

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

University of Arkansas
1 East Center Street
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-6829

Arkansas Memories Project

Earl Hale

Interviewed by Kris Katrosh

May 9, 2008

Fayetteville, 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 Web site 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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**Kris Katrosh interviewed Earl Hale on May 9, 2008, in
Fayetteville, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Earl Hale: . . . they discharged me in St. Louis, Missouri. See,
it was—I had enough points. I'd spent 279 days in
combat, so I had enough . . .

Kris Katrosh: Wow. Yeah, I'll bet you did.

EH: . . . time to come home soon as the war was over, over there,
but it had to be over in—in—uh . . .

KK: In—in Japan.

EH: . . . in Japan also. So soon as it was over, they started . . .

KK: Discharging everybody.

EH: . . . dischargin' us. So—uh . . .

[00:00:25] KK: Did you think you were gonna have to go to Japan
for a while?

EH: Uh . . .

KK: Wasn't that probably the rumor?

EH: Oh yeah, we thought so.

KK: Yeah.

EH: See, because he left right away—uh—our commander did.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: And I'd—up until about a month ago, I had a little, small

brochure that they gave us in 1945. The war was over, and it had a—a brief of this book here.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: This was not published until 1950.

KK: Okay.

EH: I got out of the service—October of [19]45.

KK: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

[00:00:55] EH: And my son, see, bein'—he's a retired lieutenant colonel in the marines . . .

KK: Oh yeah.

EH: . . . and he's—was havin'—he's a pilot, so he was havin' to do ground duty. He was the chief recruiting officer there in Arlington, Texas.

KK: Right.

EH: And he saw this emblem and knew that I was in the corps.

KK: Yeah.

EH: He checked a book just exactly like this out, and when he's comin' home with it—uh—that's another thing—my son, even though him being a retired colonel—my book showed I—I got five Bronze Stars [*unclear words*]. [*Laughter*] I was given one. But anyway, there's the way [*KK clears throat*] we wound up just before—fore we started to cross the Channel. This was in

England . . .

KK: Mh-hmm. Yeah, yeah.

EH: . . . Southampton, England. Just before we got on the boat.

[00:01:40] KK: Now which—did you go on in on D-Day or [*unclear words*] . . .

EH: I went in on D-Day. I did . . .

KK: You went in on D-Day. And which beach . . .

EH: Yeah, I—they were . . .

KK: You were on Omaha? Or you . . .

EH: Omaha's where I landed. But I was supposed to—uh—I was half-track command—they dropped my half-track accidentally out there in the Channel.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: So I had to land with the doughboys.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: The Ninetieth Division.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: And they was two officers and—uh . . .

KK: So you didn't have the other half-tracks with you at that point. It was just yours? [*Unclear words*]

EH: Well, not—uh—there was some more in there, but they went on to Utah.

KK: Yeah.

EH: See. And so they didn't know, and they told—uh . . .

KK: I bet there were a lot of screw ups like that 'cause such a day . . .

[00:02:22] EH: Oh, a lot of screw ups, and they told—uh—I don't know—it was my crew, which there was just about four of us. It was a regular crew, like the driver . . .

KK: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . and me—[unclear words] tell 'em to go. But I drove it most of the time.

KK: Oh, did you?

EH: And—uh—then—uh—the—the machine gunners, you know . . .

KK: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . and the radio operator.

KK: Right.

EH: And they sent two officers. I was the only one that made it that day . . .

KK: Wow.

EH: 'Cause we—that landed with the doughboys—I mean, that was . . .

KK: You were in the wrong place.

EH: Well, it was . . .

KK: You weren't a good target.

EH: Uh—well, I just—they happened to miss me—I mean, I—I drug a lot of 'em. But it just—I didn't catch it. And we—I was fortunate enough in 2004—see, they hold that reunion over there in—on Normandy.

KK: Okay.

EH: Or in . . .

KK: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You got to go to that, didn't you?

EH: Yeah.

KK: Yeah, I heard about that.

[00:03:20] EH: In 2004, me, my son, and my grandson and—uh—we have our picture—I've got it at home and all—on a pillbox that I had—had to take, you see.

KK: Yeah.

EH: But it's so clean you wouldn't know it then—now you know—you know . . .

KK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Of course.

EH: Yeah. Okay, now that is me right there.

KK: [*Laughs*] Oh, oh, oh man, isn't that something? You walked right into it, didn't you?

EH: Yeah, I's—I's—[*door shuts*] for about three days, I'd been up here.

KK: Uh-huh.

[00:03:57] EH: But here—that's Patton right there. That's Walter.

Now here's Patton again, and there's that one major general.

And there's our commander. And there's Giraud.

KK: Okay.

EH: The general—French general.

KK: Yeah.

Trey Marley: Wow. That's awesome. We got . . .

KK: We're going to do some scanning outta this for sure.

TM: Yeah.

EH: There's him again. But there's a lot of pictures in here. You know, I get so aggravated—uh—and like when—uh—Reagan was president, he said, "There was no fourteen-year-old German fightin'." I can show you pictures.

KK: Oh well, I've read lots of books where they had teenagers fighting. Absolutely . . .

EH: Why, sure. I've got—I've got a picture of three of 'em, and we captured . . .

KK: And as you got further into the war, it was . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . more so. They were throwin' everybody out there.

EH: Shoot. I mean, these are all—as I say they . . .

KK: Uh-huh.

EH: . . . they're pretty gruesome—there's a lot of them, you know.

KK: Well, I guess, they're showin' the real thing in here as opposed to what was watered down . . .

EH: Yeah. These are real pictures.

KK: You know. Fifty-four thousand losses. Now that was from . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . XX Corps? They lost that many people?

EH: No, no. No, no. From the Germans.

KK: Oh, the Germans lost that many.

EH: But I—this little brochure I had . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . it told, like, the corps itself. I think that—that it was under the corps—we destroyed forty-one in di—uh—divisions.

KK: I believe it. I believe it. I've read a lot about it. [*Unclear words*]

[00:05:26] EH: Well, it's just—uh—I always said—you know, I mean, when you got back home and you see a lot of the ex-GIs—oh, how tough they were in some of these bars—them's the guys that w—didn't see no damn combat. [*KK laughs*] When you been over there as I had as much . . .

KK: When you've been over there [*unclear words*]. Yeah.

EH: . . . you didn't want to see bout—anybody get a bloody nose.

KK: Exactly. That makes more sense to me.

EH: Yeah, yeah. And I mean, it was the same way when you's over there. I mean, some of them guys—if you went on a rest deal—uh—this was after the war was over . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . and then even while it was going on, you'd see some of the recruits had never been up to the front . . .

KK: Right.

EH: . . . but oh, they's back there; they's tough. And you'd go in a—in a . . .

[00:06:13] KK: Yeah, I guess you get a new appreciation for—for life and for being healthy when you've been out in that stuff.

EH: I'm tryin' to see. I mean, it's so—just full of pictures.

KK: Yeah, there's some great stuff.

EH: This is what I call—that's a half-track right there . . .

KK: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

EH: . . . [*unclear words*] like that.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: See, it had .50 caliber, and we had two .30s.

KK: Oh, okay.

EH: Yeah.

KK: So you had three machine gunners.

EH: Yeah.

KK: You had a driver. You had a radio operator. You had a officer—
or a commander.

EH: That was me, yeah. In—in that . . .

KK: Yeah. And then who else . . .

EH: But we'd just normally go [*unclear words*] . . .

[00:06:45] KK: [*Unclear words*]. Did you sometimes—did you
sometimes take troops in there with you, too, or—or was that all
you had—you usually had?

EH: That—that was all we had . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . right there. We'd go to station—I mean . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . that's what we did. But I mean, we'd have to go—uh—send
even them out of that . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . to—for a machine gun nest . . .

KK: Oh, okay.

EE: . . . that—you couldn't drive right through . . .

KK: You couldn't get to anyway.

EH: . . . you know . . .

KK: Yeah. Right.

EH: . . . when you'd go up there. There's—there's pictures of those three—I was telling you about.

KK: Uh-huh. Yeah. Absolutely. I can't believe anybody would have said that. I mean . . .

EH: Yeah!

KK: . . . every book you read, they talk about how they had kids up there, and they had the old men up there, and . . .

EH: Well, oh yeah.

KK: . . . all kinds of stuff that we wouldn't have normally had.

EH: See, there's old Patton.

[00:07:25] KK: Because they got, you know, they got desperate for manpower when the invasion came. They had so many people wrapped up in the Russian front . . .

EH: Oh yeah.

KK: . . . they didn't—they had to do somethin'.

EH: But I mean—well, now I mean, there's still—well, like, I guess, they're sayin' on the news all the time, like Obama's religion and whatnot—they don't believe that the Holocaust ever existed.

KK: Yeah.

EH: They try to tell you that, but I mean, I helped liberate Dachau, and I know damn well it was.

KK: Well, you know, there are plenty of Americans that still don't believe that.

[00:08:01] EH: You've heard of the Siegfried Line?

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: That's a picture of it right there.

KK: Yeah, yeah. Man, can't imagine gettin' through that . . .

EH: And there's another picture of where we went on through it.

KK: How did you get through that? Did you have to blow all that concrete up?

EH: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

KK: Get through there and make the holes.

EH: Yeah. See, now here's a better picture of the half-track.

KK: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Yeah.

EH: I never did talk or say anything about it until my kids—they both knew . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . I mean, that I was—they didn't really know that I was D-Day. I just never said anything to 'em. And when Alan . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . uh—checked this book out, you know . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . and I had that book. [00:08:43] But they were—wanted

me to go to New Orleans. See, they got a museum now . . .

KK: Yeah. The World War II—yeah, museum. It's supposed to be really nice . . .

EH: Yeah, the museum. I went in there—they—that was going to be my Father's Day present. They didn't have to pay—the ones that were with me—they all got in free, and they made me a lifetime membership.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: See.

KK: Good.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Well, that's a wonderful . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . thing. We'll talk a little bit more about some of that in our interview.

EH: Okay.

KK: Um—we're also thinkin' that there may—we may wanna interview you further at another date—after this, possibly. We may not have everything we need out of this one. But—uh—uh . . .

[00:09:16] EH: I had—I—the tenth—about the seventh of June, see, ever—uh—sixth of June . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . when we were over there, I've been the guest of honor for
[laughs] the—the fourth—I mean the fifth, sixth, and
seventh . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . now the eighth, I'm supposed to go to Dallas there. This
guy—he has a party every year.

[00:09:40] KK: Is it for the XX Corps? Or is it just for all World War
II . . .

EH: No. Just—just me.

KK: Oh, oh. Well, even better. [Laughs]

EH: Yeah.

KK: That's great.

EH: Yeah. I am the guest of honor . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . there. Uh—this guy is just a young fellow . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: And they're lawyers—there was two of 'em—they interviewed me
for some time.

KK: Oh, okay.

EH: Over there near—in fact, there wasn't but three of us that were
D-Day participants in—of a two-hundred-and-fifty group . . .

KK: I see.

EH: . . . a group of two hundred and fifty.

KK: I see.

EH: Now there's a lot of veterans go over there, but they. . .

KK: Right.

EH: . . . you don't—well, there's not too many of us left, you know.

KK: Yeah, I understand. That's why this is so important to us to be able to get this.

[Tape stopped]

[00:10:16] KK: We're gonna start off with some preliminary stuff.
You rollin'?

TM: Good.

EH: Okay.

KK: Uh—this is an interview for the Pryor Center for Oral and Visual History, the University of Arkansas Libraries. I'm Kris Katrosh. I'll be doin' the interview today. We're going to interview Earl Hale, and we're shooting in the home of Walt Eilers [pause]. Today is May 9, 2008. And—uh—we'd like to start by getting your full name and spell it for us.

EH: Earl F. Hale. *E-A-R-L*. Earl. *F* is the middle initial. *H-A-L-E*. Hale. Last name.

KK: So what is your middle name, if you don't mind sharing?

EH: Franklin.

KK: Franklin. *F-R-A-N-K-L-I-N*.

EH: Mh-hmm. Yes.

KK: Okay, great. And the next thing I need to ask you is if it's okay that we do this recording today and that we share it with others?

EH: Yes.

KK: Through the Pryor Center?

EH: Yes.

KK: Okay, great. Um—all right, is that all the preliminary stuff as far as everybody knows?

TM: That's the preliminary.

Joy Endicott: Um—date of birth and location of his house.

KK: Mh-hmm. I've got the location of the house.

JE: Uh . . .

TM: Well then, his date.

JE: Birth . . .

KK: His birthdate and place . . .

JE: . . . and place. Mh-hmm.

KK: . . . is where we're gonna start? Okay. [00:11:32] Okay, so where were you—where and when were you born?

EH: I was born in Mulberry, Arkansas, on December the eighteenth,

1922.

KK: Okay. And where is Mulberry, Arkansas? You want . . .

EH: About twenty-six miles east of Fort Smith.

KK: Okay.

EH: At—at the time, right on Highway 64—old 64 highway.

KK: Mh-hmm. Okay.

EH: That was the main thoroughfare from Fort Smith to Little Rock.

KK: Until they put in the freeway, I guess.

EH: Till they put in the freeway—I-40, yes.

KK: Mh-hmm. What's your—uh—who were your parents? What were their names and where were they from?

EH: Uh—they were born and raised around Russellville, Arkansas. And—uh—Tenny Elizabeth Smith was my mother, and Charles Riley Hale was my father.

KK: Okay.

JE: I'm going to get the air.

KK: Okay. She's gotta turn it . . .

EH: My father was a . . .

KK: Hold on just a second. She's gotta turn the air conditioner off.

[Tape stopped]

[00:12:38] KK: Now your—your mother's name—first name was Tenny?

EH: Tenny Elizabeth. Mh-hmm.

KK: Can you spell the Tenny part?

EH: Well, it was—uh—I think it was just short. They called her Tenny. I believe it was Tennessee. *T-E-N-N-E-S-S-double E*. Tennessee.

KK: Okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. That makes sense. That's an unusual name.

EH: Yeah. And everyone called her "Tenny."

KK: Mh-hmm. That's cute.

EH: Mh-hmm.

[00:13:00] KK: I like that. Uh—so you were raised in Mulberry?

EH: Uh—yes, more or less, because I came back there after my mother passed away. I's seven years old at—over at Moffett, Oklahoma.

KK: Okay. So when did you move to Moffett and then come back? What age did you go to Moffett?

EH: Well, I—I don't recall. I was—it was either four—uh—three or four . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . when we moved to Tuttle, Oklahoma, and then came back to Moffett, Oklahoma. And from there—but I mean, we stayed two or three years. But I started to school in a one-room

schoolhouse at Moffett, Oklahoma.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: Just across the bridge over here from Fort Smith.

[00:13:42] KK: And then when you were seven, you came back.

EH: When I was seven, I came back—uh—to Mulberry . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . and—what—and I—I was the youngest of the family—I—at the time, includin' my half brother I stayed with. I had three brothers and three sisters. So—uh—the older brothers—they were gone, I mean. Uh—the two besides the one I stayed with, they were—back in those days, they just traveled around from wheat harvest—this—doing this and that.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: They called 'em just hobos, you know . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . that's what they did. They caught freight trains—ride from one crop to the other. And—but then the oldest one of them joined the service. He was in the service during World War I. But I was raised right at Mulberry with my half brother.

KK: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. I'm going to make sure I turned—I didn't turn my phone off.

[Tape stopped]

[00:14:40] KK: So your brothers went out to do—basically, to do day labor wherever they could get . . .

EH: Day labor wherever they could get it—whatever state and whatnot.

KK: I mean, those were tough times.

EH: Oh, tough times. I mean, there was just no jobs for anyone. And my half brother—he was just a half brother—he was—that raised me. And he was the oldest one of the family, and he was married and had a family himself. In fact, the girl is—was just—uh—he had a daughter that was just five years younger than me, so . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . in other words, she was about two when I went to stayin' with them. And then he wound up havin' four children.

KK: Oh.



EH: But he—most of the people that lived, I mean, that I knew at that time—the—the—they all worked for a gentleman by the name of Mr. Farmer, Jim Farmer. He owned practically all the bottoms, which from Mulberry . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . to the river—it was five miles and practically all of that bottom—just—I'd say for miles each direction—Jim Farmer

owned it. And he had about—I'd say, from fifteen to twenty regular employees that worked daily. And they worked from daylight till dark. We always called it "from can till can't." And they'd—my brother would leave home before daylight . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . and walked, which we lived about three miles out of town. And he'd walk to the corral and all where they—the lot where they kept the team of mules . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

[00:16:25] EH: Back then, they did have some tractors but not too many. And—but he got 'em right away. And so they operated the machinery until he got rid of the mules then and whatnot and finally got all automated equipment. And so—but I start—I don't recall. I think I was in the second grade, maybe, because they just started school, and I'd—the first grade and all. But I started school then at Mulberry. And—uh—all through my schooling, I probably never attended over a half a term . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . I didn't play hooky. But I got permission, because back in those days, we had to pay for our own books. And I worked, and I hired out when I was twelve years old for even ten cents an hour. I would catch a truck at three o'clock in the mornin',

ride in the wintertime, go to Van Buren, which was about twenty miles ride on the back end of that truck. And I had to be able to pull a crosscut saw just like a man and do just as much work as him—ten cents an hour.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: That's what we got for working.

KK: Man.

EH: And I'd be gone way before daylight, and I wouldn't get home till after dark.

KK: I believe it.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Do you wanna look for the other buzzing sound? I still hear one.

[Tape stopped]

[00:17:51] KK: Sorry for the interruption.

EH: Well, that's . . .

KK: Ten cents an hour. My grandfather told me he used to haul rocks from the quarry, and he got fifty cents a load. Most days he could only do one.

EH: Yeah.

KK: And it sounds like there was a lot of that that was goin' on . . .

EH: Oh yeah.

KK: . . . I mean, it was just—it was just very hard. Wha—what did—

what did it cost to buy a loaf of bread or to—you or . . .

EH: Uh—nickel a loaf. Five cents.

KK: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:16] EH: I can recall that. And then the first time I remember it goin' to a—a dime, the day-old bread was a nickel then, you know. But back in those days, you could buy—go to a store—eggs were then never over twelve cents a dozen—a penny apiece. But you could go buy one, two, or three eggs, whichever you wanted to buy at the store. The best pair of shoes would cost you about two ninety-eight. A pair of work shoes or dress shoes—but I never wore anything but the work shoes.

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: In fact, I never wore any underwear until I went to the CC Camp. [*Laughter*] Just wore overalls, and they were two ninety-eight a pair for them. And the shirt wasn't quite that much. And the shoes. And—uh—I'll try to honestly say that from my—the first day when I moved in with my brother, that no one ever bought me anything. I—I worked and paid for it myself. I bought my own books and all to go to school. Back in those days, you had to buy 'em, but I'd get secondhand books. I mean, whoever . . .

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: . . . they was in the third and me in the second—I'd make arrangements. And I'd usually—and so I got acquainted with—uh—some of the well-to-do people. And one of 'em—I mean, the father owned the gin and all out there. This girl, Pauline Alexander—and I'd get her books. She'd hand 'em down to me, and I'd pay her. But they'd buy 'em new, and so she'd sell them to me the next year.

KK: Well, that worked out pretty well. [*Clears throat*]

EH: Yeah.

KK: 'Cause those books were in pretty good shape.

EH: Oh yes. Yeah. But I'd have to get permission. I'd say, "Well, now I'm gonna have to be out three weeks," or something like this. And they'd give me assignments, and I'd come back and take tests on 'em. And I'd always made my grades.

KK: Well, good.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:25] KK: Well, so you were able to keep up even when you were working.

EH: Oh yes. Yeah. Uh-huh. But my brother—I'll have to say that again. He's pretty rough on me, if it was not school and I didn't have a job, he wouldn't take his lunch, and it was [*KK*

laughs—I'd have to take him his lunch, you know. Just somethin' to do and that—you know. Then, too, normally there was pea patches and whatnot, and they'd be in the wintertime and—but they'd be dried peas. But we ate those, you know. And I'd have to gather a sack full of them and bring 'em home.

KK: Mh-hmm. Always a chore to do.

EH: I had a chore to do all time. And I mean, we had wood cookstoves, and even at that, I hardly had any help, you know. I'd use a one saw, and the place we lived on—it belonged to this man—Mr. Farmer. See, you didn't pay any rent. But he—we did have a cow and all. But I had to tend to that cow. I did all the milkin' and the churnin' and all of that. And so—and I cut all the wood for the fireplace and the other, too. I'd—then when my brother would help me—I've got a little scar right there. [*Laughs*] He pushed down on that handle and told me to quit ridin' that saw, you know. And I did—the handle hit me there, and I never will forget—I was about twelve years old then—tears came to my eyes. I said, "When I get big enough, I'm gonna whip you for that." [*Laughter*]

[00:22:01] KK: How old was he?

EH: He was in his thirties at that time. He's been passed away—years ago.

[00:22:11] KK: So from—it sounded like you were pretty much workin' almost full time by twelve . . .

EH: All my life, really. All my life. In fact, why I say that I tributed more to the household financially than he did before I went to the CC camp—I'll—that'll come next after me working on—until I fibbed about my age to go to the CC camp. You had to be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. If you were eighteen to go in and if you went in and when you reached twenty-two, you had to leave. And two years was normally the assignment—that you signed up to stay two years. Well, I told 'em I was eighteen. And you had to weigh a hundred and seven pounds. And I wa—that's exactly what I weighed [*laughter*] when I—at seventeen years old. And—but I made a quite a bit of money myself. Made a lot more than he'd make a dollar a day gatherin' crops; otherwise, if I was just having to hull cotton or anything like that to work, I had to wa—hire out as a hand, and at dol—ten cents an hour is what I got. That's all that he would pay any of the hired help. That's what my—he drew a dollar a day regardless, but he worked more than ten hours practically every day. But he—a dollar a day is what they got. But we'd cut that spinach. And I have to say that there was no one—no man when I was twelve years old—could keep up with

me in cuttin' that. Where a man—now like my brother, if he didn't have anythin' else to do and didn't work around the scales, well, he had to get out there. He'd get out and cut spinach. But he wouldn't cut over two hundred pound a day, and I mean, that was a good day for him. And I'd cut a ton of it a day.

KK: Really?

EH: That's hard to believe, but I'd—I could cut a ton of spinach a day.

[00:24:15] KK: Wow. Ten times what he could do.

EH: Oh yeah. And cotton is the same way. Before I ever started school over at Moffett, Oklahoma, at five years old, at that time, I could pick a hundred pound of cotton a day. And so it was nothin' for me to pick five hundred pound of cotton. And he'd be up there [*laughs*] at the scales, and as I say, he was just pretty rough on me. Now the girl and his boy—the boy—he's about seven years younger than me. And he's still livin'—he is—that boy. I talk to him quite often. He's in California. He wouldn't do nothin'. He'd cry if I'd get on to him. I'd want him to help me when I was cut that wood. The girl would. He had a little old, two-wheel iron cart that I had to haul up to the house with. And it was kind of hilly around here, as you know. [*KK laughs*]

So down there, you'd start up one of those hills. I'd want her to push while I'd gotten under that barrow—that two-wheel.

