

**The David and Barbara Pryor Center  
for  
Arkansas Oral and Visual History**

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**Arkansas Memories Project**

Delbert Lee  
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford  
October 25, 2011  
Cane Hill, Arkansas

## Objective

Oral history is a collection of an individual's memories and opinions. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using these interviews should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center website at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

## Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first twenty minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first twenty minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify the spelling and words that we cannot understand with certainty.

- Brackets enclose
  - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
  - annotations for clarification and identification; and
  - standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.

### **Citation Information**

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<http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.asp#citations>.

**Scott Lunsford interviewed Delbert Lee on October 25, 2011, in Cane Hill, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, Delbert—uh—I'm Scott Lunsford. You're Delbert Lee. We're here with the Pryor Center—uh—staff—in—in—in Cane Hill at the Presbyterian Church. And today's date is [*camera clicks*] October 25. The year is 2011. And—uh—we're about to—um—have a conversation, and we'll go as long as—uh—you feel good about talkin'. Um—I'm gonna tell you that we're recording this stuff in high-defin—high-definition audio and video. Uh—we will—uh—give you a copy of all the raw footage. We call it our preliminary DVD, and—and you'll get a preliminary DVD of everything that we do here today in our—in our interview. Uh—that'll be probably followed up, if not at the same time, it'll be followed up with a written transcript. And the transcript is verbatim. It's—pretty much reflects exactly what we said. It's not always necessarily grammatically correct; it's just how we talk.

Delbert Lee: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:07] SL: Uh—we'll ask you to look at both of those things—  
um—the—the video—uh—the interview itself—and read the  
transcript. And if there's a—if there's anything in there that  
you're not comfortable with—uh—you just let us know, and we'll  
take it out because, Delbert, this is your story, and it's gonna be  
the way you want it told. I mean, it's you tellin' the story, so we  
wanna make sure that you're happy with it and that it's the way  
you want it. And—uh—if there are—are something—some things  
to be taken out, we'll take 'em out. Now I have to tell you, it's  
very rare whenever we have to take somethin' out. It's usually  
something like a disparaging remark about a no-good brother-in-  
law or [*laughter*] somebody bein' too fat or [*DL laughs*], you  
know, it's . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: It's rarely anything . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . you know, embarrassing, other than you really don't want to  
upset somebody. Um—and if—uh—after that—eh—eh—once  
you're happy with—with what we've done in—in its preliminary  
form, then we will actually make a DVD that has chapter  
markers in it where you can go to different sections of the  
interview.

DL: Mh-hmm.

[00:02:21] SL: It'll have an electronic—uh—copy of all the scans that we do of your pictures. Uh—it'll also have an elec—uh—uh—you know, an electronic copy of the transcript. Uh—so you'll have all the stuff that we've done on this DVD package, and there'll probably be several DVDs in it.

DL: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—and then at the same time, we will—uh—pick out highlights—uh—of this interview—video highlights, and we will post those video highlights on the Internet and on the Pryor Center website. And along with those highlights, we'll post all of the audio of this interview, and people will be able to download that audio, and they can put it in their MP3 players or their CD players . . .

DL: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and they can—that way they have kind of an audio book—uh—of the interview. And we'll post the—uh—transcript, so people'll be able to download the transcript and read the transcript. And we will encourage—uh—students taking Arkansas history in the public schools and in college, and—uh—we'll encourage documentarians and researchers from all over the—the world—uh—to look at this stuff to get the—you know,

your story.

DL: Hmm.

[00:03:39] SL: Uh—when Barbara and David started—Barbara and David Pryor started this, they felt it was time for the people of Arkansas to tell their own stories instead of the people in New York and Hollywood tellin' . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . it for 'em.

DL: Hmm.

SL: So if you're comfortable with all of that rigmarole . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . and all that mess . . .

DL: It's fine with me. I don't care. [SL claps] Yeah.

SL: That's a great [laughs] answer.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

[00:03:58] SL: Okay, well, we'll get started. Now—uh—Delbert, I usually start with when and where you were born.

DL: I was born in a little town called Red Elm, South Dakota, which is near—uh—Gettysburg. And I was born—uh—on June 24, 1928. And my mother was Flora Meeks, and my father was Frank Lee, and they was—uh—married. I don't remember the date. We've got it out there in the paper when it was—we was married, and I

was the third child. I have a brother and two sisters, and we lived in South Dakota for quite some time. Got actually ate out by the grasshoppers when [*laughter*] [*unclear words*]. And then we moved back to Illinois, and I went to school in Belvidere, Illinois, and we had—uh—cows and pigs and what have you, like you normally would. And they—I got—grew up there, and I had a paper route. Used to get up at—uh—four o'clock in the morning to peddle papers. And then I went to work in a garage when I was fourteen, and I worked there for a couple years at nights after school and on Saturday. And—uh—I was sixteen when I got my first car. [*Vehicle passes*] And—uh—the fellow I worked for—his name was Doc Wolf, and he financed the car for me.

[00:05:54] SL: What kind of car was it?

DL: Nineteen thirty-four Chevrolet. Probably one of the best cars I ever had. And—uh—he took a little bit out of my paycheck every week for it. Cost me two hundred and fifty dollars. [*Laughter*] But—uh—yeah, but really, that's what it cost me, and it was a—yeah, it was good car.

[00:06:21] SL: Well, now—um—so back in—uh—South Dakota . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . uh—you were—it was a rural life. It was farm. You all—you



lived on a farm.

DL: Oh, I—the closest town was probably about twenty miles.

SL: So you were out there pretty far.

DL: Oh yeah, yeah. When my—uh—youngest sister was born—she was born in January. And—uh—we hooked up a team of horses and what they call—uh—now a bobsled, but then it was a—somethin' like a—what they called a stone boat. And we drove—uh—twenty miles cross-country to my uncle's house, where my mother gave birth to my sister.

SL: And so . . .

DL: God, that was a cold ride [*laughs*], I'll tell you.

[00:07:09] SL: When was that? What—it was a part—in the winter?

DL: Yeah, January.

SL: Oh my gosh.

DL: Yeah, and we drove across fence posts and anything else. It was just—the snow that was deep and that—but—uh—I didn't—uh—especially care for South Dakota because of all the snow.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And beautiful country, but—uh—I just didn't like the cold weather.

[00:07:32] SL: Well—and what was your sister's name?

DL: Now that one was Ardell. And my oldest sister was Alene, and

the brother's name was Glen.

[00:07:40] SL: And you—were you the—uh—youngest or . . .

DL: Yeah, I was the third.

SL: You were the third and then . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . the sister, Ardell . . .

DL: I had a sister and brother older . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: . . . than what I was. And—uh—a sister younger and—uh—but no, you know, we's like most kids—we fought and carried on. But—uh—tryin' to get out of work here and there and push it off on the other guy. You know how that goes. But—uh—yeah, it—uh—it—it was a—fun for those times, growin' up. It was hard times, but—uh—and—uh—it was . . .

[00:08:18] SL: Well, yeah, you were born right there at the . . .

DL: Depression.

SL: . . . start of the Depression.

DL: Yeah.

[00:08:21] SL: And—uh—was the farm a—a cattle farm or . . .

DL: No, it was just a—a regular—a farming unit—uh—you know, for corn and grain and stuff like that. But . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: . . . uh—it got—we didn't—well, we had some dairy cows, but—  
we shipped milk, but—uh . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: . . . other than that—uh—it was—uh—basically just a farming  
unit.

[00:08:46] SL: No—no runnin' water; no electricity; no . . .

DL: You got—you gotta be jokin'. [*Laughter*] And—and we had  
outhouses. [*Laughter*] Yeah, thank God for the catalogs at that  
time, I tell you. [*Laughter*]


SL: Sears and Roebuck.

DL: Yeah. [*Laughs*] But—uh—yeah, that worked out real good,  
but—and you talkin' bout outhouses—uh—my grandfather—uh—  
he had a—course, they had fourteen kids they raised, and—uh—  
he went out to the outhouse one day where they lived. And—  
uh—they got the bright idea, and they caught him in there, and  
they tipped it over with the door down. [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh!

DL: Oh yeah! [*Laughter*] Yeah, the whole bunch really got in  
trouble, I tell you. But—uh—[*SL laughs*] you'd have to know my  
grandfather. He was a—a very quiet fellow. He [*laughs*] never  
said much to anybody, but once in a while he'd really get out of  
line. But—yeah, they got in trouble for that one.

[00:09:49] SL: So you remember your granddad? Is that on your dad's side?

 DL: Yeah—well, oh yeah, I—my grandfather always had a mustache, and I'll never forget it. I was uptown one day—why, I must've been twelve or thirteen—and this guy come walkin' down the road and—the sidewalk, and he says, "Hi, Del," and I said, "Hi," and I went on home, and I didn't have the slightest idea who he was. And I got home, and he was in the house with no mustache, and then it dawned on me who it was. [*SL laughs*] I—I'd never seen him without a mustache, and—uh—what had happened was a guy told—told him—he said, "I'd give you ten bucks if you shave off your mustache." So he held out his hand, this guy put ten bucks in it, and he shaved off his mustache and—uh—grew it right back again. But [*laughter*] that's the only time I ever seen him [*laughter*] without a mustache and . . .

SL: That's easy money.

DL: Yeah, but he'd never ever—I never ever seen him other than that without a mustache in his life. And—uh—but he was—he was quite a character, really.

[00:10:56] SL: Delbert, I—I'm always lookin' for the oldest story. Do you member any stories or any conversations you had with your granddad or your grandma?

DL: Well, my grandda—uh—my grandmother—uh—uh—she was hard of hearing.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:11:13] DL: But she loved to write music and poetry and that, and if you smoked in her house, she—she knew it the minute you lit up. She didn't allow smokin' in her house. And—uh—with her—uh—she—in her kitchen at the—between the kitchen and her back porch, there was a set of cabinets. And there was doors on both sides. Well, she had baked cookies and put 'em on—out here in this cabinet . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DL: . . . and she'd say, "I—now you—you leave 'em alone." [*SL laughs*] But she knew that there—everybody'd come in on the porch and reach in through the cabinet to get the cookies out of the jar anyway. [*Laughter*] But that was just her way, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: But—uh—with—uh—as many grandchildren as they had—uh—oh, she—and she cooked on a wood stove and that. And—uh—yeah, my grandfather—he—I like—I liked my grandfather. He was quite a character.

[00:12:12] SL: Did—did you know—uh—your—uh—mom's side of

the family and her [*DL coughs*] mom and dad at all?

DL: I never met my grandfather on my mother's side. Uh—he died of typhoid fever—uh—before I was ever born and—uh . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: In fact, I think he died before my mother was ever married. And I—they lived in—uh—southern—uh—Indiana, down at Crothersville . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DL: . . . which is bout forty mile from Louisville, Kentucky. And—uh—the only time I remember seein' her was when we went to her funeral in—uh—I believe it was 1941 we went down there. I think I was twelve about that time.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:12:53] DL: And—uh—that's the only time I ever remember seein' her. But now her children—uh—uh—we got along real good with them. They was good people. In fact—uh—my uncle, my mother's brother—uh—he lived with us for—uh—quite a while, and—uh—he was a cook and baker, and—uh—he had his own restaurant and that eventually. And—uh—in fact, his son—uh—comes down here to visit every so often with us and he—for four days, he's the same age I am.

SL: [*Laughs*] Four days. [*Laughs*]

DL: Four days. And he—he lets me know about it. [*Laughter*]

But . . .

[00:13:36] SL: You're—are you four days older than he is? Is

that . . .

DL: I'm three hundred and sixty-one days older than he is.

SL: Oh, I see, okay. Yeah.

DL: Yeah, it . . .

SL: All right.

DL: For four days, he's as old as I am. [*SL laughs*] His is on the twentieth, then mine's on the twenty-fourth.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:13:48] DL: So four of them—four days he's as old as I am. [*SL*

*laughs*] But—uh—uh—he was—he's quite a fellow, too. But

anyway, as—where we was—I worked in that garage, and—uh—they had a fire there, and I got caught in that and . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

DL: . . . and—uh—I spent three months gettin' over that one.

SL: You got burned pretty good.

DL: I—uh—both arms, yeah.

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: And—uh—but they healed up good, and I run across a good doctor, and of course, back then we's—a guy that run the grease

rack was cleanin' the floor with gasoline. That's about all we had at that time.

SL: Yeah.

[00:14:29] DL: And—uh—one of the customers had decided he was gonna light up a cigar, and he tossed the match down, and—and it went pfft, and it was real bad for a while. But anyway, I worked there, and when I left there, I went in the service. I was a junior in high school then and . . .

[00:14:53] SL: So this was—uh—wait, let's talk just a little bit about your mom and dad. Had—had your dad been in the service at all?

DL: No, no, he was too young . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: . . . uh—for World War I.

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: Uh—see—uh—he was born in 1900 . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: . . . and he was just eighteen, and—uh—bein' as how they was on the farm and that, he didn't have to go. Now his brother went and—uh . . .

SL: Hmm.

DL: . . . which was my Uncle Fay. And—uh—he was a real nice



fellow. He—he lived here in the Ozarks for a good number of years and—uh . . .

SL: This is your dad's brother?

DL: Yeah and—uh . . .

[00:15:29] SL: And what—what was his name?

DL: Fay—uh—Fay Lee was his name.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DL: And—uh—course, I—I've got a lot of uncles and I [*laughs*]*—a whole bunch of 'em. In fact, I have one—uh—set is of twins. Uh—one was a farmer, and the other was a politician, and he was mayor—I think it was Rapid City, South Dakota, that he was mayor of for several years.*

SL: Pretty good-size town.

DL: Yeah. I believe it was Rapid City that he was in—uh—and he was strictly a politician.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And—uh—but it was—uh—and I had a lot of aunts and—oh, you get fourteen of 'em there that—you got a bunch of 'em.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah, no kiddin'.

DL: But now they—they was all good people. I liked all of 'em and—uh—of course, I had my favorites out of some of 'em, you know, like you always do—that some will pay more attention to a kid

than the others will, you know. But they was all good people  
and . . .

[00:16:30] SL: Um—so—uh—let's see now, you were—uh—in—  
workin' in the garage, and—and what town was that in?

DL: Belvidere. Belvidere, Illinois.

SL: Illinois.

DL: Yeah.

[00:16:40] SL: And—and Belvidere is close to what?

DL: Well, it's—uh—fifteen mile from Rockford. I . . .

