



**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: James R. Doil

DATE OF BIRTH: September 23, 1923 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: June 16, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Doil residence, Las Cruces

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM ☒ OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: March 28, 2001

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Jane O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: March 30, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Brief description of his service in Europe during World War II. The bulk of the interview details his duty as a guard at the prisoner of war camp in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

DATE RANGE: 1943-1945

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Doil discusses briefly his basic training and his service in France during World War II. He was wounded and returned to the United States in December 1944. After a period of hospitalization, he was assigned light duty at Fort Bliss. At Fort Bliss he was responsible for checking the weapons in the guard towers and the infantry rifles.

After his posting in El Paso he was assigned guard duty at Camp Las Cruces. He guarded the German prisoners of war while they picked cotton. They worked at approximately six different farms in the Mesilla Valley, including the Nakayama, Gutierrez, Johnson, and Alvarez farms. He perceived his job as being "to make sure the prisoners worked, instead of layin' around." He also weighed the cotton the prisoners picked for the farmer. He would take ten to fifteen prisoners of war to work on a farm.

He states he didn't have "any trouble" with the prisoners. He mentions one occasion when a POW wanted to ride in the cab of the truck rather than in the truck box. He stated he put his rifle in the prisoner's stomach and after that he didn't have a problem with discipline.

A map of Camp Las Cruces was discussed with Doil. He described various buildings at the Camp (map contained in file).

He was aware of only one escape from the camp; two prisoners rode the train to Anthony, but they became frightened once they arrived there and returned to the camp.

Doil did not serve as a camp guard very long, because he discovered he had earned enough points to be discharged from the army. He was discharged December 8, 1945.

Doil described the type of work the prisoners performed at the camp. One POW made him a beautiful wood cabinet for his radio.

The Nakayama farm employed POWs year around, as they grew many different vegetable crops.

Doil states that approximately fifteen Japanese prisoners of war were imprisoned in a separate camp in Las Cruces.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

The consultant continues discussing the Japanese POWs who were incarcerated at a camp in Las Cruces during 1945. He then states there might have been twenty-five to thirty Japanese POWs.

Doil describes the relationship between the POWs and camp personnel. He felt that there were a couple of POWs who were "pretty well liked." He discusses German soldiers being taken prisoner by American troops in Europe. He did not experience negative feelings about the German POWs that he guarded despite having served in the European theatre of the war and being wounded.

He discusses what his instructions were regarding fraternization between the POWs and the farmers' families. The farmer was told to keep POWs and other farm laborers in separate fields or work areas.

As a boy and young man Doil had worked as a farm laborer. He did not feel the POWs were expected to work too hard, "they worked, but not real hard."

He describes working at Nakayama farms, and his work weighing cotton. He was not aware of any POW complaints about any working conditions at any of the farms. He did not know of any POW having to be disciplined at the camp.