[Phone rings]

KK: Hold on one second. We'll wait for that phone to quit.

[Tape stopped]

[00:25:24] EH: Now where'd we leave off?

KK: Well, let's see. We went through your childhood somewhat.

There was a little leap from twelve to about seventeen there—where you went over to the CCC.

JE: Talkin' about takin' some wood up the hill.

KK: Yeah.

EH: Oh yeah. I was talking about that. Well, Hugh, the boy that was about seven years younger—instead of the pushing, he'd get back there and more or less try to ride that. Well, I'd run him off, you know. But he'd tell his dad. His mother knew better, you know, and she'd—no mother could have treated me any better than my sister-in-law did. And—but he'd tell him and—but he never laid a hand on me, but he'd give me a—he'd—a tongue lashin', in other words. He'd tell me—I'd be lookin' for me another place to live next time that happened. Well, back in those days, that hurt.

KK: Yeah, 'cause what were you . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . you wouldn't have anywhere to . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . live.

EH: Well, finally, my next-door neighbor—they were pretty well to do up there. And he said, "Just come up here."

KK: Did you do that? Did you move to the . . .

EH: Huh?

KK: Did you move to that house? No . . .

EH: No, no. No, I stayed with him. And then, like, pickin' the cotton, as I say—you see, I mean, you didn't get much a pound, but when I could pick five hundred pound of cotton a day, who got the money? Well, I'd—my brother did. And I got maybe ten cents to go to a movie. That's what it cost you to go on Saturday night. I mean, to spend—besides, Viola, my sister-in-law—buyin' me the clothes that I had to wear to go to school and this and that until I went to the CC Camp when I was seventeen years old.

[00:27:11] KK: So when you were growin' up, did you have—did you—I know you were workin' a lot, and you were goin' to school—did you ever have fun time or playtime or . . .

EH: Well, we went swimmin'. I mean, maybe the days that they

didn't—normally on Sundays and whatnot. They wouldn't be working down in the field, you know, and we'd go swimmin'. But we's always skinny-dippin' though, you know. *[Laughs]* They did have one place, Bluff Hole—as you cross, you know, Big Mulberry Creek o—out here east of town. A la—big bluff along there, just—I think they've made a park out of that now. But when we went down there at that time, the only time you'd ever see anyone other than the boys around town. And if we went out there, we'd have a bathin' suit. And it was a high bluff there. I don't know how high it was. We'd call it a peck and a half a bushel and three-fourths a bushel, and then the top goin' off of that.

[00:28:15] KK: *[Laughs]* So you like to jump off the bluff into the water?

EH: Yeah, I—yeah, I never did dive off. I jumped off quite a few times, but I never did dive. There's a lot of 'em that would dive off.

KK: Headfirst.

EH: Yeah, yeah. We had one boy from Fort Smith that did a—some kind of a swan dive from half bushel once. And the belt buckle cut him open, and he died just a little afterwards. I mean—hit the water, and you could see the blood come up first. I's up

there—up above him. I was up on three-quarters when he jumped off of it. I can recall that. I was just a little tot, but anyway—wasn't near grown.

KK: So just the impact of the water did that?

EH: Yeah. Yeah, well, with that belt—the way he was bent and all—then that buckle just ripped his stomach open—see, to cut him open. And the water went in him, you know.

KK: That's rough.

EH: Yeah.

[00:29:11] KK: Well, it sounds like there was a lotta hard times in those days.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah. And you know, you never see it get as cold now as it used to get a-cold. I've even been with my brother-in-law. That—the other one that married the sister—that I's gettin' up pretty good size this time. But that Mulberry Creek would frize over—freeze over right there under the bridge and all that you could—a team of horses and sleds and all—you'd ride right across in Big Mulberry Creek, just there on the ice.

KK: So it doesn't do that anymore.

EH: No. You don't do that anymore. It doesn't freeze over like that. In fact, I moved back from California after I got out of the service. My wife and I was married at this time, and I bought a

hundred and sixty acres up there at Mena, Arkansas. And that doesn't happen anymore, but I've got videos where we's skating down there on the ice and all. One of the streams that came into my—through my property and a fast-rollin' stream, see, from the Cossatot River. But . . .

[00:30:20] KK: Wow, that's amazing. So the climate has changed.

EH: Oh, it has. I know—I was a substitute rural-mail carrier. And I had a c—a cow that aborted a calf, and I had to cover her up—the snow and all. And the next mornin' when I went to the post office, it was nine below zero. You know, that cow—finally lost her, but we raised the calf.

KK: Just from the cold weather?

EH: Yeah. Yeah.

KK: Man, that's really somethin'.

EH: Yeah, I covered her up and all but her head. And that's the only thing you could see that wasn't covered with snow—where she was breathing the next day—but I took my tractor and took her to the house and raised—got her propped up. But I lost her anyway, you know.

KK: That's tough.

EH: But I raised the calf on bottle.

KK: Mh-hmm. That's nice. So you're seventeen when you join

the . . .

EH: CC Camp.

KK: Yeah, and that's the conservation . . .

EH: Civilian Conservation Corps.

[00:31:19] KK: Say that one more time. What is that?

EH: Civilian Conservation Corps.

KK: Gotcha. And what was the Civilian convers—Conservation Corps . . .

EH: Well, it was a project that President Roosevelt had initiated for the young boys, as I say, between eighteen and twenty years—twenty-two—twenty-three years old. And they fought forest fires, built country roads, set out forest—you know, pine trees and all like that. Here in Arkansas now, they did other things. They maintained roads and all, because they were all over the country. At that time, I think, there was about three different camps. And see, me bein' from Crawford County—see, that's Polk County. That's where they sent me. And I know my brother—shoot, he went to Idaho when he went in, you know. But I mean, this was his home if Crawford County—Van Buren, see, is the county seat. But I went—there was, oh, quite a few of us from this place here. And the CC Camp book that I was showin' you—there was a lot of 'em from Mena up there, which

was Polk County themselves, you know. But I think there was about—ever six months, they would change groups. I mean, you'd—they'd go out, you know, and so they'd get a new bunch in within a six months interval. Well, that's the ones that had on the white shirts—I was tellin' you about. They'd just come in and had to issue them uniforms. [00:33:00] But the world was so much different back then. Now another thing about it—our wages at the CC Camp was twenty-one dollars a month. That's what we were paid. The individual—this included all of 'em—it—not just me. We got five dollars a month ourselves. The balance went to our families, so my—all of mine went home. But I would say, 90 percent of the boys at that time—when their time was up, their folks saved that for 'em, but mine wasn't.

That's like I say—I was makin' as much money goin' home as he was. I finally got to drawin'—I made thirty-six dollars a month, but I did not draw over five dollars. And we'd get coupons, but you know, us boys—I mean, for what we needed and what little beer we drank when we'd go to town. [*Laughter*] Well, we made it on it—you know, the five dollars a month.

KK: Man, that's amazing.

EH: And it was the same thing when I went to service—twenty-one dollars a month is what I got. And—but I wasn't in no time—I

mean, I was a leader there. Oh, I made leader in the CC Camp within about four months. I made a leader or assistant leader, and then I made leader and went on up. That was high as you could go without bein' a foreman, you know. And it was just—and we could not—in the CC Camp, you could not own an automobile—see, none of the boys. But there was a few that did. I know they had a fire once there that one or two burned up. [00:34:52] And I mean, I'd—one of the boys—well, I met him back overseas. Him and I went in the service together. I mean, we were in the camp together over there, and then I saw him in England. Then I saw him in Germany. He was attached—he was a Signal Corps. He was stringin' wire and whatnot. He was with the corps over there. But I saw him in England the first time. After I got in England, we did not have—I was a half-track commander, and I—they didn't have our vehicles at the time, but they wanted to keep me with the corps, so they put me in the military police to keep me. And I was late for breakfast, and this old boy—we called him "Bust Head." Edward Bailey. There was one boy that went in by the name of Billy Little that nicknamed everyone in the camp though, [KK laughs] and so that was his name, but I was always called "Pee Wee." I's so small for my age, you know. I was five foot eleven and

only weighed a hundred and seven pounds, and I wasn't in there over six months—I weighed about what I weigh now. I haven't changed over five pounds since I was there six months. Becau— but I worked, but I had plenty to eat. Now I went to bed hungry many times. I'll tell you for sure.

[00:36:12] KK: Mh-hmm. But after you got in the Civilian Conservation Corps, did they feed you better?

EH: Oh, they feed you good. I mean, well, you was well fed and—I mean, a place to sleep and all. And I mean, and it was regular, you know.

KK: Mh-hmm. And that's why you gained the weight.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, and the exercise. I mean, well, the work they had to do, you kn—and I was the—one of these one guys—I didn't want no one to do anymore than I did, but I—I'd worked so hard here—I'd never was sore. Even since I've been older, I never got sore doing anything—like with me bein' a runner and all this. I'd—people say, "Well, I don't see how you can do that." Like when I was in the camp there—in fact, we had—we hadn't been in—I'd—not over about a week. We had a doctor that was there—Dr. Kinneck. And I will never forget him. And oh, he was heavy built, and he had him a suntan with a sunlamp. But he wanted some boxers. Well I mean, I'd—I had this brother that



was just older than me—well, he was six years older than me. But oh, they'd even tie potato sacks—them old—on us boys, you know, and get us to box. And we did. So I was pretty good with the gloves then. [*Laughter*] And so—but he wanted someone to box—train boxers there—he was a boxer—this Dr. Kinneck. And I don't know—he wanted 'em to spar. Well, most of these guys, they didn't even know what that was. Some of 'em didn't, you know, and [*KK laughs*] I never will forget it. [00:37:55] There's a—this boy I say that named all of 'em—Edward Story was the boy's name. That—we called him "Buzzard" already. I knew him, and I punched him, and he weighed about a hundred and eighty pounds. And I said, "Let's you and I get out there and box." And he just looked at me, and he said, "Well, big as I am, as small as your are"—said, "we'd get out there, and you'd whip me." He said, "What would they think?" And I said, "We won't be fightin'. We're just gonna spar around. You don't actually hit each other. If you do, you just barely touch each other." Well, he said, "I don't know nothin' about 'em." And he sure enough didn't. He didn't know anything about boxin'. All he did—he sc—got down, just stooped a way over and put both gloves up in front of you. And so [*laughs*] that doc said, "Straighten up there, son." Well, I didn't know what—he was talkin' about me,

and I straightened up. He come around with a haymaker and hit me. And I know he knocked me about five feet, and I hit flat on my back. [*Laughter*] I got up and tied into him. And I had him knocked out. Knocked him out, and the doctor caught him and was holding him up, and he said, "He's had enough, sonny boy." And I had to hit him again. But it—so when they—but it sure knocked . . .

KK: So he . . .

EH: . . . him cold. And he told a barber—this was years after he went through World War II and all. He said out of all his army experience and all—said I hit him harder than he'd ever been hit. But from that on, I mean, I did box quite a bit, but I couldn't make the team. They'd disqualify me. I had a great habit. But I could whip most of 'em, but what I'd do, I'd backhand 'em. I'd miss 'em intentionally. Go by and then come back. Boy, I could . . .

KK: And that was ill . . .

EH: . . . work 'em over. That was—I—and I couldn't get over it. You know.

[00:39:49] KK: Was that illegal to do it that way?

EH: Oh, that's illegal, yeah—I mean, you know, you're not supposed to backhand 'em, you know, in a regular boxin' match and

whatnot. But they do just about anything they want to now anyway. [KK laughs] But I mean that's the way—I just knew that, you know, and I mean. Because a guy, if he knows anything about boxin'—if you miss him, he's gonna come in. Well, I just—right back at him. And . . .

KK: So you knew how to win.

EH: Yeah, I knew how to—yeah. That's what I'd watch for—I'd do it



intentionally, see. [00:40:25] But that's about my CC experience, but as I say now, they worked hard. You can go up around Mena at this present time, and you will not find—they've got a lot of the roads blacktopped and all. Which—but the—there's three miles of the road, I'd say, comin' in from Vandervoort. There's three miles to that Shady Lake. You've probably heard of Shady Lake. Okay. I helped build that cabin back when—in 1940 and all, we built that, and they were just finishing the dam for that lake. And our roads were a lot better when we were in CC Camp—all the way—eighteen miles back into Mena from camp. They were—we kept 'em maintained. And in fact, all the way to a paved highway, we graveled those roads, you know. We had a rock crusher. They did, and the CC boys'd—they ran the rock crusher. We drove the trucks, hauled 'em, built the bridges back in those days for those country roads,

and then fought the forest fires. They used to have a lot of forest fires after that. I even—after I'd got out—well, I went to work first at Chaffee and then went to Pine Bluff until I went to the s—army.

[00:41:53] KK: Mh-hmm. So when you first got to the Conservation Corps camp, what—did you guys sleep in bunk beds, or did you have . . .

EH: They had—oh yeah, they had bunk beds. They had seven different billets there. And they—on each side, and they were real strict on you in there—they—much stricter than they were when I went to the army. That doctor that would come through—you had to make up your bed. Ju—it had to be just so-so, and boy, they had to be lined up. And we had to shake those—get those blankets and whatnot outside and the sheets and all—shake 'em practically everyday. And he'd take a broom 'cause that—they'd swept them old. And we'd use sawdust, you know, in there to kind of sprinkle on the floor before they swept 'em and whatnot. But he'd come in everyday, and that—if he—if you got demerits, you didn't go—get a pass to go to town that weekend—none of the CC boys did in that whole billet. See, the ones that slept there. But he'd take a broom or somethin' off of the broom rack and hit one of them—if dust flew out [*laughs*] of

them blankets, they got demerits for it, you know. And back then, right at first, as I say, they were rough on you—these—the older guys. If you'd been in there six months, you was a old hand, you know. [00:43:24] And so when the new rookies came in, I mean, they treated you awful. It's—they'd have some guy—now that's something I never did do. I'd—I wouldn't do it. The only time that I ever did was one guy, I mean, because he kept wantin' to fight me—box me—he wanted to. But I—but a lot of the guys would just—well, they had two or three that was real good, you know. And they knew that they could whip these guys, and they'd come around. Well, the guy didn't want to be a coward just because he was there. But they put on gloves, and they just beat the snot out of it, and I mean—but I never did do that. But there was one that I had to one night because they just—the lights go out, too, at nine o'clock in the barracks. And I was just askin' some of the guys, because they's after me. They'd say, "Hale, are you gonna box tonight?" And I'd say, "No, I'm not gonna box." I said, "You know I don't wanna box because I don't like to treat a guy thataway." I said, "You found out right away that you wasn't gonna treat me thataway," which they didn't. I was with a great big guy. And they shoved us together once, and boy, there was vaccinations they gave you

and whatnot. Boy, our arms were sore, and the older groups that got on both sides of the sidewalk, and as we's going down through there, they'd shove us together, you know. Hurt that—and this old boy—he's still livin'. And he lives at Mena. He married some lady up there. And he was from Polk County—I mean, from Crawford County here. And—but he married some girl and stayed there at Mena. I don't know whether he ever went to service or not, but he was a big old boy at that time—redheaded. And he turned around, and he said, "The next time someone does me thataway, I'll punch you right in the nose." Well, those guys—most of 'em—they knew that probably that guy can probably handle me. We'd better leave him alone, you know. And they'd jump back sayin', "Yeah"—said, "I can see that red hair is bleedin' already"—said, "better leave him alone"—said, "oh, he'll get you." And so I more or less stayed with him until after I hit that Edward. They'd—they didn't bother me from then on, you know. [KK laughs] [00:45:42] And—but the only one, as I say, that I had to box that night—well, I was askin' some of the guys. And there's an old boy—he came in and he had a—it was like the oversea cap, you know what I'm talking about? And I—in fact, I'll give you one of those. I've got one that—when we changed to it, we wore ODs and khakis just

like the army did. But they changed ours. The last six months, our winter fu—winter uniform in the CC Camp was green. And I've got one of the caps out there—extra cap. I'll let you have. It's a—and it's—we just called it, if you wanna know, a piss cap is what we called 'em. I mean, a little old cap that sat on the side of your head. [00:46:30] But anyway, he came in, and he had a cloth hat on like that, and it said Fleetwelder on there. He'd took—been going to some kind of welding school. Well, that was his nickname—"Old Fleetwelder." But he was one of these—they'd take—you didn't have to have—be too smart—the elevator didn't have to go in to the top. [Laughter] But it happened to be that someone was askin' me at first, and then I started askin' 'em. They said, "I heard that Old Fleetwelder there"—said, "is pretty tough"—said, "get him to box." And I said, "No, I'm not, but I'll ask him if he will box." And he talked real slow—I do myself, but he said, "I don't care." Said, "I never did have 'em on the gloves." Said, "I've done a lot of fightin'." But said, "I never had on the boxin' gloves." And I said, "Who do you want to box?" And he said, "It don't make me no difference." [Laughs] And they [unclear words]—I'd just point to certain guys. Well, he wasn't my brother-in-law at that time, but he operated a bulldozer over there, and he went without a

shirt all the time. And he was well built. I pointed to him. I said, "Would you box that guy goin' there?" "Yeah, I told you I'd box anybody. It don't make me no difference." And here was another fellow.

TM: Hold up, Mr. Hale, one second. We need to change tapes.

EH: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[00:47:50] KK: Yeah, you had the redheaded guy . . .

EH: Well . . .

KK: . . . I mean, you had Fleetwelder—was gonna . . .

EH: . . . well, box, but then there was a big, tall guy. And they called him "Gawk." He was big old tall—was six foot five. And he come a-walkin' across the floor, and I said, "Would you box that guy there?" He said, "I told you it don't make me no difference." Well, we had two sets of twins in a—in my CC camp with us there. And if I can think of their name now—but anyway, they got to be well to do. One of 'em was a banker there after they got out, and one of 'em denied that he's ever in the CC Camp, you know. Got ashamed of that, you know, that he was that poor. But anyway . . .

KK: Wow.

EH: . . . he was—his family was pretty well to do in the first place,

you know. [00:48:43] But back to this boxin' deal. Well, the lights go out, and I went on—went to bed. And the lights went out at nine thirty. Here them twins—they was wantin' me. They wanted to be my manager, and I was gonna be a boxer. But they said, "Hey, Old Fleetwelder is up there—there won't nobody box him." Said, "Go up there and box him. Put the gloves on with him." And they's, "Just beat the hell out of him—do this." And I said, "No, I don't want to box. I don't feel like boxin'." And I just didn't want to really, and I was already gone to bed. Now if I'd've been up there and he'd a challenged me—because you just don't let 'em dare you or anything in there, you know. So—but anyway, they was s—just sayin' to me—said, "Well, somebody needs to box him." Said, "You oughta go up there and just beat the hell out of him." And I said, "Well, get somebody else." I said, "There's a lotta guys." I said, "Weatherbee. Get Weatherbee to go up there." I said, "Now he'll—he likes that." And I said, "I don't want to put 'em on with him." Well, I don't know. I think Weatherbee'd been raised down from where he was [*laughs*—didn't want to have nothin' to do with him because he just as soon start wrestlin' or fightin' you and anything else—to tell the story—when it's all over with. But he—anyway, there wasn't no one to put 'em on with him,

and lo and behold, he comes down there himself with four or five more boys. And my—I should have just run 'em out, you know, because I was a barracks leader. And they was sayin', and he was sayin'—I said, "Can't you get anyone to box you?" "No, no." And I said, "Really? I don't want to. Why don't you wait for some other time? Maybe tomorrow night." It was in recreation hall there. That's where we watched the movies and all.

[00:50:30] And he said, "Well, I'm just ready to go." Said, "You's the one that was asking me was I wantin' to box." And I said, "Yeah." But I said, "I was tryin' to see if there was some of the others because I figured y—they would." Well, they just—then the other guys start, "Hale, don't let that rookie scare you out." And I said, "I'm not scared of the rookie." But anyway, I said, "Okay." I got up. I go out there and put the gloves on him. He didn't know anything about it. And he was runnin' into me, and I didn't have to use any skills. I just used a haymaker. And I got to where I'd hit that poor fellow—I got to feelin' sorry for him. Boy, blood would just fly, but he'd—I thought, "I'm gonna knock him out." That's what I tried to do. I couldn't knock him out. I'd hit him, and he'd hit the floor, and he'd get up. Come right back at me. I wouldn't stand over and hit him again, you know. And I'd stand back. And so finally, I mean, I

just got to feelin' sorry for it. He did—they put gloves on us, and the boxing gloves that d—wasn't too good. Now I thought he'd [*laughs*] put my eye out. He stuck his thumb in my eye. He tried to grab ahold of you and anything else—you know, wantin' to hug you up—you know, just do anything—throw you on the ground. He was as stout as a bull and—but anyway, they had these folding chairs that we sat and watched the movies on. But they were over in the corner over there. I finally hit him, and he went back in those, and he fell in those chairs. And they had to move them chairs to get him out, you know. And I did it myself. I put them chairs back, and I said, "Fellow." I put my hands on his gloves, and I said, "Don't you think you ought to pull them gloves off if you had enough?" He said, "It don't make me no difference." Said, "I just wanted to show you I've got the guts." [*Laughter*] And I said, "I realize you have." So I sat down. They took him down to the latrine because he was a-bleedin', and time they brought him back, boy, I felt bad about that. [00:52:32] They had to take him to the hospital. I mean, boy, his eyes—but he was skinned up all over—had him—because them old gloves wasn't that good. And I mean, and his eyes are practically swelled, too. And—but they'd stopped the bleedin' and all [*laughs*] and brought him back up there, and I's sittin' on

the corner of a Ping-Pong table. He said, "I didn't know that they'd put the best boxer in camp on me." Said, "I'd still wrestle you." [*Laughter*] I said, "You better wait." And lo and behold, he boxed a few times, and this big Gawk that I'm tellin' you about. [00:53:10] The day that I left there—the day that I left, they finally had a—they put a boxin' ring. It was outside. And the guys would get out just practically everyday—somebody would be out there boxin' or doing something, you know. So—but that day they—that I was leaving, me and one other guy was gettin' out at the same time. And—but he'd tell me—I'd see him a lot—this Fleetwelder—you know, I saw him there. "When I've had a little bit more experience"—he wanted to box me again. Well, I was just wishin'—he never did get enough experience, you know. Lo and behold, that afternoon, they had him up there a-boxin' the guy that I told you about—Puckett, the redheaded guy? That was the first one. He ran into Puckett and knocked him down, you know. And then they—you didn't have on the stuff to fight real well. And well, that was all for Puckett. He didn't want to. So in other words, they's all sayin', "Here, he's whipped Puckett." He just kept his gloves on. He wanted to box somebody else. [*KK laughs*] And after four guys that he'd put out, this big Gawk—he come up there and he—his big old hand—

he reached around my arm [*laughs*]. He was stayin', but just me and one other guy was leaving that day. And he said, "As big as I am and as small as you still are," he said, "you could whip him like you did." He said, "I ought to be able to hold my own with him, hadn't I, Gawk?" And I said, "Well, you sure should." He ran into Gawk, and it was the same way. And Gawk was layin' flat on his back and holdin' his hand up. And he was up there hittin' that glove and all. [*Laughter*] He had enough, you know. He had enough. [00:55:00] So when he got through with Gawk there, he wanted to box me. And I said, "No, I—I'm leavin'." Well, he'd sure like to box me. He'd think he'd have enough experience. Well, that was again, I didn't want to. But I said—I finally thought, "Well, I'm gonna tell him." I said, "Now listen, before I didn't want to box you." And I said, "Now," I said, "you know how I done you before." And I said, "I'm not gonna quit this time." I said, "They're gonna have to haul you or me—one to the hospital." Well, that was all right. He thought he could take it. We got up there. I put them gloves on. Boy, he looked over there at me then. He said, "You know," he said, "I may [*laughs*] oughta wait about boxing you." [*KK laughs*] Boy, that tickled me to death. And so I didn't have to box him anymore. But . . .

