

Bill Newland

From Sled Bus to Saipan

Bill Newland: Hi, my name is William Newland, better known as Bill. I'm eighty-one years old, and I've lived in Wheeling all of my life. I was born in Warwood, West Virginia. I remember quite a bit about Warwood at an early age. And I left there at five years of age. In fact, I was orphaned at--My mother died at, when I was four, my father when I was five. And my recollection of Warwood was the bakery that they called the Stroben Bakery. It was about 35th Street, 34th Street, around that area. And there used to be an old Globe Sprinkler factory up there that they converted into an airplane factory during World War I. I remember a seaplane landing on the Ohio River and tying anchor at about the bottom of the 35th Street, if I remember correctly. Piered--They had down there a small pier for recreation and boats. And the pilot got out, and--Oh, just a small child about four and a half years old. And this was around 1917 and, 1918 rather, I'm sorry. It came up the bank

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over the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. And I was the only one around, and he asked me if I knew where the airplane factory was. And I just knew by hearing references to it. It was up about two blocks from where we lived, which is, I think, was the old Wheeling Corrugating and later Blaw-Know factory. And he needed a part, and he went up and got it, probably, and came back. I didn't see him come back. But I was amazed at the pontoons and the airplane bi-wing job. I never saw one before. And we used to ride from Warwood to Wheeling on a streetcar that ran to Wellsburg and Weirton and then crossed over to Steubenville. And going to Wheeling, there was a large mill very close, in fact on the area and the ... location of the Maul Machinery now. It was called the Top Nail, and it was a ... converter type steel mill that lighted up the sky at night. It was rather eerie when you passed and coming to it because of the glow in the sky. Of course Wheeling itself was pretty well

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lighted by the mills in Wheeling and also in northern Benwood and South Wheeling. I remember the House in Herman ..., which House in Herman was a large department store in Wheeling. And if I'm correct, it burned down in 1918. And the flame was so intense and great that you could see it in Warwood, the upper end of Warwood. It burned completely to the ground. And then I left Warwood in 1920, early '20. After my, death of my father and mother, my aunt, who lived in Elm Grove, took my sister and I to raise. And so we came out into Elm Grove. And I know why Elm Grove is called Elm Grove because of the canopy of elm trees from the top of Spring Hill until the old S Bridge at the eastern end of Elm Grove. Beautiful, huge elm trees. And they were cut down one by one as gasoline stations and stores and homes were built. Elm Grove was a red brick road that was actually Wheeling into Elm Grove and through to

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the old S Bridge. The old Stone Bridge, originally built, or had--I think Lydia Shepherd or Kruger at that time was insistent on building this bridge, and I think she financed it. It was still there, and of course her place, we always called it the Monument Place, actually the natives called it the Shepherd Place. And I remember playing in back of it when I was a small child. And there were caves that led up into the, passways, rather led up into the, the lower extremities of the home because it was an escape from Indian attacks. However, very few people knew about them because it was very well camouflaged or ... Being so small, we were always frightened to go up through that way, so we never attempted it. But there were a lot of statues in the yard at that time, and it had a stone wall completely around it. The old mill that was in Elm Grove at that time belonged to the Rabb family, was a huge grain mill. And they had a under shot, or, I'm sorry, a newer shot wheel. And the ... or

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flue or water that turned the wheel was taken down from Little Wheeling Creek and brought along the railroad tracks, below the railroad tracks on the western side of the railroad tracks across the old National Road and into the mill yard and over the wheel and then was spilled into Big Wheeling Creek. The ... was beautiful, it was all hand-cut stone and huge stones. And the interior was chestnut. The roof was tin, all the beams were chestnut. The floors were chestnut lumber. And there were quite a few horse and wagons in those days that came in and brought their grain in to be ground at the mill. And right below that about fifty yards, was the old Stone House, which was a carriage, or an inn that was used for--And it was all cut stone. It was used for the stagecoaches that were brought through the old National Road at that time into Wheeling and possibly some Conestoga wagons travelers stayed there. It

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was later torn down, as well as the mill. It was a shame that we lost it because they were really historical, and they were beautiful structures and sturdy when they were torn down. The rest of Elm Grove was sparsely settled. This was in 1920, '21. And Patterson at one time was its own entity. They called it Flatbush. But Elm Grove itself was a town of its own prior to getting incorporated in Wheeling. They had a waterworks where Nordamen's is now, I think it's Nordamen's. It is a packing house or they distribute goods or meats. And there's a dam across Big Wheeling Creek at that point where the waterworks gathered their water and brought it in and distributed it through Elm Grove. And Elm Grove had its own powerhouse and also generated power for the, the streetcar line, which was--I can't remember the name of it now, but it ran from Wheeling to Elm Grove, then onto the foot of West Alexander

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Hill where the old Morgan Tavern was located. They used to haul cattle back in cattle cars, also sheep and hogs and pigs. And they would drop those off in Elm Grove and drive them up to the old wooden B & O station in Elm Grove. And they had a loading ramp and they loaded those into cattle cars, and then they were picked up at the B & O and transported throughout the eastern part of the United States. That was mostly dirt road over through that area and suitable to driving cattle. The railroad station later burned down. And they erected a brick, white brick railroad station at that point. And across from that was a Elm Grove Mining Company, which later became Valley Camp Coal Company. Willie Chambers owned the

Elm Grove Mining Company, and they had a long tipple that ran clear out to the railroad tracks ... that they had, one ... And they dumped the railroad cars with the coal in, not the railroad cars, but the coal
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cars with the coal directly into the railroad cars at that point. And the viaduct in Elm Grove had not been built. It wasn't built until 1927. So any time a train came in and was waiting for a car to be filled up, it backed traffic up. And the traffic might consist of one or two cars, automobiles, on either side. So you can understand how few automobiles that traversed the National Road at that time. And later the tipple was torn down, a wooden tipple, and a new tipple erected by Valley Camp Coal, which was Number One Mine. Valley Camp had three mines in this area, four mines actually. Number One, Number Two in Triadelphia, Number Three in the upper part of Triadelphia, and Number Five, which prior to being Number Five was at the foot of Springdale Hill. Across the creek on the bottom there was a bathtub factory there where Bumgardners later had a plant. And that was run by Raunchleys and the Raunchley family.

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And the old mine that we called Number Five left Wheeling, I mean Valley Camp designated Number Five was actually the old Security Mine. It provided coal for the industry during World War I, later closed down and Valley Camp acquired the underground coal rights and erected a new mine and tipple and called it Number Five mine. So I grew up, went to the old, what we termed poagy school, which was Ohio County Poor House. It was a poor house and a farm in the site that the, actually that the Bridge Street School is now on. The buildings were--There were four buildings and a gymnasium. And they were antiquated and four to five stories high. And I went through that, those schools, up to the middle of the eighth grade, which was 1928. And prior to the Christmas holidays, the new school was built, what is now Bridge Street School. And at the end of the Christmas vacation, we entered into the Bridge Street, the new Bridge Street School. And the old poagy schools were torn down. And this

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was hauled away of course. And the school then is, well, it's still out where it is, it hasn't changed except they added a few extensions to the building. And we had no school buses. We had one school bus, which was horse drawn. It had a potbelly stove in for warmth in the winter. And then when it got too cold and snowy, they brought the children to school in sleds which were filled with straw. They had pulled up, you couldn't see a child in the sled, but when the driver turned around and said, "We're at school," there'd be about, maybe fifteen children come out of the hay and the straw and head towards the school. This was drawn by a two team of horses, a two team sleigh. And after going through, finishing the eighth grade there, I went on then to Triadelphia High School, which is now the middle school, what, Triadelphia Middle School. I graduated from there. No, I went there one year, decided I didn't like high school and decided to--I needed a trade in those days more than you needed higher education. McKinley Trade School in Wheeling was

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in a different district. I had to pay to go there and pay my car fare and tuition. And I went two years to take up and I was one of the original developers of the engineering or drafting part of the trade school. And

I took two years there and then the post-grad one year. And came out during the severity of the Depression and decided--Well, I couldn't get a job at that time, so I decided to go back to high school and finish it, which I did. Then I took numerous correspondence courses in engineering, civil engineering and so forth afterwards. And I then, in the latter part of '35, I got--I graduated in 1935 from Triadelphia. And the latter part of '35 I was able to get a job from, at Valley Camp Coal in engineering. And I think I started at forty-five dollars a month, which was about a twelve hour day and six days a week. Then I later was transferred to the machine shop, the main machinery repair shop. But I worked there a half a day and then a half a day in engineering. And I did this job until about 1940, and then in '41 I was transferred to Elm Grove. Valley (201)

Camp had moved their engineering office and also had their main offices right in Elm Grove, the old company store. And I worked there at a different job. I worked part in engineering and part in supplies. I was in charge of all the materials that went in and out of the mine and purchasing of them. And in 1942 I decided--The war had started, of course, in '41 in December. In '42 I decided I would get patriotic. In the meantime I had married, married in 1941. And in '42 I decided to get patriotic and join the Army. I had a draft--

Steven Franklin: Excuse me, Bill. Let me just interrupt you right there.

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BN: Is that too much personal?

SF: No, no, that's great. Before we move on to the military career, I'd like to talk more about things like-- Do you remember your mother and father, what they did, who your, who your neighborhood boyfriends were or playmates were, what you guys did for entertainment, things like that.

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BN: Yeah, Steve--Well, you probably heard him, but he recommends that I tell something about my personal life. I--My mother was a housewife. She was originally a Marsh from Sand Hill, West Virginia. One of the--Her grandmother and grandfather, which was my great grandmother and grandfather, was the original settlers in that area, the Dallas-Sand Hill area. They were shopkeepers at, came from England. And they built a store. And at that time they were the only store in the Dallas area. And they helped--They deeded the land for the First Methodist Church in Sand Hill and helped build it. The--They had quite a few Indian attacks, and they had to stack their guns in front of the church when they were having services simply because of Indians coming out of the creek valleys, which were Delawares and Mingos and I'm not sure about Senecas. But Senecas used this area as a hunting ground. And they stayed there until their deaths and raised a family. And

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they sort of intermarried with the other people. There weren't too many people around here, nothing but woods and creeks. And there were the Dagues and the, oh, the Blakes, which was all distant relatives of mine. And of course the Marsh family and several others. I can't remember all the names. But my father migrated from England, and his family settled into Virginia and later moved to Clifton, which is west Virginia, later West Virginia. And then onto Wheeling. And he was a puddler in the ironworks or steel

mills as they call them, ironworks at that time, which was a very high paying job. I have no idea what a puddler is, but it was classified as one of the top jobs in the mill. And he worked there until he died in 1920. And so I know very little about his family other than most of them migrated west and ended up in Washington state and homesteaded in that area. This was in the late 1900s. As far as Elm Grove, my neighbors up there are the, are the only ones I remember are Wrights, people by the name of Wrights. And there was a Doctor Christian,

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whether he's a doctor of divinity or a medical doctor, I'm not sure. I just know his name was Doctor Christian. And that's--There were a family by the name of Yoho that were Canadians, and they had moved from Canada down, I think, from Ontario. And they later, just prior to my coming to Elm Grove, they moved back to Canada. And that is about the only family I remember, family names that I remember. But when I moved to Elm Grove I acquired quite a few playmates, which of course now are all dead except one who I still call frequently. And we discuss things that happened in years past. And we, oh, we used to run our recreations, run the hills. We used to travel all over the hills and thought nothing of walking from Elm Grove over the old 29th Street dirt road down until we hit about Eoff Street, sometimes Main Street and back up towards Wheeling and back the railroad tracks through Tunnel Green and back in Elm Grove, which was quite a long trip. And we didn't mind it

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because we used to walking. So the majority of the kids that I run around with are either moved out of state or have passed away. And they would all be in their eighties, between eighty and ninety years old. And we used to go to Wheeling Park frequently. At that time it was a park that was boarded up. Where the golf course is now was a board fence from the entrance clear down to the extent of the park in the lower part of the, part of the park where the statue is. It went down about another hundred yards. And then the fence went on over and up and crossed over by Dieckmann's and back in the upper part of the territory and then back up to the back of the old swimming pool. And when I was a, a child they had deer in there. There were not too many, I think there were about maybe eight or ten. And they had a bowling rink which was located right close to the old swimming pool in Wheeling Park, the bathhouse, the swimming pool. And it was a very small pool, but they had roller skating

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downstairs. And I'm not sure what they had, concessions upstairs. It was a wooden building. And of course the old Wheeling Park White Palace was wooden and about four stories high. In the bottom of the old wooden White Palace they had a bowling alley. And they were old tenpins. They didn't use the larger pins and larger balls in those days. And I at an early age set up tenpins down there until one of them hit me in the shin and practically broke my femur in my leg. And I decided this was no job for me. I was only about seven years old at the time. And then there, on down in the park where Good's Lake is now, there were shoot the shoots, or not only shoot the shoots that came down and went into the lake, little cars, or boats probably. And there were shooting galleries and other sideshow attractions clear down to the old gate and the entrance gate. And the entrance gate was a turnstile. And it

