

Ernest Bentfield

Growing Up In Warwood

Michael Nobel Kline: Okay. Today is the 25th of April, is that right?

Ernest Bentfield: Twenty-third, twenty-fourth, twenty-sixth.

MNK: Twenty-sixth today is? Okay. Twenty-sixth of April. Can you say, "My name is."

EB: My name is Ernest, or Ernie, Bentfield.

MNK: One more time.

EB: My name is Ernest, or Ernie, Bentfield.

MNK: Can you tell me a little bit about your people and, and where you were raised?

(007)

EB: Yes. I was raised, I was born and raised in Warwood. My father worked on the streetcar line. And he moved to Warwood and built a home up there in 1910. Excuse me. And I was born in 1914 in this home that he built there. And--

MNK: ... start again.

(012)

EB: Yeah. I was born and raised and Warwood. My father built a home in Warwood in 1910. He worked on the streetcar line. And I have the bill of sale from my father's home he built in 1910 in Warwood on the corner of 26th and Vance Avenue. It's a three-story frame with a finished concreted basement. And the cost of the house was eleven hundred dollars! Ridiculous, isn't it? And I also have his receipt for the lot that he bought up there originally. He paid three hundred dollars for the lot. I think all the lots in that neck of the woods sold for three hundred dollars at that time. And his first tax receipt was signed by the marshal of Glenova, it was fifty cents for the year for taxes on this lot that he purchased up there. Now when I say the marshal of Glenova, it brings up something else. Warwood originally, when my father went up there, in fact, much before that, it was known as three small communities. South Warwood was, was Loveland, Center Warwood was Richland. And North

(026)

Warwood was Glenova. And the high school up there that is now middle school has a big stone over the entrance to the front of the building. It's covered up with a metal plate now with another name on it. But originally it had Richland District High School on the front of the high school. It was built in 1914, 1913, as I recall. And in nineteen, in approximately 1920, 1919, the three little towns got together and decided to incorporate into one small town. And the name that they chose for it was Warwood. Now the reason they chose that name, there was an Englishman by the name of Henry Warwood who had a tool factory in Martins Ferry, Warwood Tool Company. And Henry Warwood managed to obtain some property about four miles north of Wheeling and built a tool factory there. And it was named the Warwood Tool

Company. And Warwood did not have its own water supply at that time. People had dug wells and rain barrels and what have you. So Henry Warwood had some ... wells dug

(041)

and put a reservoir up on the hillside up where Warwood Terrace is located now. And pumped water up there from the tool factory. And it was piped into the homes in Warwood. So since he was furnishing the community with water, they decided to name the town Warwood after him. And I have a picture of my father's streetcar in 1910 when he first started streetcaring up there. Actually, the streetcar got started around 1905, 1908, mainly because the park that was in Warwood on the river, sister, or an island on the river. But on my father's streetcar, the sign on the front of it says "Loveland, Warwood and Glenova." So I have proof of the fact that it was three small communities up there at that time. And--

?: Now your date of birth?

(052)

EB: My date of birth was 1914.

?: The date.

EB: Nineteen fourteen.

?: The date.

EB: May 29th.

?: May 29th.

(054)

EB: Nineteen fourteen. Uh huh. And the park that I speak of over on the, what we call the First Sister Island. There were three islands in the river running from Warwood north, one right after another. They were strung out like three big boats. And it was the First, Second and Third Sister Islands. I believe the only one that's left today is the First Sister Island. The others have all been dredged out for gravel and sand and the like. And there was a big park that was on this First Sister Island. They had a roller coaster and a dance hall and a bowling alley. And you had two camels to ride there. And the streetcar ran from Wheeling up to Warwood. They had a pontoon bridge across at North 24th Street that ran over to the island. And people could come up by horse and buggy, or they could ride up on the streetcar. Or the Pennsylvania Railroad ran a passenger train up and down the river. They come up on the--They had a station in Warwood. They get off there. And they also had a

(066)

steamboat that they ran up from Wheeling to Warwood. The *Avalon* was the name of the steamboat strictly to take people to the island resort area. And the resort--When we were kids we used to swim from 24th Street. We had a beach at 24th Street. And we would swim over to the island. We had swings up in the trees and the like. And in exploring the island, some of the concrete work is still there from the original park that was there. Sidewalks and concrete piers for the roller coaster and dance hall and things like that. The park was finally destroyed by fire. I think flood and fire both had something to do with it. They credit fire as destroying the place. So that was the end of the park over at First Sister Island. I don't know what the name of it was or anything else the ..., you know, that had a name.

MNK: And the year of the, of the fire?

(077)

EB: That was about 1908 I would say. Nineteen eight, between 1908 and 1910. But Warwood has, had quite a few things up there that most people don't know too much about. We also had an airplane factory in Warwood, built airplanes there. I remember the man who was in charge of it. It was a Frenchman. His name was ... Dipoliac, as I recall. And I think they built one plane in the factory before they had to close down! I think it was set up originally because of World War I, and they thought maybe they could get some production there. But it just didn't work out at all. And we had a lot of industry in Warwood. We had the Wheeling Mold and Foundry up there. We had the Globe Automatic Sprinkler Company. And we had an automatic door company that built fire doors and what have you. So there was quite a bit of industry in Warwood at that time. Now it's strictly, I guess you could call it a--

Fritzie Bentfield: Residential.

(088)

EB: What?

FB: Residential.

EB: That's about all it is right now, yeah. But I was trying to think of anything else that Warwood could boast of. Oh, when the furniture factory, or the airplane factory closed, some woman did start a furniture factory there. And she went bankrupt, and they did away with the furniture factory. But they had a big boiler there that, for the furniture factory. And had a night watchman that kept the boiler fired up. And we kids used to go up. It was at 27th and Vance Avenue. And we kids would go up in the evening and sit out in front of the boiler house with the night watchman to keep him company while he kept the boiler going up there! So I had a lot of fond memories of Warwood. Myers Bottom is another place in Warwood that a lot of people don't know anything about. But Myers Bottom was a big bottom land big enough for a football field. And it was sort of a natural bowl that we could sit around, watch

(100)

the games. There was also a cemetery in there. And I know one of the women back in my time tells about being down there to watch the kids do the May pole dance. I didn't--I was in one of the May pole dances myself. Everyone sat on tombstones watching the grade school kids do the May pole dance. And when Myers Bottom would freeze over, the river would come up in there, it would freeze over. And they could ice skate in there in the wintertime also. Center Foundry and Machine started to fill in the bottom land. And the Windsor Power Coal Company had streetcars that they purchased strictly for hauling gob or slate or whatever you want to refer to it from their coal mine up at Windsor. They would haul this rubbish down and dump it. The streetcars they had just had a little cab on each end. And the body in the middle was like a dump truck. They could move it out and dump the debris out of it. And as they filled the bottom in, they removed the tracks, keep moving them over. And

(114)

finally after getting so deep, I guess they didn't know about it at the time, but after it got so deep it spontaneously caught on fire. And, oh, was that a mess. The homes in north Warwood, they couldn't keep

paint on them because they were using lead-based paint mainly then. And the sulfur fumes from the ... fire was just turning the paint black on the homes. They lost their shrubbery, their lawns and everything else. Like a little, dirty mining town in north Warwood. And the people went after the various companies that were involved in this thing, and also city council was trying to get some relief. And finally the city fire department did go up there and put a hose on it. And they kept a man on duty twenty-four hours a day. They kept washing this out and washing and washing and washing trying to get it spread out so that the fire would go out. And that took a--I think it took two or three years to finally get

(126)

the thing out. But it was really a mess at that time. And we kids used to play in there at night a lot because the fire was under a crust of earth. And it would separate, and you could see the fire underneath the hot coals. And we played like we were playing on the moon with these craters that they had there from, from the fire! I remember we'd get down in there, and we'd give our moon wail, which was ooooooooh! But anyhow, Myers Bottom was quite a place to play. And the high school did have a football field there where they played their home games and before they acquired another field. So anything, anything else--The only thing I can, that might be interesting as far as the streetcar line is concerned, which I know quite a bit about on account of my father being on it, a conductor on a streetcar line for quite some time. They finally did take the streetcars to Wellsburg from Wheeling. And then they got the streetcars that had the center doors on. They had a passenger end at one

(140)

end where the motorman was, and a smoking end at the other end for the men. And then they gradually got trackage into Steubenville and went from Wheeling to Steubenville. My mother at that time when they started sending the cars into Steubenville, I was old enough that I could be left alone really. But when she wanted to go shopping it took an hour to go to Steubenville from Wheeling and an hour to come back. And when she wanted to go shopping, she'd put me on dad's streetcar to ride to Steubenville and back while she went and did her shopping. And the motorman would let me stand up front with him, and I got to clang the bell and blow the whistle every time we had a chance to do that! So the streetcar that ran from Wheeling to Steubenville, my father's car, was on the Steubenville Bridge, the Market Street Bridge at