KK: Well, you—are you glad you didn't have to box him?

EH: Oh yes, I am. Yeah, yeah. I'm glad I didn't have to.

TM: That's great.

EH: Because then they was all sayin'—you know, tellin' everybody I was the best boxer. Well, I'd—the same way when I went to the army. I'd take any of 'em on. It didn't make me no difference, you know. And I'd actually say—and that was when Joe Louis was the champion—I said, "I wouldn't no more care to get in the ring with him than not," you know. He—I just felt that away because I know at the time when I was in camp, I could stand up and I could let a fellow hit me in the stomach—knock me down. Not even hurt me or anything, you know. And . . .

[00:56:38] TM: When those kind of events were goin' on, were there—was—did everybody in the whole camp just come around and watch the matches and stuff like that?

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

TM: Yeah.

EH: See, it was nothin' official about it, or anything like that. And the—we had two or three guys that was real good. Now, this Weatherbee I was talking about—an old boy by the name of Smedley. He na—he jitterbugged, and so they just called him "Jitter" Smedley. [KK laughs] But he's—he was good with the

gloves. But as I say, you know, I couldn't if they—if the doctor wanted to referee it and whatnot or if you had to go to some other camp and box, they'd disqualify me. And he told me, he said, "They won't let you do that." And I said, "Well, I'm not gonna box then." You know, because I said, "I can't help it." And I said, "I'm not gonna get out there." It's—I always felt that I had to be as good or better than anybody else. And I wasn't gonna get out there with the boxing gloves and let some of 'em just beat me up. I'd a done that with it, you know, and they'd qu—disqualified me anyway. So I just wouldn't do it.

[00:57:46] KK: Did you guys build—in the CCE—did you build trails?

And did you build . . .



EH: Oh yeah. The forest, yeah. But mostly it was the roads that they maintained in fightin' the forest fires. Up there, they got a lotta forest lookout towers. And back then, you had—I don't know whether they were intentionally set or what. And that's where I was made the leader. There was five of us in a pickup, and that's when they just started with your two-way radio and whatnot. I had a siren on that truck, and they'd give me the location, you know. And I had a map, and they could tell me where the fire was. These—and I stayed on a lookout tower. That's another—it was very interesting. Those fire lookout

towers—at that time, they had a round table with a scope—just like you's lookin' down a gun barrel. And it went across this map, you know. So you gave—you'd call this tower another—if you was on Tall Peak, you'd call Wolf Pinnacle over there. You'd see a smoke and tell Wolf kinna—Pinnacle to get him a bearing on that. And whatever you got, you'd cross those—wherever you crossed those arrows, that's where the fire would be. And I mean, it—that was very technical to me—you know, I mean—see, I could lookout way over here and not know how far that smoke was from me or anything else here and—but where those lines crossed—see, they crossed that table. That's where that fire would be.

[00:59:19] KK: You would go out with just a crew of five to fight a fire?

EH: Well, we'd be the first ones there. And then directin' the—a truck. There'd be truckloads in. They'd even round up the whole camp. And they all had to take fire training, you know, to—how to rake trails and all this to fight a forest fire, you know. And see, and I had to know enough that, I mean, we could backfire accordin' to which way the wind was and—this is a county line over here. If we go over here—set this fire because it's blowing too fast, we ain't going to be able to stop it and

counter.

KK: Right, so you would deal—you would build firebreaks and . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . do backfires?

EH: Yeah. Backfires to meet that fire, see, from where you were, you know. You'd put 'em out thataway.

KK: And did you use hand tools and shovels and things . . .

EH: Oh yeah. Hand tools, yeah. Canceling tools and all that like that. And I mean, back in those days, you didn't have too much like—what—logging and whatnot—we did. I mean, they had a—like a regular cant hook that you'd turn a log over with. Then another cant hook that you'd get guys on each side of it, you know. And they'd hook over the log—get two behind. That's the way you'd pick 'em up and carry 'em, you know. So . . .

[01:00:43] KK: It must have been a lot harder to fight a fire back in those days.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah. Lot harder. Well, and we did have the bulldozer too. I mean, another truck would bring that bulldozer. You'd plow a trail, you know. And most of the time, those fires—we could get to 'em a lot quicker than they do now. Now I don't understand why that they get to jumpin' trails so much, you know. But we'd normally get a fire out pretty quick.

KK: Mmm. That's amazing.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Well, that's an interesting skill to have. You learned a lot of different things as you were growin' up.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, ye . . .

KK: You know, farming and how to work with wood and the fire fighting . . .

EH: Yeah, and I could operate just about anything. I mean that—the little P&H dragline that we had when I was tellin' you about the rock crusher, you know. You'd load that rock crusher—see, the guys from out there—they'd haul these over there and dump that stuff in the rock crusher. And I mean, it would crush it, and that's the way we built the gravel roads at that time, you know. We'd gravel all those roads. And then it wasn't—I wasn't—out of that, I went to—the first time I got a job was at Fort Smith. The—they're buildin'—oh, what is it—Camp Chaffee up there. And I was on the graveyard shift, and it was in February when I got out. Boy, it was cold. And they put me on the EUC. I turned it over the first load of the day [*laughs*].

[01:02:16] KK: Describe what a EUC is for somebody who wouldn't know . . .

[01:02:19] EH: Oh, a EUC is a big old thing that you haul dirt in to a

dirt fill and whatnot. And—but then it'd be just like a dump truck only you'd dump it, you know. Well, this—and a big—a tractor—like no cab on it—anything. Boy, and I was—I didn't like that. I mean, they put me on that. But I could operate it, you know. And the first load I had—had big old high wheels you had to climb like a stepladder to get in it. And the reason I turned it over. I knew that y—the lever you pull—just like when you was gonna dump a dump truck, you know. Only you'd go up, and then you'd—they'd pull the lever, you know, to lift your tailgate out. This here, though—the bottom came out of it, see, and you're supposed to go on and straddle it because the big old wheels. Well, I cut that EUC and went—that big old trailer—see, them big wheels, and they was goin' right over that big load that I'd put. And it just like that [leans to the right] and tilted it over. Well, I jumped clear of it, you know. They got a Caterpillar there and just pulled it off of that and straightened it up, and I went right on about my work. [Laughter] But I thought, "That's enough for me." And so I was staying at home, and I knew then that the guy—there was some of the guys working at Pine Bluff—that arsenal down there. They'd started that at Pine Bluff. And I thought, "Well, I can go down there"—I don't recall now. But see, that was a good job. I mean, even

drivin' that EUC there at night, I was making about fifty cents an hour and—boy, and I mean, that was some money to take home, you know. But everyone from Mulberry—there was quite a few of 'em that was go—had went to Pine Bluff—see, what—that's—you know where Pine Bluff is?

KK: Mh-hmm.

[01:04:15] EH: Anyway, the head of the union and his wife—they lived in Mulberry. And I had went to school with their boy and whatnot. And they said, "If you're Mulberry, you go down there, and they'll put you to work." Said—and I said, and I think five dollars—you had to j—it cost you five dollars to join the union. But shoot, I went down there, and as I say, I knew the man, but soon as the lady, his wife—I didn't know her. But when she knew I was from Mulberry—"Well, can you drive a dump truck?" "Oh, sure." And be inside drivin' that dump truck—sixty-five cents an hour. Boy, that's where I—I wanted that job. And so I went to work right there a-drivin' what they call a batch truck. Now it was sand and gravel. You'd go in a hopper, and they'd—where they had the sand and the gravel. We'd take that—this batch truck, and then what they'd do—there's six sacks of cement went on there—that's pretty good size—to mix concrete. You'd back up into the concrete hopper, see, and dump that load

then go right back to the hopper there and get your sand and gravel. It's mixed. They mix it as it comes down—loads into your truck. Then there was a black man that was always there to—they'd load them six sacks of cement. Then nother one—when you started to back into the hopper on the cement mixer and he'd get up there and cut those—dump the—that—then it would go into the concrete mixer. And then that's the way they building their concrete buildings down there and their foundations and all. So it was all pretty crude. But crudest job, I mean, is when I's just—very young. I think I was about thirteen—fourteen. When I was first tellin' you that story about getting on that truck at three o'clock in the morning—goin' up to Van Buren and what we were doin' there was just clearin' right-of-way for telephones—lines and all. They didn't just get a bulldozer and push it off like they do now. We just cut them trees down to the ground.

[01:06:38] KK: Did you cut everything by hand?

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: Clear out all the brush?

EH: Yeah, yeah. Burn them brush piles, see. We's burnin' 'em.

KK: Yeah, that's awful hard labor.

EH: Yeah. Yeah. And I—that's what I say—I had to hire out. That

was ten cents an hour just—but I had to do a man's job, see, when I was a kid. They didn't think nothin' about you here in this child-labor law. [*Laughter*]

KK: They just needed hands, didn't they . . .

EH: They just needed a hand, yeah.

KK: I understand . . .

EH: And I made 'em one.

[01:07:07] KK: [*Laughs*] So you worked hard all your life up to that point . . .

EH: All my life, really. Yeah, really.

KK: And so now when you got done with this CCC camp, is that when you went down to Pine Bluff?

EH: Well, I went for about a week up there drivin' that EUC. And then when I—that weekend—first weekend I's home, and they said I ought to go to Pine Bluff, see. In fact, there was—one of the guy's home there that weekend said, "If you go down there"—said—told me where to go. Said, "They'll hire you because"—said, "just tell 'em you're from Mulberry." "Okay." Yeah. So that's what I did.

KK: So the Mulberry workers had a good reputation.

EH: Well, the union official that was doin' the hiring—you had to go through the union there. See, he was from Mulberry.

KK: I gotcha.

EH: See.

KK: So it was arranged through the union . . .

EH: Yeah. Through the union. Yeah. Yeah, it was just like—I know I went—when I went to California, my next-door neighbor worked for Kaiser Steel—belonged to it. And I had a brother-in-law that—from—Ruel Bain—and in fact, you may have—well, he's been dead a number of years now, but he's—he was Arkansas state champion fiddler for about three years, I think.

KK: What was his name?

EH: Ruel Bain. He used to play—oh, even up in here from—bein' from Mena, he'd come to Fort Smith, Van Buren, and all. Played music all the time. Played a fiddle.

[01:08:39] KK: So Ruel, is that, like, *R-U-E-L*?

EH: *R-U-E-L*, Ruel. And then Froben was—he had a brother by the name of fru—Froben and one with the name of Coaster Bain . . .

KK: Wow.

EH: . . . Bain was their last name.

KK: *B-A-I-N*?

EH: Mh-hmm. And he was married to my wife's oldest sister. See, there was five of those girls and just the one boy in that family.

The boy was in CC Camp with us over there. And I met him overseas after we was over in Germany. He come to see me. After—this was after the war was over. He was in the medics, and I was in St. Martins, Austria. They was holding us up to keep us from going in to Berlin, see. And so I'd—few times—and then you could tell where you were after the war was over, you know. So I'd—was goin' with his sister at the time. I'd met her there. She—they lived at Mena, see, or lived out at Nunley community. [01:09:44] And I lost my wife in [19]89. She's buried there at the cemetery in—there's a little old community called Nunley—out from Mena. And I—in fact, in [19]54, I got out of the service, see, in October of [19]45. I went to California in November—the next month. No jobs anywhere, you know. You couldn't find a job. And believe it or not, in 1945, you didn't even have to have a driver's license to drive a vehicle in Arkansas, you know.

KK: Wow. That's amazing.

EH: There may have been some of 'em had some but . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . and—but I know I drove in Arkansas. And I mean, I was stopped once for lettin' a bottle roll out [*laughter*] at Van Buren, but I didn't have to have a license he said, you know.

KK: So just in a way for me to kind of stay in something of an order.
So you went to the CCC camp at seventeen. So I guess you got
out when you were nineteen.

EH: Yeah, nineteen. And then I went to the service, see. I went . . .

KK: So you—but did you go to Pine Bluff first?

EH: Oh yeah. I went to Pine Bluff. I was down there. I think I
worked about ten months down there. Then I . . .

KK: How old were you when you joined in the army?

EH: I was nineteen.

KK: You were nineteen. Okay . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. I went, see.

[01:11:10] KK: So what—why did you decide to get in the army?

EH: Well I mean, you had to register, and they called you. I didn't
volunteer.

KK: You were drafted.

EH: I was drafted, see. I was already—well, let's see, I was—in
[19]41, I was nine—right at that [*unclear words*] nineteen. So I
wasn't out but about ten months. I'd just got out. That was in
December, and I left there in Octo—in February. I left, and the
next year, by February, I was in the service.

KK: And when you got drafted, where did you go first?

EH: Went to Little Rock.

KK: Do you remember the date you were drafted?

EH: Yeah, February the sixteenth, 1942.

[01:11:52] KK: And you went to Little Rock . . .

EH: See, the—went to Little Rock. Yeah, I was the barracks leader of barracks number two. And the day that ber—Pearl Harbor was bombed, boy, they came out of headquarters there because headquarters sat pretty close to us. They was hollerin', "Japan has ber—bombed Pearl Harbor." Well, I had a brother over there—oldest brother—see, he joined the service. He was in the cavalry. And I—one of my first cousins—they were together over there. They both made it all right. Only my cousin, he didn't—he stayed, and he was finally captured over there, and then he made it through the Death March of Bataan. But he died thereafter, and they buried him over there. But finally, my aunt and them got him brought back home. But my brother—he came on back home—the one that was a volunteer—went to March Field—Camp Haan. I believe it was. Out there at March Field, California. There at Riverside. And he stayed there all during the war [*laughs*]. And after the war was over, though, he retired in [19]52. But he had to go over there—the Berlin Airlift, see.

KK: Yeah. Yep.

EH: So—but I . . .

[01:13:14] KK: So you got drafted. You went to Little Rock. And you had your basic training in Little Rock?

EH: No, no. I shipped right out to Fort Knox, Kentucky. And went to Fort Knox, and then as soon as I finished my basic in Fort Knox, Kentucky, they sent me to Camp Campbell, Kentucky. And then they sent us on Tennessee maneuvers and—because they knew—said they were preparin' us for war. We was gonna invade, see. We knew that then. So I told my parents—you know, I mean, my—you know, as I said, "I'll be goin'." And I got—after the Tennessee maneuvers was over, they gave me two weeks leave, and I was home three days, and they called me back. [*KK laughs*] And I had to go back. But it was funny—I mean, we were wearin' the same clothes only they had—the winter uniform had changed to green. The first break we have, I'll take you out there and get that cap out of my car. But anyway, I wore at that time a 7 1/2 EE army shoes, the same that they wore in the service. And when I went to Little Rock and was inducted that day, they issued me 11 1/2 Cs. And I said, "I know what size shoe I wear. I don't wear that." "Oh, before you get through basic training, you'll wish you did have." And they had you to pick up two buckets of sand, you know, and

said, "Look how your feet spread out." Well, it didn't—mine didn't spread much, but anyway [*laughs*—and they said, "Before you get through basic training"—said, "them shoes will fit you fine." Lo and behold, from—and they issued you the leggin's, you know. Well, my legs and all are small. And them old leggin's—I wore smallest you'd get—1R. And I'd put them on, and you had to have 'em tight, you know, so these—your trousers would blouse over 'em or down. And just what little walkin'—see, you had to go by train then from Little Rock to Fort Knox, Kentucky. I just wore all the hide and the hair off the top of where them shoes come from. Well, they gave me a pair of shoes that fit me down there.

[01:15:45] KK: That's a tough way to start.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, it—with them leggin's thataway, as I say, it added—you just wore. But then we started our basic there at Fort Knox. And in no time—I mean, when that drillin' and all, they pinned corporal stripes on me. What they called—I called 'em lance jacks—we did then. You didn't make the promotion, but you did get a little better treatment. I got to be treated as a noncom, you know. So—and soon as I . . .

KK: So it was kind of unofficial?

EH: Yeah, I had—instead of me havin' to do the marchin' with 'em, I

did the drilling myself because I'd already done that—you know, the gettin' out there—that hut, hut, hep, four, just—drill sergeant's [*KK laughs*] job is what I was doin', you know.

KK: Uh-huh. Gotcha.

EH: So I already had that experience, you see. So . . .

[01:16:48] KK: Well, that was good. And this was all still when you were in Kentucky?

EH: Yeah.

KK: Okay.

EH: Yeah, even there, you know. Yeah. Then when I was the sergeant then—by the time we went to Camp Campbell—yeah, Kentucky, and then went on Tennessee maneuvers. And I showed you that picture, I believe, a while ago in that book—that colonel. Well, he was with the G-3 Section. And back then, an officer wouldn't hardly speak to an enlisted man. Now that's the difference between how strict they were then in the army. An enlisted man—you just didn't talk to 'em, you know. I mean, unless they started the conversation—asked you somethin'. That's the only time you talked to 'em. You know, you didn't go up and start a conversation with an officer. But they assigned me with the G-3 Section and said I was gonna to be a half-track commander. Well, they didn't have anything then. So they sent

me up as the driver for the G-3 Section in a jeep. Well, I—told me where to park and all. But it's a long story for me to go in and tell about my first actual day in the corps—the twenty-four hours. You want to hear about that?

[01:18:10] KK: Yeah. What it—what does it mean when you say a G-3 Section? What does that mean?

EH: The section—your intelligence supply section—G-1 through -5. See, intelligence is G-1, G-2—I don't know, and G-3 was supply, you know, G-4—like communications.

KK: Right.

EH: Well, after goin' there, there was just two of us that went from the corps, see—I mean, to the corps. And I'd been—this was when we left Camp Campbell, see, and we was both sergeants at the time. And said, "You's going to the corps."

KK: Which meant the command of that?

EH: Yeah.

KK: Yeah.

EH: The Fourth Armored Corps at the time. It hadn't changed to the XX Corps like that—see, corps is—that's another thing that might—they're Roman numerals—see, a corps. So that's the reason those two Xs there [gestures to his left shoulder]—they're for the XX, see. And we told everybody when we first

came back—you know, they'd heard that—how rough that General Stilwell, which was in Alaska and all [*laughs*—said we was part of General Stillwell's paratroopers. [*Laughter*] But anyway, he—they assigned me that. When I—they didn't have there at Camp Campbell—they didn't have the half-tracks or that. They hadn't because it—they were in the process then of changing over from the Fourth Armored to the XX Corps, which was armored infantry. [01:19:54] Well, there was a Captain Lee. I'll never forget him. Back in those days—I've got a picture, too, out there you can see, I was real black headed and my whiskers were black. And so I had to shave. He told me—came out that mornin', and I stayed outside out there in that jeep, you know. Well, he came out, told me who he was, you know, and said, "I'm Captain Lee" with so-and-so. But I got acquainted with him well after that. He looked at me, and he said, "Have you met Colonel Griffith yet?" I said, "No, sir, I haven't." He said, "Well," he said, "let me tell you." And just about—I don't know—ten o'clock then, he said, "When you go in for lunch"—said, "you'd better shave." [*KK laughs*] And I said, "I shaved this mornin', sir." He said, "You heard me, didn't you?" He said, "If you want to get along with Colonel Griffin," he said, "you'll shave." Well, I shaved. Boy, it was that very next

day, though, that I—first time I—with Colonel Griffin. Oh boy, he took a likin' to me right away. How clean I had that vehicle and the motor and all. I'd—when I was settin' out, boy, I'd clean that motor and all. I had it sharp. And when he fo—he was from Texas, see, so he—when I was from Arkansas. And I just hit it off with him. And then when we got through with that Tennessee maneuvers, he sort of embarrassed me. He got me up in front of the whole crowd there and told 'em what a great soldier I was. And when we got in combat, he said I was the type of people he wanted to be with.

KK: Wow.

EH: And sure enough, he was with me when he got killed. But it was stupidity on his part, really, when he got killed. But—and . . .

[01:21:55] KK: So you were workin' as his driver during all this . . .

EH: I was, yeah. And then when we—no, when we got over there—but anytime—see, I had daily contact back with the headquarters. They didn't come overseas. They wasn't over there, the headquarters itself, until almost, I'd say it was a month and a half at least before they came over. But they were close behind. See, it took some time. I mean, we was in Normandy—what you considered Normandy—the—see, there was what—five different landings. I don't remember what it

was. But the only ones, Omaha and Utah and Gold—I was meant—I knew about it. And there was another one, too. Where the British mostly went. But anyway, there were about two months a—I'd say from a month and a half to two months. I don't recall first, because—hell, it was just nothing but hidin' here and shootin' this one and that one and gettin' shot at for—till they got over there, you know. And then they was givin' me directions—where to go 'cause I had to fight with the Ninetieth until—well, about three days after I got with more of my group. But we were more or less right along with the Ninetieth Division at that time until the corps got over there. Then that's where I took my orders from—was corps headquarters. Well, there was so many of the officers there—I told you before, there was between 90 and 95 percent of the corps is officers—not noncommissioned, officers themselves—brass. And so if they had any goin' to the front line to do, they wanted Hale—Sergeant Hale—to take 'em, you know. You know, "He knows where he's a-goin'." But anyway, [*drums on chair*] that was about all there was to that. I mean . . .

[01:23:59] TM: What—you mentioned the other gentleman—how he got killed. Can you—is that a story you want to recount, or he—you said it was stupidity.

EH: Well, I can relate it. It—late—you . . .

KK: Yeah, we'll get to that in order. I think the—where we—how long were you in—how long did the Tennessee maneuvers last?

EH: Bout a month and a half.

[01:24:17] KK: Okay. And you were practicing the invasion, or were you just . . .

EH: No, not the invasion, just combat. We had to do it. I mean, they had judges out there. They'd be dressed, you know. And then—and I mean, if they captured us [*laughs*], they'd put us on a rock pile over there—bustin' rock. And boy, you had to stay alert. If you was on guard, boy, you had to haul everybody in. So we stayed on our toes.

KK: So you learned a lot during that month and a half?