SL: Okay.

DL: And—uh—uh—I don't know if you know where that's at. Uh—  
and it's seventy-five miles west of Chicago.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And fifteen miles from the Wisconsin border and—uh—it's set  
just south of Delavan and that—up there. There are a few lakes  
up in that area.

SL: Well, let—let me ask you just a few things before we get into  
your service time.

DL: Yeah.

[00:17:11] SL: Um—uh—how long had you lived there in Rockford—  
uh . . .

DL: In Belvidere area?

SL: Or Belvidere. Mh-hmm.

DL: Uh—moved there when I was, I believe, five when we moved to Belvidere. And I left when I was seventeen.

SL: So you were—uh—you pretty much were raised or what . . .

DL: Yeah.


SL: . . . most of your memories are . . .

DL: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . are there in Belvidere.

DL: Yeah.

SL: And—um—let's see, if you were—[19]28 then you were there in—in [19]33 or so. Uh—the Depression was still kind of—people were still working through that—uh—at that time.

 DL: I—it was still bad.

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: Course, the further out you get away from the big towns, the worse it is. And—uh—hey, I—uh—when we was—uh—kids—uh—well, my brother got a job—uh—weedn' onions—ten cents an hour. Does that tell you anything?

SL: Yeah.

[00:18:11] DL: Yeah. My dad worked for a dollar a day, and that was on the farm at the—where he got job there and he'd go to work at—uh—sunup, then come home at sundown, and he'd

make a dollar a day. And—uh—but at that time it was, to buy groceries, it was nine miles to town from where we lived at—at that particular time. And it was walk to town for groceries and walk back home again. There was a—couldn't afford a vehicle or anything. And if you's lucky, somebody would come by and give 'em a lift there. Otherwise, it was a walk carrying groceries. But yeah, times was hard, and—uh—yeah, and then—then my dad got a job—uh—drivin' a milk truck, pickin' up milk from the farmers and that. And he worked in a foundry for several years and—uh—uh—just about anything he could get a hold of, he would do. He would—uh—plow gardens at night for—when he come home from work, he would—a team of horses and a walkin' plow. He'd plow gardens around town and that to draw in extra money. But it—uh—and us kids—we all had work, and we had big gardens. Peddled papers, and if we raised popcorn, it was peddlin' popcorn down the street, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:19:48] DL: Uh—and ten cents a pound for a bag of popcorn—and that's shelled popcorn. Don't ever get into that. *[Laughter]*  
That's god awful . . .

SL: Too much work.

DL: Oh, it tear your hands up trying to shell it.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:01] SL: Yeah.

DL: And, yeah, we done a lotta things just to survive. But . . .

[00:20:09] SL: What was the school like that you went to school?

DL: Our schools was relatively good. We was quite fortunate. The schools we had was good. We had good teachers, and we had—well, of course, you know, with kids you always got one that you like and one that you always would classify as mean and that, you know. But they would—they was all good teachers. They—and we had some pretty good times in school, and we had our football teams and things like that. And they had the band, which was pretty good, and a lot of our teachers—I never cared for world history or ancient history, but we had it. *[Laughs]*

[00:21:01] SL: Well now, was the school—was it just one school there or—and all the grades were in that one school or . . .

DL: Oh no, no, no. They had—we had several schools. The town was eight thousand population that we lived in. And *[coughs]* we had one local high school, but there was one, two, three—there was three grade schools that went all the way up to eighth grade. Then from there you went onto regular—one school for high school. But yeah, they was scattered around town pretty good, and it was a mile from our house to either one of the

schools we went to—grade school or high school. It was . . .

[00:21:49] SL: So did each class have their own room?

DL: Yes.

SL: First grade had their . . .

DL: Yes.

SL: . . . own room. Second grade . . .

DL: Yes. Yeah. I should say each class you had, like, twenty-five kids in a class. You had one room, and that's where they—in regular school up to seventh grade [*vehicle passes*] you was in one room. After—when you hit seventh grade, then you would move to—from one room to another, and you did that in high school. But yes, they was good teachers, and I'm quite surprised, you know, from what—the way they teach now to what they taught then, it was a—they done real good.

[00:22:33] SL: Were your parents real supportive of school, and did they look over your homework or help you with your homework at all?



DL: I—my mother did. My father—he just didn't have much time for us kids, and he would occasionally spend a little time with us, but it was rare because he was most generally out workin' someplace. And this was—now, during the summertime, there for a couple years, he took a team of horses and a mower, and

he was mowin' the sides of the highways. And he might be eight, nine, ten miles from home with a team of horses. And then the next day, he'd have to start and head back the other way. But—yeah, well, he'd be gone and—but he'd—he spent a lotta time workin'. He was almost a workaholic, actually. Yeah, I can't fault him for that. He's—he'd—he was worker.

SL: Well, it was probably necessary during those times.

DL: It was. It—but you done anything you could to make a dollar.

[00:23:51] SL: Uh-huh. Did your mom or dad have any formal education after grade school or . . .

DL: Well, my dad left school at the fourth grade. He had do that in order to survive—uh—on the farm and that. And my mother was—I forget—in fact, I don't know if I ever heard how far she went in school—but she was pretty well educated. And now my grandmother was college educated.

SL: Wow.

DL: Yeah, and she . . .

SL: That's rare.

DL: Yeah, and she had went through college and graduated from there. But—so there was brains in the family, so someplace . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: . . . along the line there. But they done quite well. My mother

used to help with—as much as she could, and course, you know, like nowadays, everything keeps changin', and what you learned twenty years ago is obsolete now, and believe me, I can see some of these kids comin' home and work—homework—I look at that and say, "Forget it." But [*laughter*] . . .

[00:24:58] SL: Well, before we go on—get you into your career—what about church and religion growin' up? Were you—did y'all—were you active in any particular church or . . .

DL: Well, we went to Methodist Church. And my aunt tried to make a minister out of me. She was an ordained minister, and she tried her darnedest to get me to be a minister, but . . .

SL: Didn't stick.

DL: Oh no, no. [*Laughs*] She's told me I'd probably go the other way, but . . .

[00:25:35] SL: [*Laughter*] Well—so . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . did y'all go to church every Sunday, or was it pretty relaxed?

DL: It—we went to church off and on, and it wasn't a real Sunday deal because it was too far to go.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And we just couldn't get there. The closest church for us would be a mile away and it—and we'd have to walk there and walk



back home again. And if we went to—out to my grandmother's—if we got a way out there—the church was across the road. And like I was tellin' you, I used to go—when I would be out to my grandmother's, I'd go over, and we'd throw some wood in the stove and get it started in the wintertime, so it'd be warm in there for church. But yeah, church has been in our life pert near all the time. Oh, I'm a firm believer, believe me. I could tell you some stories you wouldn't believe, but they would be the truth. But . . .

[00:26:36] SL: Well, we'll talk about some of those stories in a . . .

DL: That . . .

SL: We're probably talkin' about veteran war stories?

DL: Oh, there's several different things. Like, I was—we's comin' back from Texas one night, and we used drive down to Texas quite regular and come back. I don't know if you ever took 59 down through Texas.

SL: Sure.

DL: You know . . .

SL: Absolutely.

DL: . . . where the Red River is?

SL: Yeah.

DL: Comin' back. You know how it winds like this?

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:27:05] DL: There's a tavern on this end and a tavern on the other. Well, we's comin' through there one night, and I most generally slept in that area to let my wife drive. And we got down just about to Red River, and I had already sacked out in the back seat and—we's comin' back out of Houston—and I said—woke up—I said, "Margaret," I said, "I'll drive." And I said, "Pull over and stop," and she did. And I got out and drive. And we got up in those S curves up there, and I don't know if you remember or not, but the side of the road, there is—it's sort of swampy in there, and there's only a four-foot shoulder.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Okay, and then it drops right off into the swamp?

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:27:51] DL: All right, we's comin' along there, and we'd met a car comin' from the other way, and all of a sudden he decided he wanted the whole road and he—and we went off the road, and his bumper was right alongside of my car, and he had the whole highway. Now, you don't take a big ol' Pontiac and put it over on four-foot shoulder because I—somethin' was holdin' that car up [*laughs*] out of [*unclear words*] 'cause we pulled right back on the road and kept on goin'. But the—no, that was strictly

somebody holdin' that side up. But if you know the road I'm talkin' bout, you know exactly what I mean.

[00:28:41] SL: Well, it's been a long, long time, but I have been on that road.

DL: Yeah, it—they—if they—the shoulder on that was four foot, I'd be quite surprised 'cause there's only about like this here. If you wanna change a tire, you don't on a highway, but there is no place—but I don't know what held up the side of that car, but there was no bumps, no nothin'—went right off the road and right back on again. And I have no idea what happened to that guy. It scared the pants off me. I'll be honest about it. But . . .

[00:29:15] SL: So how far was it from your—where you grew up to the station that you worked at? I mean, were you—was it just—had—did y'all move into town or . . .

DL: Yeah, we had moved into town. We lived out in the country there for quite a little while, and then we moved into town, and that's when my dad went to work at the foundry down there. And that was probably about a mile, mile and a half. He was—sewing machine factory and—in fact, eventually my wife and I both worked at the sewing machine factory at one time.

SL: Was that Singer or . . .

DL: No, it was Eldredge.

SL: Eldredge.

DL: And they—we made sewing machines—five different heads of sewing machines, but there was ninety-five different names they put on 'em. And Macy was one of 'em, and Continental was another, and if you wanted your own name put on, we'd put your own name on it. But [*SL laughs*]*—and [coughs]*—but I worked there for—after I got married and—but yeah, that was quite a factory there.

[00:30:35] SL: When you were—when y'all—how old were you when you moved to town?

DL: Now probably about six.

SL: Okay.

DL: Somethin' like that. Yeah, I was just startin'—it was either kindergarten or first grade. I don't remember if they had fi—uh—kindergarten at that time, but I can remember first grade. I went to Lincoln School then, first grade, and I was there for a year or two, and then we moved the other side of town, and I had to go to a school called Logan School, and it was on Logan Avenue, which was Route 20 at that time. And then we—I went through that school and then went to seventh and eighth grade over at Washington School, I believe it was, and then from there I went to high school. And then I left there in my junior year

at—I worked there at that garage all the time I was in high school there. And that—doin' a little bit of everything there. [00:31:37] In fact, that's where I met my wife's brother, and we got acquainted, and we went to his house, and that's where I met my wife. And she was thirteen at [*laughs*]*—but—so . . .*

SL: Were you fifteen, sixteen?

DL: Yeah, right in that area.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DL: Yeah. And we got acquainted real good and my—and her brother had told me—he says, "You just stay away from my sister!" So [*laughter*] [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Sounds like a brother.

DL: Yeah, yeah. Hundred percent. Course, he had five sisters then but . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh!

DL: Yeah, but—oh, anyway, we . . .

[00:32:19] SL: Well, they—when you moved to town, then did you pick up on electricity? Did the family have electricity then?

DL: Yeah, we had electricity, and we had a kitchen sink, and it had one faucet, cold water. And we had one toilet, and that was up on the second floor, and it froze up every winter.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And fact, the faucet in the kitchen froze up every winter, and course, it got down twenty, twenty-five below zero . . .

SL: Well, yeah, you're still . . .

DL: . . . you know.

SL: . . . you know, in Canada, so . . .

DL: And—but yeah, it was quite a house. We'd wake up in the mornin' in the wintertime and go to look out the window, see what the weather was, and there'd be a half inch of frost on the window, so you'd take your finger and push on it and sorta get a little hole there to the window, and then you peek out and [*unclear words*] had more snow—well, you dressed for it, you know, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: And we had one stove, and that was downstairs, and boy, it was a long ways from that bedroom downstairs, I'll tell you that.

[*Laughs*]

[00:33:24] SL: So was that a gas stove, or was it a wood stove?

DL: An old coal stove.

SL: Coal?

DL: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And we heated air with coal for a good number of years, and

Dad finally put in gas—put in a floor furnace to heat that eight-room house.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And it don't do it.

SL: No.

DL: No. But it had one, two, three, four bedrooms in that house.

SL: That's a pretty big house.

DL: Yeah, it was a good house.

SL: So . . .

DL: Yeah . . .

SL: Go ahead.

DL: He bought it for twenty-nine hundred dollars. [*Laughter*]

[*Coughs*]

[00:33:58] SL: Man. Well—so did y'all have a radio at that house?

DL: Mmm—yes, there was a radio. Yeah.

SL: Well, I'm just kind of wonderin', you know. You went to—into the service in your junior year of high school.

DL: Yeah.

SL: And so, I'm just wondering [*vehicle passes*] if you were keeping up with the news of the war or . . .

DL: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . you were maybe seeing reels . . .

DL: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . at the theater . . .

DL: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . or somethin'.



[00:34:34] DL: My grandfather had a radio when we was stayin' or—go out to visit with him or stay with him during the summer when we was oh, five, six, seven years old. And he had a car battery hooked up to it and one of these big phone—comes out like this. [Makes arc through air with cupped hand]

SL: Yeah.

DL: And well, he'd plug that in and—for the news, and now when he got through with the news, he would unhook it. And—but he got the news every day and—but yeah, that was all we heard on the radio at that time. But when we got it at home there, we kept up with the newsreel real good, and so, when the war come along—my brother was in and, oh, a whole bunch of my cousins. They was all in. Now, we had 'em scattered all over the world. And my brother which—he lived right over here. He was a POW. And if I remember right, he was in Stalag 8A, and he got liberated in [19]45.

[00:36:04] SL: How long was he in—POW?

DL: He went in at Battle of the Bulge, and he got caught, and I think



that was in bout December [19]44. And he got out—I believe it was September of [19]45.

SL: Wow.

DL: And, yeah—but there's so much of my family was—I got relatives and that that was in World War II that it's hard to remember who they all were, but they was all over the world. Some was in South Pacific; some in Germany, and they just wound up just all over. But my wife's brother-in-law, he was POW in Germany. I had a brother-in-law was a—you know where the—they raised the flag on Iwo Jima?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DL: Well, you see four up there.

SL: Yeah.

DL: He was number five layin' on the ground. [*Laughter*] But yeah, he had a hole in his chest. He had lost a lung on that one.

[00:37:31] SL: That was your brother-in-law?

DL: Yeah. He was married to my younger sister. But yeah, it was somethin' else. That was bad news.

[00:37:44] SL: Well, was he wounded there on the ground when they raised that flag?