(151)

Steubenville at one time, when the bridge started to go down. Dad said--Oh, what happened, they were passing a work car that was coming over from Steubenville with two trailer loads of dirt behind it they were dragging. And when they passed it was between piers, and it was just too much for the bridge. So it sprung the metal, the steel on the bridge. It went down about six feet they had said, and then it sprung back up again. But they finally made it to a pier and were able to stop on the pier and get things straightened out. But my dad said the men who were back in the smoking compartment of the car when it started to go down, he said they were back there yelling, "Keep her going. Keep her going. Keep her going," until they got to a pier up there. So fortunately no one was hurt, but it was quite a catastrophe. They finally had to shore up the bridge and practically rebuild about half of it. They still use it

(162)

today. The bridge is still in use, the Market Street Bridge up there. And--Well, when the streetcar was first sent to Warwood from Wheeling, there was two sizes of track that we had here. The Wheeling track was narrower than the Warwood track by about six or eight inches. So actually from 1st Street Wheeling up to Warwood we had three rails. There were two rails right together and then another rail over here. It used to be before they got the three rails in people had to change cars at 1st Street Wheeling. They had a waiting room there. And they could go on the city car up as far as 1st Street. Then they had to change over to the Warwood car because of the difference in the, the width of the track they had.

MNK: Isn't that--That strikes me as just hard headedness that they wouldn't be able to lay the same gauge of track.

(174)

EB: Yeah. You'd think--

FB: ... they did.

EB: They did eventually get it changed over. But how the streetcar line got started up there, there was a man by the name of Garden who was very much interested in electricity. And he built the first electrical supply plant on 12th Street in Wheeling that supplied some of the business houses with electricity around, that were around there. In fact, I worked for Gee Electric Company for some time. And that building was built back in the, oh, boy, Civil War times, I guess. It's the new building right at 14th and Main Street that they're redoing, the scaffolding and everything on there. The heritage thing that they're working on. And Mr. Gee had electricity from, we had the plant on 12th Street in that building. And you can still see some of the results of the wiring in the building. It was all in wooden conduit. The wood was scraped out like in rows and it was piled together, and the wiring between. And they

(188)

couldn't keep ahead on the electricity. All the business houses downtown wanted electricity. So finally Mr. Garden went to Beech Bottom, and there was a lot of coal and water up there. And they built the power plant at Beech Bottom. And that was the plant that supplied the traction company. And Wheeling was the fifth city in the United States to have electric streetcars. Very, very up on things at that time on getting the latest equipment in. And then of course they branched out from there. And finally there--We wound up with two traction companies in Wheeling. There was a Panhandle Traction Company, which ran up and down the river, that my dad worked for. And then the Wheeling Traction Company was the old traction company that had the city streetcars that ran to Bellaire and over on the Ohio side. They also had a city line too, ran down to Benwood, as I recall. They had these open air streetcars that the sides were off and the seats ran clear across the car. And the--My

(203)

father also told me about the streetcar line. They had so many little streetcar lines at one time. That's another story. But I remember down at Middlebourne, St. Marys, Sistersville, New Martinsville, all those places had their own little streetcar lines. We had a streetcar line that ran from Wellsburg to Bethany. Bethany College, of course, was up there. And that was quite a line that ran out there before they made any improvements. I had been out there several times. And we had about three or four tunnels we had to go

through to get to Bethany. The road and the streetcar line used the same tunnel to get through. And they used to tell a story about--I think they only had one Turnerville Trolley that ran from Wellsburg out to Bethany. And they used to tell the story about when the streetcar line got out the end of the line at Bethany to turn around and come back. The conductor would take the money that he had collected and throw it up in the air. And what stayed up belonged to the company, and what came down belonged to the conductor! And one day a twenty dollar bill hung on the trolley ... and didn't come back down. So he lost

(218)

out on part of his pay for that day! That's--The other story that I wanted to tell about, my father--My sister was twelve years older than I was. And she was working and living in Akron. She became very ill. And my father went to Akron to bring her home. And this may have been before he even had an automobile, I think. The first car my father had was a '21 Ford, Model T Ford. But anyhow, dad went to Akron and back with my sister by streetcar from Wheeling, which was really amazing, unless you realize about all these places that had these little streetcar lines back at that time. I know dad went from Wheeling to Steubenville on the car line he worked on. And then there was a line that ran from Steubenville to Beaver, Pennsylvania. They had the most beautiful yellow cars on that line. I remember seeing them up there. We come to the same terminal, my dad's car would come to, to meet. So dad got on the Beaver car and went as far as he could on that. But he just kept transferring from one line to another until he got into Akron. And if he was on a

(233)

streetcar and nighttime came, time for the conductor and motorman to stop, they'd take him home and feed him and give him his breakfast and then take off again the next day! So that's how he got from, from Wheeling to Akron and back by streetcar line, which was pretty amazing at that time.

MNK: Because there was no train?

(237)

EB: Evidently he had no other way of getting there, or maybe he felt that he didn't have the money and he could just ride for nothing on the streetcar line! I don't know which, but I know he made the trip up there and back. And it was really amazing that he was able to do that by streetcar, travel so far by streetcar. So--

MNK: You said going out to Bethany there was only one--

EB: One streetcar. They called it the Turnerville Trolley.

MNK: What Turnerville means.

EB: Turnerville was an old--

FB: Cartoon.

(245)

EB: Cartoon in the newspaper, *Turnerville Trolley*. There was a little trolley car looked like it had about three or four seats on it, dilapidated. Had a wooden stove in it and a smokestack sticking out of the top. And that was with the Turnerville Trolley. That was just a cartoon, is what it was. So--The history of Warwood--

MNK: You, you want to finish talking about the trolley cars?

(249)

EB: Oh, yeah. Well that's about, really about all I can tell you about the trolley cars.

MNK: So your dad's years of service were--

EB: Yeah, he was on the streetcar line from about 1910 until--Well, when we got out of college after we were married, about 1934, '36. Yeah, my dad was on the streetcar line about twenty, twenty-six, twenty-seven years, I would say.

MNK: And the car was motorized, starting what year?

(255)

EB: Electric. They were motorized back in, around 1908 was when they first had the streetcars there in Wheeling. Before that they had horse cars. I have some pictures. Anyhow, the horse car--There was a very small car and it had about six seats in it. And the conductor and motorman was all one man. He stood in, out in the open air in the weather and with the reins for the horse. They had one horse hooked to it. And they--The track was, it was right in the middle of Main and Market Street and muddy as all get out, this picture that I have of it. But they did use these horse cars for some time. They had straw on the floor to keep your feet warm in the wintertime. And I think they had little coal stove on the car too. But that was the first transportation that they had for the city here in Wheeling was the horse cars.

MNK: And those came in?

(270)

EB: I would say that was probably back in the 1890s probably when they had the horse cars. And then the first streetcars they had here, when we were the fifth city in the United States to have electrical cars, was what they called Vanderpool Cars. I guess that was named for the inventor or some such thing. But instead of having a trolley line and a trolley on a pole that they put up to the, put the trolley up onto the wire to run the car, it had two lines that went up. They had two trolley wires and little pulleys hooked over the wires. That's where they got their power to run the car. On an electric, on an electrical circuit you must have two lines, one for positive and one for negative electricity. When they came back to the point where they could use the one trolley line, they had to bond the rails together so that the rails was a return for the electricity then. So they got their power from the trolley line, and it went back to the power plant through the rails. Which reminds me,

(286)

Warwood's streetcar, when I was a boy, turned around at 26th and Warwood Avenue, North 26th and Warwood Avenue. The car would stop there, and the motorman or conductor, whatever. ... was a one-man car, motorman. And he would go through the car and grab the seats and turn them. The seats had one backing on, but you, the back was to the south. And when you were going north and the back was to the north, you were going south. They just reversed the backs on the seats! And he had to take the trolley down on the wire in front from going north and put the trolley up in back to go south. Two trolleys, one on each end of the car. And they also had a cow catcher on the car on each end. The cow catcher had a straight up and down vertical arrangement that if it hit anything on the tracks, such as an animal or a person, it would drop what we called the cow catcher down to the ground to scoop up anything that might

be laying on the tracks there. And what we would do when we were kids just to harass the motorman, particularly