EH: Oh yeah, yeah, it was just like combat, you know. But I mean, I just have to go back ever time I think about that, that all you'd learn and whatnot—me—you can take me for the way I'm talkin'. I just thought nobody could do anything to me. Couldn't hurt me. [*Laughs*] That I could take care of myself.

KK: And do you think that was 'cause you were a young man and that's the way young people feel or . . .

EH: Yeah, practically everybody. We all felt thataway, I think, until D-Day. I mean, because, you know, that was quite a rude

awakenin'. [KK laughs] I mean, when—before you get off of that ship, the bullets start hittin' the ship. And they let that down, and then it's flyin' in there, and some of 'em goin' over the sides of it and this and that. And them gettin' hit and hollerin', "Mama," and this and that. And then I thought every boy could swim until that day. And I know when I first stepped off, I went in a shell hole that was over my head, see. So—but it didn't bother me as far as swimmin' was concerned. But I knew—fifth round—see, theirs was just like ours. Every fifth round was tracers. And it was just a steady stream of fire. See, they was just zeroed in on us. We couldn't fire back or nothin' from where you was. Now the artillery was comin' over our head. Yes. And up there. [01:26:15] And that was another thing I was concerned about—even then. Gettin' land. How close is that, you know, because we was a good little ways because the tide—the way the tide was. And I mean. And it comes in so quick then—where it was dry land a few minutes ago, it's wet there again. But the first thing that excited me that I still—as I say, until the end of that went down and then I saw how many and then you could see out there on the beach how many GIs was layin' everywhere, you know. And it—that's just a rude awakening. I might have thought, "Well, how am I gonna

dodge all this?" But I—it just did. I mean, I wasn't—there wasn't no sayin', "I'm gonna dodge it." But you just—it—they just—it was right here by me. There. There. It just didn't hit me goin' in. And I helped a lot of 'em—I know. Maybe when I'd turn 'em loose, they may—would go under—I don't know, you know. But I'd have 'em where they could stand up anyway. And some of 'em I do know that sank right there, you know. Because as long as the water was deep enough, you could carry, you know, and just—you know, along. But . . .

[01:27:31] KK: But—so what you're saying is no training can really prepare you for that.

EH: Oh no, no. See, and I mean, you didn't expect it. Now, I do know, and I've told you too, that me, my son, and grandson went over there for my sixtieth anniversary. President Bush made us a speech. I had a pass just for two 'cause being a D-Day—to have a close seat. But the others had to go back in the back. Well, I just messed around there, and oh, I's—I wasn't too close. But at the time, I thought, "Well." But I had my pass, and I could go in any of those places, you know. Me and Alan—we had the two. He was gonna sit with me, and Judd, my grandson, was gonna go on back—further back. And Alan, after he sat down there and he saw so many GIs—and there was

a lot of the GIs, now, that's over there that were not D-Day. But I mean, they were Normandy. They had been in Normandy. And most of the ones that I talked to was—you may have heard of Saint-Lô—that they had a Saint-Lô breakthrough. They was lot—now that was rough. I mean, a lot of them got shot there, and that old boy I sat there with was D-Day. And he had—practically all of his shoulder was gone. But when we listened to the president, he said that—what Eisenhower—about—you know, I showed you a picture there of them jeeps that was lined up. [01:29:09] Well, he made us a speech there. And he said, "You boys that's destined for D-Day," he said, "will not live." He said, "Eighty to ninety percent of you will never live to have children or grandchildren." And here it was I was sittin' there with a son. Well, I was it—afterwards, because my son had enough respect when he looked around, and he said, "Dad," he said, "I'm gonna go back with Judd." He said, "There's too many guys like you that needs to be up here." And so—but it brought tears to my eyes. I'm just a little sentimental about stuff like that.

KK: Well, I think that's completely normal.

EH: Well, yeah.

KK: I mean, were you surprised when—is it Eisenhower that gave you that speech? Who gave you that speech when the trucks

were lined up . . .

EH: Well, ye—not really surprised. I mean, I thought nothing about it, really, you know . . .

KK: You didn't think you were gonna be one of the ones . . .

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Then—can't be that bad. Wh—it's them's gonna get it. We just—that's all the GIs had in mind. We're gonna do it. You know, we'll do it.

[01:30:24] KK: When you were crossin' the Channel to come over on D-Day, what did you guys talk about? I mean, were you guys all talkin' about gettin' ready to land and all that? What did you talk about . . .



EH: Well, we sat—well, yeah. But we had no idea. We thought, "Boy, with the air power and all that, it'd be just maybe like it was during that maneuvers"—you know, you'd have certain groups. And see, if you slipped up on 'em and whatnot or if you shot, you could say, "You're dead." He had to pretend he was dead, you know. [KK laughs] They was just playing a game, you know. But this was real, you know, when that did happen. But you was thinking then—well, you'd went through all this, and practically all the guys had went through similar training. And they thought, "It won't get me. Won't get me. I'll get them," you know. But I'll go back and say again, you never wanted to

kill anybody, but before it was over with and when you get to see somethin' like that, you just as soon shoot 'em in back—any way you can get them because that's what he's gonna do to you. It's either you or him. See.

KK: Oh, I understand.

EH: See.

[01:31:36] KK: I understand. Now you went in on D-Day—you were telling me earlier today—you were sayin' that you were supposed to go in on a half-track with a bunch of other half-tracks, right . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: Now what—but somethin' got messed up. What—somethin' got confused there, didn't it . . .

EH: Well, there was no confusion there. They—I didn't have one to go in with, see. And then they didn't have but—the different ships—they didn't—they maybe had—I don't know whether they had two or three in my group. See, I never got to seein' them guys. I saw 'em afterwards—one or two of 'em, you know, that I was with before. But there was a lot of them didn't make it that was with the corps—themselves—that landed that day. And I know I told you, you know, then—it was about—it was either the third or fourth day—I went back, and I'd got with some of them



and met some of the officers, and so they was—there was another half-track, and I went and brought it ashore then. But I didn't know a guy [*laughs*] that was on that. And I was drivin' it and had the battle sights down. The truck in front of me, a five b—ton truck, hit a land mine, and I—to this day, I can still see it. That was another rude awakening right there. Looked up over the top of this thing—see, them half-tracks—no top, but you had a battle sight down, and it's about two inches and about eight inches across it. Just about a two-inch slit to see to drive. And—but I looked up, and I could still see the front wheel of that five-ton truck, you know . . .

KK: So you were just lucky that it wasn't yours.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: Man.

EH: But . . .

[01:33:23] KK: So how far—when you—how did you get out of the landing craft? Did you have to go over the side? Or did you come out through the front of it?

EH: Of . . .

KK: Well, on the landing craft, when you got there. You said the guys were all . . .

EH: No, no. You just—they let it down. We—yeah, we went out off

the ship out there. Went over a rope, see. Went down a rope. Yeah, I never will forget. I had a—somebody else's ring, and it—I got it hung on one of them [*laughs*] big old bolts, and boy—and it really cut my finger and all. I had a cut finger. I could—if I'd have been like a lot of 'em, I guess I got a Purple Heart for that. [*Laughter*]

[01:34:05] KK: So you get down into the landing craft . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . and you go towards the beach . . .

EH: Yeah, and, see, when we was goin' up there, that's another thing that people—I've never heard anyone—well, some of the guys after were talking, "Yeah, I'd noticed that." Well, in reference to the tide, to keep the tide down and whatnot, we had intentionally sunk a lot of ships out there. See, I didn't know that. And I thought, "Well, what?" And I got to thinkin' out there, "We'll never make it." [*Laughs*] You know. Look at all these ships. And said, "They're ours." You know. But they had been done purposefully—you know, that's what the . . .

KK: But see, as just a regular soldier, you don't know any of these things.

EH: Nah, you don't know it, see. They didn't tell us what we was to expect there—other than—like Eisenhower saying, "Now they're

dug in." Said you—said, "You've just to get up there and roust 'em out of that," you know. But he said, "They're zeroed in on you, and they're trained." ?And? which they were. They were in pillboxes. Then all those other obstacles we had to contend with, you know. And the way the—you probably saw the *Saving of Private Ryan*?

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: Do you recall seein' a little sign out there—the day that they assigned him the duties to search for Private Ryan? And it said, D Plus Three on it? Do you remember seeing a little, old sign stuck there? D Plus Three—there was no command post like that set up. The body was still covered with bodies. Even the third or fourth day, I mean, there's—when I came in, I mean, there was still GIs laying everywhere.

[01:35:48] KK: They hadn't had time to clean that up. Yeah . . .

EH: Hadn't had time, yeah. Yeah, and I had one guy. We went—this is tellin' a story, but it's all same—related to what happened over there. [*Laughs*] I still laugh about this—talkin' about Saint-Lô breakthrough. Well, when Patton really got over there—that was when Patton came over actually. Which was almo—right at two months after D-Day, which was the Saint-Lô breakthrough. Well, he's still livin' now, but I mean, when they first opened—

they put the monument in Washington, DC—the World War II monument. A guy—a real estate agent down there at Hooks, which is close to where I live now—Hooks, Texas. He got a—had a notice there at his church—said he wanted donations and whatnot to send a bunch of the World War II vets to the—up there. So we got a trip for nothin'—some of us. I went on that trip with 'em. There was one of 'em—he was an officer at the time but—went. And there was a—couples that got married. They were WACs—two WACs, you know, that were nurses. And there—they had married during the service, see. That they were—went to s—to the—see the monument there—the World War II monument. But this one—he was tellin' us a story all the time. I knew better, but I never would tell them guys the difference that went with us. And I never would say anything to him. Right to this day. He got wounded. He'd tell us—I'd say, "Where were you—got wounded?" And he said, "At the Saint-Lô breakthrough." And I said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, was you hit pretty bad?" And he said, "Yeah, I was hit in the head. When I come to," he said, "that's when I knew where I was—when I came to." I said, "Where'd you come to?" [01:37:59] See, all of 'em D-Day and all of 'em in Normandy there, they sent 'em back to England—you know, the wounded. You didn't

have no facilities over there to treat 'em with, you know, until finally they got to comin' over and settin' up just temporary trim—there, and then till they go to maybe some of the French hospitals or anything like that if they could—any of it left—which most of 'em weren't—particularly there in Normandy. Well, he said [*laughs*], "When I woke up," he said, "I said, 'Where am I?' And they said, 'You're in Paris.'" He said, "Paris?" And he lived pretty close to Paris, Texas, down there, and he said, "Paris, Texas?" They said, "No, Paris, France." [*KK laughs*] And said, "You're in the maternity ward." Well, he may have been in a maternity ward, but he wasn't in Paris, France. He was back in England 'cause we hadn't even cleared Paris at that time. But he still will tell you this day—he thinks that's where he was.

[01:39:00] KK: Well, maybe he got his bell rung pretty hard there . . .

EH: Yeah. Oh, he did, yeah. He's in pretty bad shape right now.

KK: I see.

EH: I know that group that went up there—about, oh, I'd say, ever two months, we'd get together and go eat somewhere, and there's just a few of us. They've been passin' away. We had one old gent that, the other day, I went for his ninety-eighth birthday. He was, what, ninety-four then. And you know, he

got around better than most of them people—than—that went up there with us. And they thought I was the youngest of the group. [*Laughter*] But I—'cause back—I was still gettin' around real good at that time, you know, and . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . and I do now, but I hadn't had that back surgery and all, you know.

[01:39:47] KK: So when you got off the landing craft, you went into the water—you swum out of the hole best you could, did you have a gun on and all the pack and all that stuff . . .

EH: No, I'd—I dropped that rifle somewhere because I's afraid to try to shoot it anyway because it had been in the water and everything else. They's telling you about it. But I had plenty of grenades. And I—that pillbox that we took—well, you got on top of that dude, and you could get down there close enough, and you could throw them grenades in them holes till they—till all activity ceased from in there, you know.

KK: Yeah. So when you first got to the shore and there were dead soldiers. There was a lot of gunfire. Tell me what happened that first day.

EH: Well, that was about it. I mean, then we met some of the French, you know, and I mean, you didn't know at first—I mean,

you was wantin' to shoot them, but I mean, they were already coming back in that first day—the French. There was a lot of 'em that had stayed there. Had lived through it, you know. They had just took cover somehow. [*Clears throat*]

KK: So you saw French militia on that first day that you were there . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I don't know where they were the militia or not. They were just refugees or people that just stayed there. They didn't evacuate, you know. I mean . . .

KK: They were just citizens.

EH: . . . because they didn't know. They didn't know, you know, ahead of time.

KK: So they were just citizens tryin' to live through it . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. Just a-livin' there. Yeah.

[01:41:17] KK: So do—which beach did you land on? Do you remember which one . . .

EH: Omaha.

KK: You were on Omaha . . .

EH: Landed on Omaha, yeah.

KK: So you didn't have a gun. Did you pick up a gun along the way?

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yes, some other GIs and whatnot. And then afterwards, instead of the M1, I carried a BAR, the

Browning automatic because it had—there was a lot more ammo and whatnot. That's what I had—was a BAR.

[01:41:43] KK: Yeah. So that first day you didn't have a half-track, you just went in as a soldier, right . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. Sure did.

KK: And people were gettin' shot around you . . .

EH: Yeah, and I never—see, and I couldn't—they told me that—said, "If you"—said, "maybe"—said, "until you meet up." Said, "Now they're coming in down there"—some of the XX Corps officers. And it was—I guess before I could even make my way to Omaha. And that's it. I mean, I didn't know—I just—they'd—I knew from what they'd told us—said—now Omaha was a pretty smooth beach, so they could land the tanks and whatnot. And they were some of 'em landed that day and some of 'em—I mean, they didn't make it. Now I guess, it was some of the same guys because the other guys that I met and—there wasn't but one that was with the corps that I knew of that even lived through it that—I mean, when I first started to take—takin' training, you know. Just one. Oscar Taylor—and he's from Texas, and why we didn't get each other's address—I don't know.

[01:43:00] KK: So that—the first day that you were on the beach

was the day you got after that pillbox . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: And were you . . .

EH: Yeah, it was first day. Yeah, I made it the first day. Yeah. And I don't know. Some people say, "What wave was you in?" I have no idea. But I think it was around ten o'clock of a morning, though, you know, that—and see, they'd been a-landing all night and whatnot. But it was from what I read about and understand and then goin' back over there this time and like the people telling—I mean, those paratroopers and whatnot—they were dropped in the wrong place—this and that, you know. Because I could see how easily it would be done. It was just like—as I say, you know, what rude awakenin' that was to me and what—and poor old boy that—*[laughs]* actually, I tell everybody, "A third-grade education—you didn't know too much about readin' maps and whatnot."

KK: Oh.

EH: But I knew from pictures that I'd—they'd showed us, you know, that this beach here. And they was tellin' us, "This one's gonna be the rough one." And, "This one here would be so-and-so. This was the smooth one and whatnot." So I knew it was to the right of us when I—I knew that. It'd be down to my right.

[01:44:20] KK: What was going to be down on the right?

EH: The Utah Beach . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . you see.

KK: Mh-hmm. So when you were on the beach, were you with a group of people that you'd worked with or trained with, or you're just . . .

EH: No. No.

KK: . . . thrown in with some people?

EH: Just thrown in with the Ninetieth Division. I didn't know one of 'em from the other.

KK: And did—was there somebody commanding you at the beginning, or were you just kind of on your own?

EH: I was on my own. On my own . . .

KK: So what prompted you to go up to this pillbox . . .

EH: Well, I—huh?

KK: What made you want to go up—what—how did you decide to go up to this pillbox?

EH: Well, because we needed to get up there, and they was still—there was guys on the ground, too, I mean, Germans that was dug in and pill—and just holes—the foxholes. And was—you just with a group, "What are you going to do—am I goin' to this

foxhole?" This was the nearest. Here's where I saw most of the fire comin' from, see. And so that's what I wanted to stop was that pillbox. One that they couldn't just throw something at or shoot him out of there, you know, or somethin'.

[01:45:22] KK: So how did you get up around that pillbox to get the grenade in?

EH: I don't know how I done it. I just got there. [*KK laughs*] Yeah, you don't really know. I mean, you just—you do things like that. [*Clears throat*]

TM: So you got there, and you were makin' the decision on your own to—of where you were gonna go . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah, we just knew—I mean, we had to do somethin' because if you stayed out there on that beach, you were gonna get killed. You got to get up there, and so what are you going to do? You got to pick off who was tryin' to get you, you know. And that's what happens, you know. It was just either—we had one that would come out—a general we had—old General Knox. And he . . .

TM: Can you hold up one second? I'm sorry, Earl.

[Tape stopped]

[01:46:07] KK: We jumped around a little bit, but I think mainly where we were at was—you know, first day, you were . . .

EH: Oh, well . . .

KK: . . . in D-Day, and you talked about the pillbox thing [*claps hands*] and then, you know, like, where did you sleep that night? I mean, where—how did you—where did you guys go at the end of that day?

EH: Well, I went to sleep in a foxhole that night. I did—I know. And I don't remember where then ever after that—I mean, if you got a house that you just captured, it was yours—you know, if there was beds there that you could sleep in, that's what we done. Only time that we ever had any kind of a meal—like meat—that to eat—maybe we robbed it. I know during the wintertime on there, we'd gotten their icehouses, you know, and get meat. And then, too, they preserved the eggs. They'd just let 'em float in barrel to water. We'd take 'em to the cook down there. He'd have those, you know. It was—if you was far enough behind the front lines, I mean . . .

KK: Right, right. So . . .

EH: When I say I was in combat ever day, I was in the combat zone, you know. And I mean, ever time you went somewhere, you're liable to get shot if you wasn't right—you know, well protected—even twenty miles from there because snipers stayed behind—you know, particularly if you's alone.

[01:47:28] KK: So you always had to be aware that—even if the front line was pretty far in advance . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: . . . that there might be a sniper left behind?

EH: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, I know one time, and I mean, it was—Germans were just in the woods up there. And the blacks now—you hear—you know we were separated at that time. And [*laughs*] I know—I had this outpost and a—with a half-track, you know. And boy, the fields were muddy, and this was down an old, muddy road. Here come a black [*laughs*] in that old 6X6 truck—they call 'em—he said—so when he stopped, you know, he said, "Boys," he said, "how far is it to the Germans?" And I said, "You see them woods right up there?" And he said, "Yeah, I see them woods." I said, "Well, they're dug in in them woods." And I said, "They might start firin' just any time." We were waitin' for some air support. [*Clears throat and laughs*] And he said, "Well," he said, "I don't believe I'll go any further than that." And I said, "What are you gonna do?" And he had a little old bitty ton trailer behind that 6X6 truck, and it was in that field—I thought, "Well, boy, I don't know how you're gonna get"—he'd probably get that thing stuck, although it was front-wheel drive and all. Bog it up, you know. Finally he just said,

and I said, "But if you'll give me a"—after I'd told him that, I said, "Give me your map, and I'll show you where you are."
[Laughs] He said, "I knows where I is on the ground, but I don't know where I is on the map." [Laughter] He said, "You don't want a 6X6 M1 truck with a little old trailer, do you?" He was ready to hike out of there—go back. But I told him just right from me, there he could—went in and out. There was another road, and I mean—but it'd been rainin' so much if he'd got off, he'd a-got stuck. And as he said, "I think I seen a place back." And he backed that thing. He wouldn't go any further up there. Boy, he stayed back.

[01:49:49] KK: I'm sure there were a lot of s . . .

EH: Oh yeah.

KK: . . . plenty of scared people runnin' . . .

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah

KK: . . . around lost. And I mean, he was obviously lost in some way. And so he was drivin' a supply truck?

EH: Huh?

KK: Was that a supply truck?

EH: Yeah, a supply truck—he had, yeah. That's—we called 'em COMZ—communication zone, you know. [Sniffs]

[01:50:08] KK: So now how did you use the half-track in your

situation . . .

EH: Well, we just . . .

KK: . . . what was it used for?

EH: . . . half-track was to knock out machine gun nests and so on and so forth. Or to stand, maybe, guard—to keep some of 'em comin' back, you know, to set up one. And we'd be—a lot of times, [*laughs*] I mean, there'd be Germans. We'd pass 'em. I know at one time, I went by 'em one night—a house. And I got to thinking, "We're runnin' by Germans so much." And I said, "There may be a whole nest of Germans in that house there that's hid. And if we'd try to take it"—well, they didn't want to, the guys. And then they said, "Well, they just"—that they'd come on back later. Well, I backed the thing out. I was sittin' right in front of that little old house, and I backed a good little ways back up that same road—made quite a tracks. And it was a-sprinklin' rain—just as dark as it could be. And we left one old boy down there, and so we just told him that—at—really, they didn't need anybody else at that time. But they hadn't got too far away from that half-track—well, [*makes machine gun sounds*] that machine gun. Went down there, and he'd had—he shot a Heinie. They'd come out of that building. It was so dark—you couldn't see him. We said, "How did you know it was?" He

said, "I didn't know but what—it was a cow or something else. And I said, 'Halt. Halt.'" And said, "When he didn't halt," he said, "I was gonna shoot one time, but about—it just a little burst." I mean, he'd caught the guy right along there [points to his throat] and just hollowed his head out with that .50 caliber—boy, that thing is awesome.

KK: Yeah, that's a brutal machine.

EH: Yeah.

KK: You're not gonna survive getting hit by a .50—I don't think.

EH: No.

[01:52:04] KK: So you guys in the half-track then—you did infantry support?

EH: Yeah. Oh yeah. Mh-hmm. Yeah.

KK: And your job was to get up there and maybe get rid of some of these little nests of machine guns and things that the infantry couldn't get to as easily . . .

EH: Yeah. Machine gun nests and whatnot. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. Yeah, and then a lot of times, you'd go so far—I mean, we'd let some of the others go. And I know one time—this was another time that was one of the times that I did get hit. I got a bullet in the knee. I should have kept it as a souvenir. But it was so cold, and this was during the Bulge, and I didn't know I was hit.

But there was five us went, and two of us made it back—but me and one other guy—and the other guy was shot a lot worse than I was, but he was behind me, and he's—and we had passed one machine gun nest. We went and knocked one out and was coming back. And the snow was on the ground. The snow was blowin', and that was the only thing—I mean, let you see a little bit, you know. And then they saw us, and when—boy, we hit the ground, you know. But I didn't know that I was hit in—when it was, when I was standin' up, or when. But it was already spent, practically, when it hit me. But anyway, I was the leader of that group, and I's a-goin' on, and I said, "Well"—said, "get the hell out of here." We'd passed this one nest, see.

[01:53:37] KK: You didn't realize you'd gone by one, right . . .

EH: No, we didn't till they opened us up—on us, and we didn't have much left. Because we'd spent just about everything we had—ammowise and whatnot. And so this one behind me—and I don't know the guy to this day—but he said, "Sarge, sarge." And I said, "Yeah?" And he said, "Can you carry my gun? My weapon?" And I said, "Yeah. What's your problem?" He said, "I've been hit." But he crawled on up there, and as I turned around to wait till he crawled up there with the snow on the ground and all, I could see a black spot there, you know, where I

was bleedin'. But I was so cold I still didn't know it, you know. And him—he'd been shot, and when we got back to the aid station, he was [*unclear words*] the flat of his stomach. And it went under his shoulder bone back there and come out his neck here. Cut his dog tag in two.