DL: Oh yeah, he lost a lung.

SL: Right there.

DL: Yeah, and they had to remove half of his lung because it—but he survived and—fact, he's dead now. And Margaret's brother-in-law is dead. Most of them World War II vets are dead.

[00:38:12] SL: Well, back at that—when you were sixteen, I mean, was the—you talk about all your relatives that were already in and scattered all over the world. But was—did you just want to join and go fight, or did you feel like you had an obligation to do that?

DL: Yeah, I felt like I had an obligation to do that. But there was a—well, at the time that was almost what you might call mandatory to defend the country. But it's a—but a whole bunch of us—every time they'd turn seventeen or eighteen, they was joinin' the service, and most of my friends was in service at that time.

[00:39:23] SL: Well now, sixteen was too young, though, wasn't it?

DL: Seventeen.

SL: Seventeen.

DL: Yeah, yeah. I went in when I was seventeen. Fact, I celebrated my eighteenth birthday in Germany.

[00:39:35] SL: Yeah. Well so, where do they—where did you do your training at?

DL: At Fort Knox, Kentucky. And they got the meanest hills down there you ever laid eyes on, believe me. [*Laughter*] But I

swear, there's one of 'em down there you could take a twelve-foot plank and lay from one top to the other, but it's a mile down and a mile back up. And that's one of your trips that you— Misery and Agony, they call 'em. And boy, they are, but that's beautiful country down there, though.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Yeah, down there by Louisville.

[00:40:17] SL: What—do you remember the name of the place in Kentucky? What was it called?

DL: Fort Knox.

SL: Fort Knox. It was . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . Fort Knox.

DL: Yeah, it was Fort Knox. Yeah. And what they called E-town was—we used to go over there when we got a chance—it's Elizabethtown. But they just called it E-town. And, yeah, that was pretty country down there, and that's where we learned a lot and was taught things, and then they shipped us out.

[00:40:50] SL: How long did you stay at Fort Knox? Is that six months?

DL: I was down there two months.

SL: Two months.

DL: Yeah.

SL: And then you shipped out.

DL: Yeah.

SL: So—and you ship out of Norfolk or . . .



DL: No, Brame—Brunswick—New Brunswick—New Jersey. And—I think it was Brunswick. They had big ?rapple dapple? over there. And we shipped out of there, and then we went through the English Channel and landed at Bremerhaven, Germany. That's right up at northern section of Germany.

[00:41:27] SL: Now this is about [19]45, [19]44?

DL: It was [19]46.

SL: [Nineteen] forty-six.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

SL: So the war was . . .

DL: The war was over. This—and this was just—when I got there, it was the cleanup, collectin' all the weapons and tryin' to get things back into where it was decent for . . .

SL: Operational.

DL: Yeah.

[00:41:53] SL: So I bet the destruction was pretty extensive there in Germany.

DL: Yeah it was, except for Heidelberg. Heidelberg, they didn't

bother too much. That's a big college town. And there was a few bullet holes in the walls and that, but the rest of the town was good shape. Now, you take the town of Heilbronn over there; that was flat. And I mean it was flat. There was one chimney standing in that, but depend upon what they run across there. Some of the little towns over there was not bothered too much, and some of 'em was almost totally destroyed. But that—now, Stuttgart, Germany, was—there was damage, but a lot of it was in pretty good shape yet. They had a big hospital there, and that was almost all intact, and when we was there, in fact, the army took it over and called it the 387th, and that's where most of the military over there went to for anything they needed, but it was a German hospital to start with. But—and there—we was all over Germany and Grafenwöhr. You know where Grafenwöhr is?

SL: Hm-mm.

[00:43:19] DL: It's over by Berlin, and we was over there for a little while, and that's when they would start puttin' up the barbwire fence for the Berlin Wall.

SL: Dividing—they divided Berlin into three sectors, didn't they?

DL: Yeah, took in—the Russians put it up to—and at nighttime over there, you could hear 'em shootin' people tryin' to cross the

barbwire, but . . .

SL: Already.

DL: Yeah, yeah, it was bad news. Really no reason for it, but they did it. But [*sniffs*] yeah, it's a—we was in—we was up there for training, and we done maneuvers an awful lot, just all over Germany to let them know that we was still there. [00:44:06] And then we got into the point where they changed it over—everything over to the constabulary when they was teachin' the German police what they wanted them to learn and how to do what they want. And when we was in that, the constabulary took the Nazi war criminals, and they escorted them to Nuremberg. And no one actually knew which outfit was gonna have 'em, but they was all in the general vicinity. And otherwise, you would have problems with the German people, you know, that—and it was heavy army. When they go to transport them around, everybody was armed real heavy and—but there was never an incident that I know of that anybody tried to break 'em out or anything. But—well, nobody actually knew where they was at when they's goin' in, but everybody had a hand in movin' 'em around, and they'd pick 'em up here, and they'd shuffle 'em down through, and they'd escorted all the way to Nuremberg.

[00:45:21] SL: Did you ever know any of the names of the guys that you were escorting?

DL: No, no, it was just—we would read in the papers afterwards that they was tryin' 'em, but what—that was the ones that we hauled there or that ones that they already had there. We never . . .

SL: You never knew.

DL: . . . knew who they were.


[00:45:38] SL: Well now, exactly—were you just infantry or—exactly what were you doing? I mean, what was your personal role?

DL: My personal role was I was captain's driver of a recon vehicle and . . .

SL: Captain and a driver of a recon vehicle.

DL: Yeah, that . . .

[00:45:58] SL: Tell me about that recon vehicle.

 DL: That recon vehicle was a armored car. They called it an M8, and it was six-wheel drive, eight thousand pounds—or I should say eight ton—six . . .

SL: That's sixteen thousand pounds.

DL: Sixteen thousand pounds—yeah, it was eight ton, and it had a big radio in it, 37mm cannon. It was set up for a .30 caliber or .50 caliber, whichever you wanted. And it took four people to operate it, and it was quite mobile and pretty hard to get one

stuck, I'll tell you. It's six-wheel drive, and it was a beautiful machine, and one I had I know would do a hundred and ten.

SL: Golly!

[00:46:46] DL: And we done that one time, and the captain got a little bit ticked about it. [*SL laughs*] But we's sort of in a hurry that day, but [*laughs*] they'd—he let me know that he didn't want it to happen again, but he was happy to get where he was gettin' in a hurry, but . . .

SL: Well . . .

DL: [*Coughs*] But that was—we kicked off of a mountain outside of—oh, it was between Stuttgart and Schwäbisch Hall. And it was about two and a half miles down this mountain, and we'd kicked her off at the top up there. And they—he was in a hurry to get there. It was gettin' dark, and you'd—just at that time was—wasn't very popular to be out on maneuvers and that after dark. And so, we got back just as it was tur—it got dark. But yeah, it—that armored car is quite a machine, and I'm quite surprised that I haven't seen 'em usin' 'em on the news and that. I see one over in Afghanistan, I think it was, that was very similar to it. But it's a much bigger one than the one we had.

[00:48:02] SL: Well, so did you draw fire when you were . . .

DL: We was fortunate. No, we never did. And I was quite surprised



'cause we really expected it. But we—if we did, we never knew it. And—but we did—there was—at night if you went out, like if you wanted to go down to the service club or somethin', there was always two, maybe three, go together. You never went by yourself, and it was just a—now towards the end of the time I was over there, it was pretty decent. You could basically get out, and if you wanted to go by yourself, you was fairly safe. But when we was there, see, there was a ten o'clock curfew on all the Germans and, at night, and there was no fraternizing with the German people at all. And if you seen—when we was on patrol at night if there was a German on the street, we picked 'em up and locked 'em up. And it was just one of those things that we had to do and—now, whether it was—helped us or not, I don't know, but it was just one of the things that we had to do. And basically, they called it constabulary, but mostly it was just military police was the—and—another name for it, I would venture a guess. That's what it was. But we'd—we run just all over Germany, and we, at one time, we was—left our base at Schwäbisch Hall, and we was set out in—we had three platoons in our company, and our company was in three different towns. And this is what our one platoon did. We had to take care of that whole area in that one town and the surrounding area—



insurgent and that and—which was interesting. [00:50:15] But we'd take a German policeman with us, and we'd take out, and we'd head out through the countryside to see if we could find any ill-gotten things that's not supposed to be there, you know. And pick up weapons and that. And we was out one time, and we seen this little side road, and we headed up that side road to see what was up there and the—when we did, that German policeman started hollerin', "Nein, nein, nein, nein, nein!" And we's—"Oh, we found somethin' good." And so, we ride on up the road, and course, we had a .30 caliber mounted on a tripod in the Jeep, and we headed up through there, and it wound back up in the woods a ways, and the further that we went, the more apprehensive we got because we didn't know what we's gonna get into. And we was out there by ourselves, and that German policeman was still hollerin'. [SL laughs] And we got up just where the road made a real right sharp turn, and we made that sharp turn, and we stopped, dead still. And it was the prettiest sight you ever seen. It was a nudist colony. [Laughter] Yeah. And those German fellows—they come over there, and they grabbed ahold of that Jeep. They picked it up, and they turned it around, and they said, "Raus!" [Laughter] So we left. [Coughs] But, oh, it was just a—several of those things that—

there was good times, and there was—most of 'em was pretty good. But we used to stop by the bürgermeister's office and—oh, that's the mayor's office in these little towns. And they had orders to pick up all the weapons they could, and if they had trouble findin' 'em, we would help 'em out the best we could, then confiscate 'em and turn 'em in and—which we did. We found a lot of 'em and that. [00:52:27] Another one of the jobs we had—you know what a DP camp is?

SL: Hm-mm.

DL: It's a displaced persons, and it could be a Polish, Czechoslovakian, or whatever that had been displaced and put in these DP camps. And there might be thousand, fifteen hundred, two thousand people in one of 'em. And periodically we'd have to go and search these. Every building in it, top to bottom . . .

SL: Looking for weapons.

DL: . . . lookin' for weapons. And sometimes it'd get pretty hairy. And that's when I found out people would keep cows and horses in their basement. [*Laughter*] Oh yeah. And a little smelly, but that—they had 'em 'cause if they didn't, somebody'd butcher 'em for meat, you know.

SL: I see.

DL: Yeah.

[00:53:15] SL: So they housed them . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . basically.

DL: They housed 'em where they could keep an eye on 'em. But first time I seen a set of oxen in a basement, that about blew my mind 'cause that—no way would you do that in the States, you know. [*Laughs*] But yeah, it was a beautiful country, and the Black Forest was beautiful, I'll tell you. But then we got—that outfit broke up, and we got transferred to a tank outfit in—down at Augsburg, Germany, which is down south of old Germany yet. And Augsburg, Germany—they got a—had a square down there they called Scabie Square. You know . . .

SL: Skeebee?

DL: Scabie Square. You know what they are? The little bugs that get all over your legs and make sores.

SL: Ooh!

DL: And they said if you walked around the square down there, you's gonna have scabies by the time you got back, but [*laughs*] that's what they called it. That always intrigued me because I never had a problem with 'em, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:54:26] DL: . . . lotta people did. But no, it—that was quite a—

Augsburg, Germany, is a pretty good-size town and—but we was just all over. We was—even was down Sonthofen, Germany, which is down towards the Italian border. And I don't know why but we just—somethin' like horse manure, just all over town and all over the country there. And we—just a—we went where, I guess, they needed us is what it amounted to. But—and then to come home from there—and I was home for a while and got married.

[00:55:19] SL: All right now, so how long were you over in Germany?

DL: Let's—just a—bout two years and eight months in that area.

SL: Well, before we get you back home, was the attitude toward Americans not very favorable or . . .

DL: When we went over there, it was not favorable at all. In fact, there was a lot of GIs that got hurt over there. They got into the wrong places and that. But when we left over there, yes, the attitude was—had changed a lot, and you could get along with the German people. At least the people on our company, we did. We, in fact, we used to go out and visit with the people in public. Now, like I was tellin' you, we's down there in that little town by ourself. There was just bout thirty of us down there. And we used to go out to their restaurants and go out to walk

around their town and that and chatter with the people and that. And they used to come in, and the barber we had was German. And he would come in and go to work every day. One of the mechanics we had to repair our Jeeps and that was German. And so, we got along with 'em real good, and we had no problem with 'em. Once in a while, we'd have a—run across somebody that had been hurt pretty bad and had been in a fight and got his throat cut or somethin', but other than that the—and most generally it was German that was fightin' with another German. And we'd make sure they got to the hospital and that, but—or whatever they needed. And we would—at the end of my tour over there, we was just there basically to help the German people, and I think we did a pretty good job of it. They seem to be gettin' along pretty good with the American people right now.

[00:57:33] SL: Yeah, so by the time you left, the relationships had improved and . . .

DL: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We could walk down the street then by yourself at night and not be bothered, but when I first got over there, that was a no-no because you's gonna get in problems real bad. They had service clubs over there that—a lot of the entertainers were German people, which they'd give 'em a job puttin' 'em to work. And some of the cooks they even had was

German people that they would hire, and so, they associated with 'em. They didn't—"Your wall here. You stay on that side; we stay on this side."

SL: Yeah.

DL: But when we first got over there, there was absolutely no fraternizing with 'em at all. You just treated 'em—like if they got out of line, they went into the—you know, break a curfew or somethin'. That was—you took 'em down and locked 'em up or turned 'em over to the m—the military police there at the station and let them deal with it, and then we'd go back on patrol again. But . . .

[00:58:42] SL: So toward the end of your stay there, you became—what was the term—a constabulary?

DL: Yeah, it was constabulary.

SL: And your job then was to kinda train the local . . .

DL: Police.

SL: . . . law enforcement officers . . .

DL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

SL: . . . to . . .

DL: Yeah. We took 'em out on patrol, and a lot of us—when we went over there, they taught us the rules and regulations of the New York State Police, and this is what we was passing on to the

German police over there about what we had been told and been taught, you know. And the—and some of it probably got mixed up like everything else, you know.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Secondhand stuff. But basically it turned out pretty good.

[00:59:32] SL: So I guess the Marshall Plan was in full effect while you were there. Were there—were they bringing in food and medical supplies and . . .

DL: You mean on the Berlin Airlift?

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, that was workin' when we was there.

Yeah. And if I remember right, I'm sure it was. But I don't—that's a long time back.

SL: Yeah.

