That's her daughter there.

ARSENEAULT: And that's her . . . ?

PRATER: That's her . . . Yeah, that's her daughter.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: That's their son right there.

ARSENEAULT: [27:28] Okay.

PRATER: That's my great-great there.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: That's my great-great.

ARSENEAULT: Great-great.

PRATER: That's my great-great.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: I can't see him now but this one.

ARSENEAULT: This? The little one?

PRATER: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: This little one?

PRATER: Yeah, probably that one there.

ARSENEAULT: And maybe this little one.

PRATER: And that one right there, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: And there's a little one.

PRATER: This one here?

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

PRATER: [27:54] Okay, that's my grandson right there. That's . . .

ARSENEAULT: Oh okay.

PRATER: That's her son right there.

ARSENEAULT: I see. Wow.

PRATER: This my granddaughter. That's my grandson and that's my grandson.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: Great and great-great. That's her daughter right there.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

PRATER: That's her sister there.

ARSENEAULT: Got you. I'm going to give this to Becca to take a picture. And I know you have to leave soon but . . .

PRATER: Yeah. It's . . . And the other one over there is . . . I mean that's my sisters and my brothers right there.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Yeah. One [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: So do you know their names in order?

PRATER: [28:34] Don't have . . . Not in order.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: I done lost some of them.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: I can get most of them I can put them in order.

ARSENEAULT: If you can remember their names we can get it on the recording.

PRATER: [28:43] Yeah. Okay. We'll see. Take my glasses off I might see them better.
Okay.

ARSENEAULT: I'm going to give this picture of your father to her as well.

PRATER: That's me there I think.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: That's me there.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: [29:01] Okay and this is Wilfred there.

ARSENEAULT: Wilfrid?

PRATER: Wilfred, yeah. And let me look I can't see them from there. That's John there.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: That's Darrell there and that's Carl Ray right there. Right in there. Me and him.
That's me there and that's him. That's the baby.

ARSENEAULT: It's the oldest and the youngest.

PRATER: Oldest and the youngest boys.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. The same birthday.

PRATER: Same birthday.

ARSENEAULT: Bookends.

PRATER: Yeah the oldest and the baby.

ARSENEAULT: [29:46] Wow.

PRATER: He's the baby. Okay and the girls. That's [Tommy?] Lou.

ARSENEAULT: Okay, Tommy Lou.

PRATER: That's [Ira?] Marie.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: That's Bernice.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: And that's Ruby Lee.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: And the other one back in here that was Clayton. That one right there. That's Clayton.

ARSENEAULT: This one?

PRATER: Yeah. That's Clayton there.

ARSENEAULT: And he's passed away?

PRATER: Yeah, he's under me.

ARSENEAULT: And that's his wife?

PRATER: [30:14] Yeah that's his wife there.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

PRATER: Yeah. So that's . . .

ARSENEAULT: That's his brother, Clayton.

PRATER: I have one brother I don't have on here. That's [Bernice?]. It was me, then Clayton, then her. [Bernice?] [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Wow. Thank you so much.

PRATER: Somewhere in there. I lost them all.

ARSENEAULT: What was it like growing up with so many siblings?

PRATER: [30:43] Well it was all right. It was all right. Well, Mom was kind of sick back in the '40s. She went to Alexandria [Louisiana] and stayed for about two and a half months, and I had to take care of all of them. So I was the oldest so I had to take care of some of them, but not all of them, because Dad was working so I was the oldest so I had to take care of them. So I learned how to cook, to wash, iron, keep the house running. I can cook anything I want to cook now, do a pastry too if I wanted to. She learnt me the hard way though because she was gone some. But I enjoyed it. You know what I mean? I just . . . I guess forgot about the bad part, the young part. I just faded it out.

ARSENEAULT: [32:09] Where did you go to school?

PRATER: I went to school at Mossville there. But I didn't get too much schooling because I was out off and on so much. She was sickly so I . . . Some days she would just stay in bed and I stayed to take care of the little ones. But I don't regret it. I made it up to this time so I . . . When I started work I worked right straight through. So I didn't have any problem. Did some [little things?]; welding, construction work and all . . .work.

ARSENEAULT: You said you were sixteen when you started working?

PRATER: About sixteen. First started cutting wood. Me and a fellow, Oscar Jordan, we cut wood then. I believe we got a dollar and a half for a cart of wood.

ARSENEAULT: How would you cut it?

PRATER: [33:19] With a cross-cut saw. Bust it and then stack it. Four high and eight foot long. We had to saw it, then bust it, then stack it. And we get a dollar and fifty cents.

ARSENEAULT: You thought you were rich, huh?

PRATER: We did. We did that. And then my next job was clearing up . . . we cleared the right of way from [Highway] 90 to Starks for a utility line to go through. Then I went to Maplewood [Louisiana]. Went to Maplewood to cut grass. Then cut grass for a while, then [formed a?] movement from the sewage disposal plant and I worked there. I was working there when I went in the service.

ARSENEAULT: Did you get drafted or did you enlist?

PRATER: [34:25] No, I was drafted. I was drafted. And see that Maplewood was a government job. I mean governor housing project. See they built that when the airport come in. See they have a lot of soldiers here in Lake Charles back in the '40s.

ARSENEAULT: Was there a training base there or something?

PRATER: Yes, it was a training base set up and planes coming in and out there. That's a big airport there. It can take any plane that they got now on that airport there in Lake Charles. I went to work there. So a lot of soldiers moved there in Maplewood. That's where a whole lot of soldiers moved in Maplewood. I was working there when I went in the service. So the superintendent. . . .

ARSENEAULT: You got drafted in 1951?

PRATER: [35:33] 1951, yes.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember the day?