(303)

at Halloween time. When the car would stop at North 26th Street to change over and the motorman had the seats all reversed and the trolleys up and down and everything ready to go, we would hide and wait until he gave it the gun to start back to Wheeling and run out and grab the trolley cord and pull it off the trolley wire. And everything went black, and the car stopped and nothing happened! The poor motorman would get out. And this cord that held the trolley, it had a spring packed retriever on it. And he had a heck of a time. He'd have to put his foot on there, and he'd pull on that rope and get it out and get the trolley back up again. It's a wonder we didn't get arrested! We didn't so, or anything. Of course one thing I'll say when we were kids, we weren't destructive. I mean we were a nuisance, but we weren't destructive like some of the things that go on today. So that pretty much takes care of me with the streetcar line as I recall. Oh, we did--I, I--We did have what they called passes

(318)

for the streetcar line too when I was a kid. And you paid so much for a pass for the entire month, as I recall. And of course my dad always got me one of them so I could ride the streetcar back and forth to school or to town or whatever I wanted to do. And we kids on Sundays when we had nothing better to do, a group of us, maybe five or six of us, would get on the Warwood streetcar. And I'd have my pass with me, and we would ride down the Wheeling and change over to the Moundsville car and go on to Moundsville and come back or go to Bellaire and back. And when we got back to Warwood several hours later, when we got off the streetcar we had to show the pass in order to pay for our fare for all this riding we'd been doing. So I would sit back in a car next to a window, an open window, and we'd start getting off at about 17th, North 17th Street. I'd give the boy my card, and he would show it to the motorman and jump off the car, and run back and hand it in the window to me. And the

(334)

next guy got off at 18th Street, 19th, 20th. We always ... my one pass card to, to get off of the car! But that's how we would occupy our Sunday afternoons on one pass card. I was trying to think of anything else that might be interesting. Of course we had the railroad up there too at one time. The Pennsylvania Railroad ran through Warwood. And we had a train station there, and people would use the Pennsylvania Railroad to go to town too from Wheeling. The road from Wheeling to Warwood originally was just mud. And they had a toll house on the River Road about halfway between Wheeling and Warwood, about four miles between the two communities. And you had to pay toll to use this mud road to get to Wheeling and back. And they tell the story of one woman who raised produce and took it to Wheeling every day to sell it at the Market House. And she had to pay ten cents each way for her buggy and wagon to take the groceries downtown to sell them. And later on they did pave.

(352)

It was ... of red brick they paved from Wheeling to Warwood ... this River Road. There's still a house in Warwood, the first large house that permanently constructed in Warwood as I can recall. And it still stands

today. It's, it was right on the riverbank between 24th, between 23rd and 24th Street. And it was Riley's Tavern originally. And the stagecoach stopped there at Riley's Tavern. And it was eventually--When a land company took over Warwood to mark off the town in lots and sell them, they had raffles and everything else. And you were given--You paid 300 dollars, you were given a ticket for a lot number. Well, if your number was drawn and you got the lot, the 300 dollar lot. But if there was a house already on the lot, you got the lot and the house. And some young kid won Riley's Tavern for his 300 dollars along with the property. And there was a man by the name of old Judge Ritz that a lot of us knew back in those days. He was a police court judge in Wheeling. And he finally bought it from this boy. And it's been known as Stony, Stony Ritz's house is what they called it. And it's still standing up in Warwood. Yeah, there's apartments in it now.

MNK: So how many, how many lots were there--

(377)

EB: Oh, gee.

MNK: That, that would, in one drawing?

EB: Well, I really couldn't tell you that. But I do know that when the property that we owned where my ... built our home in what was called the Sun Addition, that was a truck farm one time. And it was between 22nd and 23rd on Warwood Avenue, one block long. And ran back four blocks to the river. And that was marked off in 120 foot lot frontage, I believe it was. And how many lots were there on this street, Fritzie? There must have been about ten lots on--

MNK: There was a whole lot of people that paid in 300 dollars and then--

(388)

EB: Everybody got something. They either got the land or, or land and a home, either one. They all got something though on the drawing.

FB: Not from the Sun Addition.

EB: No, not the Sun Addition. They were sold out at auction, yeah. And--

MNK: So that's how those neighborhoods then were organized, right?

EB: Yeah, right. Really. Yeah.

MNK: The luck of the draw.

(394)

EB: Yeah. When my dad built his home up there in 1910 it was just like farmland around there. There wasn't hardly anything around. And I have a picture of the old Warwood Tool Company when they first built up there. As I recall Mr. Warwood also built two or three homes when he built the factory. ... lived in one and an office in the other and so on and so forth. But the picture that I have, it shows the factory and the three houses, and everything else is just blank. And that was right at 19th Street in Warwood, right in the middle of the center of Warwood. So it was pretty sparsely settled. At the time I wrote this history we had better than, between four and five thousand people living in Warwood. Of course Warwood is finished now. I mean you can't buy anything in Warwood now. It's all filled up, everything down on the river. But the first, the first land grant in Warwood was for one of the kings over in England, 1699, gave him a land

grant for this property. And we don't know too

(411)

much about it except when the deeds were registered at the courthouse. The original county, Ohio County, originally was known as Kanawha County, wasn't it? Anyhow, it was a big county at one time, Ohio County. It took in part of Marshall, Wetzel, Tyler and Ohio County. And, darn it, I know the name of the county. But anyhow, the first county seat was at West Liberty. That's where the courthouse was and the county seat. West Liberty was a, a, probably a larger community at that time than anything else was around here.

MNK: Larger than Wheeling?

(426)

EB: No, but larger than any other smaller, you know, developments around the city. Actually, Wheeling wasn't--Warwood joined up with Wheeling in what they called the Greater Wheeling Process that they went through back in 1920. And that was when Wheeling incorporated all the outlying territory into one big city. Fulton was by itself. Woodsdale was by itself. Elm Grove was a city by itself. I believe even South Wheeling, it was Ritchie Town. And of course Warwood. In '20, why they all went together and became one big city and built the filtration plant up there to take care of the whole city. Before that the city, actually in Wheeling they were using river water, untreated river water was coming into their homes before we got this filtration plant built up in Warwood.

FB: ...

(441)

EB: Huh?

FB: There were pumps at different places that--

EB: Yeah.

FB: ...

EB: Yeah.

FB: ... well water.

EB: Yeah.

FB: ... drinking water.

(444)

EB: Um hmm. But this book was actually--The research was done on this book by Mabel Bisset, who was the wife of the only dentist we had in Warwood for years, Doctor George W. Bisset. And also another woman up there, Bertha Cupp Jones, she also did a lot of work on it. What happened, after they did all this research, no one was interested in printing it or doing anything with it all. So Mabel Bisset was a neighbor of ours, lived a couple doors above us. And our son played with his son. They--We were all very friendly. But Mabel Bisset died, and a friend of hers who took care of the funeral and the like for her found a box with all this stuff in it in Mabel Bisset's attic with a name on there to get it to Butch Bentfield, which was my son's name. So they brought it down to my son, and my son was a bit too busy to do anything with it. He's a CPA, does tax work and the like. So he just didn't do a thing. And one day I was sitting up in the

office after I'd retired, and I said, "Butch, do you still have

(464)

that material Mabel Bisset and, and Mrs. Jones worked on?" He said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, get it out for me. I'll see what I can do with it." So I had to edit it, and made some additions and subtractions and so on and so forth and financed the printing of it. We spent about thirty-five hundred dollars, I guess, four thousand, to print it. And what I did, I did it all--It was a non-profit proposition was what it amounted to. I told my son, I said, "I want my money back out of it," what I had invested in it. And then I said, "You and a girl at the Warwood branch of the Wheeling Public Library," ... her name. What's her first name?

FB: Nancy.

(475)

EB: Nancy ... Well, Nancy took care of it along with my son. They took orders for it, and people came to the library and picked them up and they'd collect for it. So I just let them keep the money that they made from anything additional after we had the book printed. And we sold--We had to have a second printing on that, didn't we? Yeah. We sold so many of them I was amazed.

FB: Six hundred to begin with.

(482)

EB: Yeah, and then I think we had another two hundred printed up or something. Now I had a copy of this book in the Warwood branch of the library, well, both books that I've written are in there. They're also in the Wheeling Public Library in the historical section of Wheeling. Ken Hechler, who was the Secretary of State for the state of West Virginia, Ken Hechler and I were both at the Ramagan Bridge at the same time in Germany. He was a captain of the Fourth Armor Division. Got across the bridge. And when I wrote my book about some experience, things happen on the way to Czechoslovakia, I sent him a copy. And I also sent him a copy of the Warwood book. And he had both of those books in the West Virginia Historical Archives in Charleston. My book that I wrote about the Army is also in the National Archives of the Army Historical Section at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. So I'm a little notorious!

MNK: You mentioned that Warwood was divided in--There were--

(503)

EB: Three parts, yeah, actually.