DL: But I believe that was in effect when I—when we left over there. I believe that's why the—I don't remember just when that started. I—don't quote me on that because I just don't know for sure when that started, but I'd—I know it was in about the time when I was about ready to leave over there. They was—and I'm sure they was haulin' 'em in before I left. Now I could be wrong. My memory plays tricks on me sometimes, but . . .

SL: Right.



DL: Course, when you get old, I guess that happens. [*Laughter*]  
They tell me that, anyway.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DL: But . . .

SL: Well . . .

Trey Marley: Excuse me, Scott. We need to change tapes.

SL: Oh, okay. [*Claps*] We got our first hour done.

DL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:49] SL: Okay, Delbert. You got through your first hour.

You're now an official Pryor Center victim, by the way. You've survived your first hour with me. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you . . .

DL: I'm a survivor anyway. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well now, you know, let me say this—I—and I didn't get to say this at the very front—I gotta tell you, it's a great honor to sit across from you and to hear these stories. I can tell that you are the fabric of the greatest generation, and you rose to the call. And you don't see just a whole lotta that anymore, but it does give me a deep appreciation for . . .



DL: There's been a big change in people, and their thoughts are not the same as they was years and years and years ago. We have

sat and watched it degrade, you might say, for a good number of years. And the morals they have now are absolutely worthless, and what you see on TV today, thirty years ago they'd shut 'em off. And I don't know if you remember TV back thirty years ago.

SL: Sure.

[01:02:09] DL: It didn't amount to much, but what they had was—well, it was pretty good stuff. But now they got anything and everything on TV, and I don't think it's good for the kids—be honest about it. But in fact, if that pops up on TV and we got some of the grandkids there, we just shut it off. Are we on TV?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DL: Oh, okay. I didn't know that.

SL: Oh, I'm sorry.

DL: [*Laughs*] But I'm just voicin' my opinion.

SL: I'm sorry. Usually we're—Joy, I'm gonna . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . move my mic just a little bit here.

DL: But . . .

SL: Okay.

DL: . . . that's all right. I was just voicin' my opinion on . . .

SL: Well, that's all right.

DL: All right.

[01:02:50] SL: I mean, you know, it's not an uncommon observation, especially by folks of our—of the older generation to . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: There was a . . .

DL: What do you mean, the older generation? [*Laughter*] Golly!

SL: Well, it is different now. It is different now than when you grew up and . . .

DL: Oh yes.

SL: . . . when I grew up.

DL: Oh yes.

SL: It—there is a difference.

DL: Yeah.

SL: And I don't know if there is any one thing to blame. I—there's a lotta things that have happened in this world that changed things. [01:03:22] But you know—so is there anything else that you wanna talk about in your years in Germany?

DL: That pretty much—I liked Germany. I enjoyed bein' there. In fact, I've often thought I might like to go back and see what improvements they've made. In fact, I don't know if you have ever been there or not, but if you do go there, Ulm, Germany, has one of the largest cathedrals there is, and I think it's 782

steps to the top.

SL: Golly!

[01:04:00] DL: And it's a beautiful church, and it was not damaged to speak of during World War II.

SL: And what was the name of the town?

DL: Ulm. *U-L-M*.

SL: *U-L-M*. Mh-hmm.

DL: Yeah. And I was stationed there for a while. As I said, we was just all over that part of the country over there, and we went from Bremerhaven, which is at the northern port, down to Sonthofen clear down towards the Italian border—we's just east and west then. We just sorta—I don't know—we's quite mobile, and we done a lotta travelin' around in there. And, like, Heidelberg is a college town there. And it was not damaged. Other towns was almost eliminated. But . . .

[01:04:51] SL: Did you ever see Dresden?

DL: No.

SL: No.

DL: I never got that close to Dresden, and that was—and Frankfurt—we was down ten miles from it. But we just—somethin' come up, and we got turned around and headed in a different direction and—which wasn't unusual for that. A lotta times when we was

movin' like that, we might turn around and go right straight back the way we had come from. And just to let the people know that we wasn't just drivin' away from 'em, we was still in the area, you know. Otherwise, confuse 'em is what it boiled down to.

[01:05:32] SL: Y'all were establishing a presence.

DL: Yeah, and we wanted to let 'em know we was there. And—as like I said before, like horse manure, just all over, and we was. And we did travel an awful lot, and sometimes we'd be out two or three weeks at a time just nothin' but movin' around. And we'd set up camp someplace in the woods or maybe in the Black Forest over there and be there a night or two, and then we'd be gone again—different direction. And we's in so many different towns that—and our mail had a hard time catchin' up with us, believe me.

SL: Sure, yeah.

[01:06:12] DL: And—but we got to see a lot of Germany and—but I wanted to go—take a vacation and go to France, but I never quite got there. I often thought I'd like to get there, but I wanted to come up—I either didn't have the money to go or somethin' else showed up, you know. But . . .

[01:06:33] SL: I was lucky enough to go over the Normandy beaches and go . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . through all that. You know, the folks there are still very grateful . . .

DL: Oh yes.

SL: . . . and think very highly of the . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . sacrifices that Americans made . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . in their behalf. [01:06:49] And when you were in Germany, did you hear a lot about any loyalist German army folks that . . .

DL: There was a . . .

SL: . . . were resistant? Was there a resistance?

DL: I—what there was, was a little bit of minor stuff, but most of it was pretty quiet. Biggest share of 'em were just sorta happy it was over with. And—but there was some minor resistance there. There was some soldiers that got killed there and that, but there—basically, it was pretty quiet. But—and that was when I first went over and—but after, like, in 1947 things had quiet—started quieting down pretty good and—but after that it was most generally pretty good. I just—you could almost go anyplace and not be bothered too much—as long as you minded

your manners.

[01:07:49] SL: Well now, are you writing Margaret while you're over there? Had you and Margaret established your . . .

DL: No, not then. We didn't really get close together until after I come back from there.

SL: So you had, whether you wanted to or not, you had honored her brother's wishes that you not . . .

DL: Yeah, yeah. [*SL laughs*] At that time, yeah. [*Laughter*] But when I come home, Bob had, which is her brother, had sorta moved out to Tacoma, Washington.

SL: Okay.

DL: And he was out there by Fort Lewis, and he had a sister and a brother-in-law out there at Fort Lewis. And—which means that he wasn't around Belvidere at all, so [*SL laughs*] Margaret and I, we got together, and we got married and that, and then we started raisin' a family. And I had to go back to the service again.

[01:08:52] SL: All right now. Let's see, now. How old are you when you marry Margaret?

DL: I was twenty-one.

SL: Twenty-one. And Margaret's maiden name is . . .

DL: Boyer.

SL: Boyer.

DL: Mh-hmm.

SL: *B-O-Y-E-R.*

DL: Mh-hmm.

[01:09:05] SL: And so, did you—I mean, how much time did you have when you came back from Germany? I mean, were you . . .

DL: I got home in—I believe it was November of [19]48, and we got married in October of [19]49. And I went back in the service in—what was it? Along about—I think I got called back in a short time after that. Yeah, that was back in [19]50. I got called back in October of [19]50, I believe.

[01:09:58] SL: So, I mean, how did that work? Did you reenlist when you . . .

DL: No, I'd signed up for the reserves when I got out.

SL: I see.

DL: And . . .

SL: Okay.

DL: Inactive reserves, but they made it active real quick and—which I don't think it was right that they done that because the—you're supposed to be the last ones called up if—you know, the active reserve is supposed to go before the inactive. But they didn't



see it that way, and then I got called back in. And in [19]51 I was over in Korea.

[01:10:30] SL: Well, before we get you back over to Korea, you and Margaret got married and started having a family. You had—did you have a couple of children before you got reenlisted or back in active duty?

DL: No, she was pregnant when I had to go back in.

SL: [*Laughs*] I see.

DL: They—I was in Japan when my oldest daughter was born. And she was born February 7 of [19]51.

SL: Okay.

DL: And I was married in [19]49, and so, she was ten months old before I ever seen her.

SL: So you had a couple years before you had to . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . to go back in and . . .

DL: Yeah.

[01:11:17] SL: And what kinda work did you do for those couple years?

DL: Well, I was a—worked at a sewin' machine factory to start with there, and that was somethin' else. And we worked ten hours a day, five, sometimes six days a week, and we'd draw a paycheck

every two weeks for sixty bucks. Now that's the pay scale at that time.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And we was doin' that then. Now then, I went back in the service and—which was—I come back out—I got my job back again, but that factory was startin' to close up, so . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: . . . I went into somethin' else.

[01:12:03] SL: So you signed up for the inactive reserve.

DL: Yeah.

SL: But then you get some kind of notice activating you and . . .

DL: Yeah, it was a little telegram. It said, "You [*laughs*] are now requested to report for duty." And . . .

[01:12:20] SL: Did they have to report back? Where did they have you report?

DL: Well, I had to go all the way back out to Fort Lewis, Washington, and so, I had to go—well, you had to go for a physical and that, but that's where I had to report back into, was out at Fort Lewis, Washington. And that's a—pretty good places out there by Tacoma, Washington. [01:12:46] And I used to call my wife every night that I got a chance. And that was somethin' that happened out there. I—it's always tickled me. I went to a pay

phone to make a phone call. And I got all through makin' the phone call, I hung it up, and she give me all my money back, and that don't happen. [*Laughs*] Now, why that happened I have no idea, but it just did.

[01:13:13] SL: Well now, back then you placed a call through an operator.

DL: Yeah.

SL: So I bet she did that.

DL: Yeah, I sorta figured that's probably what happened. But that's strange that that happened. That just don't happen often.

[01:13:27] SL: Well now, how much did a telephone call cost in a pay phone back then?

DL: Oh, I think it was two dollars and some cents.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DL: But that was strange, too, and I got called back in there, and we got to Fort Lewis, and course, my wife was pregnant, and we'd been buildin' a house, and money was short, believe me. And so, they had what they call a partial pay line. Well, every time I see a partial pay line, I'd go in, sign up for it, and we'd get a partial pay, and I'd send it home. And this went on there, and it went on in Japan when we landed there, and then we landed in Korea. The—they still had partial pay lines there and—because

our records hadn't caught up with us, you know. Well—and when we got up to our regular outfit and the partial pay lines quit, it was June before I drew a regular pay. I was that far ahead. But [*laughs*] that started in bout February, and I tell you now, I had 'em, but for about four or five months there, I was [*laughs*] ahead of 'em. But . . .

[01:14:47] SL: So were you in Tacoma—or outside Tacoma—just for a few weeks or . . .

DL: Yeah, a short time. Yeah.

SL: And then you—they put you to Japan.

DL: Yeah.

[01:14:55] SL: And how long were you in Japan?

DL: Well, I landed in Japan—I think it was along about latter part of November—in that area. And . . .

SL: Now did you . . .

DL: . . . the . . .

SL: . . . travel by ship?

DL: Yeah. Oh yeah, we was—that was a long trip. About two weeks on that ship. And we got down about two days out of Hawaii, and they changed course and sent us back up to Japan. And we landed at Yoka—well, we wound up in Tokyo, and they had a small earthquake while we's in Tokyo there, and then they

shipped us down to Yokohama, and we's in harbor patrol down there, searchin' all the boats and that that come into Yokohama Harbor. And . . .

[01:15:47] SL: And what were you looking for?

DL: Anything smugglin' in. Dope that they'd bring it in—they'd have a small boat that—a fishin' boat or that. And we'd pull 'em up and stop 'em and board 'em, and we'd go along the outside edges of the boat, and you'd find a string hangin' over the side, and we'd just cut the string and drop the narcotics down in the bottom of the ocean. And search the rest of the boat, and if they didn't have anything up, then we'd let 'em go on. And then the other ships that come in, we's—had to make sure that they had all their rat guards up in place. I don't know if you know what that is or not.

SL: Hm-mm.

[01:16:35] DL: It's where they tie up to a dock, and if you don't put a rat guard up—it's a deal about so big around with a hole in the middle, and you can slide it this way, and it goes around a rope that ties up the ship. And it keeps the rats from coming up the rope or going off.

SL: Up the rope. I see.

DL: And you don't spread diseases throughout the country. And—

which makes it quite convenient. And then we would stop out on—in the waters and talk with a lot of the tankers and that was bringin' in, and I never liked those tank ships. They sat right down in the water. You're only about this far above the water line, and everything's down below. I never cared for that at all. But we had to go on there and check 'em out, then—make sure what was—they was bringin' in, you know.

[01:17:25] SL: Did you ever face any trouble from the . . .

DL: No, we never had trouble. They knew what we was there for, and that was the extent of it. We done our job, and we went our way. We never give 'em a problem, and they never give us one. But if we found a—and they knew if we find anything hangin' over the side, we'd just cut it and let it go. And . . .

[01:17:48] SL: Well now, so when they called you back up, did you—was it because Korea was heating up, or was it . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . because . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . they wanted you to do this stuff over in Japan or . . .

DL: No, no, it was because of Korea. Korea was already started when I got my notice to report back in. See, that started in, I think, June of [19]50, and I got my notice in the latter part of

[19]50 to go back.

[01:18:18] SL: Well so, now what was it that happened in Korea that brought the United States into that conflict? What was goin' on over there?

DL: If I remember right, North Korea was invading South Korea. And the way I understand it, I could be wrong at—my memory's not that good on it, but they was—the problems between North Korea and South Korea, and they was—and they's tryin' to infiltrate comin' into South Korea. In fact, [*coughs*] if I remember right, when the United States started in there, they was quite a ways down into South Korea. But then, when they pushed 'em back, the Chinese got into it, and it just more—it made things more difficult all the way around.

[01:19:10] SL: So was it US troops that got deployed that was a part of pushin' 'em back or . . .

DL: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: So . . .

DL: It was a United Nations setup. There was Australians there. There was Greeks there and Ethiopians and Indians from India and they was—Turks were there, and the Turks was some of the nastiest fighters you ever run across. And then they had 6th ROK Division, which was a lousy deal to start with and . . .

[01:19:49] SL: What is that now?

DL: That was Republic of Korea 6th Division. And they was the ones that was at the Iron Triangle that—they wound up they court-martialed almost—a lotta the officers in the 6th ROK Division because they deserted. And they just run off and left 'em. And there's a lot of people got hurt from it, and I don't know the exact numbers, but on that deal—that was in April of [19]51 . . .

[01:20:24] SL: Now you're talkin' about the Iron Triangle or . . .