KK: Wow.

EH: Cut the chain that was holdin' 'em. And it never hit a vital organ though, see.

KK: Man, talk about lucky.

EH: Yeah, yeah. That's lucky . . .

KK: Well, it's not lucky to get shot, but it was lucky he didn't get killed . . .

EH: Yeah, that killed him. Yeah, yeah.

[01:54:48] KK: And you guys weren't in the half-track at this point. You were on the ground for this, right . . .

EH: We were on the ground—away from the half-track just a little ways.

KK: So sometimes you'd get out of the half-track to go . . .

EH: Oh yeah.

KK: Okay.

EH: Yeah.

KK: So why would you get out of the half-track as opposed to just

stayin' in . . .

EH: Well . . .

KK: . . . and shootin' from the half-track?

EH: . . . well, surprise. Surprise, mostly, you know. That's the only thing I can think of . . .

KK: So if someone has scouted a location . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . and they see that they're out there . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah, out there.

KK: . . . you have to decide the best way to go in. Whether it's to go in on foot . . .

EH: Yeah, whether—yeah, or just go in there and let 'em shoot at us first and whatnot. And knock 'em out, you know.

[01:55:22] TM: You think growing up where and the way you did, did you good? Goin' through all that—do you think growin' up where you did and the way you did, did you good when you were goin' through all that? Did you—were you using skills that you learned growin' up, I guess?

EH: Well, not that I know of.

TM: Okay.

EH: I mean—well, it was like my CC time and all there. And just bein' an old, rough-and-rugged boy raised to take care of

yourself, you know.

TM: Good.

EH: Yeah.

[01:55:55] KK: Well, it's interesting. So you went—you landed in Omaha. You went on up into France. I mean it took a long time to get very far, right . . .

EH: Oh yeah. It took—oh yeah, yeah. See, through the—that Siegfried Line and all. And then on through Germany. And we was in—within forty-five miles of Berlin, and then they wanted to hold us up. And so we stayed there in a little old town they called Tutzing on the Starnberger See. We took that town, in fact, which was right outside of—what did I—one of the big towns there in Germany. Starnberg—that's what it was. That sea there was called Starnberger See. And—but we went back. Then they sent me and one other half-track with some, I don't know what unit it was, with the corps. And the town had already been took—was St. Martins, Austria, see. And so in fact, out there in my vehicle now, I've got a—I didn't play it at the time, and I'm learning to play it now here going on eighty-six years old, but my dad was quite a musician. And so I'd—that's where I was, in other words, when they—where I got that—when they told us the war was over there at—I was in St. Martins, Austria.

And this house that we had—well, I confiscated a fiddle there [KK laughs] that's a handmade one. It's got a dragon's head on it. That's carved out. And well, about two weeks after the war was over there, they was—until they could rotate us out—the ones that had enough or what they was going to do—we still had to stay over there. But they was giving us some passes to go to Paris or wherever, you know, they wanted to go. And I was—I got a—wanted to go to Paris, but I'd—there at this same little, old town, I'd met a Fräulein [laughter] that I'd told you where—showed you that picture of me when Patton was pinnin' the medals on our chief of staff. And I took it to her, and she—I gave her my address, and she could mail it back. And she mailed that to my home for my daddy, see, because—but—so when he passed away, I got it all back and plus his fiddle.

[01:58:44] And I don't know—about two months ago, I decided I was goin' to learn to play the fiddle. I've had it for all these years, but I loaned it to my brother-in-law, and he was the Arkansas state champion fiddler with it. And—but then I like to never got it back from him. He was one of these kind of guys that if he borrowed something, he forgot where he borrowed it or who he borrowed it from or if somethin' happened to it, you know. Or he'd sell 'em, you know, and then tell you, "Well, I

don't know," or, "I was in an accident, and my car caught on fire, and it burned up." He'd have some excuse, you know. And I know him and my sister-in-law—they divorced, and he married again, so she did too, and she just passed away about two years ago in California. But she had two boys. One of 'em played guitar with him, and the youngest one didn't. But they came back—it's been a few years back now because my brother-in-law's been dead for, I guess, fifteen—no, more than that—better than twenty years. [01:59:55] And—but anyway, at the time, Kenny, that's his youngest boy, was bringin' my mother-in-law—she was still living at that time—from California back to Arkansas and stopped down there to see me in Texas. But she—he was gonna see his dad, although they had separated, you know. I said, "When you go up there, Kenny," I said, "get my fiddle." He said, "You mean the old, dragon-head fiddle? Is he still got that?" And I said, "Yeah, he's still got my fiddle." And I said, "I want it back." And he said, "Okay, I'll bring it back." He came back through in about three or four days, and he said, "Uncle Earl," said, "Daddy thought he gave you that fiddle back, or he doesn't know what happened to it." And I said, "Well, he'll find out. I'm goin' up there next week." So I did. I went to my other brother-in-law's, and I called him. And, "Well, where are

you, Earl?" And I told him, and I said, "Ruel, Kenny tells me you don't know what happened to that." And I said, "Let m—you know me well enough. You'd better find out what happened to it." I said, "I'm gonna come out there and see you, and you better have that, or someone's liable to take a ass beatin'." And I said, "I think it'll be you." I said, "Because I want my violin back." And he said, "Earl," he said, "are you down at Robert's now?" And I said, "Yes, I'm at Robert's." He said, "Well, I'm doing so-and-so," and said, "I'll be down there in less than an hour." Said, "I'll be down there pretty quick with it." "Okay." We waited, and it was almost three hours. But he'd sold that somewhere, but he got it back. And I know—I've got that fiddle out there with me now. I done it. [02:01:45] But a pearl—the keys in the thing—all four of the keys had mother-pearl in 'em, but those don't. One of 'em does. And I asked him about that. I said, "Where's the mother-pearl keys? The ones that had the spots like this one here." And he said, "All the others broke." And he said, "I couldn't find any," which you can't—to replace 'em. I've been tryin' to get it replaced. Yeah.

KK: I'll bet. I'll bet it is.

EH: Yeah.

KK: I'm sure it was handmade for that.

EH: But I was offered six hundred dollars for it. That was in [19]45. I went to—I took it—my father, at that time, was stayin' with his sister, which they lived in Ontario, California. And that's where I went. My brother lived there in Ontario. And so I had that fiddle back then, see. And that guy offered me that, and I just—I needed the money then because when I got married—I didn't get married until June of [19]46. Eighty-nine cents an hour workin' for the federal government—when I got married in [19]46 . . .

[02:03:02] KK: Yeah, it wasn't a whole lot better than Pine Bluff, was it? [*Laughter*]

EH: No. It wasn't but much. Sixty-five cents down there at Pine Bluff. Yeah.

KK: Well, I'm glad you got your fiddle back.

EH: Yeah, I am, too. Yeah. Yeah.

TM: I'd like to see that fiddle. Could you—can you play it . . .

EH: I . . .

TM: Do you play it now?

EH: . . . oh, a little bit. Not to where—well, I . . .

TM: Well, we might want to hear it, too.

EH: . . . haven't been at it but two months. I just decided . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . that I was going to learn to play it. I've—I used to play and sing. Me and him—that brother-in-law. I'd play rhythm guitar and sang, and he played the fiddle all the time. We played in some of those honky-tonks in California. Yeah . . .

KK: [*Laughs*] That's great.

TM: That's neat. I was just wonderin' if before we're done, we can get him to—yeah.

EH: Way back there in the [19]50s. Yeah.

KK: Maybe so, yeah . . .

[02:03:49] EH: And last night, I mean, down where I was—now my son, he's the one's—and I—he wasn't but about eight years old. You ever remember—no, y'all are not old enough—like *Tommy Trent Show* out of . . .

KK: Oh yeah.

EH: Do you remember that?

KK: Mh-hmm. I know about it.

EH: Okay. He played lead guitar down there when he's about eight years old. At about the time the Beatles came out—shoot, that Memphis and all that stuff like that. I quit playin' for over forty years myself. I just never played any. I couldn't keep up with him and Linda, my daughter, here. You know. I—the only taping we have of them—my nephew that I stayed all night with

in Mulberry last night. He taped it when my son was still in the service. And Judd is twenty-six years old now. And he was just a baby, and he was singing "Rebel Child" or somethin' like that. Alan was playin' and singin'—him and Linda, my daughter. And he said, "Speakin' of 'Rebel Child'"—Judd was making a racket.

[*Laughter*]

KK: That's funny.

EH: So.

KK: That's funny.

[02:04:56] EH: But last night at my nephew's, Alan came in down there. That was unexpected. I—he lives in Arlington, see, and so he called me just as I was turnin' off yesterday to go to Charlie's. He wanted to know where I was, and he was just leavin', but he said he was comin' to Fayetteville. But he did—but he came down there about five o'clock last night. And him and this other guy—now they are accomplished—both of 'em musicians. So I more or less listened to them. I played two or three pieces on the fiddle. Then when they left, this other old b—Alan left—that other old boy that plays the guitar, that's all he's done. He's about seventy years old now, and I'd played with him once before. I was dow—at my sister—every time I'd come see her, well, she had to hear me play and sing. So I went

down—the Senior Citizens' Inn and played down there. And this old boy came in down there that day. And my sister knew him real well. Well, we hit it right off, you know, and boy, he sat down with his guitar while I'd sing some of them songs—pick lead, and I thought, "He's great." And so this is the second time I saw him. My nephew invited him over last night, so him and my son got together. Now they both can really play. And I just sit back and listen to them. [*Laughter*]

[02:06:24] KK: It sounds like you . . .

EH: I played one or two pieces on the fiddle. Now I didn't know that this other guy is an accomplished fiddle player, too. But Charlie said, "Yeah, he plays"—said, "he had a regular music room at his home," you know. And he's got a lot of recordings, and he said, "He's written over a thousand songs."

KK: Wow.

EH: And he's got a lot of 'em on CD now. And he was sellin' his CDs—he didn't have any with him, but I told Charlie—tonight, they're going down to that same Senior Citizen Inn, and he's got his band with him, and they're playing for charity. In other words, for them—if the group that comes to help build their Senior Citizen Inn. But he's quite a musician . . .

KK: Well, that's great.

EH: . . . that old boy is.

[02:07:15] TM: Where is that inn?

EH: Huh?

TM: What inn? What Senior Citizen Inn? What [*unclear words*]?

EH: Mulberry . . .

TM: [*Unclear words*] Mulberry . . .

EH: Down at Mulberry, Arkansas. Tonight, now, they're playing music at the Senior Citizens' Inn there—that old boy is.

KK: Yeah. That's great.

EH: Him and his crew. Well, he lives out there at Mulberry. Somewhere—you know, I don't know just where. But now he's a good singer. Now he sang a lot of songs there that I'd never heard, you know, after Alan left. But I mean they played some together. But I mean, they'd go up there on the neck of it and get in them fancy chords—I don't know where in the world they are, you know.

KK: [*Laughs*] I know what you mean.

EH: So I [*tapping sound*]*—*all I play is just regular—like bluegrass, you know . . .

KK: Sure. Yeah.

EH: . . . I mean, standard chords. And that's the only thing I can play.

[02:08:05] KK: Well, I understand that after you got out of the army—what did you do after that now? You worked for the government?

EH: Oh well, yeah. There were no jobs around here, and I went to California. So my brother that was in the service at that time, you know, he was on the—had a month's leave, and he was a good carpenter. And he was working for Rugg's Lumber Company. And so they had a job for me if I went out there. This other brother that's—I've got a sister in between me and him. There's about three years between us. See, I had three brothers and three sisters. And—but—so I'm the only one left. So a sister older than me, and then she—he was three years older than her. He was the first one that was drafted in. That was back in the service. They had—you'd go in, and they would—after you'd serve, you could come out in a year. And he was—served his year and come out, and they called him right back. He had to go to Italy, and he was shot up pretty bad in Italy—Harold was. He came back to the states and stayed in the hospital awhile. He was shipped to Italy, and he was wounded over there bad. He was. Me and him was the only two that got wounded. And then—but the other one, he—well, the one that raised me—he didn't have to go 'cause he was family—taking

care of the family, you know.

[02:09:35] KK: Right, right. So you got shot more than once, right?

You got shot in the knee that time you told us about. Did you get shot another time . . .



EH: Yeah. And then—well, first time, I mean, they said I was wounded three different times—a shell hit the ha—I was—it was during the Bulge again, but it was—we's camouflagin' our vehicles white, like snow—is old whitewash. And them old things'd [*laughs*]*—it's just iron in there, and so when that shell was a-comin', well, I set that bucket of whitewash down there, and I was sittin' there so down in the seat—I didn't know whether we were gonna have to go on in or what, you know. And it hit the front end of that half-track and lifted it up, and it come back down, and boy, the—that paint went all over me—in my eyes [*claps*], and so out of that door I went. And, boy, I liked to took my ear off. I dove into a tree tryin' to hit the ground. And I had all my teeth at that time, includin' my wisdom teeth, and I broke one of 'em off. And they set me up with—straddled one of them stumps of a tree left and didn't use no morphine—nothing. Yanked it out of there.*

KK: Man.

[02:10:49] EH: But that was my first time. And then the next time

was here in the knee. And then I got shrapnel in the leg during the Arnouville River crossing. When the colonel that took the colonel's place that got killed, I took him and a major up there to the front. And they was haltin' the vehicles. But when you're in a corps and they know you're a corps officer and them guys had been in the service, boy, they jumped to. They said, "Well, we haven't allowed anything but the pontoon vehicles—just lettin' 'em cross the river on down there." Said, "They're the engineers." And said, "We knew then, too, that it was about"—at that time, I'd say about ten minutes till one o'clock in the mornin'. And that's when the initial crossing—we were supposed to start takin' it. Well, this happened, I think, about three or four minutes before one. The Germans evidently knew somethin' about it, and you've heard of 'em—they'd say, "Come get us." You could hear 'em hollerin', "You Yankee son of a bitches." Some of 'em was speaking English—you know, hollerin' to come get us. And anyway, this shell was a-comin', and you ca—I'd been used to 'em. I'd say, "That's gonna hit close. We'd better hit cover." Well, I jumped out, and see, there'd already been a lotta bombin' going on there. And I'd gotten under a sign in the ditch. A big old sign. And it hit the vehicle. It destroyed my vehicle. They wasn't shootin' at me—it

was just artillery coming over. And the colonel—I didn't know it at the time, but I didn't know either one of 'em then. And I found the major over there. He—it killed him—the major. And so—but it had hit me in the leg—the shrapnel had from that shell. And I thought, "Well, I wonder where the colonel was." And I even went on down to the river crossing. And this is where they used some vulgar languages. They was havin' smoke flares and then flares. And so [*laughs*] we had the smoke screen throwed. [02:13:16] But then right out there—and there was a—I never will forget that. I looked out there and here was one of them engineers. He'd say, "Goddamn it." Said, "Get in this boat and get—let's get across the river." And that is when they was a-hollerin' over there. And here come a—just a stream of fire, and it was comin' across that river. And I was up there on the bank. I slid off in it. [*Laughter*] But I needed to stop just before it got to me. But there was one of them boys—he was a new recruit, I guess. He said, "Sergeant"—said, "there's a flare comin'!" He said, "Fuck that goddamn flare and get in the boat, and let's get gone!" But anyway, I's a-lookin' for the colonel. And I didn't know but what he'd went on because that was their duty. They was going to go down there and see what—how the crossing went. But when I come on back, I

couldn't find him. I went to that little old aid station. I found out where it was, and it wasn't but about a half a block from where I was. And then they told me that the colonel was already there—had been there, and his eye was put out. See, he was wounded pretty bad . . .

KK: Wow.

EH: . . . but they'd sent him back. Well, I said, "I need to be sent back to the corps, because it got my vehicle down there." Well, like they said, "You can't go now." They said, "That road is under fire now"—where we'd come in. And so . . .

[02:14:41] KK: Yeah. So what did you end up doing? Did you end up stayin'?

EH: I stayed in the cellar that night. And killed some gal's pet rabbit. [Laughter] 'Cause I didn't know what it was—crawled over me, and I didn't know whether it was some damn big rat. And I killed it. But then they sent a telegram home that I was missing in action. It was about three days before I could make it back to the unit.

KK: Right. So they didn't know if you'd been destroyed in the vehicle or what . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. They didn't know.

KK: Yeah.

EH: And see, that was another time—I mean, like that—and the corps—as I say, they'd report it like he reported in that book about—they lost a good officer that night and the other one wounded and whatnot. But "Old" Earl wasn't even mentioned, see.

KK: [*Laughs*] Just the officers . . .

EH: The sergeant. But they didn't know—they wanted to know. They said, "Well, the colonel didn't know," you know. He didn't know. He didn't know but what—I'd been killed. But I was missin' in action. They didn't know where I was. But I was stayin' in cover.

KK: Well, when you got back, were they surprised that you had survived or . . .

EH: Oh yeah. I mean—wanted to know what had happened, just like you're askin' me here. And I just told 'em—you know, I just stayed hid out until I could get transportation that was comin' back thisaway.

KK: Man, that's somethin'.

[02:16:09] EH: And they'd already sent a telegram home that I was missing in action, see, to my sister and them.

KK: That's some—they were amazingly efficient about that part.

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

KK: That's a lot of people to keep up with. I don't know how they kept up with who all got . . .

EH: Oh yeah, they'd—yeah. Show up, you know.

[02:16:28] KK: So what was the hardest day you think you had when you were in the war?

EH: Well, I don't really know. I mean . . .

KK: You think . . .

EH: . . . there's a lot of 'em that was pretty hard. But I guess the D-Day was. I mean, I was most scared, you know. I mean, I had no, no idea, you know. And it was such a crude awakenin', you know.

KK: Wasn't anything like training is what you were saying . . .

EH: Yeah. Nothing, you know. And I don't think anything can train you for what—that, you know. I mean, they can go and tell you that they do this and that when you're shootin' them blanks or something like that. And them fallin'—it's a lot different when they're real stuff, you know.

KK: Yeah. Yeah, I'll bet. I didn't realize that the soldiers would yell at each other across the lines and stuff.

EH: You didn't know that?

KK: Huh-uh.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Particularly you've read, I guess, about—

they just liked to made a push there during the Battle of the Bulge, you know, and they'd captured a—they had our uniforms, and there was a lot of 'em that spoke just as good a English, or practically—not as good, but you know, you'd take people's raised around here—you take a New Yorker when he's tryin' to say that Thirty-Third Street. [*Laughter*] You don't know what they're saying, you know. So . . .

KK: Well, you mean they took American uniforms and would wear American uniforms and . . .

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah.

KK: . . . try to infiltrate?

EH: Yeah—did. Got back there. And someone would be wise enough to know that that wasn't them, but somethin' else would give 'em away. But I was never faced with that situation.

[02:18:18] KK: Now as a half-track guy, were you the first guy in a lot of times to an area, or were you a little bit behind the infantry, or where—how did you fit into the unit . . .

EH: Well, it was about—just about even. Sometimes, yeah, we were actually ahead of 'em because, you know, the Germans there, they were smart enough if they would say, "Well, if somebody is behind them, let them go. We've got 'em trapped now. Let 'em go on." You know. So you never know. Particularly, I mean,

after—well, after Saint-Lô, there was so much—I mean, you just couldn't tell who was who or where they might be, you know.

You're . . .

KK: Mh-hmm. So is that—so the front wasn't like in a defined line . . .

EH: That's right. That's right.

KK: There were pockets in there or pieces . . .

EH: Yeah, you'd say, "You'll take this town. You'll take this town here." Then maybe that town that you'd already took back there—maybe the sn—one or two snipers around there. They'd say, "Yeah, there's one or two. Got to get them." You know.

KK: But the push kept on goin'.

EH: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

KK: Yeah.

EH: Yeah.

KK: So you always had to be on the lookout.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah. And sure did.

[02:19:21] KK: What kind of things would you guys say to each other, enemy to enemy, across these lines?

EH: Oh well, it wasn't that as so much. It was just like some places like that, you know. They thought, "Well, we're dug in because they can't come across this river. We've got 'em now. They're

not gonna get across." And they may have already crossed it somewhere else, you know, down there. But at that one place, right there, you know, them guys was in well enough, and they'd be just like me or you, you know. If you'd just say somethin' vulgar just . . .

KK: Just . . .

EH: . . . some conversation—you know, just, "Come get us, you Yankee son of a bitches." You know.

KK: [*Laughs*] I think that people don't think about how close these soldiers are together.

EH: Yeah.

KK: You know, you're not very far apart when you're gettin' ready to have a battle.

EH: No, no. That's right. They're pretty close. They're pretty close. And that's what I say—you know, you get to where you don't know, I mean, if you're there, but you're up close enough. Well, I see the guy. He's over there. He's relieving himself—shoot the hell out of him, you know.

[02:20:31] KK: How many days were you in Europe after D-Day?

EH: I was—well, I was—it—the rest of the time until it was over. I was . . .

KK: And how many days were you there?

EH: But they say, like, in combat—but 279, and it was more than that. It was from June the sixth until seventh of May the following year. I mean, May, I mean.

KK: So it was almost a full year . . .

EH: Year. Yeah. Mh-hmm. See, actually, I think the records are that it ended—I may have a letter in that deal there when Eisenhower declared—you know, it was—we knew it on the seventh of May. But the seventh or the eighth is when they declared all of 'em. In fact, our commander, Walker, received the Russians there at the edge of Berlin, you know, and greeted them then.

TM: Hold up just one second.

[Tape stopped]

[02:21:37] KK: So to be in the battle zone for a whole year—I mean, I would think not that many people—that a lot of people didn't survive that long. I mean, I don't see how . . .

EH: Oh well, there was a lot that did. I mean, it was—in that corps—the officers. But practically every one of them are dead now—the officers. And I don't know of any of 'em, see. I don't know of any. We've never had a reunion or anything. And I tried to contact some of 'em after—he was one of the younger—he was a warrant officer—this Daniels that gave me that book. See, when

I went a—my son, when he brought that home—a book home, they were lined up. There's a picture of 'em in there. And he had in red ink—the one that my son had checked out from the library. And he was some kind of an official, city official in Arlington, until his retirement in—I don't recall now—1978 or something to that effect. [02:22:44] Well, I told my son to look him up when he got back to Arlington prob—see if he still lived there, you know. 'Cause it had his name there—Daniels. And so he looked him up, yeah. And called him. "Yeah, yeah." And he knew me. "Yeah, yeah." So I'll go back to how I come—me to meet him. But then when—I didn't know that book. And I said—he wanted to know how I got a hold of him. And I told him about the book that he left in the library. He said, "You get one?" I said, "No, you know, I got out. It wasn't published until 1950." See, he went on to Korea and all with the corps. He stayed—he was—stayed in the corps. And I got out in October of [19]45, see. But anyway, he gave me two books, see, and they were still in the case. So that one I've had—been a-showin' it—lettin' this see it and that. And I—then all those other—that stuff I gave you that you'll want to make copies of that he made copies of—just like *Stars and Stripes*, you see. It was published everyday. And—but anyway, how come I [*unclear word*] know

this warrant officer as well as I did. The first day, there was a fellow by the name of Jess Freestone. I think I've got a picture out there of when we took basic training. And Jess Freestone and I was the only ones that went to the corps. And it was on a Saturday about four o'clock—we got to the corps headquarters. Well, when they—when we just got in there, I mean, some—a sergeant—it was a Sergeant Phillips met us. And he just—he got to tellin' us a few things about the corps—you know, what a wonderful place the corps was to be in and quite an honor. And said, "There's two names you didn't want to forget"—said that was Walton H. Walker and Colonel Colliers. General Walker and Colonel Colliers. Well, what was that, you know. Well, I knew what a general was, and I knew what a colonel was. Said that General Walker is the commanding officer, and he is the chief of staff. And said, "Don't forget those names." And said, "You'll get acquainted with them pretty soon." And I said, "Okay."