MNK: What was the character of those, the three different--

EB: Farms mainly. They would have a house on Warwood Avenue, which they called Main Street, I believe, at that time. And then the barn would be across the road on the hillside of the, of the place. And they would have pasture up the hill for their cattle and the like. And they would have truck farms down on the lower levels and to the river. But it was just about all truck farms up there. We had one place up there, Garden Park, we knew it as a kid as being Garden Park, and it belonged to the Dorsch family. And it was finally--Finally the city acquired it and did make a park out of it. We had a football field there and basketball courts and the like. And part of it was sold off that the Warwood Shopping Plaza was built in there. Well when they plowed that thing up to start to work in there, it had originally been an Indian burying ground. We

(522)

didn't know anything about that. My gosh, the artifacts they got out of there, including bones. In fact, Mr. Dorsch, I believe it was, even had the bones put together, one skeleton, and hung them in the hall of his home! The skeleton in ... bones, this Indian burial ground. When we were kids we never knew there was a burial ground there until they started to dig the place up. But Warwood just really branched out and grew after, I would say about--Oh, around World War I time was about when Warwood started to populate, you know, get more people. We always called it the Garden Spot of West Virginia, or God's Territory or something ... the people lived there. I say it's a shame. I mean when we lived up there, Fritzie and I built our home there in 1940. And I mean you went to bed at night, you didn't even lock your doors in Warwood back in those days. But boy, I sure wouldn't try that anymore, I can say that. It was a very nice community there when we were young. And when we first

(545)

moved up there we had our son when we lived there. He was born in 1937. And he went through school up in Warwood, Warwood Grade School, Warwood High School. And I graduated from Warwood High School also. And I went to my son's graduation, Fritzie and I did, and one of my teachers, Eleanor Ferris-- Is Eleanor still living? No. Well, Eleanor Ferris was dean of girls. And she was a teacher when I was in high school. And she was also a teacher when my son graduated from high school. So I was talking to Eleanor out in the hall after the graduation. I said, "Boy, this makes me feel old having my son graduate from here and me too." And she said, "How do you think it makes me feel, I had both of you here!" So-- It's been our home for years and years. And the only reason we moved out here our home just got to be too much for us to take care of up there. And we had banks around our home, we were on a corner lot. And cutting grass and stuff. And I have a service connected disability from the Army, so it just got to be a little bit too much for us to take care of. So we've been very happy out here at Brook Park Place.

MNK: So you can remember Warwood in the, in the late, from the mid- to late-'20s then?

(568)

EB: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MNK: Earlier ...

EB: In fact--Yeah. In fact, I started at grade school up there at the Warwood Grade School in, let's see, would have been 1920. Yeah, when I started grade school up there. And it was originally a wooden schoolhouse. We had four rooms on the first floor, four rooms on the second floor and a big, wide stairway each end. And that was my first to fifth grade in there. There is a tale, some man, and they don't know what has happened to it. There was supposed to have been a log cabin school built up in Warwood in about 1876 as I recall. And they had a big washout on Glens Run that took the cabin out, teacher and about five or six of the children. And they were all drown in the Ohio River. That was the end of that schoolhouse. Which reminds me of something else too. The original post office for Warwood, and this would have been back in the very early, maybe the late 1700s or early 1800s. The original post office was Glens Run, Virginia. G-L-E-N-S Run, Virginia. And that--We, we had another washout on Glens Run when Fritzie and I lived there.

MNK: What year was the schoolhouse washed away?

(597)

EB: About 1876, as I recall. They can't find--This--There was a man who found a ledger that had the names of the children in and everything else. And it has disappeared. No one knows what happened to it. But these girls, or these women researching for this book found an article to the effect that it had been found, and they had all been killed. The husband of the schoolteacher evidently was there for some reason or other too. And he managed to cling to tree branches and the like until he was rescued by some of the men there. Oh, I have another story too. We had fire trucks up there.

MNK: I was going to ask you.

(609)

EB: Yeah. The, the Loveland fire truck was a three reel hose cart you pull by hand. The Richland, the Richland fire truck was a two reeler hose cart. And I have a picture of the old firehouse there. I--My dad took me there to get my hair cut. A barber was located in the firehouse. And then the one in north Warwood, Glenova, it was a two reeler. And we kids had that later on, and we put a big wooden box on it. It had wheels about six inch, six feet high, I think. And we mounted a box on it, and we'd ride around in that, someone would pull the thing. But the story about the one in Loveland, down south Warwood, W. E. Helfenbine, who had a grocery store in Warwood. I think he also had the first post office. He had the first dance hall where the flappers and their ... went to dance and so on and so forth. But anyhow, W. E. Helfenbine was elected fire chief when they got their new three hose pull cart, hose cart. And the first fire alarm that came in down in Loveland, W. E. Helfenbine, being the fire

(633)

chief, got to the hose house first. And he grabbed the hose cart and started out with it, probably a couple other men with him. The started up 6th Street from Richland Avenue to Warwood Avenue, which was up a hill.

MNK: Pulling this thing by hand?

(639)

EB: Yeah. ... a whole bunch of men ... big, long rope, yeah. And anyhow, Mr. Helfenbine stumbled, he was at the head of the line pulling the cart. He stumbled and fell going up the hill. Well back in those days, the volunteer firemen, I guess they still do it this day too, they, they try, they try to beat the other fire truck there. They always try to be the first one on the scene, you know. So anyhow, by that time, some of the other volunteers came and grabbed the hose cart, the lines to pull it. When Mr. Helfenbine fell, they grabbed the lines and took off with the hose cart and ran over the fire chief with the hose cart! Said thank heavens it didn't hurt him. He was able to get up and go. But they just took off with the hose cart and ran right over him. I was trying to think of anything else that was, any funny incidents that happened here.

MNK: Any good ghost stories?

(658)

EB: No. There was a woman whose husband worked on the Pennsylvania Railroad. And she was going to have a baby, and she was to put a red lantern in the window of the home when he went by in the train if

anything was happening. And he would stop the train and get off and come back and take care of getting her to the doctor or whatever they had to do. This was in the dead of winter, I guess. They said they had snow up to their hips. And the Ebberts family, who was prominent in Warwood. In fact, Mr.--The father, I can't think of his name offhand. But he was the one that started, was instrumental in starting the first bank in Warwood, Bank of Warwood. And they lived right near this woman who was going to have this baby. And I guess that the train went by, and she didn't do anything. Everything was all right. But a prowler, they found, was looking in the window at her. And she fired off a shot from her gun that her husband had left with her. And the

(682)

Ebberts heard it and thought she was having her baby and needed help. So they immediately got in their clothes and hip boots and got out in this snow up to their hips and went next door to see what was wrong. And they found out then what had happened, that she was all right but this prowler was there. So Mr. Ebberts went looking for him, and I guess he tracked him into the woods, and then he lost him. He disappeared. So the husband didn't get back for two days. When he went into Pittsburgh on the train it took him two days to get to Pittsburgh and back to Wheeling again on the Pennsylvania train. So he came back and found out that everything was all right. But I can't, I can't think of anything, any ghost stories really up there that we had.

MNK: Can you talk a little bit about the, the wharf and the, and, at, at Warwood and the, the river and life on the river?

(701)

EB: Well, yes. We, we kids had a bathing beach at 24th Street, North 24th Street. And we had a, a raft there with a diving board on it. We had a swing in a tree that we could swing out onto the river. And right across the river on the First Sister Island we also had a sandy beach over there with a swing on it. And we kids, just for the heck of it I guess you'd say, to show them what wonderful sports and athletes we were, we would swim to the First Sister Island to that beach over there. And when we got our, rid of ... on the other side of the river. But in order to swim over there to the First Sister Island, I said--I was telling Fritzie the other day, that seemed like such a long swim to swim over--

(side two)

MNK: ... remember one day.