DL: Yeah, that was a—yeah, that was the Iron Triangle, and that's a—6th ROK Division was on one side; the Australians was on—next to them, and that was part of the Iron Triangle, yes.  
And . . .

SL: And the US made up the other . . .

DL: We was—the outfit that we was in was a mortar battalion, and we supported both of them.

SL: I see.

DL: Yeah. They was here, and we was at right behind 'em. The weapons we had was only good for forty-two hundred yards, and that's as far as they would fire and—which—a small—actually, a small artillery piece. [01:21:14] But it come out of about a three-foot tube, and believe me, they made quite a bang when . . .



SL: Yeah.

DL: . . . they went off. And that's what they called a 4.2 mortar.

And—but the Iron Triangle was where the 6th ROK Division—they come through us at night. They just walked away and left and—which left the front line wide open, and the Australians got hit pretty hard, and we got hit pretty hard and—in that whole area. In fact, I don't know the exact numbers, but if I remember right, I think the *Stars and Stripes* said that there was somethin' like seventy—I believe seventy-two thousand people killed or wounded in about seventy-two hours. And I believe that's what the *Stars and Stripes*—I could be wrong on that number.

[01:22:15] SL: That's both sides?

DL: Yeah, and I . . .

SL: North and South?

DL: I'd venture a guess that's what it was, both sides, that they figured on and . . .

[01:22:22] SL: Now do you know where on a map this Iron Triangle was? What . . .

DL: That'd be almost in the center of Korea. That'd be almost in the center. Our company fluctuated from bout twenty, twenty-five miles from the Seoul to over to the Frozen Chosin. That's Chosin

Reservoir. They called it the Frozen Chosin. And we operated the whole central section. We would fire here and pack up and leave, and then we'd fire over here and pack up and leave. We was very mobile. In fact, North Koreans, they sorta chased us all over central Korea tryin' to catch us. But we was very good with what we did. In fact, one outfit called us in, and we set up right behind their 4.2 mortars to fire because they couldn't get done what they needed done, and we done it, and we left and then that—the Chinese or North Koreans wiped 'em out, and they come in, hit 'em hard. They'd thought we's still there, but we didn't—we'd moved. And we moved a lot. But . . .

[01:23:49] SL: So North Korea picked up the Chinese as an ally, and the Chinese really got behind it and . . .

DL: The Chinese come into it right after [*coughs*—a short time after the—they went up to the Yalu River. That's when Second Division, I believe it was, the Indian Head Division, lost a lot of men because of poor judgment on some people's part. They went up the roads to the Yalu River, and the North Koreans and that set up in the mountains and let 'em go through, and then they just cut 'em off. I mean, it was bad judgment and—which happens. But I had a brother-in-law there at that time, and he was first sergeant in that Indian Head Division, and he lost a lot

of his men because of it. But . . .

SL: But he made it out.

DL: He made it out, yeah. [*SL sighs*] He was—married Margaret's sister and . . .

[01:24:58] SL: So what was the—was it cold in North Korea?

DL: Oh [*laughs*], yeah.

SL: How cold was it?

DL: Well, I'll tell you. It would get down just about as cold as what—twenty below, maybe twenty-five below. It'd freeze ice, and I mean to tell you, real quick it would freeze ice, and you'd wake up in the mornin' with three, four, five inches of snow on top of your bedroll. I won't call it what they called it, but that's a [*laughter*]*—that's—it was a bedroll.*

SL: Okay.

[01:25:41] DL: But believe me—yes, it was cold. Rainy season over there is god-awful, and you could—there was one time we was right next to this little stream that you might call it. You could step across it, or you could take your finger, reach the bottom of it, and never get your hand wet. Well, about eight hours after it was rainin' there, it was washin' two-and-a-half-ton trucks down it. I mean, that's the kinda rain that they get over there.

SL: Almost like a monsoon kinda thing . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . but in the north.

DL: And it—and it'll do that in about eight hours in some of those streams, so you have to be extremely careful if you don't know the area where you're at. You can get in trouble real fast. But yeah, that's a—it's a beautiful country, actually. It's quite mountainous, and we went up a lot of those mountains. But, God, they was steep, some of 'em. But . . .

[01:26:49] SL: Well, what kind of fire did your unit take on? Did y'all ever face heavy fire from the enemy or . . .

DL: We had some artillery, and most of the time we was movin' from one place to another. We had some rifle fire. In fact, the captain's driver got killed. He got shot between the eyes when a—on that and we had a few other wounded. That's one of the things that happened. We had artillery come in I don't know how many times, but everybody had a hole to crawl into. Sometimes you'd find a snake down in a hole, and you'd go to another one, but they was colorful snakes. Those little snakes that somethin' like the coral snake. I don't know if you know what they are or not.

SL: Well, I know what a coral snake is but . . .

DL: Yeah, that's what these—some of these would look like. Now

they coulda been. I don't know. We just shot 'em.

SL: Yeah.

DL: But we done that after the artillery stopped till we'd get back up out of a hole someplace. [01:28:02] Yeah, we had a strange thing happen one time. We had a two-and-a-half-ton truck comin' in with a load of ammunition on it. And there was a Korean—South Korean—one of workers ridin' on top of it, and it was pretty cold. So he decided he'd build a little fire up on top of this. And boy, I'm gonna tell you, now, there was problems when he come in 'cause, boy, they had—everybody was gettin' the heck outta the way because that thing blew. It took out a half a mile of territory around there with all that ammunition on there. But we got the fire—they got the fire put out, and they done some butt-kickin', I'll tell you. [*Laughs*] But that didn't happen again. But, oh yeah, they was—those South Korean people, they're good people, but they didn't understand what was goin' on, you know—how dangerous it was to do somethin' like that. [01:29:10] But do you know what a 4.2 mortar is?

SL: Well, is that millimeters—4.2 millimeters?

DL: Yeah, it's about that big around.

SL: Well now, see that—to me, I . . .

DL: It's about 4.2 inches.

SL: Four point two inches.

DL: About this big around. [Holds thumbs and forefingers in 4-inch diameter circle]

SL: That's like a . . .

DL: And about this long. [Holds hands about twenty inches apart]

[01:29:31] SL: Well now, I had a neighbor that lived up the hill from us in Fayetteville, and he had a 105mm cannon.

DL: Oh, that's a little bit bigger. That's a . . .

SL: Yeah, but it looked like to me that the hole . . .

DL: That . . .

SL: . . . the shell that it took was about that big. [Holds hands to indicate circle]

DL: . . . that's about this big around. [Holds hands in slightly larger circle]

SL: Yeah.

DL: And 4.2's about like this. [Moves hands to indicate smaller circle]

SL: Okay.

DL: That—there—that's the next size up, and then . . .

SL: Okay.

DL: . . . you go from—the ones we had, you went from a 105 up to a 155. And then you went from that on up to the eight-inch self-

propelled or self-contained—whatever they want to call it. And it fired off of tracks, and they was good for about twenty miles that they could fire in. You could sit out here and bout wipe out Fayetteville with one of them—just—they're that powerful. And the 155s—now, they call them the Long Tom, and they normally fired eighteen to twenty miles inside. [01:30:30] And we had air support also, and they used what they call napalm at that time. I don't—I haven't heard of 'em usin' napalm anymore, but that—you know what napalm is?

SL: Well yeah, they used it in Vietnam, didn't they?

DL: They could have.

SL: I think they did.

DL: But I think that was probably the last place we used it. But it's a jellied gas, and it explodes, and it just burns everything in its path. And it really puts a stop to an invasion sorta deal then when they drop a few of them. And we used to use them for booby traps and bury 'em in the ground and put a hand grenade on 'em and stretch a wire out. [01:31:20] And—but we had a strange thing happen one night. [*Laughs*] A bunch of us was out there on guard duty, and I heard this noise, and course, we just sat right behind the infantry, and you don't know if it's American comin' through or what it is, so you always let 'em

know that . . .

SL: Identify . . .

DL: Sound off.

SL: . . . themselves. Yeah.

DL: And they couldn't get no answer out 'em, so they just cut loose, and it was a machine gun. They just putt-putt-putt-putt-putt-putt. Well, the noise stopped, and the next mornin' we went out to see what was—if we can find out what made the noise and we had to bury a darned ol' mule.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh!

DL: And it's one that the Chinese or North Koreans had used to pack their stuff on, and he'd wandered off from 'em and got over where we was, and we had to bury that sucker. I tell you, it's—they take quite a hole to bury [*laughs*] one of them.

[01:32:25] SL: No kidding. Well, so they were close, then. They were close to your position if . . .

DL: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . a mule . . .

DL: They was never far away. Yeah. And in fact, there was some times they was just as close as from here to that wall down there, and I don't—and sometimes they was a little bit closer.

But it depends upon the day and the time you know. [01:32:52]



Now at—during the Iron Triangle, they was extremely close. And there was an Aussie come through that had one shoulder blade shinin'. And he musta been probably six foot two. He—tall, thin fellow runnin' pretty good, and the Chinese behind him had a hatchet tryin' to catch up with him, and he's about a dozen feet behind him. And the Australian walked out with us that mornin' so—and we had no problem there, and he was pretty badly wounded, and he walked out with us at—we got overrun pretty bad that mornin'. I think we walked about fifteen miles through the mountains that time. And I think it was two days later the tankers had went up, and we'd got most of our equipment back again, but now, why they didn't destroy it, I don't know. But we got most of—all of our stuff back and I was quite surprised. But we had—I don't know whatever happened to that Australian, whether he lived or died, but his one collarbone, collar blade there, was . . .

SL: Showin' pretty good.

DL: Yeah, it was white. You could see it.

[01:34:20] SL: So when you say you got overrun, are you saying that the North Korean/Chinese infantry actually stormed where you were and ran through . . .

DL: They was all over the top of us. Yeah.

SL: And so, is this hand-to-hand stuff that's happening or . . .

DL: Most generally you shoot first. You don't—and you sorta shy away from that hand to hand if you can. If you run outta ammunition, then it's hand to hand, but it—that Australian, I think he'd been into it probably hand to hand. And the night before, this went on for seventy-two hours, and the night before they run over the top of us, the Australians was lookin' for hand grenades. They had run out of ammunition and that, and they couldn't find any. Nobody had anything left, and they could hear noises down below 'em. They was gonna drop hand grenades on 'em. And they passed the word, and nobody had it so they—which was fortunate. The next mornin', turn daylight, they looked to see who was down there, and it was some of their own outfit that had moved back and was down right below 'em. If they'd had hand grenades, they'd have been killin' their own men.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And—but yeah, it—when you get overrun, they're all over the top of you, and there is—you look up, and your next-door neighbor might be one of the North Koreans or Chinese or whoever they might happen to be at that time, or it might be your best friend that's still there. But you try not to be there.

You tried to get back outta the way if you can, but there's times that you just can't go. [01:36:16] But yeah, we got overrun real bad one—at the Iron Triangle. In fact, they court-martialed a lotta the . . .

SL: North Korean . . .

DL: . . . North Korean . . .

SL: . . . folks.

DL: Not—the South Korean . . .

SL: I mean the South Korean. Yeah.

DL: The ROK. Sixth ROK Division. Yeah. But because of—well, they left us open for it. The—see, we—the outfit we was with—most of everybody over in Korea that was there would get two weeks' R & R over in Japan. The outfit we's with never got that. They was always in demand. They was top-of-the-line mortars and specialists is actually what they boiled down. And they never got off the front line. They was there the entire time of the Korean War. They just never got off of it.

[01:37:14] SL: So how long were you deployed there like that?

DL: I got outta there—let's see, I got hit the last time in September 10, and I was home discharged November 20, and that's after spendin' time in the hospital and everything and gettin' through—they booted me right out is actually what they done.

[01:37:48] SL: So you say the last time you got hit—did you—were you injured in some of these overruns or what . . .

DL: Yeah, I got injured on—at the Iron Triangle. I got shrapnel in one leg. Then which it to—that one there took about, oh, I think probably two, two and a half months to heal up. It—sanitation's not that good there. You're bathing in the river if you wanna bathe there. You wanna drink water, you get it outta the river. And you're talkin' about that. They give you a pill to put in the water to kill the bacteria.

SL: Iodine pills.

[01:38:43] DL: And you cross the river—course, everybody fills up their canteen. It—you might not find another one for a while. They done that one day, and we had crossed a river with Jeeps and everything and was drivin' up alongside the other—river on the other side and everybody had filled up their canteens goin' across the river. And bout a half mile upstream, there was the six—Chinese soldiers—there were North Koreans or what layin' in the river. So from there on, all there was is a stream of water alongside the Jeeps as [*laughs*] they left. Everybody poured their water out.

SL: Well, sure.

DL: Yeah. But God only knows what you—but that's—you never

know what's in the water when you go to drink it. It—some of it was bad. Yeah, I got hit then.

[01:39:36] SL: Now the shrapnel—was that from an artillery shell?

DL: No, that was from bein' fired on when—rifle fire. It left a mark about the size of a bullet, and that's what the scar is left on it. But no, the artillery shell—it—that took off a good chunk of my face on that.

[01:40:04] SL: Now wait a minute. So you got injured a second time?

DL: Yeah. That was . . .

SL: And . . .

DL: . . . in September.

SL: In September.

DL: Yeah.

SL: This is separate from the Iron Triangle or you . . .

DL: Yeah, the Iron Triangle was in April, and this was in September



that I got hit the second time. And I was runnin'—we had moved up in North Korea. And it got ready to fire, and our telephone line was out, and—which I was a lineman—and I got elected to go back and find out where the break was in the telephone line. And I's on the way back, and an artillery shell come in and exploded next to me. And I laid there for two days,

and the company went on back south. I never did find out if I had the line fixed by that time or not. I'd fixed quite a few breaks [*laughs*], but I never did find out if I got it fixed or not. And . . .

[01:41:13] SL: So how close did that shell come to you?

DL: Well, it explodes on a forty-five-degree angle, and I got hit right here. [*Pulls thumb along left jawline*] And I'm five ten, so that'd be about five foot.

SL: My gosh.

DL: And well, they left me for dead and . . .

SL: The Koreans—North Koreans or . . .

DL: No, my own outfit.

SL: Your own outfit . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . thought you'd died.

DL: Yeah. Well, they'd seen me get hit, and they figured I was dead. When I woke up, there's quite a puddle of blood under me, and my rifle was about twenty foot back. And I had that crisscross my shoulder like this [*runs hand from right shoulder down across body*] 'cause I was leanin' over so much. And how far that went with me, I have no idea. And when I got back outta there, I got back to the company, and they hauled me off to a

medic and one of those aid stations. And it's, believe me, it's not like the . . .