[02:25:19] The next morning, on a Sunday morning, about—oh, I'd guess it was between eight and nine—this same Sergeant Phillips came in that barracks where we were and said, "Sergeant Hale and Sergeant Freestone." "Yeah." "You've got to go on guard duty." [*Laughs*] Well, that was nothing new to me. I mean, that didn't bother me. I knew the general orders

for—you know, there was eleven general orders, and I could quote any of 'em at that time backwards and forwards.

[02:25:57] Well, but they didn't tell you much. He didn't—he just said, "We're goin' up to corps headquarters." And said, "There'll be one of you"—said, "you're just gonna be on duty two hours." Said, "One hour—one of you will be outside of the building." See, this was at Camp Campbell and—or—yeah, Camp Campbell, when we'd go down there. And said, "One of you will be on the outside patrolling in front of the headquarters." But said, "Now if a GI"—said, "if they've got on a uniform, in other words, it was all right for them to go." Said, "But don't let a civilian in civilian clothes go around thataway." Said, "If it's even a GI, if he's in civilian clothes"—said, "holler at him and find out what his business is." And he said, "You might oughta be pretty careful"—said, "some of the officers may be down here this Sunday morning." Well, Freestone said he'd stay outside the first hour. I go inside—just inside the door. "What's my duties in here, sergeant?" He said, "Well," he said, "if a civilian"—said, "a officer comes up here"—said, "that'll probably be all you'll see." But said, "If one comes in," he said, "just show 'em courtesy. Jump up and jump to attention. You don't salute inside or anything, you know. They'll usually say, 'As you

were.'" But said, "If it's a civilian, make 'em sign this register here and the section they want to see and direct 'em to the section." I said, "Direct 'em to a section"—is like you asked me, I said, "What do you mean?" [*KK laughs*] He said, "G-1." I said, "Hell, I don't know where they are." I said, "I never—this is the first time I've stepped inside the building." He said, "Hale, you can read, can't you?" [*Laughter*] I said, "Well, I see right down here it says G-1 and G-3—I see it way down there." He said, "Well, if you don't know"—see, we'd always—with my experience then just finishin' basic training and then this other and then going into the corps that I was assigned to, I'd never heard of a duty officer. It was always officer of the day.

[02:28:14] But he said, "If you have any questions or somebody asks you somethin' you don't know," he said, "Captain Morgan back there"—I'll never forget his name. But he had a moustache, and his name was on the front of that desk—said, "Just direct 'em back there to see the duty officer," in other words. Well, hell, I—here it was, I was tryin' to get all this stuff in my head, and I'm thinkin', "Officer of the day. Duty officer. What the hell is a duty officer?" You know, I thinkin' to myself, you know.

KK: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[02:28:50] EH: And I still hadn't figured it out. [*KK laughs*] Well, it wasn't too long—I mean, there was some other officers came in. Well, I'd hop to. "As you were, sentry." You know. It wasn't long—this damn Colonel Colliers come in. I didn't know him from Adam. I knew he was a—that was the chief of staff. They'd told you, "Don't forget his name," you know. But I'd never seen him before. He goes right by me, you know, but he said, "As you were, sentry." He turned around and said, "By the way, sentry," and oh boy, I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Has the mailman been in here yet this morning?" [*Laughter*] Hell, I didn't know the mailman from no one else, you know. I said, "I'm sorry, sir. I couldn't tell you." He said, "You don't know the mailman?" I said, "No, sir." And the only thing I could think of when there's—before, the only time we got mail, I mean, it—they'd send some sergeant out of headquarters. He'd go into the post office. They'd come out if they had mail. They'd have mail call, you know. Hell, I'd never experienced anything like this, you know. And I didn't—I thought he's talkin' about maybe some sergeant, you know. I didn't know what. But it—there was one that brought the mail up there to the corps headquarters—what it was, you know. But I didn't know him. So he started to quizzin' me, and I don't think he liked my

answer. He said, "How long have you been in the corps?" I said, "Four o'clock this afternoon—twenty-four hours, sir." [*KK laughs*] I don't think he liked that very much, but anyway, he said, "Who posted you on guard?" I said, "The sergeant of the guard, sir." He said, "Who is sergeant of the guard?" I said, "Sergeant Phillips." And he said, "What's the officer of the day's name?" And he had me so confused right then, and oh, I thought, "Well, what in the world?" And I said, "Sir, I'm sorry. I cannot tell you his name." I said, "I—they told me, but he's some first lieutenant. That's all I can tell you." He said, "Do you know how to get ahold of him?" I said, "Yes, sir. I've got a phone number." [02:31:04] But anyway, that—well, he pointed down—he said, "Do you know that fellow sittin' back down there?" And I said, "Yes, sir." I said, "I don't really know him. Just saw him—met him this morning—know who he is." He said, "Who is it?" [*Laughter*] And I glanced again and, hell, a big old sign. I said, "Captain Morgan, sir." Boy, I thought, "That's a good answer. That's Captain Mor"—"never mind his name!" Said, "What's his duty? What's he up here for?" Well, he stumped me again. I said, "Sir, I forgot what they told me, but it's something similar to the officer of the day." But I said, "He's to take care of business in case I don't know—I'd send 'em back

there to see him." [*Laughter*] [02:31:53] That's about the time this warrant officer, Daniels, came down, but he first said, "Do you"—he did like this [beats chest with fist]—he said, "Do you know who I am?" I said, "No, sir." I said, "I know you're a full colonel." And that's when this Daniels was coming down the hall, and he went in the office. He just thumbed—said, "I don't suppose you know that fellow there either." I said, "No, sir." He said, "You don't know very goddamn much, do you?" And I said, "No, sir." I mean, what are you gonna say? I wanted to just knock the hell out of him, but anyway, he said, "You get the [*laughs*] officer of the day on the phone and the sergeant of the guard and send 'em down to my quarters right away." And I said, "Yes, sir." Still, at that time, I didn't know who the hell he was or where I was gonna send 'em. But anyway, I thought—that's what I thought. So he hadn't no more than gone out the—but any—in the meantime, he asked me my duties, and I'd told him, you know, what I'd been told. That evidently satisfied him, and then I said—and it was just time for Freestone to come in—relieve me. And I's hopin' so bad that he would. Sure enough, here comes Freestone. I'd told him all about that. I said, "The guard out there—I replace him." I said, "I've been here right at an hour now." And sure enough, Freestone—he

said, "Is this the sentry that's supposed to relieve you?" And I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Sentry." Freestone, "Yes, sir." He said, "You continue on your duties." Said, "I'll take care of this situation in here myself." But he talked to me a little more, as I said. That's what he told me—to get that officer of the day and the sergeant of the guard on the phone and get 'em down to his quarters right away. And I said, "Yes, sir." Well boy, when he went out that door, I headed for—in that room, and there sat Warrant Officer Daniels. He was just a-dyin' laughin'. [*KK laughs*] He said, "Sergeant"—said, "sit down over there." He said, "If that hadn't've been your ass, it have been mine or somebody." Said, "He's in the habit of that." I said, "Who was that?" I said, "I don't know where to send 'em." He said, "I've already called 'em." Because he could hear us out there in the hallway. But he said, "Think nothin' about it." So he was a regular Joe, you know. Daniels was. But . . .

[02:34:30] KK: So that gave you an idea of what it was like to deal with an officer, didn't it?

EH: Yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And I mean, not the only time, then I'll go back to the deal. It was after that—we was in England when I first saw Patton. And they'd told us—we used the condom rubbers to blouse. They'd issued them boots over there

then—had the two straps around the top instead of the leggings, you know. And we'd take those condom rubbers—just punch a hole in 'em—you could stretch that and, boy, I mean, put that around this and just blouse them trousers right over it. Boy, it was—otherwise, we had to put 'em in the top of them boots, you know. And they wouldn't stay a lot of times—you'd walk, and they'd come out. But that rubber would hold 'em, you know. I mean, because you'd tuck it under, see, and they'd just make a fold there. *[KK laughs]* But boy, Patton knew that. And he didn't like that, and you'd better have on that steel helmet, which weighed eight pounds, too. Regardless of where he saw you, you'd better have that—pat—that steel helmet on. And then not have that. [02:35:32] And they told us. We got warnings. Said, "If you come up here to guard headquarters"—and it was me and this same sergeant that'd put us on duty. They had me on one side of the door and him on the other of the headquarters that day that Patton was supposed to visit us. And so he came up, and it was just like—said that—the chief of staff did me. We'd hop to attention. "As you were, sentries." On he went. And so he turned around and come back out right—he hadn't more than got in the door. And he turned around and came back in—out. And boy, we hopped to attention again. He

bends over and pulls Sergeant Phillips's trousers up. Didn't say nothin'. Turned right around while he was still over—he turned his loose. Pulled mine up and looked. And, "As you were, sentry." And he walked on in. [KK *laughs*] Never said what he was a-lookin' for or nothing. But we knew, you know. That was the first time I ever saw him.

[02:36:39] KK: So you were lucky you didn't get in trouble that day because . . .

EH: Oh yeah, yeah.

KK: . . . someone had tipped you off not to wear the rubber . . .

EH: Oh, we—yeah, we knew not to have them that day. Yep.

KK: [*Laughs*] It's awfully picky for somebody who's about to be in a big old, long war—for him to wanna even care about that. It's funny that he was focused on that.

EH: Yeah. But it—some of those, I mean, were just regular heels. I know—like my son, he just talked. And they do now—you know, officer talks to enlisted men. And I wouldn't doubt but what a few of the officers lost their lives on that account in war.

KK: Mh-hmm. Because they weren't . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . close to their men, and they weren't . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . a part of the group.

EH: Part of the group, you know, and . . .

KK: Or maybe didn't treat people very well . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. Wouldn't hardly speak to you, you know.

[02:37:26] KK: So if they were walkin' out there about to get killed, maybe somebody . . .

EH: They want to have somethin'—the only time they'd say somethin', "Straighten that cap up there, soldier." Somethin' like that. Just, you know, something to aggravate you or—and I know even there—it didn't make any difference how well I knew those guys. When you was out there on the gate comin' in, you had to see their ID card. And they would usually show it. Or they'd—they knew that they were supposed to, and we'd—we supposed to take their license number and turn 'em in if they didn't—you know, whoever they drove in. There was one—another one that was a major; in fact, he was the one that got killed—he was with me that time. He was like some Boy Scout all the time. And I know I had the habit of—when I'd—out there—see, you'd salute 'em. You was outside, you know. They'd look at us, you know. And I said—I'd—my expression was, "Okay, sir. Okay, sir." That damn—[claps] he started off, and he backed up, and I came to attention. He said, "Let's

watch that okay stuff." [*Laughs*] And I was—I said, "Okay, sir."

[*Laughter*]

KK: It was just kind of a habit of yours, right?

EH: Oh yeah, see.

KK: That's pretty strict.

EH: Yeah.

[02:38:57] KK: So how did that guy get killed—that you were with?

EH: Oh, that one there. I mean, he was the one that got it there at the Arnouville River crossing that night. The other one—the first one was Colonel Griffin. The one that—see, this colonel and that major was with me at the Arnouville River crossing. The colonel got it. The colonel that replaced the first one I was with—it was at Chateau-Thierry—I believe it was. The first big city after they was over there. And he wanted me to take him up close to the front—see what the activity was. Well, we was just crossin' over a railroad track, and here was two or three GIs—you know, they were down behind that dump because they were still—and they said, "There's some snipers still here." But they'd already got word that most of that was clear. And so they told 'em. And there was two officers in the back, and he was in the front in a jeep—a little old jeep. And he'd—see, he had a map, and he said, "When we get to this"—he just said, "well, we'll go on."

Said—and they—and then they's a-watchin'. They had a machine gun, see, on that jeep. One of them officers—they was gonna be the machine gunner. Anyway, he said, "Sergeant"—said, "when you"—he usually called me Hale with it—he's—"Sergeant Hale," he said, "when you get to the corner up here"—said, "turn left." And said, "We're gonna cut off"—said, "because all of this has been cleared in here." We had no more than turned left there—I turned left [*claps*]*—it's like a one way. Just a—actually what it was, it was a circle round. And instead of goin' on around it like that and going straight on, we turned left like he said. And I just had started, and I was goin' real slow when I went around that corner. And that first store in there—here was a machine gun nest set up right there. Boy, I put that thing in reverse and back around that corner I went. And as soon as I got stopped because there was some other GIs in here—just right there with their rifles, too, you know. And they was lookin' for snipers and whatnot. [02:41:21] But here come a little old M8 tank, which is a very light tank. He grabbed one of those GI's rifle there—that was standin' there in another storefront—just about maybe as far from here to the street—from the corner—where you'd go around the corner and then this other storefront around there is where that machine gun—*

the German nest was. They's in there. And he got that rifle, and he just got—he stopped at—they wore their insignias, you know, and whatnot. And so most of those people, ?ever?—they didn't have to be in the corps. They knew, "Well, there's an officer. Stop." So he stopped that tank. He crawled up on the front of that thing and told 'em to go around the corner and said, "Machine gun nest round there." Well, they just blowed him all to pieces. But they got the machine gun nest.

[02:42:12] KK: So the tank got the machine gun nest . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . but the machine gun nest got that guy first . . .

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah, got Colonel Griffin.

KK: Why would he do that?

EH: I don't know, you know. I guess he thought he'd be some big hero and go around the corner and maybe them shootin' when he got there. And then they'd get all of them before they would shot him or something.

KK: Did it seem like to you and the guys on the ground there—did it seem like he was acting normal by doin' that . . .

EH: No. I—that's why I'm sayin'. He just—that wasn't showin' any kind of sense at all. Why would he do somethin' like that?

Unless he just wanted to be a big hero or somethin', you know.

KK: But I mean, he—a guy sittin' and exposed like that—not gonna have a chance against a machine gun . . .

EH: No. Hm-mm.

KK: Yeah. That is wild.

EH: But you never know. I mean, that rifle that he had—I mean, they just shot the stock of that thing 'cause they just—machine gun, you know.

KK: That is wild. Do you think that he had not been in . . .

EH: And I think there's a picture—his burial there in that town. He was buried over there—Colonel Griffin—Griffith—it—really. It's not Griffin. Griffith.

[02:43:23] KK: So there's not really any way to explain why someone might do somethin' like that . . .

EH: No. I couldn't, you know. I mean, unless you just go berserk, you know. Either that or, like I say, some of 'em—they want to think, "I'm a hero." You know, "I can do this." You know.

KK: Huh.

EH: But at that time and so soon, we wasn't gettin'—hearin' anything about details of guys being heroes and whatnot and bein' awarded this or that for that. You wasn't interested in nothin' like that.

KK: Well, you were just trying to survive every day.

EH: Oh, that's all. Survival.

[02:43:58] KK: That is so, so strange—that whole thing. And I
guess you saw plenty of odd behavior, not just from that officer
but from just various people . . .

EH: Oh yeah, yeah.

KK: . . . like when a new—brand new green soldier gets in the middle
of this . . .

EH: Oh yeah. You'd say—yeah. Say, you know, a—maybe some of
them hadn't had much experience. You'd see 'em get in a
foxhole or something. Boy, they'd want to get out of that
foxhole and shake the dirt off of that blanket and whatnot.

[*Laughter*] You know.

KK: Yeah. And if they're lucky, they wouldn't get shot, but that'd
be . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . so did you find yourself sometimes yellin' to green soldiers
what to do?

EH: Oh yes. Said, "You'd better watch yourself. "Stay." You'd tell
'em that all before hand, you know.

KK: That's interesting to me. It's like . . .

[02:44:44] EH: And then you'd take some of 'em—I mean, there was
a little old boy. I don't know whatever happened to him. We

got separated, and I never saw him anymore. But he was right along with me at one time. And a German 88 tank was right across that hedgerow from us. And they'd been a-firin', you know, and so we were in foxholes at that time. And so I said to him—I called him "Shorty." Now I don't remember now [*laughs*] what his name was. He was a re—a new recruit. And I said, "Shorty," I said, "do you see any activity?" And he said, "I can't see anything from where I am." And I thought it sounded awful funny, and I said, "Get your damn head up there so—to where you can see. You can't see layin' down in that foxhole." And so finally, he just said, "Sarge," he said, "it's a tank with one of them M88s!" And I said, "Surely not." He said, "Yeah, I never have seen one before. I know that's what it is." By the time I think it went off, I think the concussion was close. Knocked him out. But he—boy, he got to where—after that, if there was snipin' fire coming from a buildin', he wanted a bazooka. And he could flatly put 'em in there. [*Laughter*] And he just—the first time that I'd seen him, we saw a officer takin' a dump, and he said, "That's—he—that'd be the last time he'd take a crap."

KK: So he went from being a green . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . soldier to learnin' how to work in that environment . . .

EH: Oh yeah, yeah. Mean. He got—he just wanted to really kill 'em, you know. Yeah.

[02:46:23] KK: You know, I think that people think of the war in terms of what they've seen in the movies, you know. It's just not the same as—I don't guess there's any way you can show what it was like. I mean, do you think the *Saving Private Ryan* thing was a fairly good . . .

EH: Oh, it was, yeah. There was a lot of it that was real good, yeah.

KK: I mean, was that a little bit more true to life than, say, an old John Wayne movie or something . . .

EH: Yeah. Yeah, I'd say so. Yeah. Because there was a lotta actual photos that was taken there—that were actual. Mh-hmm. Yeah.

KK: Right. The photographers that were shooting . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . film that . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . were recording the actual D-Day . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . was incorporated in that.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Yeah. So it felt more real. The whole thing felt more real . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: And a lot of crazy stuff happened . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. And a lot of crazy stuff. Yeah. But that's what I noticed though, I mean, at first when I saw it. And that soon—and the command post bein' set up and the way that beach was—well, I knew from experience it wasn't that—there was bodies, as I say, still—oh, a month or more—still layin' round. They had—they couldn't pick 'em all up. Get 'em back out. No, no way . . .

[02:47:26] KK: Well, part of that was—that the mission was to push everybody forward and do the war, right . . .

EH: Yeah, that's right.

KK: And so picking up the dead just wasn't a priority.

EH: No, that's right. Well, and the people that was assigned that—there wasn't that many of 'em, see.

KK: Right. Because . . .

EH: Yeah. Yeah. You had . . .

KK: . . . most of the force was designed to fight or support the fight.

EH: That's right.

KK: I understand.

TM: We need to change tapes.

KK: Well, that's a really—it's just interesting to hear those details, because I think that's what—you know, our archive has a chance

to really contain a lot of that type of stuff. And it gives people a different perspective.

[Tape stopped]

[02:48:00] KK: You know, there was clarity of what you were—why you were there.

EH: Why you were fighting. Yeah.

KK: You knew why you were there.

EH: Yeah.

KK: You knew they're—who the enemy was . . .

EH: That's—oh yeah. Yeah.

KK: . . . you knew why you were there.

EH: Yeah. That's why I say—you finally—you just come to the conclusion—I mean, you know how dirty it'd be to shoot somebody in the back. But I mean, what are you gonna do if the guy—maybe he's turned around there with a cigarette. If he knows that you're there or down there, he's gonna turn around and shoot you. You know, or if you—if he catches you off guard, that's what he's gonna do.

KK: Yeah. I think that . . .

EH: And I mean, I don't un—I think back now—I mean, if I'd a known—had any idea. There ain't no telling what this old boy would have took for souvenirs, like all kinds of guns and

whatnot. But I saw too much of it—the guns that they'd take. Some of 'em had took guns. And them Germans, when they'd catch them prisoners—I saw a couple that tried to stomp down their throat. Kill 'em and then just take that gun away from 'em as one of theirs. [*Claps*] Anything, you know.

[02:49:07] KK: Yeah, so it just made it worse for 'em if they got caught with it . . .

EH: Make it worse on 'em if they get caught with it, yeah—there.

KK: Yeah.

EH: But then they was—I'd say, too, that I think most of the ones that got w—away with a lot of loot—it's like I did that violin. I didn't have any idea, and I think maybe some of those officers—then I don't know whether they could or not, but I mean, I've heard that they just—anything they wanted, you know. They just took it, you know.

KK: Yeah. I've heard that too. You know, and whoever wins takes whatever they can take. I mean, a lot of that goes on . . .

EH: Well, I know at the time—I can tell you this. When—even—this was when I was comin' back to be shipped home, you know, to be discharged from up there in Germany. I finally come back over to—from St. Martins, Austria—I went back to Tutzing, Germany. And they—just on the train, see—that—and us—it'd

stop ever so often [*laughs*], and I don't know where—who had it, but I was the one that acted as the police. [02:50:24] That—them guys—I didn't have a penny, see. Wasn't—I didn't—no money when I left over there. And I had over seven hundred dollars when I got to Le Havre—sellin' cigarettes! But we'd sell it to 'em and take it away from 'em. I mean, what they'd do—they'd just—like ?Stovewood?—cartons of cigarettes, they'd sell 'em at twenty dollars a carton—I think is what they's . . .

KK: Wow.

EH: . . . them GIs selling 'em. Twenty dollars of their money and whatnot, but we could cash it in, see. And I didn't have any, but being as I was the police—the chief there, I'd confiscate a lot of 'em [*KK laughs*], and then I'd just give it to them. Let 'em sell 'em—take 'em away from 'em. And you could see 'em takin' 'em out there in the weeds, if they'd be stopped on this side. And you'd tell 'em guys—said, "Hey"—or they would [*unclear words*] they wouldn't let you have any more over here. Make him go through that train, go over on the other side—they'd go down there and get the same cigarettes and sell 'em to—back to him.

[*Laughter*]

[02:51:28] KK: It was kind of lawless, wasn't it . . .

EH: A lot.

KK: Lawless territory.

EH: Yeah. [*Laughs*] That was the law of the territory, yeah. Yeah.

KK: [*Laughs*] That's funny. Well, you know, it's—I think war is a really weird thing, you know.

EH: Yeah.

KK: I mean, it makes—it—there's—the aftermath of a war—there's not any control.