EB: Our kids--When we were kids up there and swam over to the island, usually if there was any danger or we felt that there was, we would get a railroad cross tie and swim with that across to the islands. So if anything happened we could hang on to this railroad cross tie. We didn't have any such thing as a life jacket or a life preserver or anything back in those days. And there was one little kid that was a neighbor of ours. Well, our parents all had whistles, and they were pretty loud whistles. And we each had a code, each one of the kids. And I think mine was three whistles. But when our parents wanted us, they'd get out in the backyard or someplace and blow this whistle. We could hear clear down to the river. And it was time for us to get dressed and hike home. But anyhow, this one kid who was probably four or five years younger than me, Kenny Wardle was his name. I think Kenny died several years ago. But Kenny would

come down to the river, and he'd want to go over to the island

(011)

with us older boys. So I would usually get a cross tie and go with him and take him over to the island. Well, we got him over to the island one day and heard his mother whistling for him. So we had to get him, the cross tie and get him back over to the West Virginia side. And he went home to see what his mother wanted. The next thing we know he's down on the riverbank yelling for us. He wanted to come back over to the island. So I had to swim back over to the West Virginia side and got him and took him back to the island and then brought him home. I said I think I swam the river about five or six times that day! Just about wore me out. But the river wasn't as dirty back in those days. I mean we didn't have all the sewage and everything that--That place wasn't populated enough to do--It was dirty, but that didn't make, didn't hurt us too much of anything! We also--We kids had boats as much as we possibly could. Everybody had something to ride around in on the river. And there were two

(022)

Coleman brothers. Their father had a grocery, first grocery store, I think, in Warwood. First automobile in Warwood too. That's another story. But anyhow, we got hold of an old iron hull, steel hull boat, must have been about twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two feet long. And we had an old Overland car motor, four cylinder engine. And we mounted that in the middle of the boat, and we put a wooden hatch over it. And the drive shaft for the propeller came halfway into the boat. And the drive shaft for the motor, we extended that back to it. Well one was higher than the other, so we put a chain drive on the, the two shafts to, so the motor could turn the propeller shaft and make the boat go up the river. Mr. Coleman wouldn't let us go out in the boat unless we had life preservers on, life jackets. So we all had life jackets. And it was the funniest thing, we go up the river with this motor running, and we'd have some water that would get into the boat that we hadn't bailed out, enough to get on this

(033)

chain drive. We looked like a whale spouting going up the river with this chain drive throwing water up in the air as we were going up the river! One day I didn't--I seem to miss out on all the bad things that happen. One day he went down and got in the boat and took off. And they don't know what happened, why, but they said when they took off it took a nose-dive and went to the bottom of the river and that was it! We never saw the boat again after that. The same thing happened. We kids had an Overland touring car. It was an Overland--It was a sedan. It was all enclosed. I think we bought it for twenty-five dollars from some car dealer some place. And we decided we would paint it. And Bob ..., who was, oh, he was president of Tri-State Asphalt, I believe. Is he still around? Anyhow, we gave Bob money to go buy paint. He was going to paint the car. Well no one paid much attention to the thing until it was all done and went out and looked at it. He had painted it like a loaf of Wonder Bread! He got about twelve different colors of paint and just made

(045)

circles all over the car! And I wasn't with them this night. They were coming up from Wheeling to Warwood, and they stopped at 10th and Main Street. That was the old streetcar waiting room. And Wayne

Kanamon, who was president of Warwood Transfer Company, he's still around. Wayne was waiting for the streetcar. Incidentally, he forgot all about this. He didn't remember the last time I saw him. Anyhow, he was waiting for the streetcar. And they picked him up in the old Overland, take him to Warwood. They got up to Warwood. The brakes weren't too good on this Overland. In fact, we had a rope tied to the accelerator and the brake pedal. I used to sit up front, and they'd yell pull, and I'd pull the accelerator up so they could get the car slowed down! And anyhow, they're going up Warwood Avenue. We had double streetcar tracks on Warwood Avenue, north and south, and the width of a streetcar about between the two tracks. So they're going up Warwood Avenue, and the streetcar stopped to let some passengers off. Well you didn't dare pass a streetcar on

(057)

the side they were letting passengers off. You'd probably kill someone. So they headed for the other side of the streetcar to pass the car. They couldn't get the car, Overland, stopped. But they didn't know there was another car coming south at the same time. So they got wedged in between the two streetcars with the Overland like an accordion, I think it was! They said--One of, I believe it was Wayne Kanamon, one of them got out of the car. They said he was rubbing his head and his stomach at the same time. He said, "Don't you guys ever pick me up again and bring me home in this thing." But we always had some kind of a car. I remember when we were juniors in high school, 1931, there were five of us applied for what they called at that time Citizen Military Training Camp. And we were accepted. It was during the Depression, no one had any money at all. And we were accepted to go to Fort Thomas, Kentucky, which was across the river from Cincinnati to the Citizen Military

(067)

Training Camp. What they did, they paid us mileage. And we found out that the five of us each got mileage and what it would cost us to buy an Overland touring, this was a touring, Overland touring car.

FB: ...

(071)

EB: No, this was a touring car, Fritzie. And anyhow, we made money on the trip, our mileage that we were allowed. So we all started off for Fort Thomas, Kentucky, in this old Overland. We had it in Warwood for a while running around up and down Warwood Avenue. We ... after high school ... had the roof down on it. It was a two seater. And we'd go by the firehouse, which was across the street from the high school, and the firemen would usually be out with a hose hosing off the street. And we'd come down Warwood Avenue, and we'd all yell to the fireman and thumb our noses at him. He hit us with his water hose as we'd go by! We got in the car and started for Fort Thomas, Kentucky. And it was a hot day. And Jimmy Letseller, he just died recently, his father had a big plumbing shop here in Warwood. Jimmy--We lost our fan belt, and we got a piece of rope and we tied that onto the fan so we could keep the motor cooled off a little bit. And Jimmy stood out on the running board to

(082)

watch the fan belt to make sure it was running until we got to a service station or something. And we all had our shirts off. We had white deck pants on, Jimmy had his white deck pants on. He forgot that he

didn't have the belt fastened. A car with some women was coming this way, and Jimmy happened to stand up to look over into the motor to see if everything was working. His pants fell off! These, these women--It really made them howl when they saw him when they went by in their car! We got to Fort Thomas, Kentucky, and spent a month there in training. Came back home and got as far as St. Clairsville, and the car conked out and it wouldn't move another inch! We had to call one of the fellows' fathers come out to St. Clairsville and pick us up and bring us in. I think we just junked the car then after that. But--I was trying to think if there was anything else that happened on the river back--

MNK: Would you talk more about the, the commercial traffic on the river?

(093)

EB: Well, you know, the steam boats on the river at that time--We had passenger boats then too. The *Liberty* boat was a passenger boat. We had the little tugboats of course with the barges. Most of the barges at that time were wooden. And they were put together with big iron spikes, six or eight inches long. And we had one girl up there, Margaret Cosen, she was a good swimmer. And she dove off the front of one of the barges one day. It was anchored down the riverbank. And the tide or the current was so swift that when she came up the current carried her under the barge. And fortunately she was able to hold her breath the length of the barge ... But it had her pinned up against the barge. And these spikes sticking out, she got pretty well banged up with these spikes and stuff ... there. But fortunately she recovered and everything was all right in the end there. We would wait for these steam boats to come up the river with the paddle wheels on the back. And when we saw one coming up (coughing) it was making pretty good waves.

MNK: Could you say that again.

(106)

EB: When we saw a boat coming up the river that was making pretty good waves from the paddle wheel, there'd be maybe six or eight, eight large waves right behind the paddle wheel. And we would get into a boat, anything we could find, a canoe or anything else, and paddle out. Just miss the boat to get into that first wave off the paddle wheel so we could ride that and, you know, the boat's going up and down on there. We had one tragedy. A man that was in high school with me, same class, Ralph M. Hough, he and another young man built a boat, a john boat. And they were out in the boat one day and for some reason or another, I guess they were taking waves off one of the steamers. And the boat upset. And I guess the boy that was with him tried to help him, got him, got Ralph M. Hough to hold onto the john boat. And he was going to swim ashore and try to get someone to help them. But for some reason or another I guess he couldn't hold onto the boat, and he slipped off and he was drowned. Now we were all juniors in high school at that time. I remember

(119)

Ralph was president of the High Wire Association, YMCA group. And I had to take over his job as president that year, junior year. And then the senior year they just elected me. I had it for two years then. But that's the only tragedy that I can recall that really happened to any of us that fooled around down on the river. We did, we--

MNK: That's an amazing record.

(124)

EB: We lived on that river when we kids. I mean we were down there every day. We'd be down there all day. And we'd come home and get cleaned up and have dinner with our family, and the next thing you know we're all back down the river again! But we were back and forth quite a bit.

MNK: Were there--Go ahead.

(128)

EB: We went through--The '36 flood was the biggest flood we had here in Wheeling, got up to fifty-five feet, I think it was. And Fritzie and I had been married--In fact, you were pregnant then. We were married in '34, this was the '36 flood. We were living in an apartment building on 16th Street downtown. And we had refugees from the flood in our apartment. We were on the third floor apartment. We had telephone operators, bakery truck drivers. We had everyone! And they were coming and going all hours of the day and night, you know, working shift work and stuff. And we got word that they thought the Suspension Bridge was going to go out, that the cables had broken off, some of the cables. And the rescue workers on the Island needed food. So Fritzie, even though she was pregnant, made a big pot of vegetable soup, didn't you?

FB: ...