PRATER: Yes, January the eleventh.

ARSENEAULT: Like do you remember what happened that day? Like how you were feeling.

PRATER: I was feeling rough that day. [laughs] January the eleventh I went to Alexandria. Come back and eight to ten days I got my notice to come back to Alexandria. Bring enough clothes for three days.

ARSENEAULT: Processing?

PRATER: I know. I left then. I didn't come back to [. . .?] my training and then I got a leave.

ARSENEAULT: Where was boot camp?

PRATER: [36:17] In Virginia. Right of Washington, D.C.

ARSENEAULT: What was the . . . Was it Fort . . .

PRATER: Fort [Berrymoore?].

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about training?

PRATER: Well . . .

ARSENEAULT: Was it segregated then?

PRATER: No, it was distorting. Not all the N.C.O.'s some of them were white, but all the troops in there was all colored. One spot they had all the white in a different spot, but it started right when I got out in '53. It was kind of mixing in in '53. But I don't know I didn't get in to any trouble and I got passes. Got pretty good pass for a standing inspection. My shoes shining. So I enjoyed it. When I could come home and see her I enjoyed that. So it was nice. I had a good life. In the service I didn't get into any trouble. So I . . . But I got out when my two years was up. I didn't re-up no more. But I was in reserve though for six years.

ARSENEAULT: What was your . . . Was it M.O.S.? What was your job in the military?

PRATER: [38:00] I was a truck driver. See I was in headquarters. In headquarters Fort [?].
Headquarters would take care of all the rest of the [. . .?]. It was good.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember any of your superior officers?

PRATER: I done about forgot some of them. Let's see, I had . . . Let's see, the captain was
. . . We gave the nickname Cooter Brown. It wasn't his name.

ARSENEAULT: Colonel Brown?

PRATER: Cooter Brown.

ARSENEAULT: Cooter Brown. Why'd y'all call him that?

PRATER: [38:54] Because he was kind of mean. [laughs] Yes, he was kind of mean. Let's
see. What was his name? I done forgot his name. I forgot. I can't think his name.

IRENE PRATER: [. . . ?] I can't think his name now. I had it.

PRATER: We had a lieutenant there.

ARSENEAULT: He was mean?

PRATER: I can't think of his name. I can't think of their names. That's what I said sometimes I just forget. I can't think of them. The name I know just as good as I do mine but I just . . . It's gone.

ARSENEAULT: It will come back to you probably in a second. But he was . . . Was he just grouchy or . . .?

PRATER: [39:37] Well he wasn't really grouchy but you just . . . It was that he was strict. I'll put it that way. He was strict. So . . .

IRENE PRATER: Collin Powell.

PRATER: Yeah. Collin Powell. That was the captain over the division there. So that was him, but I can't think of the lieutenant. I had a lieutenant. First lieutenant, second lieutenant, but I can't think of their names. It was the engineer construction battalion what I was in. So if I'd have went overseas we'd have been the first to go in because we'd built roads, bridges, and stuff like that for everything to go in. But I didn't go. Some of my outfit went over because they [. . .?] and went over. When we were scheduled to go over I didn't have enough time left, so they just transferred me to another outfit. And then the ones went over. They went overseas.

ARSENEAULT: Did any of your buddies go overseas?

PRATER: Not . . . No, not the ones from Lake Charles. But had some from Houston [Texas] went over and Alexandria. Different places went over, yeah. But we went through training though. We took over through what they call the infiltration course. Set up machine guns out there, out front there line them up, machine guns. And we come in on the other end. [. . .?] come in. And they had it was in the summertime dry but they put water out there I guess because it was muddy and wet. They had poles dug. They had done them right in the holes . . . charges. And they had barbed wire stretched all in there and they had logs all in there. The machine guns set up over here. They was shooting live ammo. They told us before we go in. Say, "Stay down. If you get up it cut you in two." They said, "This is it. We going overseas and you got to be ready." So Okay. We went in in the daytime. We went back in at night and that night you could feel the heat over you. They were shooting I guess about that high over us.

ARSENEAULT: The heat of the bullets?

PRATER: [42:35] Yeah. And they were live. It was real. And they told us, "As you get up that's it." We went through with our packs on our back. Whole full-filled pack. And your rifle. And when you get through then your rifle had to be clean because you had to have it ready so you could fight . . . shoot. Come back in that night and at night it wasn't nothing but a streak of fire over us. Far as that ammo went. Every fifth round was a tracer and it was shooting so fast it wasn't nothing but a streak of fire. Gave one of them a steak of fire right over you. So that was the getting ready. That's the only time that I felt bad about it because it was real. One boy got his eyes . . . I don't know if it put his eye out or not but anyway. He crawled in where a charge was of dynamite and when it went up well I was close to him. It went up just water and mud come

down. Down on your head. And it was something. Well I don't know, but I got to go. It's after two.

ARSENEAULT: It's about that time.

PRATER: Yes ma'am. It's after. I got . . .

ARSENEAULT: Well we have so much more . . .

PRATER: I have to pick up my . . . What it is I have to pick up my grandson.

ARSENEAULT: [44:23] Okay.

PRATER: From school. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Yes well . . .

PRATER: You can get the pictures. Mama you can show them the pictures and all.

ARSENEAULT: Yes, we got pictures of these and . . .

PRATER: Oh you one got them?

ARSENEAULT: She took a picture of the picture.

PRATER: Okay. Alright.

ARSENEAULT: Yes sir. And we'll definitely come back and get the rest of this story next time.

PRATER: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: If that's alright.

PRATER: Well, if I can think of it.

ARSENEAULT: Oh yeah. You'll think . . .

[44:48]

[End Tape 4558. End Session I.]