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cost ten cents to get into the Wheeling Park at that time. And they had it pretty well wired up so you couldn't get in other than going through that gate. And the streetcars, they used to have summer cars which the seats run from front to back of the car. And they were straw seats, and they were one continuous seat. If you entered the car you sat either facing the east or west. And the cars came up along the side of Good's Lake. Where the exit road is now, that little high ledge there was the old streetcar tracks. And they came up as far as the aviary, present aviary. And then they, the passengers disembarked at that point, and new passengers got on to go back to Wheeling. But it's changed quite a lot. They used to have quite a few band concerts on Sundays up on the hill where the people in the park could hear the music coming down. And they were good bands, not large, but small bands. And speaking of bands, incidentally, when I was in Triadelphia High School in

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1933, or '32 and '33, we went--We had a beautiful band. There was a hundred piece concert band. I think it was 125 piece marching band under the direction of Stefano Chao. We were invited to attend the national band concert in Chicago, Illinois. And we stayed at the Evanston, Illinois, at Northwestern University. And our band was rated second in playing of all the seventy-five bands entered throughout the United States. And it was only a freak happening that caused us to lose the first place. We were deducted three points because one of our members had lost his way and come in in the middle of the concert. And they knocked five points off of our score, and we lost it by three points. But we won, we were able to give an exhibition of marching in Soldier Field in Chicago, and we won first place in marching throughout, through the bands throughout this country, seventy-five bands. And we were the only band chosen to play a concert at the Hall of Science in the World Fair being

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held in Chicago at that time, which featured Sally Rand by the way. And that was a great attraction for us high schoolers. And so we came home, played quite a few concerts around Wheeling at that time at various garden parties, Capitol Theater and so forth. And we dispensed of course. And we tried to get another band up, the old members later, to play concerts, but it never materialized. There just weren't enough fellows in the area any longer too and not enough interested. Well, my working history--I started, as I said, with Valley Camp. I worked with Valley Camp up until I went to the service in 1942. And I, my wife at that time we lived in an apartment on Kruger Street in Patterson and my wife continued to work until I came home from the service. She later moved to Martins Ferry to live with her mother. But I volunteered for induction and I did have a possibility--In fact, I was deferred due to my job with the coal company, but I--As I said, I got patriotic and joined the Army.

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SF: Excuse me. I'm looking forward to hearing about your military experience, but I know there were some things that, if I forget to ask them now, they may be lost forever. Can you describe some of the entertainment that was available at Wheeling Park when you, when you were young?

BN: Yes.

SF: You, you mentioned shoot the shoots and--

BN: Yeah, shoot the shoots.

SF: Other things.

BN: And--

SF: Can you describe in detail what those things were like for people who won't know what people did for--

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BN: Well, the--Actually at Wheeling Park, the entertainment area was strung along the, the road going, leading to the exit of the park where the present road is. It was cindered at that time. There were--Oh, they'd set baby dolls up, you could knock them down with a baseball. They had shoot galleries, ducks and other things that were rotated by belt. And outside of the shoot the shoots, I can't remember too much about the other. I was too young to do that, participate in that type of entertainment and ... people didn't have that type of money in those days, that kind of money. But the main attraction, of course, was the old wooden White Palace prior to it burning down. And--Oh, incidentally, the third floor of the building was a dance hall, and they had the local bands there. And they had quite a bit of dancing, and this was held twice weekly, as I remember. And I can't remember what was on the top floor. I

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have no idea. I don't think there was any concessions up there. But I do remember when it burned down. If I'm not mistaken, it was 1925 or '26. Twenty-six, I think. And the--In that area they had the golf shop because the golf course was just starting in, it had to be 1926. The golf course was started by Bob Berry in 1926 and was finished in, sometime during 1926 because I started caddying there at, at that time, although when I carried a golf bag it usually, the bottom of it dragged on the ground. I wasn't tall enough, really, to keep it up in the air. But there was a part of the golf shop in the bottom of the White Palace. And I remember going down that next morning and seeing if I could retrieve any of the golf clubs that were in there. And I couldn't because the fire was such intensity it, it melted, not melted by it deformed all the irons, and it burned the woods up of course. And they were all hickory shaft clubs

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anyway, so there wasn't much to be retrieved. But I caddied at Wheeling Park until 19, probably 1931 or '32. And I caddied for quite a few of the prominent families in Wheeling. The Sonneborns and Doc Carper, Doctor Carper and his wife, who is a dentist. And I can't remember all the others that I caddied for, but quite a few prominent Wheeling people came to Wheeling Park to play the nine hole golf course. And it was much, much tougher now because they had two lakes on it and many more trees, more rough. And they had quite a few elm trees on there that were huge. And you either had to go under them, and you couldn't go over them. And you were lucky to ever get through them, and that was on number three, two and three hole going down into the green into the valley there. But I had quite a lot of fun in those days caddying. It was work, and we would get up around three, three-thirty in the morning, go down so we'd have our first turn. And we got paid twenty-five to thirty-five cents a round. It depended upon your ability to caddy, and luckily, I was one of the thirty-five cents persons, or kids. And we would stay there until

after dark.

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In fact, I used to caddy, you couldn't even see the greens, let alone see the hole. And some of these foursomes played right up till it got too bad to see any longer. And so I left there, and that was about eight-thirty in the summertime, or nine o'clock, and get home. And if I made a dollar, a dollar and five cents, which usually what I came home with--And I saved all this money for tuition and clothes and books at school. And at the end of summer I usually ended up with ninety, ninety-five to a hundred dollars, which was quite a nice, tidy sum in those days, was enough to get me through school for a year. And so the other recreations at Wheeling Park, I don't think they had too many others. They did have a few swans on the Good, where the Good Lake is now. It's the same thing, but there was a lot of ice skating on Good Lake during the wintertime. We used to take our skates to school, leave them in our locker and then when school was over in high school, we'd walk up from Triadelphia

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and skate on Good Lake until midnight, and sometimes afterward. And there were always huge bonfires on each side of the lake to stay warm. And the lakes were always just crowded with people skating. And we'd walk home in the snow, and it took us about a half a mile before we realized that we weren't skating and we were walking. But everything--All we did we walked. Very seldom did we ever ride a streetcar because there wasn't that much money, and I think the fare from Elm Grove to Triadelphia at that time was five cents. Well, consequently, we walked it four times a day. Usually most of the children didn't have the money to buy their school lunch, so we walked home and ate a lunch and then back to school to be back there at one o'clock. And then of course back home at night. So, those are hard days.

SF: Can you describe for me what the sleigh bus looked like?

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BN: Well, the sleigh bus was nothing but a two team, horse-drawn sled. It was a formed sled. It was made of heavy timber with two runners on, one on each side. And they had a small set of runners in the front that was on a pivot, and as the horses turned to go around the bend or to move from one side to the other or back up, the front part of the sled would, would pivot and--Just like the wheels on the front of an automobile. And the sled was probably fifteen foot, maybe sixteen foot long, and about three and a half to four feet filled with straw. And the driver sat up on the seat in front. It was a high, spring-type seat. And he guided the sled and the horse team from there. And most of these children came from the Stone Church Road. And I don't remember the braking system. They certainly had to have some to get down off of Stone Church. I'm not sure what, whether it was a sprague or a drag type brake or not. But I never remember any accidents. And the old school buses that were

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on wheels, which was actually a huge wagon. But it was about two steps up, set rather high, and two horse team also drew that. They had a little potbelly stove in the front to keep them warm on cold days. And they just had wooden seats in it that were anchored to the floor and windows, of course. And they must have carried at least fifteen to eighteen to twenty children from Stone Church. And this is the only mode of

transportation we had in those days for the school children. Everybody else walked. And the--I don't remember the name of the driver or what farm he came from, but it was a daily thing during the school years except in the winter when they used a sled, and it was the same driver and the same team of horses. And they were heavy horses, large. But this went to Bridge Street, serviced the grade school and the junior high, which was in the, the old poagy school at that time. Poagy is a derivative of poor house, so it was a common name. They called it at that time I'm sure Bridge Street, well we always referred to it as poagy. In fact, the hill behind the school that goes up, we call poagy hill. I never knew the right name of it, but as far as I'm concerned it's still poagy.

SF: Do you remember during recess if, you know, what games you might play?

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BN: Yeah. During recess our games were sometime a form of softball. It wasn't actually softball, but it was--A baseball was used. And it was a type baseball bat that we couldn't hit that far. And so we had no worries about any of the children getting hit with a ball that would actually be detrimental or dangerous to them. And we also had, oh, small track meets such as running races and just on the flat, no, no course, and broad jumping. And we had soccer in those days. Oh, which reminds me. We had soccer in those days, and we played soccer. And that's about the main recreation we had when we were in school would be play basketball in the gym occasionally. And once in a great while volleyball, but not too often. And they used to stage extra plays and so forth on the stage that was part of the gym in the old poagy school. And it was quite a--It was done usually at night, and they charged to get in. But this was only held once or twice a year. And getting back to the hockey, I'd forgotten this. Behind the present National Bank, what do they call that now.

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WesBanco in Elm Grove, there was a dry goods store where that bank stood. It was ... Dry Good Store, and it was a long store with a tin canopy over the front to protect the customers from rain. And that was later torn down. And where the parking lot is now of the banks, the WesBanco bank of Elm Grove, that street, it was an alley at that time, went into this area where the parking lot was. And that was a large baseball field. They played semi-pro baseball at that, there on Sundays and sometimes Saturdays. And Elm Grove had a team, and then other teams from Claysville and little Washington and Cannonsburg and other areas over in Ohio would come in and play the Elm Grove--And I can't remember the name of the team other than Elm Grove Giants or something. And they had quite a crowd there on Sundays, Sunday afternoons and Saturdays. And at that point I happen to be up there one time when a fellow that was in there, and he--In those days we had prohibition at that time, and he happened to be one

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of the town drunks. There were very few of them. At least I could count them on my one hand. Five, maybe six. I'd have to use one finger on the other hand. But he's pretty inebriated, and one of the policemen in Elm Grove, they were foot police at that time, patrolmen, by the name of Bartels went over to quiet him down. He was making such a fuss and, and diverting the attention to the game to himself, that he told him to leave if he couldn't straighten up and be quiet. And he did leave the game, I mean the area of

the game as a spectator, and strolled up to the old station of the B & O right above the baseball field. And Bartels went up to follow him because he started screaming up there and carrying on. And the next thing we heard was a shot, and he shot and killed this patrolman Bartels at that point. And this was something new to me. I can't remember his name. I remember it was Austin, the person that shot the patrolman Bartels. I think he ended up in Moundsville Penitentiary. I didn't remember the details of it, but I never went up to see the shooting area because it sort of frightening this, being a small child. But getting back to the baseball.

SF: Do you remember what year that was?

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BN: Oh, that had to be 1921, maybe '22, around in that era. But then, referring to soccer that we played in school, they also in the off season in baseball, they had soccer teams that came in from Wheeling area. And also there were exhibition games from Ireland, from England and other European countries come in there. They were touring the country, and they would give exhibition games of playing soccer. And they had quite a huge crowd. It was quite an event in Wheeling to watch these soccer games. And I know because of sitting--And I know how hard the soccer, soccer ball is because I was sitting behind the goal post and someone kicked a goal and the ball hit me and knocked me clear off the bench! I was just a kid though. But I saw quite a few stars. But later on this soccer games and baseball faded out. And the old Elm Grove Civic Association converted that into a campground because the automobiles were getting more plentiful, very, the old touring cars, wooden

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spoke wheels and so forth. And a few people were traveling the National Road, and they would have as many as, maybe eight to ten to twelve campers in there over the weekend. And they had an old Wheeling Public Service streetcar, without the wheels of course, sitting in the center. And that was the headquarters of the campground and also the headquarters of the community association in Elm Grove. And I think this lasted up until about 1927, and they abandoned it. And the state bank around that era built the present building that WesBanco Bank of Elm Grove is in. They later went under during the early part of the Depression and--

(Side Two)

BN: Building adjacent to where TCI presently is, in that building, that used to be called the Bank Building, departments in the upper part with dentist offices and so forth. And just opposite that entrance, which is also TCI, part of TCI now, was the Elm Grove Post Office. And they later built a new building next to where Seibert's Restaurant used to be, the Board of Education has that building now. And Seibert's Restaurant was quite renowned for its fine foods, its bowling alleys. And when they lifted prohibition, it also was a bar and drinking and pool and of course in the back, gambling. In the far back--They built another building across the alley in the back of their new building and put a gambling establishment in there. I was never in there, thank goodness. But people from, drove for miles, even came from Pittsburgh and over in Ohio to eat at Seibert's Restaurant because of the fine food that they had. And then the--One other thing I remember about Elm Grove, the streetcars, Wheeling Public Service streetcars, going west

into Wheeling, came to the--I got to think

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this out. Came to the foot of Springdale Hill, there was a beautiful antiquated weighing station at the foot of Springdale Hill with stairs leading down to the track level. And it was a very beautiful building. It's a shame they tore it down because it was all hand crafted and very beautiful decor on the outside of fine woodworking and mostly, as I remember, chestnut boards and seats inside. It was small, but very well decorated and beautiful. And the tracks run then from there on towards, follow the creek, the bed of the creek right above it, on in and around and past the Hancher estate. And the Hanchers at that time had-- There was an island at the foot of, I can't remember the name of the avenue, but where the Hancher home was there was an island there which is now covered by I-70. They filled the inner part in and diverted the creek over to the west side. But Hancher at that time had the Hancher Jewelry Store in Wheeling. And he was a fancier of fine horses, and he had a large stable and