(138)

EB: And we took it down to the bridge and sent it over to the Island so they'd have something to eat while they were working over there. We weren't in the flood ourselves. She had a cousin, they were in the flood. The flood was clear up to the ceiling in their apartment. And I went down with her husband after the waters went down. We just went into the apartment with a water hose and just sprayed the whole apartment, walls and everything else, to get it cleaned up some. We haven't really had a, a big flood since then, I mean that's done very much damage. Of course they built all these flood dams around the countryside here to hold the water back as much as possible.

MNK: But you remember the old, the old dams?

(146)

EB: Oh, yeah, yeah. We had the dam at Warwood, the old Number 12 Dam at Warwood. We kids used to go down there quite a bit. In fact, you burned your dinner up one Sunday, I believe, down there in ...

FB: ...

(150)

EB: Took our son down so he could watch them walk a boat through. And we got so interested in it she forgot that she had dinner on the stove at home!

FB: ...

EB: But we had dams about every twelve mile apart, we had dams back in those days. We had the McMechen Dam, and then we had the Warwood Dam. Then we had Wellsburg and New Cumberland. And that's when the river, the stage of the river was supposed to be nine feet at all times with the small dams that were in. I don't know what the stage is now with these new dams. I think they keep it around

twenty feet now or maybe better than that, I don't know. But these were nine foot stages that we had.

And--

MNK: Was it called wicket dams?

(161)

EB: Yeah, yeah. They had a boat that would go out and hook onto the wickets and let them up and down and so on and so. I'm trying to think. We used to go down to the river a lot on Halloween. We'd spend the night out. We'd go over to the islands usually, a bunch of us on Halloween night. And--Oh, one night we were there when the morning came for us to start home. The river was fogged in. And we got in the boat that we had, about four or five of us, to start back home from the--It was the Second Sister Island we were on. And we didn't know where we were when we got out in that river! I was looking to go over the dam any time! We finally made it to shore, but how we ever got to shore I'll never know. It was so foggy you just didn't know where you were at all. And then my brother tells about the time they were on the First Sister Island. And my brother had a cannon. In fact, I inherited it later. On the Fourth of July we would use it. It was a small iron cannon with a war hole

(173)

about so big. And we would put black powder in and put wadding, newspaper cloth or something and tamp it down, use a wooden tamp, hammer and tamp it down tight. And then we had a fuse that we would put down in the little fuse hole like that and wait for the cannon to go off. Well if you had it packed good and a good load of black powder in there, when it went off the load of packing went out one end of the cannon, but the cannon backed up about several feet when it went off ... My brother tells about the steamboat, passenger boat, I think it was the *Liberty*. That was the one we were most familiar with on the river. But anyhow, my brother said they had packed the cannon to set it off on the Fourth of July morning. And no one noticed that the *Liberty* boat was coming down the river. It was almost opposite the island by the time they noticed it was there. In the meantime, though, they lit the fuse. Oh, they had the ramrod stuck in the cannon is what happened, couldn't get it out. So they

(186)

lit the fuse. The cannon went off, all the packing came out. The ramrod came out, went over and hit the smokestack on the *Liberty* steamboat! My brother said it scared the kids half to death. They stopped the boat, dead stop right then and there, put a boat over the side. And the crew got in the boat and started for the island to find out who was shooting at them on the boat there! They finally got away from the island, got away from them. Nothing happened about it, but he says it scared him half to death when that thing went off.

MNK: That's a great story.

(194)

EB: (laughing) Yeah, that was a funny one. But--

MNK: What--In, in the '20s what, what--Did you see lots of different kinds of boats on the river then?

(197)

EB: No, not too much. Of course people weren't into passenger boats at that time. And we had no

marinas here at all back in those days. Later on we got a marina on the island. Had a marina in Warwood. But back in the '20s, even the '30s we didn't even have, have any marinas here. There wasn't too much boating on the river as far as individuals were concerned or families.

MNK: Just commercial stern wheelers--

EB: Yeah.

MNK: Or john boats.

(202)

EB: Tow boats, tow boats and the passenger boats, yeah. Fritzie's brother-in-law finally had a houseboat with a Volkswagen motor on it. And it was a very comfortable little boat. I think it slept two or three, no, maybe four people in it. But it was hard to manage because the engine, the Volkswagen engine wasn't enough to handle, especially in a wind on the river. In fact, we were out in it one day. And Fritzie and her sister and her brother-in-law and I were on the boat. And we got up to just this side, underneath the Number 12 Dam at Warwood, almost underneath. And we were trying to bring the boat around and go back to Wheeling in the wind. And we couldn't get the darned thing around at all. It just kept going up the river. And we tried about everything we could think of. Well finally what we did, we took the anchor, and we threw the anchor overboard. And I got up on the prow of the thing, of the anchor. And I managed to get the anchor lodged in the swell, and then he, and we

(217)

were able to pull the boat in front of it and around with the anchor in order to get it turned around enough to get back to Wheeling. And I think they bought another engine for it after that. They had two motors on it then after that to control it. They had a heck of a time. But as far as any other boating, we did--A man in South Wheeling, it was a friend of your parents, Elwood Close, he had a cabin cruiser that--We had been on that a couple times. Oh, your mother and father were on that one night in a storm too, scared them half to death.

FB: ...

(225)

EB: Yeah, that's right, yeah. But there just, just wasn't too much activity as far as individuals or families boating on the river.

MNK: Were there any colonies of people living in boats?

EB: We--Yeah, we had houseboats along the river that people lived in.

MNK: Did you know any of those folks at all?

(229)

EB: Not really. I carried newspapers when I was a kid. And we did have some houseboats anchored up just north of Warwood. Had a little park on the riverbank there that they had built, and they had two or three houseboats there. And I used to carry newspapers to them. And I guess I was probably in high school at the time. They're people from some foreign element. I don't know exactly what they were. I was half scared of them myself! I'd deliver their newspaper and get the heck out of there! I wouldn't stay around very much. But they did have some houseboats on the river. In fact, one Halloween there was a

houseboat down at 24th Street. And we kids had made a batch of home brew. No beer or anything back in those days! And we were going to listen to something on the radio. We had--Somebody's house that we went to. And we had this home brew with us. No, it wasn't a house, it was an apartment over a garage, and Marsh's. And we had it up there. Anyhow, we were

(244)

drinking the home brew, and everybody got pretty well souped up on the home brew. And I remember one of the fellows that we ran around with all the time, he was a great, big kid, played football at Linsly, must have weighed about 300 pound. But he couldn't make it across the gangplank to get over onto the houseboat with the rest of us so he crawled across the gangplank and finally got over without falling into the water and all. But we, we did have people living on the river in these houseboats then. But, as I say, they were, just weren't the type of people that we wanted to associate with and get too close to! We were a little bit frightened of them. I mean, you know, how they lived, whether they were robbing people, or just what they were doing.

MNK: Were there many, many different ethnicities of people that settled in, in Warwood?

(255)

EB: No, Warwood--You know, it was strange. Not that I'm a racist or anything, but it's just the way I was raised. We didn't have any black people in school at all in Warwood when I was a kid.

FB: ...

EB: Huh?

FB: ... until ...

(259)

EB: Well, there were some black people in the mining community, the coal mining community down in south Warwood or south of Warwood. Of course they went to Wheeling to, they had a separate school back then, Lincoln, Lincoln High School, for the black children. And they were taken down there to school. I remember when they changed the law here in Wheeling. Our son was in high school at that time. And we knew they were going to get some black students in Warwood High School. A few of them, just a handful. So we sat down and talked to our son about the situation, try to make him understand that they were people too, you know. I mean how to be treated and so on and so forth. And it really was a good thing we did because (coughing) Excuse me. Our son was a diabetic from the time he was four years old. He was insulin dependent from the time he was four years old. He's fifty--He'll be fifty-eight tomorrow, next day, which they say is a miracle. He's lived that long on

(272)

insulin, being fifty-eight years old. But anyhow, he would go--We would send him to camp for diabetic children, to Cleveland Clinic. And he ran into a lot of colored children at this camp at the Cleveland Clinic. And he got friendly with them. He'd choose them for his baseball team, and they lived in the same cabins and stuff. And everything went along fine. But I think it was for the fact that we did sit down and talk to him about the situation before he got involved in anything like that. But Warwood was pretty much just a, a white, Christian community. There was one Catholic church in, in Warwood. And they had Presbyterian

church, Lutheran church, Methodist church, Christian church. It was pretty much just a, an ordinary white, Christian community, Warwood was at that time. And--

MNK: What are, what are some of your earliest memories of Wheeling itself?

(285)

EB: Not too much really, because we were pretty much isolated in Warwood when we were kids. About the only time we got to Wheeling was if we took a ride down on the streetcar or something or went to a movie downtown. But outside of that, our parents went to town and did all the shopping and everything and left us at home in Warwood. And we just didn't have much ... Now there were a lot of Wheeling high school boys would come to Warwood looking for dates. I think we had better looking women in Warwood than Wheeling! She's Wheeling High School! But we never seemed to bother--We did have some of our fellows from Warwood High School went down--The, the Wheeling Hospital used to be situated in North Wheeling between the 1st and 3rd Street on the riverbank there. And they had a nursing home there. Well, the girls that were studying to be nurses lived in the nursing home.