SL: *M\*A\*S\*H*.

DL: It's not like you see on *M\*A\*S\*H*, believe me.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And they cut off a lotta meat and sewed it up, and then they sent me all the way down to Pusan. That's down at the very southern edge of South Korea. And I spent a week down there, and then they sent me back up to my outfit, and then a short time after I was there, I got orders to go on home.

[01:42:51] SL: So you get hit by this artillery shell. You're workin' the line tryin' to find where it's broken, and you're—they think that you—that there's no way that you could survive that hit, but you—so you are there for two days.

DL: Yeah.

SL: And when you woke up, did you just get up and walk?

DL: Yeah, I just got—I got up and had to walk back on to—and I walked quite a little ways, and there was a Jeep come by. I flagged him down, and he hauled me the rest way back to the company. But yeah, there was a puddle of blood about that big around and about that thick underneath my head.

SL: It's a miracle.

DL: I thought my throat'd been cut. But yeah, it's strange how that happens. Yeah, that happened on the tenth of September, and I got—when I got to the medic, it was the twelfth of September. And so, they left me there for two days. But somethin', you know, I never understood, and I haven't figured it out yet. All the time I was there, my body functions quit completely. Nothin' moved. And when I got up, it was just like I had just laid down, and the time of passage didn't—I thought it was the same day, but then I found out it wasn't. But—which is strange, and I don't understand how come the body functions quit and that.

[01:44:43] SL: Just need to shut down, I guess. The—so was it really cold?

DL: No, no, it was a beautiful day. The sun was shinin' and everything. I imagine probably about eighty, eighty-five degrees.

SL: My gosh!

DL: Yeah. And I've never understood that. I've often wondered. I never heard of the body functions stoppin'.

SL: I hadn't either.

DL: And—but I got up, and my pants was dry, and my shorts was clear. So I could—I mean, I'd been there for forty-eight hours. I'd—and believe me, I'm a lot more regular than that.



[*Laughter*] Believe me.

[01:45:23] SL: Well, so you said your rifle was so far away.

DL: Yeah.

SL: So did you find your rifle and pick it up and . . .

DL: Oh yeah, yeah. I . . .

SL: And you had—did you—what about your helmet? Did you have your helmet or . . .

DL: Oh yeah, it was—I found everything I had—went in there with. I had everything I—and I come out with it. In fact, my rifle wasn't even damaged. But the only damage that was done was the side of my head, that's all. And I had got an idea that when they shipped me all the way down to Pusan—I was in the hospital down there—and I'd—when they sewed me up, you can't—it kills all the nerves down through here [runs finger along left cheek down to jaw], you know, and you can't open your mouth because you're—all those muscles had been cut. And to eat a slice of bread, you're gonna laugh when I tell you this, but you lay it on a table and you beat it down flat, so you can get it [*laughs*] in your mouth, you know with—then it's a glass of milk or whatever they got to wash it down with. But that's just god awful. It takes you bout anyplace from fifteen to thirty minutes to get outta bed. You just can't move, and it's just bad news.

But—well, that's in the past.

[01:46:47] SL: Well, so leg. Side of your face. Any other injuries?

I know you've got a problem with your back, but . . .

DL: Well, it tore me up pretty good. I have my right arm. I could never do much overhead with it, and they kept tellin' me there's nothin' wrong with it and this and that then. I'd been to the VA a lotta times with it, and they just said, "No, there's nothin' wrong with it." And then in—oh, was it—oh, what is—[20]03 they done—when they done my bypass or short—right after that they took another look at my shoulder. And then there was three orthopedic surgeries—surgeons that worked on it. And that's when they sawed off bones and filed it and sanded it and drilled holes in it and then put it back together again, and they fixed it, and now I've got full use of it now.

SL: That's a blessing.

DL: But it only took 'em fifty-two years to figure out what to do with it. And I carried it in a sling for three months after they done it and, which isn't a normal shoulder operation to start with, a normal rotor cuff . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: . . . deal like that, you know, is a week or two in the . . .

SL: Right.

DL: And it's all—but mine was three months—I—that I had to carry it like that. And—but I do have full use of it now.

[01:48:33] SL: You know, I hear this over and over again, how loyal veterans are to the Veterans Administration medical services. They—it's first . . .

DL: This medical service they have here through the VA here is one of the best in the United States, and they are good. I've got no complaints with them at all. They have done surgery on me. And if they can't do it—like, if you go down to this VA here in Fayetteville and Little Rock is loaded up, they can't do it, they'll put you in the hospital here and call in one of the best doctors to do it. Now that's what they done with me on my bypass. I had Dr. Counce.

SL: I know Jim Counce.

DL: Yeah?

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: All right. He's the one that done my bypass, and he's about as good as they come in this part of the country.

SL: Yeah.

[01:49:31] DL: And he done that, and then after that happened, I had a vein that collapsed that they had put in, and I had to go to Little Rock, and then they put in, over a period of time, they put

in three stents down there. And so, right now I'm workin' pretty good, and they've checked out that by nuclear stress test and one thing and another, and that's when they found out my heart's only workin' 40 percent.

SL: Yeah.

DL: But that's better than 25 percent.

[01:50:09] SL: Yeah, you look—you're lookin' pretty good. Your color's pretty good.

DL: I feel pretty good most of the time. It's—when I get to doin' too much, I start runnin' out of air and huffin' and puffin' because I'm—it's like with you, you'd run a mile, you'd be huffin' and puffin'.

SL: Or fifteen yards. [*Laughs*]

DL: I can do that. [*Laughter*] Yeah, fifty feet or so. But that's the difference in it.

SL: Yeah.

[01:50:33] DL: But no, I'm quite happy with when they done my bypass and everything. And the hospital down there overloaded me on Warfarin. I don't know if you know what that is or not.

SL: Morphine?

DL: Warfarin.

SL: Warfarin. I don't know what that is.

DL: It's a blood thinner.

SL: Oh.

DL: They use it in rat poison a lot. And . . .

SL: Keeps the clots from . . .

DL: Yeah. Keeps the blood real thin. And they overloaded me on that too much. And I got out of the hospital at noon, and that evening I was back in again 'cause it took out a hole in my stomach and a blood vein, and I'd lost seven pints of blood so . . .

SL: Oh!

[01:51:18] DL: So it took seven pints to get me back up to what they call the safe zone and another five days in intensive care. But—and then they done stomach surgery to . . .

SL: Repair the hole.

DL: They cauterized that. Boy, that guy was good, I'll tell you now. He went down in there and done that, and I didn't even know he'd been there.

SL: Is that right?

DL: Yeah, no pain—no nothin'. Yeah. And Dr. Rogers out of Fayetteville Diagnostic. He even—you might know him.

SL: Uh-huh.

DL: Yeah, he's extremely good. And now the stuff he give me to

swallow, it—what it tasted like I won't say, but it was bad.

[*Laughter*] God awful! I told him that, too, and he said, "Swallow it!" So I swallowed it. Next thing I knew, I woke up in bed—it was all over with. But yeah, and didn't even know he'd been there, and my throat wasn't sore or anything, but he went all the way down through there . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: . . . and took care of it. Yeah. But the VA up here is one of the—is extremely good, and I have no complaints with them at all. Oh, you'll growl at it like you will with any doctor, you know . . .

SL: Sure.

[01:52:31] DL: . . . if they don't do it just exactly what you want 'em to do, they'll do that. But they're—they are good. And I've had some real good ones up here, and I've had a couple women doctors up here that were very good, and I got along with them real good. They was—and fact, two of 'em was real good and why—I got a kick out of one of 'em. [01:53:02] I went in there—I thought my medicine was gofin' up. And I went in there, and she said, "Well," she said, "I want you back down at Little Rock within two weeks." Well, Little Rock is where they set up most of my medicine from the bypasses and stents and that.

And I said, "Okay." So I got the notice to go down there, and I went down, and he says, "Well," he says, "everything is not the way it should be." Says, "So we're gonna do surgery in the mornin'." And I said, "Oh?" And I just—"Didn't say anything about that. I thought it was about the medicine I was on." "Oh, no," he says, "we gotta do surgery in the mornin'." So they done surgery the next mornin', put in another stent, and I had to report back to the doctor up here in ten days, so I went in there, and I told him—I says, "I's down there. They put the stent in." And I says—"Well," she says, "that's good. If you hadn't've went down, you'd be dead now."

SL: Oh!

DL: I said, "Well, thank you." [*Laughter*] But . . .

SL: "Thanks for sparing me the" . . .

DL: Yeah, but . . .

SL: . . . "details."

DL: They found I was—what they call the widow-maker was startin' to close up, and they had to go and put a stent in that one. But she never said anything about it until I got down in Little Rock. I don't know if they figured I [*laughs*] wouldn't go or what, but I don't know. But they got me down there and kept me. And now I gotta go down there Friday again, so . . .

[01:54:36] SL: That's a check-up, though, right?

DL: Yeah, it's—yeah, I hope that's all it is. [*Laughter*] They've sorta got me a couple times goin' down there, but it makes you leery after a while, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: . . . they do good work, though. I've got no complaint with 'em at all. But you take the shoulder—how about that?

SL: Yeah.

DL: Yeah.

SL: That's good.

DL: Yeah. And I went down there, and he told me I could take it outta the sling, and he says, "Now," he says, "you're gonna have to do some" . . .

SL: Rehab.

DL: . . . "rehab on that." Told me what to do, and I go back in thirty days, and so I did. And he told me to do this and do that and standin' in front of me, and I did, and he says, "Okay." He says, "You're out." And just that good. And . . .

SL: It's amazing.

[01:55:27] DL: Yeah. So I can't complain on those doctors down there at all. They got some very good doctors. I had a problem with my head pluggin' up all the time and sinus infection and this



and that. And they checked me all over up here, and they sent me down to Little Rock to their head doctor down there. And he looked at it, and he, "Well," he says, "you need surgery on that," but he says, "you're too damned old." [*SL laughs*] And he says, "We'll do this." And so, he put me on some stuff that—and it's just stuff to keep your nose lubricated. And another thing to keep the phlegm goin'.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And you know what? I haven't been bothered since.

SL: That's great.

DL: As long as I do this . . .

SL: That's . . .

DL: . . . but if I quit one or the other it—I'm back with sinus problems again. But no, they're extremely good.

[01:56:29] SL: Delbert, do you—what about the guys that you served with? Are any of them still with us or did you ever keep in touch with the guys in your unit?

DL: I have never kept in touch with 'em because they're all over the country and—the outfit in Korea—I've got a list of where most of 'em are. And they have a newsletter that comes out bout every three months. And I get a letter on that. But it sorta ticked me off that they just left me layin' out there and didn't bother to

check and see if I was alive or dead.

SL: Have a pulse or . . .

DL: Yeah. And it ticked me off enough that I thought—pfft [*claps*].

And I know where a lot of 'em are and—but I've—it—I just don't have much use for 'em if they can't . . .

SL: And none of 'em ever voiced any kinda regret or shame or guilt about that?

DL: Well, I got sent home a short time after I got back to the company.

SL: Yeah.

DL: They was friendly enough when I got back to the company, but I was only there just a short time. Well, from time I got hit—the time I got home was two months.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And now, you know, that's awful fast for the service, now . . .

SL: That's fast.

DL: . . . after I'd spent a week in the hospital down there, and then it's another week gettin' back to the company and that, and the time I laid out there and got sewed up and one thing and another, you're talkin' three weeks. So it was only five . . .

SL: Four or five weeks of . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . actually bein' with those guys again.

[01:58:24] DL: No, it was only about five weeks before I was home.

SL: Yeah, okay.

DL: Yeah.

SL: So that's another couple . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . three weeks' travel, so . . .

DL: And so, they booted me out. I was—time I got hit to time I got home was two months. I was discharged. And they wouldn't even talk to me. When you get out they ask you if somethin's wrong, and I tried to tell 'em—says, "Well, they healed up fine. There's no—scars [*unclear word*] good. Out. Next guy." And that's just the way they was. They—well, I can understand it—gettin' hit in the head with shrapnel. "He's—guy gonna be nuts, goofy, or" . . .

SL: Right.

DL: . . . "what's he gonna be?" So they just turned 'em out. And there for a long time, the VA system was bad for a long time. But right now they're . . .

SL: They've turned around.

[01:59:18] DL: Yeah. I went to the VA Hospital up in Chicago one time, and I sat there, I believe it was three days, waitin' to see a

doctor, and time I got there, everything was over with, and it was all cleared up and—when I got hit in that leg with shrapnel, it messed up my one knee, and I had a knee about that big around.

SL: Oh!

DL: And that's the reason why in that one picture you got, you see a chair there with my knee stuck up in the air?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DL: That keeps the fluid runnin' down so the . . .

SL: Doesn't swell.

DL: Yeah. And they—time I got there to see the doctor in there, swelling was mostly down. "No," he says, "there's nothin' wrong with it." And I thought, "Well, that kinda treatment there—I just—you'd be dead if you went in there with a heart attack or anything major wrong before you see a doctor."

SL: Yeah.

[02:00:16] DL: And so, when we left that area up there and moved down here, I'd picked out an area down here. I like this type of country, and so does my wife, and the Fayetteville hospital was right close by here. And so, when we moved down here, we moved outta the Chicago area because the drugs was gettin' so bad up there. And it was gettin' the point where people was

comin' right up on your porch and hurtin' your kids or somethin', you know. And in fact, that happened about five or six houses up the road from us, and so we just said, "To heck with it," and moved to—all the way outta the country and come down here.

SL: Well, before we get you here, is there . . .

TM: Excuse me, Scott. We do have to change tape.

[Tape stopped]

[02:01:10] SL: You know, we spent the last hour, really, pretty much talkin' about Korean War.

DL: Yeah.

SL: Your experiences and your injuries and your disappointments and some of the stuff that you had to go through. Is there—and I don't want us to dwell too much on it if you feel like you've had enough talkin' about it. But I wanna make sure that both your European service and your Korean War service—is there anything that you'd like to say about either one of those before we move on after your service years?