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large oval training track and exercising track on this island. And he had various boys down there that trained his horses and exercised them and groomed them and so forth. Right across the back channel and about just below the streetcar line was their home. They had a beautiful home. I think it's still standing. I think it's Elmwood Avenue at the bottom of Elmwood. And anyway, the streetcar tracks run around. And there was one other station was in the vicinity of Stams Lane at the very far end, west end of Stams Lane. There was a waiting station there, just sort of a crude station made of pipe with a roof on. And the car continued on, the streetcar continued on and came out by the turn that came up. Turned and turned east and come out of the lower part, the exit of Wheeling Park. There's a home on that site now. I can't remember the name of the people that built that home. But it then joined the,

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switched over and put onto the double tracks, then into Wheeling. And the streetcar going east would, was routed up past Wheeling Park down in front of the statue there, the Madonna of the Trail, which was put in much later of course, and on down to Elmwood and then switched to the double tracks down there and then on into Elm Grove. And the--They run an old wooden car. The streetcars at that time were wooden, you stepped up about three steps to get into the streetcars. And they later bought more and more modern streetcars, I think about 1927 if I'm not mistaken, '26, '27. And they run those until streetcars went out of existence and they got into busing. But the streetcar continued on in Wheeling past the, went down through Woodsdale past ..., Edgington Lane and on down through Elmwood, not Elmwood, but close to the, oh, apartments across--I can't think of the name of the street going down. But anyway, it continued on to it, ended up below where the nursery is now. What's the name of the nursery, Beckett's, Becker.

SF: Yes, Beckett's.

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BN: Below Beckett's was a double track down there. And they run from there on. And they passed where Howard Johnson's used to be and on, continued on. And there was a coal tipple there, and I can't remember the name of the people that owned the coal tipple, the name of it. But it run out. That's why

Howard Johnson had trouble with the apartments, or the motel that he had, because it had a sinking and they had to reconstruct some of the foundation that was all under mine. But streetcars rode from there on into Fulton and around Bow Street and came out in Wheeling at 16th Street and then on up and down Chapline and the terminus was the old Henderson Restaurant on Chapline and 12th Street. And then they continued on there, from there on out 16th Street and back into Elm Grove.

SF: How long would it take for a ...

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BN: The trip from Elm Grove to Wheeling would take about thirty minutes. They were fast streetcars. They run them fast! And of course automobiles coming in at that time, and there were no traffic lights. They had police on the corners. Some of them had stop signs that they operated the signs by pivot. And they had 'stop' and 'go' and a cross sign on the top above them. And they would turn these by hand. When they saw that enough automobiles that were jamming up at any one particular street, then they'd turn it to 'go' and clear that street and stop the others from, on the cross street.

SF: Can you remember any of the sights and sounds of the earliest automobiles you saw?

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BN: Oh, yeah. They all had wooden wheels. And our favorite time on Sunday was sitting trying to figure out which automobile was coming a half a mile away because we could tell by the sound. They all had different sounds. There were all different varieties, and they all had a different body to them. And we could tell by the sound of the body or the emblem on the front. And they made, not too fast, twenty-five mile an hour, twenty, twenty-five was the average speed. Thirty-five you were really speeding. And if you wanted a real thrill, get on top of Wheeling Hill or Park Hill and kick it into neutral, and you could maybe get up to forty-five to fifty mile an hour. Then you were speeding. And this was quite a thrill, we did it once in a while. And at that time it was safe enough. We used to take an old Oakland automobile that we had second hand. I think it was about a 1923 model, one of the boys' parents bought it for him. And we'd take it in to go to the movie in it, either the Colonial Theater or the Liberty Theater or Rex Theater. Then we could leave it on the street and not roll a window up and lock a door, never have any worries about it. It was a

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hundred percent safe in Wheeling at that time. And many a time we walked in, went to the movie and walked back home and, which was only about five and a half mile. We didn't mind that because we used to it. And there was no restriction on, or curfews at that time because children just didn't get into trouble. And you didn't have to worry about crime on the street. But the automobiles were--Younger men would put what we termed cutouts, which eliminated the, the muffler on the car and gave it a straight exhaust. And we would get real cute and use the cutout. It was a homemade device, and it just roar. And of course the police put a halt to that. They used to have whistles on patrol, and they walked. And they'd whistle to you to stop and told you to get that off. In those days we used to ride the running boards. Maybe there was six in the--If it was a sedan there was six in it in the seating area and six on the running boards, three on one side and three on the other, and maybe sometimes one or two sitting on the spare tire in the back dragging

their feet. Of course at the speeds we went, we didn't have to worry about accidents. But--

SF: Do you remember what model cars were able to carry that kind of ...

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BN: Yeah, they were Hudsons and Essex and Oaklands and Richenbachers and Hurons. Fords were too, too flimsy for that. Some Chevys, some Hudsons and, oh, there were so many. The Star and the Moon and, gosh, I can't remember all the other names of cars. The Oldsmobile wasn't too popular at that time. And Durants, and there were so many of them on the market that you couldn't keep up with them. But--

SF: What were the roads made of at this time?

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BN: Usually brick, red brick. Later on white brick. Then I think in the early '30s they started putting bituminum on the, blacktopping. But prior to that they were brick, laid in loosely, weren't concreted. And they rattled every time a car went past.

SF: So the sound carried pretty far?

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BN: Yeah, and the horse and wagon come up, which I used to ride to school on once in a while. I'd bum a ride on back end of a wagon. And run and catch up with it and jump on it and holler, "Is it all right if I ride to school?" He'd look around, the driver'd look around and, "Yeah, go ahead, you're already in the wagon." But they used to make quite a noise clomp clomping on the bricks. And I think it was in the early '30s when they started putting blacktop on, covering the bricks up. In fact, you go down Elm Grove right down here in the main, on U. S. 40 and get deep enough, you'd find gravel, then you'd find red bricks, then you'd find white bricks, then you'd find four or five coats of asphalt. It's ... deep!

SF: Were white bricks made of anything different than the red bricks?

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BN: Not necessarily, just prettier!

SF: Oh, I see, they just painted ...

BN: In those days you had no heaters in your car. Usually heated a brick and wrapped it in a piece of carpeting and put your feet on it. This was the way we heated, and it always smelled to high heaven. It was an awful stench. And there weren't too many cars running around in the wintertime because there was, at that time, there was no antifreeze. And finally it got to the point where they got alcohol and put in. And it just wasn't too safe. And, and then later got into the permanent antifreeze. But then there were heaters, manifold heaters that took the heat from the manifold and brought back into the front part of the car. And they're rather dangerous because of the fumes that were generated by the engines and the manifold itself, the exhaust actually. So they weren't too popular, but they did give you an awful ... heat. But in those touring cars mostly, you had side curtain that you put the curtains on and, and turned buttons top and bottom and it's buttoned, the curtain all around the car.

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It wasn't until about 1924 and the Nash came out because I remember it had roll up and down windows. And the Nash was a big box actually. And a high running board on them. But they were the first that I

remember that had windows. And then later all different brands of automobiles copied it. But they, they had no great speed, you didn't have to worry about crashes in those days. And they only had two wheel brakes, and they were mechanical. If you got into a wet situation where you had to drive through a stream or it rained real hard, you hit the brakes. If they got wet, they wouldn't grab, so you, a lot of times you coasted right into where you shouldn't be. And pushing an automobile wasn't anything because of the scarcity of money. A lot of times we'd coast to the top of Springdale Hill and couldn't quite make it, and everybody'd jump out and push it to the top. Then we'd coast to the first filling station, was an old Spears and Riddle filling station in Elm Grove or just coast to--What's the name of that store right down here that carries TV equipment and--

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SF: Duval?

BN: Huh?

SF: Duval?

BN: No. Right at the foot of Elm Grove. They carry VCR, tapes and so forth. It's wooden building.

SF: Oh, Stone Church Video.

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BN: Stone Church Video. The Spears and Riddle station--Or Bill Altman had an old Essex station and Hudson station in there, but it later was converted over to a, to Stone Church Video. But just west of there across the street where Isley's were at one time, it's a flower shop now. Scharf brothers had a filling station there. We either go in Scharf brothers or go right above that to Spears and Riddle, which was, they had a number of stations in Wheeling, and get maybe a nickel or dime's worth of gas. And that would last us, oh, maybe a few days at least.

SF: How, how much would a nickel buy you? How many gallons?

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BN: Probably one and a half, maybe two. No, about one. And later on, just shortly after that they jumped gas to ten cents a gallon. And it went to twelve and on up. But anyway, everything was free. I think oil cost ten cents a can at that time for a can of oil. And of course we used kerosene. We didn't have the money to buy oil, and we used kerosene when we didn't have the money to buy gas. We used to go in Wheeling, you could see us where we gone in--If we were in there an hour and come back out, you could see where we had already ... where we had already gone in because of smoke. There was no restriction on that until later on, and we stopped that. But we were caretakers, another boy and I was caretakers of the mausoleum at Greenwood Cemetery. And they used kerosene to clean the granite and the mausoleum to keep it clean. And of course every once in a while when we ran out of money, we'd dump a gallon of kerosene into the gas tank of the car, and that would get us back and forth to Elm Grove from Greenwood Cemetery. But--

SF: Let's--Well, let's move on to your career in the military.

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BN: All right. I volunteered for induction in 1942. I was sent to Fort, Fort Hayes, Ohio. I stayed there

about four or five days, and I volunteered for engineering. And I was sent from Fort Hayes to Westoverfield, Massachusetts, and ended up in an airborne, the 881st Airborne Aviation Engineers. This was a glider outfit that carried small dozers and equipment for building airfields and whatever was necessary in the way of engineering. Then I was later transferred to a 1921st unit, airborne unit at Westover, and after it was formed we were moved from there to Bradley Field, Connecticut, just north of Hartford. And we trained there and made a number of landings and ... mostly at night. We called them planes that were bailing wire, burlap and canvas. We didn't know the name, but can't say that here.

SF: Yes, you can actually.

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BN: But out of ten planes, if you were lucky, three landed, the rest crashed. And those that didn't crash and tried to land, the ... equipment behind them would come up and take the soldiers right out the front with it! And so this whole idea of airborne engineers didn't go over, and they disbanded the whole idea after I was in them about six months. Took my basic training in airborne engineering. And we had abbreviated training because the war was just getting started, and they wanted us in combat as soon as they could get us. So we moved from there--Well, we formed a heavy--No, we moved from there to Richmond, Virginia, Army air base. And there was a heavy equipment aviation, or aviation equipment engineering unit started down there, and I was one of the first in it. And it was designated as the 806 Aviation Engineers. And this was attached to the Air Force, not the Air Corps. And we trained in Richmond, went through rigorous training. They even took us down to the Delmar, the peninsula, and we crossed the peninsula in LCIs, which are

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landing craft infantry, and which never quite made it into shore, and we had to wade off of the ramps and lost several people. The soldiers there that were drowned they never even bothered to look for because water was too deep. So they had to raise the ramps, go back out and try to get in closer. And we trained on this island for invasion. There were no fires, no heat, just

K rations for over a week. And when it was down around thirty, thirty-two degrees and you couldn't sleep at night because of the cold and having no fires. And we were unable to shave or any of the necessities we should normally have. And after a week they brought us back to the Richmond barracks that we were in. And we were starving practically and covered with mud from head to foot. And they fed us, and we were more like animals than humans because we were down to the point of starvation. But we trained there for about a month and a half. And then they took us from there, and they had--And this was a large base, not as large as Westover. Westover in

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Massachusetts was a huge base. Bradley Field in Connecticut was a camouflage base for submarine operational planes that were flying out of Bradley Field. Everything was camouflaged, you couldn't even find your own barracks back in the woods half the time. The barracks itself was all camouflaged. And--But Richmond Army Air Base was fighter and bomber base, mostly fighter.

SF: Do you remember the fighters and the bomber types on the base at that time?

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BN: Yeah, they were, they were P-51s. Most of the ones at Richmond were P-51s. I never got on the airfield. We, our--At Westover everything was so massive. I mean there were two bus lines on the base across the base. You had to transfer to get across the base, it was that large. But they wouldn't allow us on the airfield at Bradley because everything was secret. They were going out in the Atlantic for submarine duty. But Richmond was a training base for fighters mostly. And they had a railroad track coming into Richmond, and we were loaded on cars at that point. And this was in April of '40, no, it was in winter of, just after the first of the year in '43. We went completely across the country and turned north, went through Illinois, part of Wisconsin and Minnesota and across South and North Dakota and on into Idaho and into Washington state and cut down along the Palisades of the ... River on into--No, we were north of that. Then went north into Seattle, and they brought us back into Portland, Oregon. And we unloaded in Portland and was transferred over

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to Vancouver, Washington. Vancouver Barracks, which was a old, established Army base. In fact, General Grant was recalled from there to be a general in the Civil War. He was a commanding officer in this Vancouver Barracks at that time. And we trained there extensively for overseas operation. And they moved us from there, at nighttime, down to Portland, Oregon. And we went aboard troop transports to go down the Columbia River at night. In the daylight we were just leaving the Columbia River past Ester, Oregon, to out into the Pacific. And--

SF: Before you leave the continental United States--

BN: Yeah.