EH: Yeah, well, you could tell—I mean, if you ever—anytime you's back there—I wasn't in long enough, and what times that I's around some of 'em that had never been in combat, you know, that was over there though, but they hadn't been in combat. Boy, them was the toughest son of a guns you ever seen. They'd tell some awfulest stories that you ever heard, you know. And you could tell 'em right off. The guys that had been in combat—they didn't even want to see somebody's nose bloodied. And some of them guys—others, they just wanted to be a smart aleck. Just—and that's the way you could tell 'em apart. No kiddin'.

KK: So the people who had been in the war weren't interested in being in a fight . . .

EH: They weren't interested in startin' no fight or bein' in a fight—well, yeah.

KK: 'Cause they'd seen enough.

EH: They'd seen enough of it, yeah.

[02:52:36] KK: You think it kind of changed your whole view of . . .

EH: Oh, your whole attitude, you know.

KK: . . . about humanity? About other people?

EH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I know I's awful high tempered before I went, you know. And I—like when I was in CC camp there, I just—little bit on the mean side in other words. We'd go to town, some of them CC boys and others, and I'd take up for all of 'em [*laughs*—right or wrong, you know. But after—over there, I mean, I—and I had one brother, and my son and them couldn't hardly believe it. I mean, the one that didn't go overseas. After that—he—and he was mean. I mean, he was—he'd rather fight than eat—he weighed about two-fifteen. If he hit a guy, normally, he went down for the count. He'd walk up to—he'd hear a bunch of people talkin', you know. Didn't know one of 'em, you know. He'd stand there—maybe his hands on his hip. "Fellow, I think you're telling a goddamn lie." Just to get something started, you know. And—but you could tell people like that—they didn't—none of the guys had been in combat over there—suffered a lot. Because I mean, I had been so cold at times that I—and I'll say this, you never saw an atheist in a

stock—in a foxhole. Yeah, you believed in some superior being.

KK: Had to have something to hang on to, didn't you?

EH: [*Unclear words*]. Yeah. Yeah, but boy, I mean, as I say, I have been so cold and miserable—you'd think, "Well, it can't be any worse than this," you know.

[02:54:25] KK: Did you think sometimes that you might freeze to death?

EH: Yeah, I didn't know. And then I'd think, you know, "Well, what will my folks think?" You know. I mean, if I got killed, you know. I thought about that a lot, you know.

KK: How it would affect them.

EH: Yeah. And my brother that I treated so rough—that treated me so rough—to me—he was, I mean, bein' cruel when he cussed me, you know. I'd rather for him to whip me. And I will say this. Before that—when—after I got out of the CC camp and before—and just before I went to the service, I was down there. Another guy had done me some dirt. Like, we was talking about that swimmin' hole. I used my oth—my brother that was in there, he had a bathin' suit, although it was too big for me, and I wanted to go over there on a Sunday. And he was one of them well-to-do guys. In fact, my brother worked for his daddy, and actually, he was the boss, too. And he stayed—he drank a lot.

He wanted to know where I got that bathin' suit. And I told him it was my brother's, you know. My sister-in-law, the one that acted as a mother, told me—said if I was going over there—"Earl"—said, "you'd better wear"—and we told her that we needed a bathin' suit, and I didn't have one. Well, she said I could use a safety pin and all. And so that's what I done. And he was drunk over there—this—Farmer is his—was his name—Jim Gueen Farmer. And he was telling me, "Yeah, that's my bathin' suit. You stole it from me." And I told—kept tellin' him, you know. And he said, "I'm gonna take it off of you." And I knew at the time, as drunk as he was, "You," I said, "you can't take it away from me." But I said, "I ain't gonna let you close enough." And I—but I said, "You couldn't take it away from me, Jim Gueen—the shape you're in." [*Laughs*] [02:56:22] And—but anyway, I told my other brother, Jim, about him. "Why didn't you let him have that damn suit?" I said, "Because it belongs to Bill." And I know when he came home—he's the one that was mean. I told him about it, and boy, did he ever—he just slapped him like some little old kid a few times. And then kicked him in the rear. For doin' it—said. But then I grew up just a little, and when I'd been in the CC camp. And I was about—no, I was nothin' like he was—wantin' to start a fight or

anything. But I was in this pool hall, and there was a sign that come all the way across—boys under eighteen was not allowed back there where they sold the beer and whatnot. You could play pool up there and whatnot—up here in this place. And so I know any time that this half brother—the one that raised me—if someone else that they—a kid—if I was around—did something they didn't like or somethin', "Boy, we'll tell Jim on you." Well boy, I just—I didn't want him saying anything to me—get on to me. And he'd had run me home a few times. [02:57:42] And I just had enough that time, and I'd thought about the time—you know, I'd—that he put that little scar on my lip, where he put that. And I just thought, "He's run me home his last time. I don't care if he does know it." But what had happened, this Jim Queen, the same one—he came in that beer joint. Well, I's in there drinking. And I wouldn't let him buy a beer. I run him out. And so then the bartender—I was that mean, now—he said something to me about it. And I said, "I won't let you sell it to anybody then." I said, "Don't set a beer up for here for somebody." If he did, I'd slap it off, you know. [KK laughs] So they told Jim, and he come in there [laughs], and he—then I just told him—I said, "You've told me the last time to go home." I said, "I'll do as I please. I'll go home when I get ready." And

there was another guy that worked with him all the time. And so he grabbed ahold of one of my arms—Jim did, and this other guy got ahold, too. But I just got alose from him real easy. And I got ahold of Jim. And that sign we's talkin' about. I put him plumb through that sign. Knocked it [*laughs*] down. And the other one—out the door he went. Said, "He's just like a damn mule." [*Laughter*] So that was all I had with them, and they never bothered me. But as I say, I'd—all that stuff had left me when I—but I never would—I'd let a guy know that I didn't want to take no junk off of him, you know. But he didn't start nothin' with me and get by with it.

[02:59:21] KK: So now how did you come to live with your brother-in-law? How did it—I mean . . .

EH: My half brother.

KK: . . . your half brother as opposed to your parents. What happened?

EH: Well, my mother passed away, and so my dad—he wanted to stay over there, and you couldn't make a li—he was a blacksmith in a little old place like Moffett, Oklahoma, you didn't have enough anyway. And so I don't know. The family just wasn't there to stay. I mean, the older sisters was married, and then them other two—the two s—two girls and then me was the only

ones that was left there. So they'd talked it over. My older sister she said, "We oughta bring them back." And said—I can stay with Jim, and she would keep my two sisters, you know . . .

KK: Mh-hmm. Makes sense.

EH: So.

KK: I was just missing that part of the story . . .

EH: Yeah. Yeah.

KK: . . . I didn't realize. So how old were you when your mother passed?

EH: Bout seven.

KK: Hmm. That's tough. [*Pats legs with hands*]

[03:00:20] TM: Do you remember—how much time did you spend in Moffett?

EH: Not too long. I'd say—well, I started school over there.

TM: I was about to say I heard at one point Moffett was a pretty lawless place over there.

EH: Oh, it was. Yeah, in fact—well, I can remember—see, there's another thing that scared me. That—at the baseball. Now I had—my dad was—he was fifty years old or more—he was gettin' gray headed. And he was pitchin' in that game. And Harold, the brother that was six years older than me—he wasn't quite grown, but now he is a—he was a good ballplayer. Now

my son was the same way. He could really play ball. And he would—they—he caught. [03:01:06] And I don't know—one of the guys—he lived not too far from us—name of Cherry. And he was always into it, you know. And he was usually cutting somebody up—doing this and whatnot. And he called my dad—I don't know—it was somethin'—said, "You old, gray-headed son of a bitch." [*Laughter*] Or something like that. Well, my brother was standin' pretty close to him—the one that—see, and boy, he collared him right away. But Cherry somehow started bitin' him. He went to his grave with a scar there [points to left cheek]. He just almost bit a hunk out of his jaw. And he wasn't very old. He wasn't at that time. And anyway, there was a guy—he finally made the sheriff—Howard Watts. He made the sheriff over there. But he picked—and my brother had him down on the ground. And he had him bleedin' and all—Bill did. But he was—a lot of blood was comin' from him, too. And he said, "Cherry"—said, "turn that boy's jaw loose." He said, "Huh-uh." [*growls*] He was holding that—he hit him in the head with it—head—while he was laying on the ground with a ball bat—Howard did. [*Laughs*] That jarred him loose. But they was five or six of 'em. Boy, they was fightin'. It was just a regular gang fight, you know.

KK: Man, rough-and-tumble.

EH: Yeah.

[03:02:34] KK: So that would've been in the—that would've been in the [19]30s?

EH: Yeah. Early—let me see—[19]20—yeah, seven—[19]29—[19]30. Yeah, along in there.

KK: Were all—yeah, so you're in the Great Depression.

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah.

KK: So there's . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: It's tough times . . .

EH: See, in [19]29—see, that's when—you know, you just didn't have anything. Nothin'. We didn't. I can remember when we first—just as a kid—see, as I say, I don't know how old I was, but I—you know, there's certain things—my dad was a blacksmith, and I can remember I wanted a hatchet. To me that was just about like a ax—you know, a hatchet was. I was so small. [*Laughs*] And I never will forget because when I was old enough and then come back—went out there, and it's still standin'. But over the wellhouse, there was a shed built over it with four posts. And when we was gettin' ready to go move—I guess, and Daddy had told me that when we got ready to move,

he'd give me that ax, but until then, no, I couldn't have that ax. And I got that, and boy, I just—I really chopped me a hunk out of that post. [*Laughter*] And it was still there. But oh, I got a whippin' for that. Got that hatchet took away from me.

[03:03:56] KK: So when did you go—did you say you saw that again years later?

EH: Yeah, when we come ba—yeah, it was quite a few years later. I mean, I was twelve or thirteen years old. And I—my sister and them was tellin' me where it was, you know. And said, "Yeah," said they, "out there by Gabbards'"—some people name of Gabbards lived out there. Said, "They still live out there." And said—and I knew where—this one. He had somethin' wrong with his back. He had a big hump in his back, and they called him "Humpy" Gabbard. And I went out there and saw that. [*KK laughs*] And I was telling Watson ?Agsine?, a friend I was going to school with there at Mulberry, about that.

KK: Well, that's funny.

TM: Was—what kind of—how'd you get back and forth on the river? Did you go to Fort Smith much, or was there any kind of bridge there at the time?

EH: No, you just had to flag a ride.

TM: But there was a bridge? From Moffett to . . .

EH: Oh. Oh yeah. Yeah . . .

TM: Okay.

EH: . . . yeah. That same bridge there. The railroad bridge and all. And I've walked the railroad bridge. We lived not far from the railroad, so I'd walk that. Yeah, I walked all the time there. But when I moved back to Mulberry and I was up—big enough—and if I ever went to Fort Smith, I'd just flag a ride. You know, back during the war and before the war, you'd get out—you—anyone'd pick you up, you know.

KK: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. It was a different world back then . . .

EH: Yeah. Yeah.

[03:05:21] KK: And not everybody had cars, so . . .

EH: No, no.

KK: . . . it was . . .

EH: In fact, I think back, and I know the place where I lived with my half brother that—there on—out on the highway, we lived about three miles from town. One of the guys there in town—now this was on Highway 64. That was the main thoroughfare from Fort Smith to Little Rock. And you just hardly never saw a vehicle. And I know that part of that vehicle—he had a bad accident—this Hunter. Everybody called him Koji. He was quite a sot—drunkard, and I don't know what had happened, but there was

somebody killed in an accident. But he was hurt pretty bad. But those two vehicles sat there for a long time. You know, the other vehicles would go around 'em. But you ju—you hardly ever, even at that time. [03:06:20] And to just show you how, and like—you see the eighteen-wheelers out here now, and how the world has changed. I moved back from California in [19]53—I guess it was. [Nineteen] fifty-three or fifty—you never saw a eighteen-wheeler on the road. I went back out there in 1957, in fact, and hauled a load of cattle. I—when I moved back from California, I bought a two-ton truck that had a full 8x16 foot bed on it. And that's what I moved what little furniture I brought back, when I moved back. And I went back to Chino, California, and hauled a load of cattle to Mena, Arkansas. And you're supposed to unload those things ever eight hours. But see, I didn't know anything about this and why. I thought because—that practically ever depot had a place where they shipped cattle out from, you know. And—but you was competin' with the depot or with the railroad. They wouldn't let you let them off to drink water or anything else. Well, I had the stuff—I could water 'em but—and just what feed you could poke in there. And it was—shoot, I—it's right beyond where I live down there in DeKalb now—is the first time I got to unload those

cattle—for all night stand—to bringin' 'em to Mena, Arkansas.

KK: 'Cause there just wasn't a place to do it, where they . . .

EH: No, there wasn't no place for me to do it.

KK: That's a long haul.

EH: Yeah.

[03:08:06] KK: How many days did it take you?

EH: Oh, I don't know. Almost a week. [*Laughs*]

KK: I'll bet.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, see, that old truck—I mean, it was a—well, it was a 1950, I guess, truck—two ton. I used that thing for many a years though.

KK: That helped you . . .

EH: Now I hope—now you can cut all this off.

TM: What's that?

KK: [*Laughs*] Oh yeah, we can cut it up any way you want.

EH: Yeah. I was just talkin' . . .

KK: Did the—it seems like you always were drivin' somethin'. You knew how to drive a tractor at a young age, you knew how to . . .

EH: Oh yeah. I could—just about anything. I mean, when I first went down to that job down in—I operated a Sideboom Cat for a little while. That's a—we're layin' pipe in the ditches. Well I

mean, that was cold, and I decided, you know, that I could get just as much drivin' them—one of them big trucks that—them batch trucks that we's driving was pretty good size. So I wanted to do that.

KK: Yeah.

EH: And so when I told 'em, I got it, you know.

KK: Yeah.

[03:09:19] EH: The only thing—they called me Wild Bill. Boy, you talk about burnin' the road up. I'd burn it up. [KK laughs] And as it—when I was in the camp over there—those CC camp. I was real respectable, and they thought I was a lot older and not my age. I—when I got married, I was twenty-three, and my in-laws thought I was around thirty-five. And they s—well, ever since then when I got up I guess past fifty years old, everybody's sayin'—now they tell me I'm—look like I'm in my sixties. But . . .

KK: [Laughs] It's a compliment.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

KK: So tell me about your wife. Well, how did you meet?

EH: Well, it was in the CC camp up there. It's where I met her. Her brother was in camp over there. Well, there wasn't many places—they had a place there at the edge of Mena. Well, it was

in Mena—Rob's Place. And that's where they had—it was just jukebox. We'd go up there and dance on Saturday nights. And so Gene—I mean, that's my wife's brother. Well, he's been dead quite a few years now. But Gene was over there, and he just said, "My two sisters come up there all the time." And so I knew him pretty well, and so he introduced me to 'em, and I started goin' with Betty Joe and—my wife. Then I corresponded with her all the time I was overseas. [03:10:50] And that's how come me and him to know—we got together after the war was over there in Tutzing, Germany—I was tellin' you about down on the Starnberger See?

KK: Yeah.

EH: I don't know where he was, but he was about four or five hours from me. But he came to see me and stayed over there about a week with me. Yeah. I had a boat and all out there on the Starnberger See and all.

KK: [*Laughs*] That you had borrowed.

EH: Just—yeah, I just borrowed it. [*Laughter*] Yeah. Yeah. Them Fräuleins helped me operate it.

[03:11:31] KK: And so you got to see him again while you were overseas, and this was . . .

EH: Oh yeah. Yeah, I got to see him. And not only that—one of his

first cousins. I met him. When this Oscar Taylor—the one guy that I said that was from Texas that I—that me and him was only two half-track drivers and commanders that I knew then—went through it. Him and I stayed pretty close. But he left. He got called somehow before I did or somethin' to come back—in the process—comin' home. So it didn't make much difference. They just come back there. They named those camps right on the coast there Camp Lucky Strike and Camp Camel and all of this here [*KK laughs*] after cigarettes, you know. And—but anyway, Oscar Taylor, this guy that was with me there—he got to knowin' Gene pretty well—Gene Titsworth—Titsworth—that—she was a Titsworth—my wife was. And they thought, "Well, that's a funny name." So he wouldn't forget that. Lo and behold, it was about—it was at least three days after he had left, see, bec—and then I left. So you don't know. I mean, I met him. We was—there was a group of us that—and I didn't even know them that I was with then—see, was lookin' for a shower tent. Someone said there's a place, and they usually put up a tent somewhere to take a shower.

KK: Yeah.

[03:13:11] EH: And so, lo and behold, I met—meet Oscar, the same one—guy, you know. And boy, we had to gab for another hour

there. And he said, "There ain't no telling how long you're gonna be down here, Hale." He said, "We're down here"—said, "I've been here three days now." And said, "We've got to catch a ship back somehow." And said, "When we'll get it, I don't know." And so—but he said, "Hey, bet you can't guess who I saw." And I said, "I have no idea." He said, "I saw Titsworth." And I said, "You mean Gene Titsworth? You saw him down here? Is he going home now, too?" I said, "I don't think he's been here long enough." He said, "No, it's not him." He said, "It's another one, but he knows you." [*KK laughs*] I said, "Is he real black headed?" He said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, where'd you see him." And he said, "Well, he told me," he said, "we got to talkin'," and said, "and I heard him call him Titsworth." Said, "I got to tellin' him about me meetin' Gene and then who you was with." And said, "They knew each other," and well, he knew me too—see, Les did. And he said, "Well, he knows you." Said, "I don't know which one it is." But said, "He told me," he said, "the second tent this side of where the shower tent is. He's a-playin' poker, and he's sittin' straddled of a bunk playin' poker." [*KK laughs*] Now I go in, and there's—we called him—he was real black headed at that time. He's dead now, too. But he had real pretty black hair. And they called him "Black Mocus." Where—

Billy Little—that named him. This same old boy that named most of 'em there. [*KK laughs*] And so I went in the door, and here he was sitting up there. "Black Mocus," I hollered. And, God, he knew somebody had to know him from—yeah, so.

[03:15:04] And—but there was one other guy then that I saw. I met him in England. That was when I was waitin' for 'em to get the vehicles over in England, and they put me in the military police. I think I told you that. Okay. Well, I'd been on guard duty, and I was a little late for breakfast that mornin'. And Edward Bailey was his name. And him and I were good friends. See, we run around together in camp up there. Edward was a couple years older than me. But I got acquainted with him. And when I first went in—the first time I saw him, I didn't like him. I had a hang-up. I didn't like to see a guy with whiskers on his face. And he had a moustache, and I wanted to knock it off.

[*Laughter*] And—but anyway, he got to be one of my best friends. And anyway, as I say, Billy Little named him even after he'd been in there six months—when we went in. We called him, instead of Ed—but he's "Bust Head" Bailey. So that's what we—he went by from then on—Bust Head. And I called him that all the time too, you know. And I've got a small head, and he'd—every now and then, he'd say, "Well, Hale," he said, "they

ought to name you 'Acorn Head.'" That's what he'd tell me. And that mornin', I was lookin' for a place to sit down, and he was with the Signal Corps that was attached to the corps. And he was eatin' in our mess hall—that whole group that he was with. And while I was lookin' for a place—heard someone, "Sit down there you Acorn-headed bastard!" [*Laughter*] And it was Edward Bailey. Then I—next time I saw him after that, we were in the place where I—that picture—showed when I was back there, and he was in the motor pool over there when I seen him.

KK: Well, that's great.

EH: Yeah.

KK: So were . . .

[03:17:10] EH: Then I did—then I saw him after the war was over.

He died not too long after we got back. He was diabetic, and somehow, he lost a leg and all. And I went down to see him in the hospital. And I've still got it. I told my son. I hang on to a lotta souvenirs. You oughta see a collection of pocketknives I've got. But anyway, I'd been a-lookin' for him. I'd been, well, workin' at Red River, and outta there, I knew material when you seen 'em. And I knew that that little old—it's a electrician's knife is what it is, but the one that they made there in the army, and it had TL-29 on it. And lo and behold, I said somethin' about

that to Edward. And he said—asked me and my wife—he knew her, see, before 'cause he lived in Mena and knew his wife real well. So we got acquainted with them. And he said, "I want you to go over to the house," and said, "I'll tell my wife to give you"—said, "I've got home with the—my pouch and my TL-29 knife and the pliers that goes with it"—said, "that I used all the time." Said, "I want you to" . . .

[03:18:34] KK: That he used in the war?

EH: Yeah, he used in the war. And, "I want you to have those, Earl." Said, "I got home with 'em, but"—said, "you collectin' stuff like that." And so I—and Betty, my wife, went over to his house, and she gave 'em to him. And so I've got them at home and told my son. So that's quite a story for my son—to know where they came from, see.

[03:18:55] KK: Right, right. And so you met your wife in Mena?

EH: Yeah, I li—yeah. Yeah, that's where—see, they lived there. See, Gene, too . . .

KK: Right. Right.

EH: . . . I mean, they owned a store. We'll get back to the whole thing then—how come me back at Mena. Well, we were going together and whatnot and then communicated all the time, and when I come home the first time, I went to see anyone—she was

workin'. And back then she was practically a nurse. See, you didn't have to be registered or anything, you know, to—she gave shots and all up there at Mena. It was the only hospital they had. They called it Redmond Hospital—just a big old house. So she was the head nurse up there. Betty Joe was. My wife. And so we talked about gettin' married. Well, couldn't get married. I's too poor to mar—get married. Couldn't make a living. And I said, "I'm gonna go to California." And said, "If I get a job out there"—boy, and I thought I was getting rich. Eighty-nine cents an hour. [*Laughter*] But I went to work there at first. I don't remember what it was, but it wasn't quite that much workin'. I didn't work but—not even a week for that guy there. And it's like you say, I could drive just about anything. I went to work for the—they wanted me to go to carpenter school on a GI right, and I didn't want to be a carpenter. But anyway, I said, "Nah, nah, I'm gonna find something else to do." [03:20:24] Well, the next day—the first day I worked for him—come to work, he said, "Come to work in the morning, Earl." And well, the next mornin', I was up there. And he said, "I hear you're a pretty good driver." And I said, "Well, I can drive most anything." So it was thirty-five miles to [*laughs*] Los Angeles. And he had a truck that had a danged old open cab on it and all that sat up

there—just the one seat. But you could dump the lumber off. Said, "You'll go up there, and they'll load the lumber, and you'll come back down here and them rollers and all." Well, so he sent me to Los Angeles for a load of lumber on that thing the first day. Next day, he had me out there. He got a lo—a boxcar load of cement. And he told me that it took—oh, he chewed me out good. That's the first time for—I'd been chewed out for workin' too hard. He said it took two guys almost three a days to do that before, and I unloaded that one car that day myself. [Laughter] He w—I wanted to know what else to do the next day. He said, "Well, you've got to get back on that car." I said, "Wait, what car?" I said, "I got that unloaded yesterday."

KK: You're a workin' fool, aren't you?