FB: Nurses.

(298)

EB: And some of us, some of the fellows in Warwood would go down and date the girls at the nursing home there. But outside of that we just didn't have too much contact with anyone. Our biggest thing when we were in high school was to beat Wheeling in a football game some day. And we finally did it one, one time! Wheeling was always such a big high school and we were such a little one that we just didn't feel that we had much of a chance. But--

MNK: You, you remember the Wheeling windows at Christmas time or any of that sort of thing?

(305)

EB: Well, yeah. We would go down at Christmas time. Of course Wheeling--About the only--I, I recall going to the large department stores in Wheeling at Christmas time. They would usually have a display of trains, miniature trains, and I enjoyed them when I was a kid. I always had to go and see them.

MNK: Which stores?

(309)

EB: But I--Stone and Thomas, they always had a big Christmas display up on the top floor of their building. And there was L. S. Goods, they would have their trains set up. And Stifels and Taylors Department Store. The Hub. There were a lot of, a lot of large department stores at that time down in Wheeling that we would go to. And it's just a shame that Wheeling is, they just don't have anything down there anymore. I mean everything went out to the mall. And to have a business down in Wheeling, I don't know.

FB: You were in the first Christmas parade ...

(317)

EB: Oh, lord, yeah. I'll tell that story too! I'm sorry. No, I was in the first Warwood High School band, marching band, in nineteen and twenty-eight, as I recall. I was a freshman. And we were going to be in the first Christmas parade, our, our first Christmas parade for our Warwood High School band. And we went

downtown and got into the parade. The instructions were that we were to go down Main Street to 16th Street. At 16th Street we were to turn left and go over to Market. Our band drum major, Harry Parshall-- Harry's still around. I was telling this story at the Lion's Club fiftieth anniversary the other night. Harry was the drum major. He was about the tallest one in the class, and they bought him a big, white fur hat. He couldn't twirl a baton at all. He got a military baton, it had a wood shank on it and a big ball on top. So he drilled a hole through that and put a handle on it. And he's going down Main Street at the head of the band and twirling (laughing). Anyhow, we head to 16th Street, the band turned left at 16th Street to go over to Market. And

(335)

Harry must not have gotten the word. He went on down Main Street over across the bridge headed for South, Center Wheeling all by himself! He finally then, I guess, quit hearing any music and turned around and couldn't see us. So he ran back and got in front of the band again. But that was the funniest thing. I told Harry--They asked me to come up and give a talk at Lion's Club about, at their anniversary, and Harry was there. And his son-in-law was there too. I told Harry, and before I gave the talk, I said, "I don't want to embarrass Harry," but I said, "I have to tell this story about Harry when we were in high school." But we had quite a band there. I played cymbals in the band. I had no musical talent at all!

FB: ...

(346)

EB: Huh?

FB: ...

MNK: No, it's all right.

EB: And we--Finally I graduated to bass drum. I think that was my senior year. And I used to try to beat the head off of the bass drum all the time! And our band director was also the band director at the penitentiary in Moundsville. Well he would come up from directing the band in Moundsville with his forty-five still strapped on him, you know, to come up for our practice! And I remember we were practicing in the gym up at Warwood High School. And I was trying to beat the head off the bass drum one day. And finally our band director, J. S. Dennard was his name, our teacher. He got so mad at me he picked up his metal music stand in front and threwed it clear to the back of the band where I was the bass drum! And, if you'll pardon the expression, it was, "Damn it, Bentfield, you sound like the Salvation Army!" He finally got me to

(360)

stop trying to beat the head off the drum then after that time, that happened that time. We were a little mischievous about things back in those days! But as I've often said, we, we never went around destroying any property or anything. I mean we just got in trouble once in a while with the law and the like. But for some reason or another, when we were kids we had no money at all. And I worked the whole time when I was a kid. I mean I was a soda jerker at one time at a drugstore across from the high school. Carried newspapers. I raised vegetables, had a vegetable garden, sold them around the community in my little wagon ... I had. Picked coal at the gob fire and sold it for five cents a bushel. Take it up in my little

coaster wagon and dump it in their coal cellar! And finally my senior year in high school, to make some money, I borrowed money from my father. I found out I could buy steel wool made for women's kitchens in little canisters. They were different colors. They were mounted on a display board. And as you scoured your pans out and wore off the steel

(379)

wool, you'd push it out another notch and stick a little thing in, keep on using it until it was all gone. I must have bought a truckload of that stuff. I had an attic full of that stuff. But I got several of the kids that were in my class in high school to work with me. And we would get my dad's old 1926 Dodge, and we would go to Moundsville, and we'd go to Wellsburg. Went all over the place here. And we'd just take a day and just canvas the whole town selling steel wool from house to house. I made a lot of money off of that deal too! Well, in fact, I had enough money to pay my way in college for two years that I saved up from some of these enterprises that I got into. But that was back during the Depression, and, boy, you just didn't have one nickel to rub against another back in those days. I have my dad's old pay book, of course now this is before the Depression. But people talk about the good old days, when dad worked on the streetcar line back in nineteen and ten, they didn't have, they didn't have

(394)

one day off. Nothing was scheduled for time off. I don't know how many hours a day they worked, as much as they, was necessary, I guess. But his pay was ten cents an hour when he was a conductor on the streetcar line. Fortunately, my father's father had some money. He was on the board of directors of the steel mill over in Bellaire. And the old Bellaire Brewery, he was on the board of directors of that. He had a lot of property, rental property in Bellaire.

MNK: His name?

(402)

EB: Was Ernst, Ernst Bentfeld, German, old German guy. She says ... (laughter)

FB: ...

EB: Okay. She swears up and down my grandfather was Jewish! He was very Catholic, though, so I don't know. But anyhow, my grandfather had enough property that he gave each one of his sons, he had about four sons I think and a couple daughters, but he gave each one of them a home when they got married. And my father had a home down Bellaire. And my sister and brother, who were born down in Bellaire, they were ten and twelve years older than I was. And when they moved to Warwood--And my dad went to Warwood and built the home up there. He sold the home that his father give him in Bellaire. But he didn't quite have enough money to pay for the one in Warwood. So his father gave him enough money to pay off the home in Warwood too, in addition to what he got for the house he sold in Bellaire. So he got along pretty well during his time. But the, the Depression, people just can't realize what we kids went through during the Depression back in '29. Huh?

(421)

FB: ...

EB: Well, from '29 on up through the time we were ... (clock chiming)

MNK: You were talking about how rough it was on kids during the Depression.

EB: Depression, yeah, from '29 on. We just didn't have any money to do anything. Fortunately--We had a theater in Warwood. Well, actually there were two theaters in Warwood. One of them was, dates way back to when I was just a child, the Gem Theater. It was in back of a confectionery. Had a soda fountain there and sold ice cream. And they had a side hallway that went back along the confectionery and a window built in the hallway for the ticket seller. And you went back through this hallway and bought your ticket and went on back into the theater. And a lot of the kids that could stoop down low enough and get under the window so they'd get back in there without paying to get in to see the movie! Well then they opened a movie on 17th Street, North 17th Street. Beanie Morgan built a theater there. And I think it was about ten cents admission charge. But what I did, I got a job with Beanie Morgan. I went, I passed programs out for the week's showing of what pictures were going to be showing for the week. And I would pass them out to all the homes

(442)

in Warwood on Saturday. And then he would give me five or six passes so I could go to the theater and see the movies for no charge for passing out these programs! So that was mainly my entertainment. Even, even when I was dating a girl in high school we'd use those passes to go to the theater. And that was about the only recreation we had back in those days. We did have a dance place at Wheeling Park, the White Palace, that we would go out there, have an evening, take a girlfriend out or go stag. And we were able to dance for five cents out there. We'd buy a strip of tickets, maybe five or ten tickets, spend the evening dancing for a nickel a dance. And how we ever got to Wheeling Park from Warwood I don't remember. I don't know how we got out there.

FB: ...

(457)

EB: Huh?

FB: How about your miniature golf ...

EB: Oh, yeah. When miniature golf was first popular, little nine hole golf courses, wasn't anything around here at all. And I was familiar with what they were all about from going on vacation with my mother and father. We would go to Cedar Point up on Lake Erie usually for vacation for a week or so in the summer. So came back and got with these two Coleman boys whose father had the first automobile! I have to tell that story about Lou Coleman! (laughing) He went down to Wheeling, he had a grocery store. He had a livery stable, which they called a horse piddle. And--

MNK: Where was that?