DL: Not really—yeah, there's some of it I'd like not to go through again. [*Laughs*] But I'll tell you [*unclear words*]. Some of it was enjoyable, and some of it was right down nasty—be honest about it. But we got to see a lotta different countries. I got to see a lotta Europe, and I seen a lotta Japan and South Korea

and got to see some of North Korea and that—some of which a lotta people don't get a chance to see. But I wouldn't wanna go back again, and I didn't lose anything over there, I'll tell you, except a lotta time. But no, that's a—it was an experience, but that—I'll leave it at that. But . . .

[02:02:47] SL: Well, I have to say it was some kinda miracle that you survived the artillery round.

DL: Well, it—to be honest about it, I'd venture the chances of standin' that close—an artillery shell when it explodes, your chances are probably about one in eight or ten thousand of survivin' 'cause they didn't—did not expect me to survive. In fact, the eyebrows went up on the captain when I reported in 'cause he'd already reported me MIA and sent the paperwork in and the stuff on it and that. And fact, when I was home, a friend of mine come in. He'd been in Korea, too. And he seen me up tendin' bar there, and he looked at me, and he says, "How in the God's name did you get here?" He says, "You was MIA the last I knew of." [*Laughter*] I said—told him, "Well, their people make mistakes all the time, you know." But he let it go at that 'cause he knew why. He had a metal plate in his head from it, but—and he knew exactly what I was talkin' about. But I understand he—that fellow—his name was Burt Winer, and I

understand he's probably dead now. 'Cause he'd be as old as I am, and he's a lot worse shape.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And—but . . .

[02:04:11] SL: Well, okay, so—now, I asked you about stayin' in touch with your unit in Korea, and for a couple different reasons, you hadn't. But what about the—your unit in the European time? Do you ever hear from any of those guys?

DL: I have thought about gettin' in touch with them, but most of 'em that was real close friends—when they got home, they said they was just flat gonna move, so I don't know where they moved to.

I had one friend down in Mississippi, and his name was Elmer Wood, and he was not gonna go back to the job he had before which was dredging the Mississippi River for bodies.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh!

DL: And he said he was definitely not gonna go to that, he was gonna go someplace else. And there was things like this. And another fellow by name of Thornton who was outta West Virginia and he said the work there was not very plentiful, and he was gonna try someplace else. I don't—have no idea what happened to him.

SL: So they kinda scattered.

DL: They—I knew they was gonna scatter, so—and they knew it that I probably would because I told 'em I didn't like the area I was in because it was just as flat as a pancake, and there was just not that much work there. [02:05:45] And fact, I worked there for a while, and that factory closed up, and I went into the tavern and restaurant and dance hall business there for a while.

SL: Okay now, I wanna hear about that.

DL: All right.

SL: So you're—now you're back—what was the name of the town again?

DL: Belvidere.

SL: Belvidere and . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . you've got your job back at the sewing machine plant—factory.

DL: Yeah.

SL: It goes outta business.

DL: Yeah, and so, I sorta come—when I come home from Korea I—that one was runnin' downhill. It was sorta gettin' ready to close up, but—or sellin' out. One or the other. [02:06:24] And my dad and brother wanted me to help 'em with the tavern business there 'cause they wanted to buy it. And so, I agreed to that,



and I went in there, and my brother was drivin' long-haul truck, and my dad was drivin' a milk truck, pickin' up milk from farmers, and haulin' it to the dairy. And so, he was gone all day, and my brother was gone all month, and that left me to run it from six in the mornin' to most generally closin' time at night, and my dad helpin' out in between times and when he could. And we built up quite a business there. Yes, it was—had a bad name when we took it over. [02:07:07] It was called the Bucket of Blood.

SL: Oh [*laughs*] gosh!

DL: And [*laughter*] so . . .

SL: Real friendly place.

DL: Yeah, as long as you didn't open your mouth, you was all right. And—so we had to go—we cleaned that up and made a decent place for families to come in, and it turned out real good. We had—most generally had a good crowd on the weekends for the dance and everything. And we used to sell hamburgers and that there and lotta chicken and lotta fish, you know, and a few steaks'd go out. People went in more for chicken and fish on Friday night instead of the steaks, and that was on Saturdays. And Margaret and my brother's wife was the waitresses there, and so, we kept it pretty much in the family, you know.

[02:08:03] And we did hire a cook, and she was a woman up in her sixties. She was very good. But out in front, we most generally took care of that out there. And we finally got it cleaned up and got the rowdy people tossed out, and then we got families comin' in and made a good business . . .

SL: Well . . .

DL: . . . out of it for several years.

[02:08:26] SL: What did you change the name to?

DL: We left it the . . .

SL: Bucket of Blood?

DL: No, no, the name of it was Pearl Street, but the nick . . .

SL: Oh, Pearl Street.

DL: The nickname of it was Bucket of Blood.

SL: Oh, I see. Okay.

DL: Yeah, and that's what everybody called it, and we finally got that



squared away and straightened out. But we's just outside the city limits of town, you know, and some of the people thought they could get away with everything out there because it was outside the city. It was in the county. [02:08:55] But—and Saturday—Friday and Saturday nights we always had a policeman in the building there with us, and his name was Norm Euting, an old farm boy who was a big ol' fella. And [*laughs*] we

was in there—the back bar we had was—it was quite long, and if you stood on one end of it and there was people up at the other end and they was talkin' in normal voice, you could hear everything they said. You could—because it ricocheted off the back bar and when we's down there twenty feet away, we could hear everything they was talkin' about.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And these ol' boys was up there tellin' how they was gonna take over the bar and take what they wanted and just have a free ol' time in there. And they made plans on—one of 'em was gonna go to the restroom, which was just the other side of our bar down there at the end of it. And when they come out, they was gonna hit the cop on the back of the head with a beer bottle and take him out, and then that would just leave the ones tendin' bar there, my dad and brother and I. And I sat there listenin' to 'em and heard it all, and I called Norm over, and I told him what was goin' on. "Oh well, okay," he says, "we'll just fix that up real good." So [*SL laughs*] when that guy went [*laughs*] into the bathroom, and he come out with a beer bottle in his hand, Norm took him out right there, and the fight was on. And we cleaned those—I think it was twenty-one guys that we tossed outta the bar that night.

SL: My gosh! [*Laughter*]

[02:10:30] DL: And after that we had no trouble but it—that took care of it. That cleaned out the mess, and they was welcome back as long as they behaved themselves. And we told 'em that. And a lot of 'em was there—steady customers in there, but they actually behaved themselves. [*Laughs*] But they said they'd never got tossed out of a place so fast in their life but . . .

[02:10:53] SL: Well now, what year was this that y'all sa—took over that place?

DL: That was [19]52.

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-two.

DL: And we run—I was there [19]52, [195]3, [195]4 and up until May of [19]55. And then that's when I went to work for another company. My dad was comin' back in full time, and my brother was gonna be there, and I was gettin' sorta tired of it. And so, I went to work for a place called Lien Chemical Company. And that was in Rockford. And that was running up into southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois on service work and that. And . . .

[02:11:39] SL: So what kinda business—what—what'd they do?

DL: Oh, they sold all kinds of chemicals and that. They had a restroom sanitation service, and they had a service for cleanin'

out rats and mice, and they had—sold just all kinds of janitorial supplies and they had the full line of everything that you would need. And I worked for them there for a while. Then people come out of Chicago, which was the main office, and they talked with me, and they offered me a pretty good job if I'd come into Chicago and be a supervisor in there. And so, I moved in there and they—what they promised me was pretty good but not the best, either, and they said in time it would improve. Well, I was in there probably about six years doing that, and the things didn't improve the way they said they would. [02:12:41] And so—and then I went back into—right there in that same area—right—I went back into service work. And I went from about \$150 a week up to \$300 a week [*unclear words*].

SL: Big difference.

DL: On wages. And I had a family to support, and my kids are gettin' bigger. And they wasn't happy when I went back into service work because I was settin' up franchises and that for 'em, and they wanted me to take over the southern half of United States areas, and I refused that. I'd be gone too much. And so, I went back into service work, and [*SL clears throat*] then I stayed there until [19]72, and that's when I left there and come down here.

[02:13:28] SL: All right. Well now, let's see—we—you had—your first child was born when you were in Japan.

DL: Yeah.

SL: And her name was . . .

DL: Patricia.

SL: Patricia. And then y'all had two more kids?

DL: Yeah, we had another boy born in [19]52 and a girl born in [19]55.

SL: And their names were . . .

DL: Darryl and Lois.

SL: Darryl and Lois.

[02:13:56] DL: Yeah. Darryl's in Fayetteville, and Lois is in Fayetteville. And they're—Darryl's got a boy that lives out here at Cane Hill, and right now he's—went to school over in Oklahoma—welder's school. And he graduated outta there, and now he's up in Kansas welding up there. And his name is Travis. And Lois has got two—three kids. One's Tommy—it's a—worked for Danaher. Rachael is a certified phlebotomist and their—Angela is a CNA.

SL: Certified . . .

DL: Phlebotomist.

[02:14:45] SL: Well now, what does that do?

DL: It draws blood.

SL: Oh, okay.

DL: And this is the ones that they can get blood any place in your body that—they have—be certified to do it.

SL: I see.

[02:14:59] DL: And there's some that just pull blood out of the one vein, but these here are the deep veins and that, they have to be able to get into and that—that they—and that. But they are both good at it. When . . .

SL: Hey, Trey?

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you see somethin' . . .

[Tape stopped]

[02:15:19] SL: Well now, so—pretty big difference 'tween the small town and Chicago.

DL: Awful big difference and—but I never had trouble gettin' around Chicago. It—I never have trouble gettin' any place, really. Directions, I have no problem with. In fact, I very rarely ever get where I don't know where I'm at—strange towns or anything. And [*laughs*] settin' up a franchise one time out in Seattle, Washington. You ever been Seattle?

SL: I've never been. I've always wanted to go, but I . . .

DL: Well, we's out there when they was puttin' that big restaurant up in—what do they call it?

SL: The Space Needle?

DL: The Space Needle. And they—that wasn't even open yet when we's out there. And their main thoroughfare through town is they have traffic on lower level. Next one up goes one way, and the one above that goes the other way. And the fellow met us at the airport that was gonna have the franchise, and he took us out to his house. It was thirty miles out of Seattle. Midnight he brought us back in, and he says, "Here's the keys to your motel." And he says, "See you in the mornin' at the office." Did you ever go into a strange town and try to find your motel from what it says on a key ring? [*SL laughs*] And he told you where the office was when he drove by. He says, "There. The office is over there." He says, "We'll be there at eight o'clock in the morning."

SL: Okay.

[02:16:59] DL: Well, in Seattle if you miss one exit, it's quite a little ways to the next one because it's over Puget Sound all the time. [*Laughter*] [*Coughs*] But we was there five minutes to eight the next mornin', [*SL laughs*] and he was quite surprised we got there. He says, "I didn't think you'd get here till noon just tryin'



to find it, you know." But we—it turned out pretty good. But—  
and he was a lawyer out there. I forget what his name was, but  
they's nice people.

[02:17:30] SL: All right, now—so did you actually move into Chicago  
when you were workin' for the chemical company in . . .

DL: Suburbs.

SL: In the suburbs.

DL: I moved into suburb—place called Lombard. The lilac capital of  
the world. I don't know if you knew that or not.

SL: No, never heard that.

DL: Yeah, it's all lilacs in there.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Beautiful town.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Yeah, especially when the lilacs are in bloom.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Smells, too.

SL: Yeah, sure.

[02:17:52] DL: Yeah. And [*SL clears throat*] yeah, we lived in  
Lombard for quite a while and—Villa Park we moved into first,  
and then we left there and moved back over to Lombard. We  
didn't especially like the area there, and we bought the house

there, but it wasn't the house we wanted, either, so we sold that one and moved over to Lombard and got two-story house over there.

[02:18:21] SL: Well now, you were sayin' that in [19]72 you came down here to Arkansas. Now, what possessed you to move outta the Chicago area and why Arkansas?

DL: Well, my brother lived up in northern Wisconsin, up near Chetek and up in that area. And that's beautiful country up there. There's lakes up there, and there's small hills—mountains like it is right around in here. And I always said if I could find someplace that looked like northern Wisconsin and a whole bunch warmer, I'd move there.

SL: Oh.

[02:19:02] DL: And the guy said, "Well, you want to go to Northwest Arkansas." And I'd had a bunch of surgery done, and I was fresh outta the hospital with that, and I said, "Well, no time like the present. We'll take a trip down to Arkansas." So we come down through here, and we come over by Memphis and come across this way and—well, I didn't care for that part of Arkansas over there. And we got over here, and I stopped down here at Fort Smith, which is a branch of—they had an office down here of the same company that I worked for. It was a franchise. And

I stopped in there, and I found out I could work down there if I wanted, and so, I come on up in through here and found this part of the country that we liked real well. And so, we bought a chicken farm out here at Lincoln. And so, we moved down here, and I worked for this guy out of Fort Smith for a while, and he got to the point where he didn't wanna pay me for holidays and that the way that I thought he should've. And so, I started my own business down here. And when we was up north livin' up there at Lombard and that, my wife went to beauty college up there—a beauty school—and become a beauty operator.

SL: Kay.

DL: And then she was in long enough, the guy says, "You're too good for this." She said—he says, "You should become a teacher of it." So she become a teacher of beauty culture, and she was for several years up there. Yeah, she had . . .

SL: Here in Fayetteville?

DL: No, in . . .

SL: Oh, in Chicago?

DL: Yeah, up at Villa Park, there in Lombard. [02:20:49] I mean, the last school she was at was down at Downers Grove. And so, she taught beauty culture up there for quite a while, and then people—narcotics got pretty bad in that whole area around

through there, Chicago-area suburbs and that. And our kids was teenagers, and I just didn't figure that was a good area for 'em. And so, we took that trip down here while I was recovering, and we got what we liked down here, and so, we moved down here. And we got away from all that garbage up there. And it was—that was bad news up there. It wasn't bad when we moved there, but after a few years, it finally got out into our suburbs, you know. And people up the street—their kids was out on the porch one day sittin' there, and some other kids was a little bit high on drugs. They stopped out in front, come up on the porch, and beat up on 'em, and got back in the car, and drove on down the road and—which just created problems, you know. That's—and our two oldest kids graduated up there, and I think there was three thousand—about three thousand kids in their graduating class. Somethin' like . . .

SL: Wow, that's a big school.

DL: It was up in that area. There's a . . .

SL: It's big, big school.

DL: . . . a tremendous amount of kids there. And fact, it was four or five hour graduating class just get—to get 'em diploma, you know. And God, it was hot, too. And—but that was the reason why we moved down here and found out it was a lot like

northern Wisconsin and a whole bunch warmer. But . . .