SF: I had a question about the gliders. Can you describe for me the capacity of one of the earliest gliders that used to have the crashes with the heavy equipment floating over the troops and ... How many troops it could hold, how many vehicles, what was the--

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BN: Eight, eight troops, about two pieces of equipment, and sometimes three depending on the size. Small dozers, very small, which, I have no idea they wouldn't do anything. You can use a shovel and do about as much, five men. And some little ... that they used to drag the dirt away and this was about it. And machine guns, you know, the few howitzers, not howitzers, but mortars, small, small mortars. And this is about the extent of them, but they ... them in and numerous, I mean many of them. And by the sheer weight of numbers there would be probably some ... but other than that--

SF: Why did most of them crash?

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BN: Well, once they were cut loose from the tow plane, I mean, you had no control. I mean it just ... or flaps up and down and the only thing they could do is just go. And if there was a row of trees when you're getting close to the ground, they had no control to miss the trees or go over them. And you couldn't go through them, so they crashed into them or tried to land the plane and you were subsequently--And you couldn't--End, end up in a cow pasture somewhere with huge ruts in it and plane'd turn over and just--Or

straight down. Sometimes a wind current would hit them, and they had no control and went nose down. So they were a poor idea. They abandoned it. However, I was lucky. A fellow by the name of Raymond Fisher and I had gone all through training. And there was, posted a list on the bulletin board at the company headquarters for seventy-three men to be sent overseas as the airborne unit. And this is prior to going to Richmond. And Raymond and I took our barracks bag down and reported in, and the first sergeant looked up and he said, "Newland, what are you doing here?" I said, "Well, my name's on the bulletin board out there for overseas shipment." He said, "Go out and look again." And

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I went out, and he had scratched my name off and only took seventy-two, which included Raymond Fisher of Elm Grove as the seventy-second man. And I was fortunate in that respect because he went to the ... Burma CBI in the ... theater. And he was still in the glider troops. And I don't know how many broken legs and everything he had, but he, he come back a total wreck, I mean physically and mentally. It was terrible because he'd done quite a bit of fighting in Burma and also got into part of China by transport some way. I'm not sure, I sort of lost track of him. But he, he come back to Elm Grove, and he lived here and married and died at an early age. But the good lord must have been looking over me because I was the last one on the list, and I ended up in Richmond, Virginia. But we left the Columbia River and went out in the Pacific. And we still had winter clothes on, uniforms. And everybody at that time knew the Aleutians were vulnerable. And the scuttlebutt was that we were going to the Aleutians. And I particularly didn't want to go to a cold

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climate like that because I had an aversion to snow and ice and cold. But we were out about four days, and I noticed a color, a change of color in the water went from no color blue or green, blue actually, to a blue-green. And it was a distinct demarcation between the two. And a fellow I'd buddied up with at that time was from Brooklyn, and I said--He was one of the old original Dutch settlers whose family was at that time--His name was Dor. And I said, "Dor, we're not going to the Aleutians or Alaska." I said, "We're going into Hawaii." He said, "How do you know that?" He said, "Why do we have these heavy, woolen uniforms on?" I said, "Well, look at the water." And I said, "That is a Japanese current." I said, "If we were going to the Aleutians," I said, "we wouldn't be into the Japanese current. We're going straight across the Pacific heading southwest." And he said, "Oh, you're crazy." The following day they called us aboard. It was getting too warm, they called us up on deck. Everybody had to change uniforms. And they issued us summer uniforms.

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And then everybody was sure we were going to Hawaii then. So I was sitting, I was standing on the port side, and I happened to look out and I could see an object in a distance. And I recognized it, not having been there but read about it, it was the Aluatar in Honolulu, which is a, probably a six, eight, ten story tower that has a large clock in. And so I knew then we were heading towards the port of Hawaii, Honolulu. So it was just the following day we, that afternoon, we got in there and they--

SF: What was the date of this arrival?

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BN: Oh, boy. Had to be in April '43. Yeah, April '43. And we were there in April, May. No, it had to be February. February. We were there February, March, April, and then we sail from there. We took extensive training there. We had to go into ... bay for invasion landing, craft landing. We went through mine fields, explosions and everything, to get on the shores. And the--I took as much time as I could to see Hawaii whenever I had the chance to get off. And I did go down to Waikiki. In fact, I lost my wedding ring at Waikiki Beach, and there were only two hotels on the beach at that time. One was the, as I remember, was the Beach Combers and the other was the Royal Hawaiian. Now it's wall-to-wall hotels. And one of my buddies I was swimming with there helped me over a submerged sea wall right off the beach. And reaching down to grab my hand, he pulled my ring off. And so my wedding ring, original wedding ring is in the Waikiki Beach in Honolulu. Right across the beach was

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Trader Vic's, was a large exotic bar with various drinks and--And there just wasn't too much to Waikiki, which was a separate part of Honolulu at that time. And Honolulu I got to see as much as I possibly could there. The old Bishop Street and the city building and everything that I could. I got up to Palai Pass. And when we landed in Honolulu, getting back to that, they march us from the dock across the street and put us on their ... railroad, which was cars that hold pineapple and sugar cane. And we must have traveled eighteen, twenty mile northward on the island of Oahu to Army Air Force base Wheeler Field. And right above us was Schoefield Barracks. We went through some training there and--But most of it was on the eastern side of the island in these bays that we were training for landings. But the barracks we were in still had the bullet holes from the shelling of Japan, the air strike on Honolulu. And they shot up Wheeler Field. They also shot up Schoefield Barracks above us. And you could

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sit inside and look outside without any problem! And after that, after we went through our training and we were taken back to Honolulu and put aboard a ship, a large ship, troop ship that was a Dutch East Indian. I think it was chartered under Dutch East Indian. And we called it the garbage scowl because the crew all wore yellow silk skirts and silk jackets. We couldn't speak to them, we couldn't eat their food. The galley, you couldn't stand the stench of it. And these Dutch East Indians, I don't know what, exactly what island they were from, were scurrying all over that ship up in the mast and all over the place because we had ack-ack batteries set up at that time. And this is all the protection we had. And we joined the convoy of three-- Our convoy going into the Pacific was three troop ships, two escort destroyers, and that was our entire convoy. And we started over and we had gone, been gone probably ten days, maybe longer than that, I'm not sure. We had one torpedo attack, which

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I happened to see the torpedo come and miss the ship by at least twelve feet. And the escort destroyers wheeled around and started dropping ash cans. And daybreak the next morning--This was just about dusk, and daybreak the next morning I could hear them in a distance starting dropping ash cans. And I was thinking to myself, "Well, I hope they hurry up and come back because we have no protection." And then

we kept sailing farther down the Pacific. And we had one high bombing or aerial attack by a Japanese plane. They missed the whole convoy by thirty, forty feet, maybe farther. So we weren't too much worried about them. And we went down to an area, I'm not sure what islands or where they were, but before we got down there we stopped at the, in the Marshall Islands at ... And, and ... we talk. We put some pierce planking down, which was the material that the fighter planes from the aircraft carriers landed on. And this was just practice routine, these islands that are already

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been secured. And they put us aboard ship then. We only stayed there several days. They put us aboard ship. We were in Innawetauk also in the Carolina Islands. And they put us aboard ship again, and we went and waited for four days in the boiling sun. It was so hot you couldn't go below deck and you couldn't sit on deck. You couldn't stand on it hardly, I don't know how we ever. Because the minute the sun came out of the Pacific in the morning at sunrise, the deck heated up like a frying pan. And there we were stuck about five days. And so we lost a lot of weight and couldn't do anything but put a blanket up and keep the sun from hitting you. Otherwise, you'd have melted. And then hop practically the rest of the day to keep your feet from frying. But then we then moved out of there, and they said we could go swimming. And all we had to do was look over the side, there were sharks all around us! And you couldn't even fish, they'd tear your line apart and ... your bait and everything.

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But we left there after about four or five days and joined our convoy. And we were heading toward the-- We didn't know it, of course, they never told us. We were heading towards the Mariana Islands to be ... in Saipan. And at that point we joined up at the invasion point. They, they didn't--Well, they anchored, I guess, about three hundred yards off the coral reef barrier. And they brought LCVPs, which was landing craft vehicle personnel in, and also amtracks too. And they threw a rope netting over the side, this is what you had to climb down about the height of a five-story building loaded with machine guns, bayonets. In my case I had a dispatch case and a darn field typewriter! And if that wasn't a real stint going down that five stories to get into one of these crafts.

SF: How much did that gear weigh?

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BN: Oh, probably, I'd say pretty close to a hundred pounds. And it had a tendency to pull you over backwards. You were in full combat with your knives, what we called bullet belts or ... and water bottles, which was our thermos, our canteen kit. And our extra blanket rolls, extra shoes and a full military infantry field pack on our back. And we had to climb down that. And if you happened to fall--When you got down into your craft you had to put your gun down, you couldn't, and bend your head and then bend your back squat. And anybody fell and hit their back! And if you fell in the water, they didn't bother to look for you. But anyway, this was the way we invaded Saipan. We joined up with the 4th Marine Division. And I was on an amtrack, and there were about maybe eight, ten men with us. On each side there were LCVPIs, or LCIs, not LCIs, yeah, LCVPs, landing craft vehicle personnel. And the one on our left side was blown completely out of the water. And of course

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the Japs had us zeroed in. And they were really shelling us. And our cruisers and, and this task force and-- I don't think we had a battle wagon, I'm not sure. I was too busy to worry about it. But they were shelling back. But the Japanese had us pretty well zeroed in, and we were lucky to make it to the beach. And--

SF: Could you tell--Was it mortar or artillery ...

BN: It was artillery and mortar both. And a lot of gun fire in the meantime.

SF: What was the carrying capacity of the LCVP that took the hit?

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BN: Twenty, twenty-five men. And they had a ramp in front, and they dropped the ramp and run off of it. But they tried to get up shore, but we had to go over this, over this coral reef. And the craft got hung up on it, and they were sitting ducks. I mean they got blown clear out of the water. We got hung up at--The operator, I think it was a naval personnel who really got angry, and he threw it in reverse and then kept reversing it and going forward until he got us off this reef, and then we were able to go on in because we were afraid we were going to get blown out of the water. But we made it into the shore, which was sandy from the coral reef about 150 yards into the sandy shore and the palm trees and everything. And we were told ahead of time that our objective was Asalito Air Field, which was a Japanese fighter field, air field. And it was pretty well secured by the Japanese. We had to go up a vertical bank about twenty feet high and ... from the beaches to get up there.

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And of course as soon as we hit the beach we started running into, get into the terrain where it had trees and brush and anything to get a little cover. It was more Indian fighting than it was anything else. I mean I only had a M-1 Garland, Garland.

SF: Garant?

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BN: Garant rifle. And it was pretty accurate and fired rapidly, but it was rather hard trying to get the shells in, the clips in and keep fighting and running at the same time. But we regrouped as much as we could, and there were marines all around us, and we finally made the bank. And there was quite a fire fight to get to the airfield. And the marines who had gotten there just a little ahead of us--And there were one or two tanks. How they got there, I don't know. But we started driving the Japanese from this airfield. And we fought all night and ... half the next day. And after the Japanese were cleared, they started down to the lower end, or the center of the island, which was termed death valley. This island was about five mile long and about two and a half, three mile wide. We--Then the airfield was shelled so badly that we had to start putting pierce planking down to get the, unload the fighter planes from the aircraft carriers around. The airfield had been bombed and shelled and so forth, and so--

SF: Do you remember what type of aircraft this was now at this time of the war?

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BN: Some Fifty-one Mustangs, Thirty-eight Lightenings. And the P-51, widow, black widows, we termed them, didn't come in until later.

SF: The P-61s?

BN: P-61, yeah. And P-38s and Mustangs mostly. And Avengers and ... aircraft carriers. They had to get them off because they were sitting ducks out in, anywhere around it because two miles across the bay, across the ocean was Tinian that hadn't even been taken yet. But we worked like crazy all day to get pierce planking down to get these airplanes in. And we just finished, and we heard whistling humming through the air. Here the Japanese had large guns on Tinian Island two miles across from where we were. And they had their complete trajectory on our airfield. And they just wiped everything out we'd done all that day. So we worked all night and all the next day. And I was hit twice at that time with shrapnel, and we were so busy, and not severely enough to hospitalize me. But took a couple pretty good chunks out of my, one on my back and one on my arm. And we carried first aid kits ourself and powder, and I got a fellow to rip my shirt part way up and they put some sulfur

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powder on it, put a bandage on. I said--He said, "You got to go to medics." I said, "I'm going back to work." So I went back to work. Never even got a purple heart, never put in for it. So we worked all night, and in the morning we pretty well had the airfield, or this pierce planking laid. And by that time they had some battleships and cruisers in. And they were ringing Tinian and lobbing shells at a distance about a mile and a half away. And you could see the trajectory of the shells. They were white-hot going through the air, and it was a minute later you could hear the boom. And so they put the large guns Tinian had, the Japanese had on Tinian out of commission. And we finished that airfield and then we moved on down into the valley on foot down to the, about the edge of what they termed death valley. Was a large--

(Tape Two, Side One)

SF: Let's pick up where we left off.

