

# Document 20 oral interview with robert rasmus



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April 8th, Oral Interview With Robert Rasmus This document is an interview with Robert Rasmus, a businessman who was a participant in World War II as an infantry soldier. In the interview he tells about his experiences in the war. The interview starts out with a description of how he heard the war was started, when he was a child. He was not yet old enough to sign up and the US wasn't involved, but he was excited when his mother told him he would be in it. When he actually was enlisted, he was both terrified and excited. He says it felt like being in a dramatic movie, but with the added terror of it actually being real. It took a while for him to get used to this. Later in the interview he describes his six week tour of duty, and actual examples of the battles he was in and how they were. Throughout the rest of the interview though he returns to that same conflict he feels between the excitement of the war and the horrors of the reality of it, and how he doesn't want to die. He says he was " pulled in two directions: Gee, I don't wanna get killed. And, Boy, this is gorgeous country." In the rest of his interview he talks about the experience of taking one German town and then another one, and how the first to die was a sergeant everybody hated and wanted to kill. But he is sure nobody in his platoon did fire the shot, and that it was a German. The immediate historical context of this document is the end of World War II. It is a war that many people thought had to be fought because of the evils of Hitler and the holocaust. Despite that, and despite the worthiness of the cause of the war, to the soldiers fighting in the war it was still terrifying. This accounts for the sense of " schizophrenia" that Robert Rasmus refers to several times in the interview. He felt simultaneously as if he was doing the right thing, and that it was great, and that he was going to die, and he did not want to die. Historically it shows that even if the cause is just people are

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scared of war, and that it is still a horrible thing to have to experience. Even though World War II happened over 60 years ago, the interview here is still very relevant today. Other than the specific geographic locations and the names and places mentioned, Rasmus' description could fit for any war. For instance, those fighting in Afghanistan or Libya at the moment might feel the same sense that the enemies they are fighting are evil and need to be stopped from hurting innocents through terrorism and attack. But, at the same time, they must surely be scared to death despite their military training. I think it would do any military person good to read this document because they would know they are not alone in their fear, and that might help them. People who are not in the military, and who dismiss war as nothing to be worried about, should read it as well. It might change their minds and then perhaps there would not be as much suffering in the world.