(470)

EB: In Warwood at 24th Street on Warwood Avenue. And anyhow, there was a lot next door to the ... I don't have the slightest idea who that lot belonged to.

FB: ...

EB: But there was a vacant lot next door to the grocery store, and, and the horse piddle, livery stable. So I got the idea one day of, during the summer, of building a miniature golf course. And we would charge

admission and so on and so forth and make some money. So anyhow, Mr. Coleman gave us permission to build a miniature golf course. And I went and got used green lumber. Oh, it was a mess, not dried out or anything. And it warped when it dried out. But I was able to lay out the golf course and make the holes with two by fours that I had. We went to Scott Lumber Company mill down Warwood and got sawdust and dyed it with bluing that they used for clothing when they washed clothes and stuff. It was sort of a blue-green dye. We dyed the sawdust and put that down for the grass and, and the fairway. And we, we weren't

(490)

allowed to charge. We, we were charging, I think, thirty-five cents for the--Well, we had lights up even too. We strung lights. And the city license man came up to see me one day and wanted to know about our license to operate this miniature golf course we were charging people to play. I think he wanted something like three or five hundred dollars for a license back in those days. No way. So anyhow, I had a sign made, and a fellow painted it for me, that a free-will offer, a, a free-will silver offering will be accepted for the use of the golf course! So most people would pass thirty-five cents or fifty cents then to use it. So we got by with that for quite some time. And of course just as most high school kids back in those days, everyone got tired of being, taking care of the golf course and working nights and couldn't have a date with their girlfriend and so on and so forth. We wound up one day, about five of us out on the golf course with the golf balls and the clubs hitting the balls up into the

(509)

woods. And that was the end of the golf course, we just quit! But Mr. Coleman, Lou Coleman, I have to tell. Lou Coleman went downtown and got one of these cars. And I can imagine now what it would look like. It was probably one of these open air, two seaters that the brakes and all the handles and levers on it and everything, you know. But anyhow, they knew--They went down to get the car and bring it up. And everyone's sitting out on the front porch at 24th Street next door to the grocery store waiting for Lou to come by with his new car. So Lou came up from Wheeling, and he went by the house and everybody yelled and waved and Lou waved back, went around the block. Kept circling the block until he ran out of gasoline. He didn't know how to stop the car! He finally ran out of gas and got the car stopped. I bet that was the craziest thing, him going around the block to run out of gas to get the darned thing stopped. But--Some of those old cars that they had then. Fritzie's uncle was a--We had a livery stable first, Uncle Bruce.

(528)

FB: ... grandfather.

EB: Huh? Yeah, your grandfather. And Uncle Bruce, he had a Stutz Bearcat, didn't he? That was one of those two seater jobs, it was like a racing car. And he finally wound up with--He had the Olds and Cadillac agency here in Wheeling for years, GMC trucks too. Bruce Seabright had this auto agency here. Old Bruce wound up with some money. He was quite a promoter. I kid Fritzie all the time about when we got married. We were going, going together in college at West Virginia Wesleyan. We were dating. It was my sophomore year, and it was her junior year. And I kid her all the time about when we got married. I said, "Here I thought I was marrying Bruce's daughter!" I thought I was going to get my hands on some of

this money! Here I got the wrong Seabright! (laughing)

MNK: Tell us some stories about your mother.

(546)

EB: My mother. Well, I don't know. Jenny, that was Jenny, Sarah Jane Kenny. She was a country girl, came from out on the farm. And really, she was a--Well, me being the youngest, she raised me practically by herself. I mean she told my father, "You raised the other two, I'm going to raise this one the way I want to." And I told Fritzie, she and Fritzie never got along together. But fortunately she didn't last very long after we were married. But she was a pal of mine while we were, while I was young. I mean we palled around together. She'd take me to town to shop, buy me anything I wanted in the way of clothing, things like that. Go out for dinner together and stuff. And we really got along great. My sister was twenty-eight years old and developed a tumor. And they operated on her. And we heard that the tumor broke when they removed it. Now I don't know how true that is, but anyhow, she developed, I guess it was peritonitis and--

(567)

FB: ...

EB: Died practically overnight after this operation. And that just killed my mother. I mean my mother just changed completely after that. She was a very difficult person to get along with after that happened. But before that, why, she was a very nice person to get along with. And--

MNK: She didn't mind you going down and playing in the river?

(575)

EB: Not really. I mean they knew all of us kids were going down there and doing it, and they just prayed to god, I guess, that somebody was looking after us while we were down there, I don't know. But my family was never a religious family really. Mother would go to church occasionally downtown on the streetcar. She would take me with her two or three times, I recall. My father was a Catholic. And mixed marriages back in those days just didn't work out too well. I mean mother being Protestant and dad being Catholic. Dad and, I believe it was a sister or a sister-in-law, took me and had me baptized without my mother knowing about it, to the Catholic church after I was born. And I was never raised in the Catholic church at all there because dad never got to go to church ... working on the streetcar line, and I was more or less on my own. So my--

MNK: Your mother never knew about it?

(596)

EB: Well later on, yeah, she found out. I think she was pretty well disturbed about the whole thing. I have a saint's name, which no one knows about at all! Ernest St. Claire Bentfield is what my full name--I just go Ernest S. all the time on everything. But dad did--He would take me to church occasionally when he had an opportunity. And a very strange thing happened though when I was in the Army. I was in Weisenfelds, Germany, one Sunday. Our corps chaplain, who was a lieutenant colonel, that I was acquainted with, knew him personally, decided to have church services for us in this town this Sunday. And he got a church, and he said he had to practically knock the parson down to get the keys to the church. So we went there for services. And after church was over I went to, to the chaplain and I said, "Chappy, is this a Catholic church

where we had our services today?” And he kind of grinned, and he said, “Why do you ask?” And I said, “Well,” I said, “I was baptized Catholic and

(620)

knew something about the Catholic church from my father.” And I said, “The statue of the Virgin Mary’s up by the altar with the baby Jesus in her arms and the altar rail. Stations of the Cross around in the inside of the church.” And he said, “Well, we’re right in the territory that was the home of Martin Luther.” And he said, “Their entire congregation’s here, Catholic congregations, who at that time, back in the 1400s became what they called Followers of Luther and never changed the interiors of the churches at all. They all stayed the same as they were back at that time.” So anyhow, as I got older I started to--My brother took me to a Methodist church Sunday school. And then I, I was very active in the Methodist church. I was president of our young people’s association, went to a conference down at West Virginia Wesleyan College and stuff. And when I got married though Fritzie had been raised in the Lutheran church all of her life.

And I decided there wasn’t any

(643)

sense in us going to two different churches, so I just flopped over and became a Lutheran then and joined her church. And been a Lutheran for sixty-one years now. We’ve been married sixty-one years. May the 30th. Sixty-one years. I’ll be eighty-one May the 29th, and we were married sixty-one years on the 30th, the next day.

MNK: That’s exciting.

EB: I said she gave me a wedding present I’ll never get rid of! Or something!

MNK: So you all started off kind of young.

(656)

EB: Yeah, we were both--I was--It was the day after my twentieth birthday, and Fritzie was still nineteen when we got married. We had a lot better sense than the kids today have though! We were more mature I think. We didn’t have any children at, at least. I said, “Boy, when we got married--”No one knew me at all. They didn’t--She was dating some guy steadily then down at Wheeling for a couple years, I guess, and no one knew anything about me at all. And, boy, shocked the whole dog gone neighborhood. I said, “I think all of our neighbors checked the calendars when we got married!” Marked it on the calendars to see when the first baby was going to get here! But fortunately we knew what we were doing and didn’t want a family at that time. We couldn’t afford to have one, so we waited for three years until we--Well, her, her cousins were all having children, and we decided about time for us to have one too to keep up with them.

So we had our child then. And--But we have been

(678)

very well blessed with everything that’s happened. I mean we had our troubles and hardships and stuff, but things have always worked out for us all right. She’s having a pretty rough time of it right now. She has a sister that’s been--

FB: ...

EB: ...

FB: He'll go on forever.

MNK: This is who?

(685)

EB: Eleanor Stever. Eleanor Stever was a soprano, graduated from Warwood High School. Her father was cashier of the Bank of Warwood. Her mother taught music and taught vocal and so on and so forth. And Eleanor was educated in music all through school. She went to the Juilliard School after she got out of high school and became a very, a very well-known soprano with the Metropolitan Opera for a number of years. She died just recently. And she taught me how to dance. We were both juniors in high school, and the junior/senior prom was coming up. And we had to take someone to the prom from our class. So Eleanor taught me how to dance so I could take her to the junior prom. And one of them in here that I'm not allowed to tell you about. Turn the machine off, and I'll tell you.