BN: All right. The battleships, I'm not sure of the name of the battleships and cruisers that were shelling us. The island of Tinian, which I pointed out was two miles across the ocean from the island of Saipan. They neutralized it so that the, the troops could invade it and start the work of building an airfield over there. We went over to assist only in supervision of the start of the airfield. And then a party returned to Saipan. They ... us back from the entrance to, or the early entrance to the valley we called death valley, and they moved us back to the location of our airfield, which was to be a B-29 field. We had no idea what it was to be at the time, but we started our construction work on the airfield. And there were three--There was a complete brigade, the 806, 807 and 808 Aviation Engineers, that was similar to Seabees because we fought and we also constructed. We started the airfield, laid it out, had it

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surveyed and was leveling mountains, filling huge ravines and diverting water to other areas so that we could have a solid foundation for the airfield. And we started into the construction in the, about the middle of July in 1944. The Japanese had their airfield, Asalito, north is the ones that we, the one airfield that we landed on and was able to neutralize. And it took the landing of fighter planes, but the airfield that we started was to be the first B-29 field in the Pacific Ocean areas. And Tokyo Rose was broadcasting at the time. She seemed to know everything that we were doing because there was one mountain in the center of

the island that the Japanese had retreated to and were sending broadcasts back to Japan. It hadn't been completely conquered yet, and they were giving a blow-by-blow description of what was going on and what we were doing. And Tokyo Rose broadcasted nightly and said it took the Japanese five years to build the Asalito airfield, it would take the American

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engineers at least ten years to complete their airfield. We started on it about the 15th or 18th of July, in that area. We worked night and day, twenty-four hours a day. A shift lasted anywhere from twelve, fourteen hours per man. And we continued on at that airfield using bulldozers, ..., what we called ... foot rollers or wobble wheel rollers and crushed the--Using coral as a base, we built up the base materials to the point where we constructed an asphalt plant and started making asphalt and, and laying asphalt to the airfield properly. There were two runways that were two mile, or, yeah, were two miles long each. And there were approximately 175 hard stands. That is the areas that these B-29s were to be parked on relative to the approach to the airfields. There were probably 147 miles of taxi ways. These are all made with coral and blacktop. And the project was finished on the, about the 24th of November in 1944. We had found out there were no B-29s that were ready to be landed

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on the field. And consequently, we started other operations of making roads, putting up quanson huts and other areas of, of construction such as control towers and waited on the first flight of the B-29s to come in to land on the field. In the meantime we were getting a lot of low-level fighting plane raids, also high altitude bombing raids. We had a large betty bomber, which is a two engine, heavy-duty bomber that crashed in our area killing thirteen of our men. Fortunately, I was one of the men that were far enough away, about fifty feet, that I could get out of the way because there wasn't anything that could be done to save any of the men because it was burning and exploding and the ammunition was exploding, just going all over the area. So the only thing we could do is clear out and do--We got fire equipment in to fight the fire and get the blaze down and see if we could save any of our men, which we couldn't.

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Well, anyway, the, the American, or the Air Force finally flew a token B-29 in from Selina, Kansas. It was the first one landed on Saipan on the, on Thanksgiving Day. I think it was the 26th or 28th of November in 1944. The original plane was designated as T Square Five, that was a designated numbers of Saipan's fleet of B-29s. The crew called, named it *Miss Doty* from the singer that was badly burned in the Coconut Grove Nightclub fire in Boston. They named the ship after her, and the original crew of eleven men were going back to celebrate with her after the war. They went completely through the war. I don't know how many runs they made over Japan and high altitude and low altitude bombing and fire bombing and fought also the planes of Japan, the fighter planes. And just to follow this *Miss Doty* up, the original crew went completely through the entire battle, and when their time was up around the--Just before the war ended they were given duty to then return to the

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United States and they had got as far as San Francisco and the plane exploded and went down, and all

eleven original men were killed. So they never got to see and have this get together with Miss Dotty, or Dotty in Boston. I've seen as high as five planes not make the takeoff due to heavy loads of bombs. And there was, at the end of the runways there was a high cliff. I don't know how many feet above the ocean it was, but a lot of them couldn't get airborne, so they run to the end of the runway and then dropped off and went over the ocean. And the currents and the air right above the ocean was heavy enough that they couldn't get airborne. Maybe you would see them a mile, mile and a half out being airborne and on their way to Japan. A lot of them did not make it. As many as eleven, which was eleven men each. I've seen as high as five that landed in the ocean and blew up in one evening takeoff. But they never stopped coming. There was one halfway down the other runway, one was taking off and another was starting down the runway on two runways. And

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they flew out--By the time the first one had gone over Japan and dropped its bomb load and returned, the first one was landing on Saipan. Sometimes they had to circle to wait till the last plane took off. A number of them blew up overhead that were badly shot up by ack-ack and never made the landing and completely disengaged in the air due to the flak that they had taken and ruptured oil and air lines. After we completed our mission on Japan, or on Saipan, we were moved then by--Well, at first we were trained to go into--No, I take that back. We were trained to go to Iwo Jima with the Marines to, to take the island of Iwo Jima. There were two Smiths, one Howling Mad Smith, the general of the Marines Corps. And I'm not sure of the name of the Smith that was the general in the Army who was in command of the army operations on the Iwo expedition. But there was an island above Iwo that was more flat, larger island. And it had been bombed for seventy-two days and neutralized.

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We could have put an airstrip on there and set our operations up and got the field completed in short order and just starved Iwo out because they were unable to get supplies. We ... with naval ships and kept them from getting supplies. However, the two Smiths could not get their act together and Howling Mad Smith won out. So Iwo was the, was the target for the next invasion. And the General Smith of the Army said that if it has to be Iwo, then it's going to be strictly a Marine operation, which I am thankful for because we were down on the dock ready to load aboard ship. The troop ships were about, oh, 300 yards off shore. We were to be ferried out by LCVPs or similar craft, landing craft. And we had waited down there two hours, and finally the word came down that we were to board trucks coming in and go back to our area. So--Which did happen. And consequently, the Marines took an awful beating taking Iwo, which, in my estimation, wasn't necessary because the

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island of Titi Jima directly above that was a more suitable island for airfield and getting our planes off, getting the airfield completed. Regardless of that, we stayed and continued working on different buildings and projects on Saipan for two months. And the next operation we made we were loaded aboard LCVP, no, I'm sorry, LSTs, that's landing ship tank. And we were then taken in the direction of Okinawa ready for the operation of the opening of, and the invasion of the island of Okinawa. And the ... group we stayed

in the harbor for about four days, couldn't get in due to the kamikants, kamikants planes. Kamikants.

SF: Kamikazes?

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BN: Kamikaze. Kamikaze was the name of the operation that they termed it, but it was the kamikants planes that the Japanese flew. And there was also backabombs or backabombs, we called them backabombs where the--It was just a huge shell similar to a rocket where the pilot was put in and the canopy that he used to look around and see where he was at. He only had a control, and it was rocket operated. He was welded in so that there was no possibility that he could eject. And his primary duty was to head towards a vessel, which would either be a cruiser or a battleship, and dive into it. How many of those that hit, I'm not sure, but there was a lot of kamikants planes, kamikaze planes that did awful damage and sunk a lot of ships, killed a lot of men in the harbor of Okinawa or directly around Nawhaw, that is a city, the largest city on Okinawa. We then, not being able to land, was taken by LSTs and over to the island of Ieshima, that is I-E shima. We were taken over and landed at

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midnight not knowing where we were, where we were, what the island was or where we were going or anything about it. Wasn't even sure it was taken. And probably hostile troops. We marched up a coast road around midnight and were told to disperse and go up into the fields to our left. And we did. And there were only--We found out that there were only two companies headquarters of ... and the only armament we had was our M-1 rifles, carbines and 130 caliber machine gun, which was not too much of an armament, for an island we found out later hadn't been taken. Not knowing anything about the terrain or the island, we only went, maybe a hundred yards into a field up a hillside. We were told to bed down, be quiet, no lights and no talking, no noise. And consequently, we followed those orders because we couldn't see to go any place and we weren't allowed to even use a flashlight. Well, to our dismay, we

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found out that there were cobras on the island. And a fellow I slept with, we laid down and threw a blanket over us, and there was a fellow on the outside who had lost all his equipment in transition from the port to this island. A fellow from Huntington, West Virginia. The fellow I slept, threw the blanket over, with was from Watertown, New York. The fellow from Huntington did have a small flashlight, and he said if it started raining, he would slip in and try to crowd in between the two of us. And I don't know how long after we had gone to sleep we heard a scream. And apparently it was the fellow from Huntington who covered his little flashlight and started in, got in between us. And here a cobra had, who was starting in or was already in between the two of us, under our blanket. And I didn't hear it, didn't hear the scream or anything, but the fellow next to me from Watertown, New York, I was sleeping with must have moved or put his hand down and the cobra struck his hand.

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And then he let a scream out, and I asked him why he was screaming. He said, "There's this cobra or snake between you and I, and it bit me." And so I took the blanket and everything and grabbed the flashlight from the other fellow and located the snake who was trying to get up away from the light up along a rock.

And I had the fellow that was from Huntington hold the light while I bashed the snake's head in, the cobra's head in with the butt of my gun. And we started treatment immediately by putting tourniquets on him and working the poison out. And we had no idea where our medics were. We passed the word along, and we didn't get them until about an hour later. And I was able to get a man dispatched down to the, what we called the coast road, the only road we knew that we came up. And he located, ... locate a jeep, and he located one. And they started up and they picked another snake up about fifteen or twenty foot from where we were at, and here we were on the the path, not knowing it was a path. And these are very hostile snakes, they are hunters. They hunt you, you don't hunt them. And we had to hold the tourniquet. I had a fellow
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hold the tourniquet while I tried to shoot the snake. And the only time I was in the service that my shell jammed in the breach of the gun was at that time I tried to shoot the snake's head off and never even got a shot off. And the fellow holding the light for me to do this had a submachine gun. And it was raining, of course. And I had him pass the light to me while I held the light and tried to keep the snake at bay. And it would rear up because they strike down, they don't lash out. And it would only stay up so long. And it kept moving up the trail. And we'd get in front of it and flash the light and zigzag it back and forth to make it rear up again. We finally got his ... submachine gun out and two shot, had shot him in the head. And of course everybody's screaming to be quiet. We're not allowed to make any noise to shoot him. But consequently, we finally got a jeep up to the area. And we put the fellow that had been bitten by the cobra on board and they took him out to a hospital

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ship. This was all in the dark. We had no idea where the dock was or hospital ship or anything, but we didn't see him for, oh, at least four months. We were on Okinawa at the time after we fought on Ieshima. Incidentally, Ieshima is the island that the, where famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle was killed on. And we weren't too far from where he was killed. And we did happen to see him laying covered along the road. After about two weeks fighting on that island, they brought us back to the island of, or Okinawa. And when we were landing, we were landing with what we called ducks. They were amphibious and land-based transportation that looked like a huge barge. We never made shore before we were strafed by Japanese planes. We had to dive out and dive under these ducks. And our driver, we don't know whether he was killed or whether he took off. We never found him again. And one of the fellows from Texas said, "I think I can drive this thing." So we got in and we at least, we got up to the cover under the canopy of trees. And I got myself and another

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fellow from my outfit were the only two that we could find. The others just dispersed among the trees. We had no idea where the rest of our outfit were, was located, so this was in the daylight. And we started up, and we reached as far as we could go and had no idea of where we were going, but we kept working up the mountain. The high altitude--And it was dark by the time we got two-thirds of the way up, and we decided just to sleep in the field. We'd be probably less susceptible to discovery there than we would if we were in the woods or the thickets. So we made as small of a target as we possibly could and covered ourselves with

blankets and hunkered down right in this field. And we woke the next morning at daylight and it happened to be a cabbage patch. So we were pretty well camouflaged in this cabbage patch. But here we were within 150 yards of our outfit. It had already stopped right above us. So the good lord must have been directing our footsteps to get up there. But we joined

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our outfit, and the men that came in with us later on also were able to gather themselves and locate where we were at. We were in an area called Kemiya. And this, this where our location was to be, we were supposed to start a new airfield, B-29 field, which was twice as large as the field we built on Saipan. However, there was a lot of fighting to do, so we had to fight down into ... and also up towards Surry Castle in the third of the island. And after we got through fighting there, they brought us back, after about two weeks, to start this new airfield. And it was a Kemiya air base for B-29s. It was just, just about twice the size of the one on Saipan. We had a lot of culverts to put in. What we called mountains, they were just medium-sized hills that we had to remove. There were ravines, deep ravines, it would have to be filled. All this had to be compacted. And all the hard stands and the same thing that we done