[02:22:40] SL: Well, that—you know, that—late [19]60s there in Chicago—late [19]60s in the United States—you had the Vietnam War protests going on . . .

DL: It was . . .

SL: . . . had the . . .

DL: . . . the whole—just a whole bunch of garbage. Yes.

[02:22:56] SL: And then there was also the civil rights movement . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the [19]60s. Did you see much civil rights activity in Chicago or in that area?

DL: There was some not—but not a whole bunch. I was doin' a lot of travelin' in the [19]60s. And where we traveled—you heard about it, but we didn't run into the mobs or anything like that on it. And now, we's in San Francisco and Los Angeles and San Diego and Seattle and Tampa, Florida, and Omaha, Nebraska, and things like that, and you heard about it but when we . . .

[02:23:40] SL: You were movin' too fast.

DL: Yeah, we was a couple weeks here, couple weeks there. And I had two weeks to teach the—all these people everything they needed to know about runnin' a business and how to operate it.

And there was a fellow—I traveled with a salesman, and he taught their salesmen how to sell the products. And—but the rest of it, it was up to me to teach 'em how to operate their business and that, and—which is quite a job be honest about it.

[02:24:14] SL: So you end up down here in Northwest Arkansas, and you buy a chicken farm. Are you—were you actually raising chickens or was this . . .

DL: Forty-six thousand chickens at a batch.

SL: You are—that is somethin' else. Now that's a totally different lifestyle than . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: What . . .

DL: And most generally about 'tween four to five batches a year. And we done that for I think it was seven years.

[02:24:39] SL: You had a contract with Tyson or . . .

DL: Yeah, yeah. We had a contract with Tyson's on that. And we'd raise Cornish hens and . . .

SL: Oh!

DL: . . . we's—they was good for, oh, any place from four to six weeks, and sometimes we'd wind up keepin' 'em on up to fryers. But we always hoped to get rid of 'em . . .

SL: Quick.

DL: . . . for Cornish hens.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Otherwise we gettin' crowded, you know. And—but forty-six thousand chickens is a lotta chickens.

SL: That's a lotta chickens.

[02:25:10] DL: Yeah. And—but yeah, they—we done pretty good on that. We bought the farm at pretty good price, and this fellow from California come in, and he had a pocketful of money, lookin' for a chicken farm. And my wife had got strep throat from the dust from chickens every six months, and when he left he had a chicken farm, and I had a handful of money. And that was just before [*laughs*] the chicken—just a little while before the chicken industry sorta went downhill for a while.

SL: Right.

DL: But we got out of it at the right time. [02:25:48] Then we bought a house over in Viney Grove area, and we paid cash for that, and it's bought and paid for—has been for years. And we had a couple acres there, and then bought another nine and a half acres to go with it. And I sold nine and a half acres to my grandson, which we raised there—him and his mother and two sisters. We had them there. We put in a house trailer for them, and they lived there from close, I guess, close to ten years that

we had 'em. We knew where they's at and takin' care of 'em there.

SL: Yeah.

DL: And then when she got married again and left, I sold the house trailer and turned it into a carport for my car—truck and car. So it's a pretty good deal. But he's bought that now, and he's got a house, and he lives up there on that. Fact, he just got married here a short time ago. But they're doin' real good, I guess, and—but yeah, we've been very, very fortunate. We've had basically no deaths in the family of the close relatives, other than brothers and sisters, you know. But that goes with age.

I've lost everybody in my family. My sisters and brothers are all gone, and Margaret's got—I think she's got three sisters left—or there's three of them left. Yeah. And there was seven in her family there, and—but they're all gettin' up in age. But I guess you can't help that. You can't sorta beat the grim reaper, I guess.

SL: You can't. Sure can't.

DL: But . . .

[02:27:40] SL: Well, is there anything that you wanna say about Margaret that hadn't been said yet?

DL: Well, she's one of the best cooks and one of the best people I



know that I coulda married. She's been a good mother, a very good companion, and she's been a hard worker, and oh, we've had arguments but nothin' serious. And we've been quite fortunate. We've got along real good. But . . .

[02:28:12] SL: You know, a little earlier we were talkin' about some of the—you mentioned that there were several things that—kinda miraculous things that had happened in your life. And you talked about being on 59 South down by the Red River and . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . somehow or another not ending up in the swamp when by all rights . . .

DL: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . you should've been.

DL: There's a—there's been—well, another one to see is standin' next to an artillery shell and have it explode. What can I say?

SL: Yeah.

[02:28:50] DL: I take it for what it's worth. I mean [*laughs*], that says what it probably boils down to.

SL: Well, that's two great [*DL coughs*] examples.

DL: Yeah, and for myself, I was left for dead once and almost bled to death one time besides that. And well, this poor ol' body has just been beat up, and it's been bad news and it's—the only

reason it's here is because of the good Lord. That's all there is to it.

SL: Yeah.

DL: I've got more stitches that's been in my body than what would go from your feet to your head. And to be honest about it, I'm tied together, stitched together, banded together, wired together, and glued together.

[02:29:50] SL: [*Laughs*] [*Sighs*] It's a bit—it is remarkable.

DL: Yeah. Yeah, and I mean, that's just a fact. That's the way it is. And they've been in and around my heart about eight times, and I figure that's just about enough. And I've had—almost every part of my body has got scars on it. You name a part, I can show you the scars. That's just the way it is. And as I like to kid people, I've been beat up, bowed up, shot up, cut up, burned up. You name it, that's the way it is. But thank the good Lord, I'm here. And I got a good wife. Well shoot, I've got a hell of a good family if that's what [*laughs*] it boils down to—and I mean, a good family, too. I love 'em all, and they're all good people, and they're all good workers, and I've got no problem with 'em. But that's about the only thing I can say that I've been very fortunate.

SL: You have been very fortunate.

DL: Yeah.

[02:31:22] SL: [*Sighs*] Well . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . is there anything else you wanna talk about that we hadn't talked about? Is there—I mean, there's gotta be a big difference to—once you came down here to Arkansas—it's different kinda land, different . . .

DL: Well . . .

SL: . . . culture and . . .

DL: . . . you know, all my life I have been periodically in a different area. And it's always interesting to find—I've—love to find out different cultures and that, and I've enjoyed finding out what a lot of 'em are. A lot of 'em I don't care for. I wouldn't go back to—now, when I was in Japan and Korea, they—I found out one of their dishes over there. You take rice that's got a fish head stuck up out of it. I don't want a no part of that. And [*laughter*] I mean, that really turns me off.

SL: Yeah.

[02:32:22] DL: And—but there's other things that they have over there that are very good, and that's just different cultures, you know. But—and I like the American way of life. And the German way over there, it was entirely different, now. And

course, when we was there, they didn't have much for food and that other than what we had in the military. But occasionally we would get out, and we'd be invited to a German home, and they had what they call the black bread over there. I don't know if you've ever eaten any of that or not. It's black.

SL: Is that a—is it rye kind of bread or . . .

DL: It's a—I can't tell you what it is made out of. But the only way I could put it down would be to put some little bit of butter on it and dab a little bit of sugar on top of it, and it was pretty good that way. But [*SL laughs*] that . . .

SL: But without, you could leave—you could do without.

[02:33:19] DL: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] But it was just one of those things that—and they made some very good pretzels over there in that part of the country. Now the town of Schwäbisch Gmünd that we was in at that time was the silver capital of Germany.

And they made a lotta silver stuff there, which was quite interesting to get around and look at. And—but it was just a different type of country and everything. It's cobblestone streets. You'd—I don't know if you've ever seen them or not.

SL: Sure. Yeah.

DL: Yeah. But . . .

SL: They last a long time, don't they?

DL: Oh yeah, yeah, and they're very rough.

SL: Yes. [*Laughs*]

[02:34:05] DL: Yeah, very rough. And [*laughs*] the honey wagons over there—they're—you know what I'm talkin' bout—a honey wagon?

SL: Well, those are the—they clean out the septic tanks or . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DL: They'd pull 'em down the road with—and . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: Yeah, but they was quite prominent when we was over there. But—and [*laughs*] yeah, they make sort of a mess. But [*laughter*] yeah, there's different customs and that. And one place where we used to go to—I get a chance—we had been stationed there, and we knew a lotta the people there, so we'd go back down and visit with 'em and that. And there was one hotel we used to stay at down there, and their restroom was a straight pipe all the way to the basement. And there was a big tank down at the basement, and that's where they collected that. And then they'd take it out and spread it on their fields.

SL: Gosh!

DL: [*Coughs*] Excuse me.

SL: It's all right.

[02:35:14] DL: But as I say, it's different custom than—but it was interesting. But I think that probably covers pretty good on that. [*SL sighs*] But no, it's—when Margaret was a beauty teacher up there, there used to be people from different places that would call in and say, "We've got a woman here with green hair. What do we have to do to correct it?" [*Laughter*] And so, she would tell 'em what they'd have to do in order to correct it and get it back to normal again. And I mean, she was as good and color hair was her specialty. She was extremely good on it.

And—but she was extremely good at it, but—and—but we moved down here, and she dropped the beauty culture, and we had the chicken farm and this and that. It was entirely different way of life and—but it's beautiful country down here, and the people are extremely good. But it's just like any other country. You're gonna run across some jokers every once in a while, you know, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:36:31] DL: And we have done that, but we just ignore 'em and forget it. But a lot of us like to give us a hard time about bein' Yankees, you know, but—maybe yes, maybe no. [*Laughs*]

SL: I'd say you've been here long enough to . . .

DL: But actually, my great-great-great uncle was Robert E. Lee's grandfather.

SL: Is that right?

DL: Oh yeah. And so, I mean, it . . .

SL: Virginia. Out of Virginia.

DL: Yeah. And there were seven boys in that family and Light Horse Harry and that, and yeah, my daughter looked it up, and she went back through and—a school project she had, and she was curious to—if we was related or not, and she found out we was. But we've got relation all over this—between my dad's side of the family and—well, I should say my grandmother's side and my grandfather's side—we're pretty well related to about two-thirds of the country around here [*laughter*], I think. But no, they're real good people down here. I have no complaints with them at all. But—in fact, my brother's buried over here in Fayetteville and . . .

[02:37:55] SL: In the national cemetery?

DL: Yeah. Margaret and I'll be over there. And I don't plan on it, but I guess I'll wind [*laughs*] up there anyway. [*Laughter*] But that's the way it goes. But yeah, that's a nice place over there, too. I don't know if you've been there or not.

SL: Oh yeah, sure.

DL: Yeah. But it—we buried my brother over there four or five years ago now. He died at six hours before he become eighty years old. And—but he had been up the VA, and the VA wanted to put him in the hospital, and he absolutely refused, and I can understand that. So he went home, and he was dead six hours later. But his wife—he was havin' a hard time breathing, and he could walk six feet and have to stop and catch his air. And his wife had dementia, as they called it. And he couldn't handle it anymore, so I think he just opted for bein' out, and I think—that's my own personal opinion and—which I can understand it if he did because it—he had no way of taking care of her.

SL: Yeah.

DL: Hell, he couldn't take care of himself, to speak of.

SL: Right.

DL: But—which—it's one of the—that goes with age. I hope it never happens to me. But [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: I'm old enough. I don't care to get any older, but . . .

[02:39:32] SL: You've had a pretty long, good life.

DL: Yeah, yeah. Been very fortunate. I've had a good wife, and we've been [*unclear word*] pretty darn good. We've had basically a job all—my wife and I as a—have always had a job of



some kind or another. And—but my wife started out workin' in the restaurant. She worked her way through school by going to work at about four in the morning in the restaurant and workin' till school time and then after school. And I've worked all my life, and so has she. And our kids are doin' the same thing, so they've worked all their lives and that. Anyway, our grandkids are comin' up the same way, and I'm quite proud of our grandkids. I really am. Of all the grandkids we've got, there's not one of 'em that's livin' on welfare or anything else. They're makin' their own way. And some of 'em are—have got certificates to get 'em jobs if they need 'em and we—one grandson is a supervisor down at the wheel company down here. He's in the machine shop, so he's supervisor of that. And he's doin' real good on that, and he's smart. In fact, they're all pretty [*unclear word*]. They're smarter'n I am. [*SL laughs*] You [*laughter*] have to be honest about it.

SL: Musta got it from Margaret.

[02:41:17] DL: I just got 'em bluffed, I tell you. Yeah, but I sound good when they talk to 'em. That's the main thing. But . . .

SL: Yeah.

DL: Yeah, we're doin' good. So to—we probably just bout got this wrapped up, haven't we?

[02:41:32] SL: Well, I was just gonna say—is there anything else that you'd like to say while you got the opportunity?

DL: No. That should just about cover just about everything.

SL: Well, we do a—we ask our interviewees to do somethin' for us. We have this deal where we ask them to look straight at the camera, not at me. And say their name and say, "I'm proud to be an Arkansan," or "I'm proud to be from Arkansas," and . . .

DL: I . . .

SL: . . . I think you've lived here long enough to say that you're an Arkansan.

DL: [*Laughs*] Okay.

SL: And you're ?proud? to be from Arkansas. But . . .

DL: Yeah.

SL: . . . I'm gonna get up out of the way, so you don't look at me.

DL: Okay, I can . . .

SL: And . . .

DL: I—you can sit there.

SL: Okay.

DL: You don't have to move.

[02:42:15] SL: All right, now . . .

DL: I . . .

SL: . . . once you say it, stay lookin' at the camera just for a couple

of counts.

DL: Okay.

SL: 'Cause that'll help us in the edit.

[02:42:22] DL: Okay. Yeah, I'm just glad I live here in Arkansas, and I think the world of it, and I appreciate the people here. In fact, I wished I'd probably moved here ten, fifteen years before I did. And it's the best thing I can say for Arkansas is that I love it. And I think that would probably just bout cover it all, don't you?

SL: Yeah. Okay now, what I want you to say is I want you to say your name.

DL: I . . .

SL: "I'm Delbert Lee, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

[02:42:53] DL: Yeah. I'm Delbert Lee, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas. And I wanna thank you for this opportunity.

SL: Thank you, Delbert.

DL: Yeah.

SL: That was good. That was good.

TM: Yeah. [*Clears throat*]

SL: That was a good one.

DL: Hmm.

SL: Thank you.

DL: Take care.

SL: Thank you.

[End of interview 02:43:10]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]