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on Saipan. The taxi ways and et cetera had to be made and blacktopped and gotten ready. This airfield was huge. You wouldn't believe the size of it. But, unfortunate thing and in a way a fortunate thing for Japan and for ourselves also, after we completed this job, it took us, oh, about eight months to complete this airfield because of the size of it. And in the meantime we were fighting off Japanese raids plus the infiltration of the Japanese ... that was almost a daily and nightly occurrence. And we had perimeter guards set up. And there was a fire fight about every other night. But we were high enough we could look down on the bay at the airfield. And I'm not sure if it was the north side or south side. I never was sure of which direction we were in. We were never told. And we could see fighting going on on down there, plus air raids and so forth. Was a fighter air base on the far end of the island. At that time there weren't any bomber bases, ours would have been the first. And most of the

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bombers were still making runs from Saipan, Tinian and Guam. And so we worked this until--Fortunately, as I said, the day the war ended our Air Force company, or brigade rather, turned this entire field over to the United States Air Force to start the landing of the B-29s. And fortunately for Japan that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. And we weren't even informed, the plane took off from Tinian. Part of it, the parts were in Saipan, and they flew them over to Tinian and assembled a lot in Tinian in the plane itself, *Enola Gay*, took off from Tinian and dropped the first bomb on Hiroshima. Then three days later, they dropped one on Nagasaki. And I had made a bet with a fellow from Holidays, Pennsylvania, a tent buddy of mine, that the war would be over in three days, that we would announce that the war would be ended. He said I was crazy, and so we each bet a fifth of whiskey that would or wouldn't be. Well, I won the fifth of whiskey. I just had a gut feeling that this

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was the very end. However, we had been--After we had completed this airfield, we were starting to train

for the invasion of Japan. And we found out after the war was over they called us together, a grand assembly, and said our designation was the fourth wave going into the island of Honsu, which was the island that Japan was, or Tokyo was located on, plus the other cities. But our intelligence had estimated they had about seventeen hundred, or 7,500 fighter planes in reserve just for an invasion of the island. And we found out later that they were wrong, they had 27,500, plus all the home guard and so forth that we would have gotten slaughtered if it hadn't been for the atom bombs. I'm sure that there'd have been very, very high casualties in the United States Army, Air Force and Marines, just taking the islands, plus the Japanese themselves. So it was a blessing in disguise that Truman made the decision to drop the bomb. And then after the war was declared over, the planes that

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took the emissaries of the Japanese Peace Commission landed on Tinian and Saipan, and they were picked up flown over to Tokyo with the United States entourage, plus General MacArthur, to start the signing of the peace treaty with Japan on the battleship Missouri. This was 1945. However, the fighting was still going on Japan because they had not been informed that the war was over, and the southern end of the island was still in the throes of battle, mostly mopping up operations. Then after the war was over, we were supposed to, supposed to get off as soon as we could because we had points due to the length of time we had been in action and in the campaigns. However, before we could get off the island, they were starting to send troops over from Europe because the war in Europe had ended in, I'm not sure, May, I think.

However, the end of the war, by the time they got over there, Japan was defeated and they conceded that they had lost the war, so they turned the ships and the troops

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back and sent them back to the United States. Those ships were supposed to be the ships that brought us back home. So when they did get ships over, we had this terrible typhoon over there that was one of the worst typhoons they had in a hundred years. We had a wind recording instrument that registered up to 156 mile an hour, and it blew them out at 156 mile an hour. They were no longer readable. And it blew any number of empty transports that were supposed to ferry us back home completely, a quarter of a mile up on the island and laid them on their sides, and hundreds of them. And as a result of that, we didn't get home until--We didn't leave there until after Christmas. It was in early January that I left the island of Okinawa. But our original company who, which had 226 men in--That was our battalion, I'm sorry. Our company--No, our company had 226 men in. Of the 226 original men there

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were seven left. I was fortunate enough to be one of the seven. And we were then taken down to what we called a receiving depot, ... depot and put on board ship. And it took us seventeen days. We were put on a converted aircraft carrier by the name of Kipkin Bay. And it took us seventeen days to get back. We were supposed to land in Seattle, and there was such a huge storm in the Pacific that we could not even get within fifty miles of Seattle. So they had to take us down the coast to the port of Los Angeles, was San Pedro. And we landed there, and they took us by train out on through the desert to, down to the southern L. A. to Camp Angela. And it got extremely cold at night and too hot through the day. We--I was only there

five days. And the fellow from Steubenville in Ohio and I were sent--No, I take that back. The whole company was boarded, after we left Camp Angela, boarded on troop trains and taken down through southern California past the ... Palm Springs and on down until we reached Yuma, Arizona, and then cut across to Phoenix and, and diagonaled

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up through Texas until we went through Texarkana. And from Texarkana, we went on to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, just outside of Indianapolis. But the fellow from Steubenville, as I mentioned, and I were the only ones that were going east in that particular area of Steubenville and Pittsburgh. We were on the same coach. There were probably other soldiers on that train, but when we got off in Indianapolis to catch a Pennsylvania train to Steubenville, we had to change trains at that point. We had been away from home and cities and people for so long that we started to cross the street never thinking of automobiles. And I never heard so much horn tooting in my life. And we looked around, and here we were in the middle of a busy expressway. And we made a vow then that we're back in civilization, we'd better watch our foot. So we got out of that debacle and finally boarded the train. And we got back to Steubenville. At that time I lived in Martins Ferry, and my wife did. So I caught a bus from Steubenville down to Martins Ferry and walked across the train bridge home. And there was no flags waving or brass bands. This was the middle of January. So I was only too glad to get home, and after being in the Pacific over three years. And that's about the end of that!

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SF: I have a few questions in reference to--

BN: Yeah.

SF: Your military career. You told me previously before this interview an interesting story about the description of the cobra.

BN: Um hmm.

SF: Also, I'm interested in the story you referred--

BN: Oh, yeah.

SF: On the island. And there was one other thing. I was wondering if you could describe for us, for those people who will not know that era of combat, what a fire fight was like.

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BN: Well, to start with, Steve asked me about the cobra. It wasn't the hooded cobra as known and seen that mostly is located in India and Jakarta, around in that area. It was a plain headed cobra. The Japanese name was jima habu. It was just as deadly. The venom would paralyze and kill within eighteen to twenty minutes so you had to get immediate action on cut, slices into the areas of the fangs deep enough that you could get the blood flowing and then put tourniquets right above it. And release these tourniquets about every ten minutes just slightly to let the blood flow a little bit, but work the poison out in the meantime. Well, our medics did have suction cups. We finally located them, and they got in, oh, a half an hour after the, the snake had bitten, or struck this soldier. But it was too late. They couldn't get any of the poison out of his, or venom out of his wounds because most of it we'd worked out and kept the tourniquets on and

kept releasing them on the basis of about eight to ten minutes, just enough to let the blood flow. They're real vicious snakes. And they run--The one I killed was probably six foot. The second one, we shot its head off, was approximately seven foot long. And they, they're vicious. The--What was the other thing?
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SF: The situation that led to the death of a journalist.

BN: Oh, the journalist. Ernie Pyle was used to--He had just come over to the Pacific from the European theater. And the European theater had roads. You rode in jeeps, you rode in tanks, you rode in trucks. It was dangerous, no doubt, in the world. But in the Pacific you had to be more like an Indian. You done a lot of your fighting by Indian tactics, not exposing yourself and luring the Japanese out into the open after the main battles were open, over, because there were so many Japanese scatted and infiltrating back and forth. So you didn't expose yourself. And Ernie Pyle, not knowing this, had a driver. He was riding in the jeep on this island of Ieshima, and you don't do that on the islands in the Pacific. You keep under cover as much as you possibly can. Well, some Japanese had infiltrated back, and they had a thirty caliber machine gun set up along the edge of the roadway under cover. And as soon as he got within range of that machine gun, they cut loose, killed him and the

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driver both. And the fact was that he just was not acclimated to that type of fighting and the tactics that were used in the Pacific. And as, as far as a fight, fire fight goes, it was one of those, just the exchange of bullets, shells, machine guns, rifles, grenades, anything that you had, back and forth. Either a number of Japanese or a few Japanese and a few Americans, or it was just almost a hand-to-hand combat.

Fortunately, we never got close enough that we had to use our bayonets. However, we had them on our guns at all times, at least our outfit didn't. But we come awful close to getting in that type of combat due to close approximation of the Japanese within our areas and the areas that we were working in and the areas we were sleeping in. It turned out that we had several of our guards kill other guards simply because they weren't sure and maybe the noise was too great to hear the password. And consequently, they took them for an enemy, and they were shot and on several

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occasions several of them stabbed. But we, we got into a lot of this perimeter fighting. And right in our own area, and we had--On the island of Saipan we had a, a strafing raid that, from the Japanese. There were four fighters and I think there were four squadrons that criss-crossed the island in broad daylight trying to--Well, they did, they didn't try, to destroy the B-29s that were parked ready for the start of the operations of bombing over the islands of Japan. And I happened to be in a tent, and I noticed, I heard them coming because I could tell the difference between the synchronization of a Japanese and an American plane. And I figured they wouldn't get far because the ack-ack would get them. Well, the ack-ack started shooting before they got their guns up in the air, and they shot half of our mess hall up.

Fortunately, the early chow line was going in and they didn't have that area of the mess hall occupied yet. But had there been, there would have been an awful lot of

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casualties in our outfit. But they ... through the mess kitchen ..., and got under the ... under the mess hall fortunately. And this was about, oh, eleven thirty in the morning. And I thought this one squadron is always coming through, and I was standing in the tent ready to, to start writing a duty roster up, and I noticed it was getting awful daylight in the tent. And I just happened to think maybe there was another squadron coming through. This was what was happening. The bullets were going right over my head opening the tent above me up. So I got out of there, out of there in a hurry and, and dove in a prepared foxhole that I had. And what we found out--I had to go down to the base. I didn't get all the way down before they were gone, and our own planes got most of them. I think there were sixteen of them, maybe possibly twenty-two Japanese fighters. And the ack-ack shot a lot of them down, but in the

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meantime they had destroyed, I counted twenty-one B-29s already loaded and on their hard stands ready to be taken off. However, we listened to the short-wave broadcast from San Francisco that night, and our propaganda said there were three completely destroyed. Well, I have pictures that show there were twenty-one, and I counted them. But we couldn't let the enemy know how many they got, so we soft peddled it down to three. But not only did we have high altitude and low strafing raids, but we had a lot of invasion. And an odd thing, I didn't see one tank, one enemy tank in the whole Pacific. Although we did have small tanks in there because the terrain was such that you couldn't use large tanks in this type fighting. There were just smaller tanks that were used by the infantry and the Marines. And we did have an officer locally from Wheeling, Colonel Julian Hern was in charge of the 27th Infantry that was on Saipan. I wanted to make an effort to see him, but I never got a

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chance to, to meet him. But we were attached to the 27th Infantry for a short while for mop up operations. And this is the type fighting we had, mostly small arm fire. Mortar was the most deadly thing because you never knew it was, where it was coming from. You never knew where it was going to land. Heavy artillery was dangerous too because heavy fragmentations of the, the shells that would spread over a wide area. And of course mortars done the same thing, but the area that they covered was much less. And they were awfully dangerous because there was small and large mortars, and you never knew which gave the biggest bang or from which direction they were headed. And this was done most of the time at night and, and under the cover of darkness or daylight when you were having intense fighting. And these are the ones that, that you had to be most concerned about, particularly at night. And we had an awful lot of infiltration back of Japanese stealing our water, going through our tents, stealing our food. And it got to a point where we had to set up a twenty-four hour a day squadron guard so that these Japanese wouldn't steal us blind and also kill our men. And this got pretty intensive. And after you was over there so long you got used to it. So you just watched your foot.

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SF: I heard you mention that you were able to listen and hear the difference in the synchronization between engines of our planes and the Japanese. Can you describe the difference in the sounds of the weapons, the smells, sights of planes that were strafing, other visions you remember from your experience in the war?

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BN: The Japanese planes had this synchronization sound differential in their motors that I would--I don't know why I could pick it up and none of the other fellows could because we were located at one time on the edge of Nagisini Bay on the island of Saipan. And we had picket ships in the bay who were supposed to have, they had radar on. They were supposed to pick up these low flying planes. And we had an ack-ack battery right on a part of a mountain above us. And the Japanese somehow or another figured out how to evade these pick ships with the radar, and fly high enough that they could fly over the picket range of the, over the, the range of the ships that had the radar on, and they weren't picked up--

(Tape Two, Side Two)

BN: The invading aircraft coming in from right over this bay that was Japanese somehow woke me up because I was able to pick this up. Being an old mountain boy, I guess, I was able to pick this difference of the motors up between our planes and the Japanese planes, and I'd alert the fellows in our tent before the first ack-ack battery had fired, and they'd give them signal, which was a siren, that airplanes were overhead. And I'd get the men out of the tent as fast as I could. And we had individual foxholes dug right around our tent when we were working on the airfields so that we could drop in them, roll out of our cot right into them. They were only three men tent, sometimes a five man. And so we had a lot of that. And high altitude, there was no way you could pick those up because they were over you in no time. The only thing you knew that they were there was by the blast of sirens by, prewarnings by radar on the island. And then we had a siren that we used.

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And so then you had to immediately go out and get under cover. There's nothing we could do about the high altitude bombings, only cross our fingers and hope their shells didn't land right on you. But we had quite a few night raids by fighter planes, low strafing and the personal bombs were dropped, the small bombs that would explode on contact with the ground. There was quite a few of our men killed by those. And the strafing, of course, they weren't aiming so much for our area as they were for the airfield, which we were set up right at the edge of the airfield. So we caught the very beginning of their firing at the airplanes on the field. And we had quite a few tents destroyed and men killed in that respect. But we, we kept fighting back. And there's no way I can tell, explain how I could tell the difference between the Japanese and the American planes other than just by hearing and ... Being an old squirrel hunter in West Virginia, I can probably hear better than most.

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Well most of the troops were either born in the city or places that they weren't used to this type of terrain and atmosphere. My growing up and hunting squirrel and rabbits around here, and grouse, probably made me more aware and keen of things happening around me than the majority of the fellows that were in our outfit. And ... I had been out on patrols down into hostile territory, and they always look for me to be the one that would lead the, the number of men that were with us, usually about six, five to six, because I was so ... to the fact that the Japanese would be around and that I more or less could sense them being there or know that, hear them talking because we had to be awfully quiet. We had to watch where we were walking

due to the mines and trip wires and so forth. But, consequently, we never had any trouble, and fortunately, I guess. We got back. We did locate one big Japanese cache of ammunition that was, they had camouflaged at the end of a rock. Sort of a

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rocky mountain area. It was a mountain about, oh, I wouldn't call it a mountain, it was just a pile of rocks. But they had camouflaged a metal rock that looked almost part of the mountain, but it was a huge cache of ammunition. And I opened up the door ... and we had to locate these ... we were sent out to find a thing like that and see where the enemy was and what they were up, numbers where, and the type of guns they had and equipment. And we just happened to run into this particular rock. And we were able to detect it as not being a rock, but a camouflaged piece of metal. And we opened it up, not knowing if it was booby trapped or otherwise, and found out that this was an ammunition dump. So we had to plot it and write it down in the notebook that we had and report it as soon as we got back. And they sent other troops out and also field pieces to destroy this and, which they did. And this was the kind of thing we got into, more or less, constantly. Not so much on Okinawa, it was a

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larger battle, a larger island. I think Okinawa was about, oh, I'm not sure, sixty, seventy mile long by fifteen, eighteen, maybe twenty miles wide. Where Saipan was five, five and a half mile long and two to two and a half miles wide. So everything was compact and close, and you were in close proximity with your enemy at all times.

SF: Can you describe those moments when you're actually coming home to your house where your wife lives in Martins Ferry from the war?

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BN: Well, I can't explain this too much because I got back in L. A. and had the sense of being back in civilization again. The only thing was we weren't too used to being in close quarters such as a railroad car or even a bunk ... After three years we were living in the open at all times. And we were as brown as berries, black actually, from the tropical sun because it was so hot on these islands, except Okinawa where their island is more seasonable such as, I'd say the climate around Georgia. Hot in the summer, but it did cool off some in the winter. But Saipan was--A hundred and twenty degrees was nothing there in the daytime. Everything was damp from morning till night. It never cooled off at night. Maybe went down to a hundred. And you went to bed with wet sheets and mattresses if you were lucky, or wet sleeping bags. You took wet clothing off, if you had a chance to take your clothing off. You got up in the morning, put wet clothing back on. And consequently, we couldn't stand

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our fatigue jackets, only in extreme combat conditions where we had to wear them to carry the extra supplies and rations we had to carry. But most of the time it was stripped to the waist and just had combat, or fatigue trousers on. And due to the tropical sun, we blackened up in a hurry. And it was pretty hard to tell. And the Japanese even got blacker. They were hard to tell the Japanese, between the Japanese and the Negro soldier because they were just about as black. We didn't get quite that black. But the difference in

the sun, the ... of the sun and the--Even though I was a blond, I still got black. And so it was just a terrible climate. And we had all kind of malady. Getting back to Okinawa, they'd brought some mongeese, goose, had mongeese, I guess they would be, plural, on the island to kill the snakes, which thank goodness there were only a few on Okinawa. But there were a lot of rats, huge rats. And the mongeese would kill the rats. Mongeese could not climb trees, but the rats

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learned to climb trees like a squirrel. So they would run along the branches, or limbs of the trees and the branches and jump from tree to tree. And the next thing you know, they landed on your tent, and they weren't long getting through the canvas or any wood. They were almost the size of a cat. And we, we had a chocolate bar in a desk. You had to lock everything up and close everything, batten hatches when you went to bed at night. And we had a candy bar in a Japanese desk that we had, very light wood. And we had the drawer closed and we heard a sound like a buzz saw during the middle of the night. One of the fellows said, "It's one of those doggone rats." And he said, "Hey, I got a flashlight here." He said, "You get a shoe." I got a shoe. And we were on the opposite side of the tent. And he said, "I'll count three." And when he turned the light on, he's in that drawer getting that candy bar. We turn the light on, he said, "We'll throw our shoes at him." Well, he turned the

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light on, the rat came out, we threw the shoes, but we hit everything but the rat. I think we hit each other with the shoes. So we never did get the rat, but he got out of there. I had him slip down over my shoulders, clear down to my feet and back up again. You just turn over, and you got used to them. As long as they didn't gnaw you, you didn't care. But you didn't see the mongeese, geese, goose too much because they were secretive and worked mostly at night, where the rats were smart they worked at night and day both. But there were not too many insects on Saipan and the Pacific, in the, what is termed the micro, Micronesia, central Pacific. The people were Shaburos on the, out on the Saipan and the Mariana Islands were Shaburos. They were a cross between the Spanish, who was one of the owners of the island, and Germans later owned it, owned the islands, and then Japanese took the islands, and I think in the '20s. But they were very nice people. Some of them were fairly well

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educated and not a bit hostile. They were not for the Japanese, but for the American troops. So they had no problems with--Although they did put them in compounds, huge compounds simply because the Japanese would have killed them had they gotten around to it. So we put them in compounds and guarded them.

SF: I want to get back to getting home and your experiences once you arrived in Martins Ferry up till today. Your observations about how Wheeling had changed from the time you were involved in the war, how the neighborhood had changed, shops had come and gone, the attitude of the people, anything that comes to mind.

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BN: Well, when I came home, I didn't notice too much change, particularly around Martins Ferry and

Wheeling, as far as stores or industry went. It--To me it seemed the same that it was before. They still run streetcars. And the only thing I noticed is change in the attitude of the people. Not that they were hostile or anything, it was just the people between each other. When I left for the service, you wouldn't dare to hear a man cussing in front of a woman. Or a gentleman with a woman would go up and make the man come over to his wife and apologize if he had done any cursing in front of the woman. You could, everything was safe. You didn't have to worry about anybody taking anything or destroying any of your property. And I noticed a big difference when I come home that the attitude of the public had changed, and I wasn't used to this. In fact, my wife and I went into a bar and I heard some cursing, and I started getting up because I got angry. And my wife said, "Where you going?" And I said, "I'm going over and get that character and bring him

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over and make him apologize to you." She said, "Forget it, this is the way things are now. He probably wouldn't do it anyway." And so I thought, well, maybe she's right. So the biggest change I saw was the attitude of the people themselves between each other.

SF: How did you get reinvolved in employment?

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BN: Oh, when I came back--I had worked for Valley Camp Coal when I left in their Elm Grove office. And the fellow I had working for me, he, when I went over to, made an appointment to go over to get my job, which is about a month after I come home. I took the short month of February off to get some rest and recreation. And when I reported back to Valley Camp in Elm Grove, the fellow that I had trained and I was his, maybe his boss or superior, he had the job that I had left. And I stood there and wondered, didn't question anything, wondered what they had in mind for me. Well, I was taken up to the main maintenance and machine shop at Triadelphia, and our vice president in charge of operation called the whole department together and announced that beginning as of tomorrow morning that I would be in charge of the maintenance and machine shop where I had worked partially when I was working in engineering before, but not under that capacity. So I worked

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there until, oh, up until 1950, and then it was my responsibility to set up a machine shop and a new office and building that they were erecting, they planned to erect. And I had to do the specifications and the layout and placing all the machinery where the lathes and the milling machines and so forth, presses that we had in this new shop. And our maintenance crew worked right along with the shop people. And we moved into that new shop in 1950. And I worked until 1952 with Valley Camp. And took a job with Wheeling Machine and Products Company, at that time as a design engineer and machine designer. And I worked at Wheeling Machine, I worked from there up to chief designer and draftsman, and that was in '55. And in '56 I was made chief engineer, and I worked then at chief engineer of Wheeling Machine until 1969. And I had an offer of a better job with the McGraw Edison in Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania. And I accepted their offer and went up as, in

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engineering management. And I worked for the McGraw Edison Company for two and a half years and decided it was too far to drive. I didn't want to move to Pennsylvania. And so I thought maybe I could relocate in West Virginia, and I had a friend in engineering that I had worked with at Valley Camp many years later, or before rather. And he called me up one night and asked me if I was still in Pennsylvania. And I said yes, and he asked me if I'd care for a job in West Virginia again. I said, "Yes, I'd be glad to take one." So he was with Consolidation Coal, and I went in to Consolidation Coal then. I quit the job in Pennsylvania and turned my resignation in and came down to Consolidation Coal and worked in the main office and also their maintenance shop as general maintenance foreman for a period of almost ten years before retirement. And I was much more satisfied being back in West Virginia. Had enough engineering, but I still had engineering to do, plus the maintenance crews and the machine work that I was in charge of. So I finished up ... after forty-five years of working!

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SF: A very long time.

BN: Very long time.

SF: Tell us some stories about Wheeling and the surrounding neighborhoods that generations from now will have wished someone had recorded or written down.

BN: All right. There's one incident in Wheeling that I had forgotten to mention. Wheeling had a baseball team at one time. It was a farm league. It was a semi-pro. They played teams such as Johnstown, Charleroi, occasionally exhibition game with Homestead Grays. And the name of the team was the Wheeling Stogies. And they had some excellent players on. And it was a farm team for the Detroit Tigers. And they drew quite a few players from there and sent them on to the, their own league and their team, pitchers and catchers. This one particular incident, they were giving an exhibition match between, the game between Wheeling Stogies and the New York Yankees. And at the time of--At that time Babe Ruth was on the New York Yankees. And the Stogie Park, baseball park, was down where J. E. Miller used to have his, I'm not sure

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that they still have it, his--Caddy corner to the, almost straight across from the old Fulton School, and J. E. Miller later on kept his equipment there. And prior to his equipment, the Wheeling Mold kept patterns in that area that they had it fenced in. But there was quite a large grandstand and, and nice baseball field. And it had a wooden fence around, and it sat back towards the creek. And Fulton School is directly to the, I imagine to the north of there across Fulton Street from the park. And Babe Ruth in this particular game had not done real well in his batting, and the, the crowd, it was crowded, it was really packed, started getting on him when he came up to bat. And this one particular instance he, he looked at them and waved his cap and then he pointed out towards the Fulton School. And the first pitch, he hit that thing and it just flew over the wooden fence and clear across Fulton Street and landed in, I think it was a playground of the Fulton School. I imagine it was 325 yards at

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least, or feet rather. And it was a huge blow. And that soothed the crowd and they were happy because

they got to see Babe Ruth hit a home run ball. I didn't pay to get in to see that, but I climbed up on an old packing house, brick packing house that was no longer in use and had pipes coming out. About fifteen of us stood along these pipes and looked over the fence into the ball field. We could see probably better than the people in the grandstand and the bleachers. But--

SF: Do you remember the date?

BN: It had to be in the early summer, or late summer of 1926.

SF: How old were you then?

BN: I was twelve years old.

SF: That's great.

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BN: That was a big thrill for me. But the Stogies were well known. They, they played teams from all over West Virginia and Pennsylvania. And they had quite a team.

SF: Can you share with us any stories you heard or were told, maybe by family, in regards to the Native Americans that might be a good story to have chronicled for those who might be unfamiliar with--

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BN: Oh, not necessarily. The uncle that--After my mother and father died, and my aunt and uncle took my sister and I to raise from Warwood to Elm Grove, my uncle was raised on a farm fairly close to Wheeling Hospital, east of Wheeling Hospital. It was a large stone, cut stone farmhouse, and they pastured cattle and had corn fields and wheat fields and sheep. It was along Big Wheeling Creek pretty close to what later was the old Security Mine of Valley Camp's, or Elm Grove Mining. And it took in the whole bottom area, area down there. And after they put the, the I-70 in, somehow or another they tore down the original farmhouse and also, I think, used that as part of a right, right way, right of way to the highway. But it was a fairly good bottom for cultivation and farming. And this goes back--He was born down there in around 1855. And he often told me there were a few Indians in the area, but they were all peaceful. And he said there was no encampment, they were just more or less

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loners that mingled in with white people. And he said there were no deer in those days. That if you wanted meat for the table for Sunday dinner--There was nothing going back up from the hill right behind him towards where Bachmann property lies on top of the hill. And getting a wild turkey because there were wild turkeys in that area there. And he said Big Wheeling Creek was teeming with bass. He said there were no problems getting a full string of bass in no time. He said all small mouth, beautiful bass. And the suckers used to make--Red horse suckers used to, is a fish that is a bony fish, but they, they come in schools and they used to come up, swim up Big Wheeling Creek from the river. And exactly where they used to go, as far as they went up Big Wheeling Creek, I'm not sure, never did know. But there were schools of them come up in the spring before they spawned. And we used to sit on the bridge going across, we called it the Bridge Street Bridge, going over to the Bridge

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Street high, or school, and at that time you were allowed to spear them or gig or loop them. And we used

to sit on the piers with long cane poles and lines with the copper loop on. And we would try to position the loop in front of when these huge red suckers and give it a quick yank and pull the sucker up. And we got quite a few of them that way. But I found out later it wasn't worth it. They're full of bones! You couldn't get all the bones out. But this was an annual, that the conservation commission, which was formed just shortly after that, gave way to, I mean set up laws that you couldn't no longer gig or loop fish. So that ended that.

SF: In, in the many years that the Ohio Valley has been fortunate to have you as a resident, what good and not so good things have you seen affect the city of Wheeling and surrounding neighborhoods?

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BN: Well, the good things I remember about Wheeling is the amount of industry from steel mills, iron factories, glass factories, pottery works, stogie factories, chewing tobacco factories, right on down through the huge amount of industries that we had employed so many people. As I remember when I was younger, Wheeling was approaching 75,000 population. And a lot of the people that come to Wheeling to work were from the Ohio side also. This wasn't included in Wheeling's population, but there's quite a few people came from Bellaire and Martins Ferry and Bridgeport and down the river and worked in Wheeling. So the workforce in Wheeling had to be pretty substantial. The worse thing I saw was the industries moving out. There was fairly good size mills on the Ohio side and the southern part of Martins Ferry. They moved to Pittsburgh, California, most of them. And they, they just absolutely--And Benwood, of course, had its own mills. And they were all gone in short time.

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And it just seemed like the year '24, '25 up in to about 1930, most of the industries, heavy industries were out of Wheeling. And the lighter industries during the Depression era closed down, went under or moved out. And it just been the exodus of the working areas in Wheeling. And establishments had hired a lot of people. That's been the demise of Wheeling as far as I can see. We're looking at population now around, what, 38,000 compared to, you can say 75,000 in, say, early '20s, mid '20s. So this is the worst thing I can see happen to Wheeling other than Wheeling now is cleaned up. When you walk downtown Wheeling when I was younger, it was just crowded, I mean absolutely crowded, the sidewalks, both sides. Market Street, Main Street and all the 12th, 14th and so forth. And at that time Schenks had a large meat market on Market Street close to, well, close to McFadden, who's directly across the street from L. S. Good's and Stifel's department stores. And they had their

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own packing house, slaughter house out in Fulton. And there were quite a few people that come from ... district to come to Schenks to get their meat. It was a tremendously large market. And annually, or semi-annually they had buffalo meat sales where they would ship the buffalo meat in from the west in iced cars, and then they would have these huge sales of buffalo meat. I found out I liked buffalo meat better than I did beef because it's more tender and has a better flavor to it than even high grade beef. But then there were so many theaters in Wheeling. The Colonial, the Rex, the Liberty and Virginia Theater. And the Capitol wasn't built at that time. And the Court Theater, of course, and several others I've forgotten. But

they also--When I was younger we had quite a few vaudeville shows coming in. Vaudeville was just practically on its way out at that time, but there was still quite a few shows in Wheeling. I mean brought into Wheeling. And magicians such as Thurston and Houdini and

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several others I've forgotten their names, but they were shown at the, either at the Court Theater or the Virginia Theater. And later on the Capitol Theater was built. And at that time the stage shows, they had quite a few in the beginning. They had a large organ in the Capitol Theater which raised as the organ started playing and came up. And they had an organist, the first organist by the name of Dusty Rhodes. And he played at the beginning of a production, prior to a stage show or play of some kind or before even the film started showing. And this, oh, this had to be in the late, '28 or '29. And it lasted about three years. And then the Jamboree was in the old Market Auditorium, which now is the Market Plaza. The building was torn down. They had started up in the auditorium, then they moved from there. It was upstairs in the auditorium, they had it on center stage up there and bleachers. They moved

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from there to Virginia Theater. Then the Jamboree left the Virginia Theater and went to the Capitol Theater after the Capitol discontinued showing movies. And they brought the best movies to Wheeling. I saw *Gone With the Wind* in 1940 in there shortly after it was starting to run throughout the United States. And in fact, I still have a folder for the *Gone With the Wind* here of Clark Gable and, and Vivien Leigh, Hattie McDaniel and all the rest of the cast. And Gable, not being too far away from, born not too far away from Wheeling, we were pretty well interested in what he looked like. And incidentally, my wife was a picture of Vivien Leigh or Scarlet O'Hara. In fact, people on the street used to stop and ask her if she wasn't Scarlet O'Hara and Vivien Leigh, and she had to say no. Because she wore her, wore her hair the same way and, and well, the physical features of Vivien Leigh. And it was kind of embarrassing to her, but I think she liked it!

SF: Sure.

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BN: I'll show a picture of her later, later. You can make a comparison.

SF: Often it happens when the interview is over, the speakers, story tellers think of one more great story to tell as we're heading towards the door. And instead of me heading towards the door, maybe you can think of one more story that needs to be told about Wheeling or the neighborhoods or the history that should be in the books some place, should be recorded.

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BN: Well, I do remember the '36 flood, and I think, because a lot of people didn't remember it. At that time I was working for Valley Camp Coal. And of course all the power in Wheeling was off. There were no lights in Wheeling, and the homes didn't have lights. The streets didn't have lights. And my assignment and another fellow by the name of Eddie McCormick, who lived in Woodsdale, he's dead at this time, we were to take cap lamps that the miners used for mining coal. And this was the start of electric battery operated cap lamps. And we were to pass these around to people wherever we could so they could

at least see where they were going. And if we could get them to homes to light up their homes some and to city personnel also that needed light to get around the city. And I do remember rowing up Market Street in a skiff. It had to be about two o'clock in the morning. There was a traffic light where Straub's Honda is now and 12th and 16th Street. And we rowed up Market Street and to miss the traffic light we had to duck our heads, the water was that

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high, to get under the traffic light and continue rowing up. And we decided it was too much of a current. We couldn't make it to 12th Street, so we turned around and come back up and rowed up right to the old City Building, where the new City Building is located. And we beached our skiff at that point and went into the City Building. There wasn't anything we could do. When the river crested at fifty seven point something feet, I was at the end of the Suspension Bridge on the Island side with cap lamps. And I couldn't get any farther. The only thing that was sticking up was chimneys and a few roofs of three or four story homes over there and church steeples. And there were women trapped on the attic of one of these four story apartments or buildings, homes. And they had the window open screaming for me to come over and get them. Well, I couldn't go over and get them because the current was too swift, and they were too far away. And they had brought Coast Guard cutters in to

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help rescue some of these people, but the waves of the Coast Guard cutters, the craft was too large and the waves from it were knocking the homes off of foundations. So they had to get those out in a hurry. And I did get up around the Court Theater on 12th and Chapline Street. And you can stand here and look across into Ohio. And it looked like one huge lake as far as you can see in Ohio, which was probably, I don't know when it was as far as, oh, the first series of stores over there. And it was--All you could see was the tops of bridges, church steeples and a few chimneys, and that was about it. The rest of it was all water. It was a tremendous amount of water. And most people forget, from the fifty-seven foot something, I think I'm right there. I don't think it was fifty-nine. Fifty-seven foot something. The river started receding. And of course what caused the river, we had a terrible winter. Winter of '36, '35, '36 was terrible. Snow piled up so high they had banks of snow on Market

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Street they had to cut--They couldn't haul it all. It was just too much to handle, and they had to cut pass ways through so you could cross at the intersections. And the--Then it started raining in about the first week of March. And then rain right on top of all that snow, and it just cascaded out of the hills from all over and filled all the creeks. In fact, Big Wheeling Creek was backed up clear to Greenwood Cemetery. Water couldn't get into the river. And the--Just about a week after the river receded to where people could get around and start using your roads. And we had to go to Alexander Mine in Moundsville, and we worked Saturday and Sunday and Sunday evening. It rained all the time we were there, and Sunday evening the river came back up. And it came within, oh, half a foot or a foot to the crest that was reached, the highest crest was ever reached by the Ohio River. So we had two floods actually. It might have been a week later, but I'm not sure. Because we just started working.

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Everything we had done and finished working getting the mud out and cleaned up and getting ready to put new structures in was completely covered again. So we had to do, do it the second time. So there were actually two floods in one! And of course houses were going down the river. Chickens on top of the roofs. And you could just see anything floating down the river. And that time the, the old steel bridge was in. The Wheeling ... Company had the steel bridge where the streetcars went across, also automobile traffic. And you could only go down so far on the ramp leading down to Wheeling Island. You couldn't get off of it because it was just too much.

SF: What did people do for food?

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BN: Well, they done the best they could! I don't know what they did actually. Luckily I lived in Elm Grove. The only way you could get from Elm Grove to Wheeling was the B & O Railroad. It was just high enough above the water that they run a shuttle train from Elm Grove to Wheeling. And this was the only way you could get into Wheeling. All the roads were completely closed, Leatherwood, Linsley, everything. The only other way was over 29th Street Hill. Well, all of South Wheeling was flooded, so you couldn't get any further than that. So the shuttle train was the only thing that you could use. It went through Tunnel Green and very close to the water and went clear into the terminal where the community college is now. And people got off, and it waited there till it had a whole trainload to take them back in the coaches. And I don't know how they got their food. They ... on what they had in the house or how they got it or the drinking water or, anyhow, I'm not sure, but we

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couldn't get close enough to anything to really find out what was happening. And a lot of people were evacuated. A lot of them were caught. And what the ones that were caught ate and drank, I have no idea. But not only Wheeling, but Bridgeport, Martins Ferry and Benwood and Shadyside, the whole, whole area was just in completely covered with water. It's just hard to believe that that much water could exist. But since the new dams they put in and the new lakes throughout the state of West Virginia and Pennsylvania and Ohio, it's helped tremendously in checking the water and keeping it in bounds. In those days it was-- Nothing had ... dams. But they, they weren't anything. I mean they were only about, I'm guessing three or four foot high. There was one in Warwood, one in McMechen, and they wouldn't hold any water back to amount to anything compared to what these new roller type dams will. So they did, do have control of it now, but in the ...

SF: Any final thoughts you'd like to add?

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BN: No. I did see Lindbergh. He landed at the field in Moundsville. I was trying to think of the name of the field.

(noises)

SF: Continuing.

BN: Lindburgh landed, and I can't remember, I think it was Laidley Field, if I'm not mistaken, in

Moundsville, or Glen Dale rather. And he came in on the *Spirit of St. Louis*. And it amazed us because he made what we termed a three stick landing! What it meant was sitting the tail and two wheels down in this monoplane at the same time. We thought that was great. But he was a tall, lanky fellow. And very cordial. And they motorcaded him up the river road through Glen Dale on up to Wheeling. They had a parade in Wheeling. Quite a huge throng of people were out to greet him. And he made a tour of Wheeling around Market Street and down Main Street and then on back to Moundsville. And that's about--I just got to see him, got to see him land, didn't get to see him take off. I did follow him up to Wheeling. And--

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SF: Do you remember the date?

BN: No, I don't, Steve. It had to be the summer of '27, but the month I'm not sure of. Because he made his crossing, his transatlantic crossing, in May of 1927. Then he toured the country. And it had to be the latter part of '27 that he hit a city the size of Wheeling. But he was a well-liked person. I, I mentioned the *Shenandoah*, the airship, didn't I?

SF: No.

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BN: I think I did on the other tapes.

SF: The *Shenandoah* airship?

BN: Aircraft.

SF: Uh, no--

BN: Dirigible.

SF: I don't think you mentioned that yet.

BN: I didn't. In case I didn't, there was--The *Shenandoah* was an airship, it was a dirigible, they called it-- It was commanded by the U. S. Navy. And it was making a flight from New Jersey. I'm not sure exactly where it was heading for, but I know it was coming over, directly over Wheeling. And I had a cousin working on the switchboard of the old C & P Telephone Company in Elm Grove.

(715)

They had their own switchboard in Elm Grove. That's prior to one being built in Woodsdale. And she had a relay about midnight--