EH: Yeah. [KK laughs] Well, it's just like—right around Mena, Arkansas, you can ask 'em now—that's old enough to remember it. When Alan, my son, wasn't over four years old—that truck I's talking about?

KK: Mh-hmm.

EH: But I'll go ahead and tell you though then. We stayed out there—I went to work—federal government then. Eighty-nine cents an hour. And so I came back then in June and got married. Well, they were cuttin' back on the security. Well, the

whole thing was—they was cuttin' out, you know. But I hired in as a material sorter and classifier. In other words, you identify—you classified according to the condition. You sorted out accordin' to the likeness. Like flags or whatever it is. And then I had learned some of that in the service—knowin' what—well, I knew the parts and where they went and whatnot. So that was no problem. But I . . .

[03:22:35] KK: And what—and where was that that you were workin'?

EH: At Mira Loma Air Force Station in California . . .

KK: Okay.

EH: . . . it's just right outside of Riverside.

KK: Okay.

Eh: And . . .

KK: And you had your wife with you at that point?

EH: Yeah. Yeah. She was married, so she went to work at a little old grocery store down there. You couldn't find any place to buy or to rent. We had to—there was three families using the same kitchen. And—but it was just pretty poor, and then it took a lot—I mean, you couldn't find no place. And they charged you more rent, I thought, than they should have. But anyway, after—it wasn't very long—they was havin' problems—I know

when I first went out there. These guys were older people—that was on the security force. And then there too, they were saying that there's a lot of stealing going on. Which a lot of 'em was—the security people that was gettin' parts and stuff there from Mira Loma. It was a quartermaster depot. It finally changed to a air force station, but it was a quartermaster depot at first. [03:23:47] And then they finally got to receivin' bodies, you know, from World War II. One whole warehouse down there. But anyway, that's where security—but I was on security then, and I had to protect that ware . . .

KK: They were receivin' bodies? They were . . .

EH: Receivin' bodies back from overseas for, you know—corpse—back in caskets, and all . . .

KK: Wow.

EH: . . . the GIs that was being shipped back home. But . . .

KK: How long after the war was that? That was just right after the war, right?

EH: Yeah, yeah . . .

KK: Okay.

EH: . . . see, I went out there—see, I got out of the service in October of [19]45, see, and it was over—when? June or—when was it over in Japan? Just a month or so after Europe, anyway.

KK: Right.

EH: And see, it was May over there.

KK: Okay.

EH: May the eighth is when they declared—end of hostilities over there.

KK: And what time—when—and when did you get married? What was the . . .

EH: Oh, in June.

KK: June of . . .

EH: Well, no—of—aft—of—[19]46.

KK: Of [19]46. Okay.

EH: [Nineteen] forty-six. Yeah. But they . . .

KK: [*Clears throat*] And they were still gettin' bodies back at that point.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah. A lot of . . .

KK: Yeah.

[03:24:54] EH: . . . well, they just—this depot—when I first went to work, that warehouse there—we cleared that one out. See, that whole warehouse—it was about, oh, I guess, forty feet wide and about a thousand feet long—just a warehouse. And they had caskets that just—full in there.

KK: Man.

EH: And they processed them there, you know. The bodies comin' back and certain—just tag identification and whatnot. But any . . .

KK: That must have been kinda sad and weird . . .

EH: Oh yeah. Yes, well, it just—I . . .

KK: You just didn't think about it . . .

EH: I'd been used to the bodies and whatnot. That didn't bother me nothing. I thought nothing about it, you know. But they were—some of 'em—I mean that they'd been already diggin' 'em up, you know. They wanted the survivors back, I mean, if they knew 'em—where, you know.

KK: Sure.

[03:25:45] EH: To—they identified 'em. They's send 'em back home. There's—the parents—they wanted 'em. A lot of 'em didn't. They'd say, "Let 'em stay there." Well anyway, about two weeks before they had a layoff—they was layin' people off though. But they came around to all the World War II vets, and they was gonna have to stay but take a nickel a raise, or in two weeks, they's losin' their job. Because they was cuttin' back, you know. The war was over and all. And by that time, all these Italians—when I first went out there, there was a lot of Italian prisoners of war that were stationed out there. They had

'em guarded over there. But they were workin' out there with the civilians and—durin' the war, see. So about the day before that we was supposed to get our notice to go out, they came down there and said, "We need"—Stites and I—just two of us—was the only two veterans. We decided no, we wasn't going to stay it. We can beat that somewhere else. Do somethin'. And here it was, and I'd tell him, "Stites"—Stites, I knew, had two years of college. He was from Colorado. Eugene Stites. And then—he'd been over there and had it pretty rough, too. Gene had. And we were pretty close friends. And we decided, "No, we ain't going to take this. We can get—find a job around here somewhere without taking that nickel cut." So—but then the day before they came down there and wanted to know if we wanted to go on security force—said they'd looked over their application, and they'd noticed that Hale here said he was gonna go out, but he was in the military police. I'd put that on there, see. *[KK laughs]* And Gene, I think, had been a military policeman. And said, "You two guys oughta go on the security force." And said, "You get a nickel an hour raise." Well, that's why we took that job. *[Laughter]*

[03:27:53] KK: Good for you. Now, how do you spell his last name?

EH: Huh?

KK: This . . .

EH: Stites. *S-T-I-T-E-S*. Stites.

KK: Okay. Gotcha.

EH: Eugene Stites. Well, it wasn't too long that the chief security—I'd say, within a month after we was there, they decided that he was mixed up in—on some of that stealing and whatnot. And so . . .

KK: You think that was true?

EH: Huh?

KK: You think that was true?

EH: Yeah.

KK: Oh, okay.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, because they had proof on him, you know, and whatnot. And then some of the others'd tell that—how they'd sleep on duty and whatnot. Well, they needed—and we just went on the force, and we noticed there's—they wasn't fooling with me and Gene too much. And we just—what jobs we had. So the colonel said, "Just give an announcement and examination, and we'll hire a chief outta some of the newer veterans." There were some others there—World War II veterans home. And so we took a test, and I beat 'em out. [KK *laughs*] And I got the job as the chief security officer right off.

KK: Man.

EH: So I's also the range officer. We had to qualify every six months.

KK: Oh, okay. Right.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Shootin' targets to prove you could do it and . . .

EH: Yeah, yeah. Uh-huh. And so I've got . . .

[03:29:22] KK: Did you get a raise when you got to be chief?

EH: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, but it wasn't too great. I've—yeah, I finally got up—I was out there—let me see. From [19]46 bout—until [19]54. Eight or nine years out there. I was—we was in California. But anyway, I was chief a lot of the time. I's making, I don't know, around four or five thousand dollars a year when I—but I was a GS-10. And that's pretty good—up in the money in civil service. It was at that time. But anyway, to get back—me have—being a keepsake. Alan—I don't know whether I ever told him where I got that gun. I've got a collection of guns. But it's a—we carried 1917 Colt revolvers. That's what we had—the old rel—.45. Okay. When they issued the guns out—when I went on, that—I heard 'em talking about some guy from Texas—had killed a black man there. And the reason for it—they said they had a guard out there—you'd—

they'd have to park in a parkin' lot, and then they'd come through and punch a time card, you know. Go through before they'd go to work.

KK: Sure. Yeah.

[03:30:56] EH: Well, them blacks had a habit back then—one of 'em would get out of the car, and maybe three or four more would get—stay in the car, and they'd go on to work—a shortcut there and not have to walk out there and go out the pedestrian gate. Probably punch time cards for people that's not even there that day and whatnot and punch 'em out that afternoon. So they—the commander knew about that, and so he put a guard down there. And he said, "Do not let anybody when they come in here"—said, "don't let 'em stop until they get in a regular parking spot. Then come single file. That other gate is closed up there. They can't go out. They've gotta come out at this gate." [*Unclear words*] Well, this one jumped outta the car with a lunch pail, one black did they said. And he said, "I always did want to stomp the hell of a security guard in the first place." That old boy said this. Took that revolver—didn't even take it out of the revolve—I mean, out of the holster. Dropped him right there.

KK: Wow.

EH: They had his trial. See, back then you were segregated. They didn't do nothin' other than transfer him back to Texas. Because when they asked him—said, "You intend to kill him?" He said, "Hell yes, I intended to kill him."

KK: Yeah.

[03:32:11] EH: So—and I got that gun. They issued—that's what they told me. So after our first range officer deal—me bein' a range offer—I's—I got to thinkin', "Why carry these old, heavy .45s when I'd like to get a .38?" So they had some—they—the commander—when I—he's the only one that had the authority to tell me, you know, and so he said, "Yeah." He wanted to know how many guns we had. And he said, "What am I gonna do with these here?" And I said, "That's your problem." [KK laughs] I said, "We can turn 'em in where we draw these. Where you going to get those from?" And he said, "March Field." He said, "They don't want 'em over there." [Laughter] And I said, "Is there any possible way that you could get 'em cleared off the books and sell 'em to the guys?" I said, "They'd be glad to buy 'em." He said, "Oh yeah." Said, "We can write 'em off as"—I don't know what it was. That was his authority, see, to—because he was responsible for 'em.

KK: Right.

[03:33:16] EH: And so he sold every one of us our revolver if you wanted—seventeen dollars apiece. That .45. And I've still got mine.

KK: [*Laughs*] Oh, that's great.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, and so they did. They issued to us those .38 Smith & Wesson. The only difference between a Smith and a—did you know that? That a Colt goes to the right. A Smith—the cylinder goes to the left.

KK: I didn't know that.

EH: Yeah. Yeah.

KK: That's funny.

EH: Yeah, Smith & Wesson goes to the left—just your revolver—the cylinder rotates to the left. The way you check a—the safety on one—you know, where they're either single-action or double-action. I mean, if you just want to cock it and shoot. Or you can just pull the trigger. But you ain't gonna shoot very true just pulling that trigger every time, like that guy—just pull like that and pull the trigger, you know, to kill that black. But you cock it real slow. You take a revolver and cock it real slow. And when it's cocked, fully cocked, if you can take your fingers and rotate that cylinder as much as one qu—eighth of an inch. He said, "Do not fire it." Because it might not be lined up with

the cylinder and you shoot it, it blows up in your hand. But I fired one time, and I got Maggie's drawers—fast fired—five. There wasn't a one of 'em left in the barrel. Jammed. Didn't blow up. A .38—now that was with a .38. And I was the only one that ever had one thataway. I was the reason I got Maggie's drawers. It didn't even leave the barrel. [*Laughs*]

[03:35:03] KK: Now what does that mean—Maggie's drawers?

EH: You di—you missed the whole target.

KK: Ahh.

EH: You didn't get a bull's-eye or anything else. They called it Maggie's drawers. [*Laughter*] That's what they would s—when you was down on your belly takin' your practice at five hundred yards with a M1 rifle. If you missed the whole target, that's what their—they had some old drawers, they'd put on a flag there, and they'd wave that. And otherwise, they'd hold up a big number. What you hit—whether you'd hit a five, six, seven, eight—or ten is a bull's-eye, see.

[03:35:36] KK: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. That's funny. [*EH laughs*]

That's funny. So you moved out there. You got married. You got this job in security.

EH: Yeah.

KK: And . . .

EH: Okay.

KK: . . . did Betty Joe continue to work at the grocery store after you got to be security?

EH: Yeah. And . . .

KK: And did you guys get a house . . .

EH: Both of my kids—huh?

KK: Did you get a house?

EH: No, we finally. Yeah. Yeah, we finally did. But I bought a house trailer at first. And here it was—I had to go out there a lotta the nights and try to sleep in the daytime, and out there in California—no air-conditionin'—with a fan with a pan of water in front of you, you know. But both my kids were born in California. The girl first there in Ontario. And then where was it that—we'd moved to Bloomington, which was—that's where I bought my home over there. I bought a GI home. And boy, I thought I'd never get that thing paid for at the money I's a-making—forty-one dollars a month was what I—my payments on that house at that time.

KK: And it was a special GI type made for returning . . .

EH: Yeah, GI. Yeah, yeah, yeah. GI for—I mean . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . guaranteed, you know. But anyway, you know, that thing's

is worth the thousands—way up in the thousands of dollars now. The house is still livin' there 'cause we were out there two years ago and went by there. And they said, "No, that'd be way over a hundred thousand dollars—that house would be now." Still there. But it's—there's a pl—close to a Kaiser Steel, you know.

KK: Yep.

EH: Yeah.

KK: That's interesting.

EH: But anyway . . .

[03:37:15] KK: So how did you get back to Arkansas?

EH: Okay. How come it—I resigned out there. But here it was, I was a veteran, and I had career status, you see. So me comin' back there—the postman—I gotta pretty well acquainted with him. My father-in-law—this little old community, Nunley, out from Mena there. My father-in-law had a service station there. Well, and he had a garage down there, and Gene, the boy, was a mechanic, and he did some of the work down there. But Gene had bought him a truck. And he decided—well, and he made good money. He even hauled for Mayflower and all, you know. And made good money at that. But I decided—you know, they wanted to sell their place, see. Wasn't doing any good. And I had 'em put me in a grease rack and used another buildin' there

for a feed store and whatnot. And then that buildin' down there where my father-in-law had a gristmill—he'd make meal, in other words, for the community—grind their corn and all for 'em. Well, all of that—I bought all that. But I bought it for a song you sing it yourself, and the same way with property. [03:38:33] But anyway, the postman that was carryin' out there, he liked my father-in-law and them, and I got acquainted with him. And he said, with me workin' with the federal service out there, he said, "You can come back here," and said, "right off," he said, "I need a good substitute carrier." And I said, "Well, what does a substitute pay?" And he said, "Well, with your rating," he said, "you'll make as much as I do or probably more." Because they've got to pay you, when you go to a federal job, the nearest you's a-makin'. And so at that time, boy, I thought that was crappin' in high cotton and you on the top leaves.

[*Laughter*] But anyway, I thought, "Well, yeah. I'll just buy my father-in-law out and take that over and be a substitute and then get that job when he resigns." You know. And then I'd be . . .

[03:39:28] KK: So you had really two things goin'. You had the store stuff goin', and then you also . . .

EH: Store. Yeah. I was going to let—see, let no more business than

you had out there—my wife could run that, and I'd be through by noon every day, see. 'Cause I was a lot speedier than the guy that was carrying' it, you know. [*KK laughs*] Boy, I'd get that mail out—cased and get out of that post office, and shoot, it'd take me no time to put that mail. I'd be back home and then haul hay that afternoon. I'll have to tell you about my hay haulin' . . .

KK: So you had three things goin' at least . . .

EH: Oh, that or I'd go cut pulpwood and all. But anyway, on that job, I didn't know at the time, and it's still to this day—I'll give you some information that may be good, and some of these congressmen should know somethin' about it. It was—got political. A postmaster—either the only way one of 'em could be filled is by competitive exam or by the point—appointment of a transfer. See, you got some guy here at Mena, and he wants to come to Fort Smith. He could transfer if that congressman signs him in. Say, "Yeah, well, get him up there." And—or appointment of a veteran that's had career status, see. Subject—I was subject to reinstatement any time, see, and at a job, you know, that was less than mine, or if I qualified for the job. Now, which—the job I had was much more qualified than just carryin' the mail, you know.

KK: Sure.

[03:41:14] EH: And that's what I wanted—to substitute. Because I could do it, you know. In fact, I subbed for the other two routes some of the time. And I made pretty good money. At that time, boy, that was some money. I made twenty-seven dollars a day.

KK: Hmm. It's a lot more than sixty-five cents an hour, isn't it?

EH: Yeah. [*Laughter*] Well, even that four thousand dollars—I mean . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: . . . when you carryin' that mail like that, you know. And—that was money. And then me a-workin' then besides that—cuttin' pulpwood or haulin' hay. Whatever came along. So—but I went in debt then for a hundred and sixty acres of land out there. And you know what a hundred and sixty acres at that time cost me? Eighteen thousand dollars was all. And I had enough money to pay for it. But I wanted to borrow this and do a little more there and build me a home down there. Place I'd been doin' business with—oh boy, I's goin' to have to mortgage—put up that, my truck, everything I had, and all that. I go up to the other bank, and it just so happened that the president of the bank—when I'd been a-comin' back here on vacation, remember, I'd come back every year. I'd ta—spend one month

with my wife's folks—we'd spend up there at Mena. Or I'd—we'd come to Mulberry and see my folks down here. Anyway, when we'd—I—on that vacation and all, I told them that—I've lost my train of thought. [03:43:10] Goin' back to that buildin' then—I thought, "Well, I was not gonna do that." I had the money to pay for it. But I said, "I'm not gonna do all that. I'll just—I'll go up to that"—oh yeah, we played music, though, with a guy that had a nice farm—that was a World War I veteran over there. And ever time I'd come back on that vacation, Ruel Bain and I would go over there because he played the mandolin some. And at that time, I did play the mandolin and the guitar. But anyway, he passed away. So his wife—the first time I came back, we went over there and play—well no, she had got married by that time, and she married the banker up there he was with her. But she wanted to hear "I'll Sail My Ship Alone." I used to sing that and play. And so she wanted to know if I still played the mandolin some, and I said, "Yeah." But I still lived in—I'd been—how come me to get acquainted with her. This was—how come me to know her and then to have a good deal when I go to this bank. Well, she told me that one time, she wanted a—after her husband passed away, that she'd let me keep that mandolin. Well, I didn't want to take it back. Ruel didn't want me to take it

back. Ruel could play it—tha—by the time I come back for another vacation, he'd already traded that mandolin off. But anyway, this lady—she still remembered me and all comin' back every year and—although she'd married. And then we was on the back of a truck there in Mena playing one day, and so she come up, and that is how come me to know where Mrs. Wyman had went. She married this boy that was the president of the bank up there. When I go up there, I didn't have to give anything. [*KK laughs*] I went up to the Union Bank instead of the Planters Bank. They just said, whatever I wanted, they'd let me have it. Just on my own word, see.

[03:45:22] KK: Uh-huh, 'cause they knew you.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Or 'cause she knew you . . .

EH: Well, they did—should have with the other. I did bankin' there with 'em all the time, but they just—well, in fact, the guy that I bought the acreage from, he worked at the post office. He was a janitor, more or less. But he was an alcoholic. And they come out there to talk to him one day. And they—one reason it wasn't—they knew that I wanted to borrow the money. They was gonna give him more money. And he gave 'em [*laughs*] a cussin' and run 'em off. And that's how come they know about

that. And I got them two guys told about that. Oh, they denied it, and I said, "Well, go tell Joe that." Joe Vaught, he's the guy I bought it from. But anyway, I built a house and all and—there. And had that hundred and sixty acres. And then to make a long story short then, my wife and I had our will made out. I lost her in [19]89. But whichever one of us were to go first, it's—you might think it a funny deal, but if it had been me, well, like it was with her—whichever one died first, their half would go to the two kids, see. So when she passed away, everything I had—half of it belonged to the kids. So I—by that time, I'd already went to work, though I didn't get—I'll tell you about the crooked politics after this. [*KK laughs*] [03:46:54] I went to work at Red River. And how come me to go down there and get back with the federal service before I get to this—I paid for my place and all. And one night, Roy Riales—he used to be the Speaker of the House for the state of Arkansas when Faubus was down there. Roy Riales now. And Roy was a first cousin of my wife. And his mother and father lived just right down the store from me, and they were gettin' up in years. And I would haul their feed down there and feed for 'em. And he promised his mother—he said, "When Earl—when that route comes vacant, Earl's gonna get that route." See, there'd been a vacancy or two

in the post office. I didn't want it. And so when there was—when Roy Riales, though, got beat—I don't know who the guy was now, but Roy Riales was out of a job. He was Speaker of the House, and the guy that took his place—Roy had a place over in the mountains out close to Shady. [03:48:11] The guy was Bill Martin there. And I hope this doesn't ever get out on me now—tellin' this part about it. [KK laughs] And he said—he was one-eyed. And they called me over there. The first thing you know—I didn't know what it was all about one night. Wanted to know one-eye—one-eyed bastard was leaving the post office up there. I said, "What do you mean?" "When's Bill Martin leaving there?" I said, "I have no idea." "You haven't heard though the grapevine?" "No, no." "Well, here sets your next postmaster. He's takin' his place." Roy Riales—he pointed to Roy. And he said, "That's the reason we've called you over here now." Said, "His son"—see, his son worked in the post office. Said, "His son wants that route." And he said, "You're better qualified for it, and it's been promised to you." But said, "Do you mind," he said, "if we give that to him and you can have the next one that comes open?" And I—what are you gonna—about it?

KK: Yeah.

[03:49:15] EH: Said, "He's gonna resign." And Roy was there. He was gonna be the postmaster, and yeah, he'd be on my side, too, you know. I thought, "Well, he's a good friend of mine. He's my wife's first cousin. He's promised his mother that he's gonna do all—see that Earl got that route." Well, when that guy—he decided though—Bill did, when they gave him that route, he wasn't gonna resign then. And just—somehow through politics, they got him to pull an inspection, and it's because the stools was too many—they had in the post office or somethin' up there. And they was gonna gig him for that and whatnot. And he'd go out when he did retire with demerits on his record and whatnot. But he decided then he'd go out if they wouldn't push that on him, you know. So Roy—only way he could be the postmaster. He was not a veteran. But let me tell you this much. Toy Edwards, a good friend of mine, was on the bus with him. They were goin' to Little Rock for—induction center for the examination. The bus had a wreck. Turned over. He claimed disability. He was a diabetic—is why he was turned down. But he drew a pension. Roy did. But he wasn't—just didn't draw enough. It was a 10 point that he couldn't get the full benefits of a veteran and whatnot and no federal service. So he needed to—hadn't been in the service there. So he needed to take the

examination. He couldn't pass the examination. One exam is all you get. He couldn't pass . . .

TM: Can we stop? I'm sorry. We got to change tape.

KK: All right.

TM: We're out.

[Tape stopped]

[03:51:12] KK: Now we're ready.

EH: Anyway, Roy couldn't pass the examination. I told someone not too long ago, but he's a representative from Texas—veterans—representin' veterans. They passed a law—he introduced it, and it passed a law. The law is on the books right now that a person injured while traveling to or from an induction center be given a 5-point preference over veterans in postmaster's examinations.

KK: [*Laughs*] Oh, man.

EH: And it reads like that. So the one that I told you a while ago—the fiddle player, Ruel, and him and his wife that my—they divorced. Well, she married a guy that owned the cleaners. And he'd been shot down over there in Europe and lost a leg, and he was a 10 point. And he made the high score. But who got it? Roy. Well, when this job come open then with the guy that—for route one—Roy kept tellin' me, "Earl, take that examination." And said, "I wanna see." Said, "You know"—said, "that was the

reason that I lost my—didn't get—got beat out of being a senator is because I didn't support the veterans enough." And he said, "I've got to take care of these other veterans." And said, "I want you to be the high one." Said, "You're already qualified." And I said, "Roy, I'm qualified." I said, "I will not take a damned examination to show you up or anybody else." [KK *laughs*] I said, "You and Doc Woods," and I said, "politics." I said, "Hell, I can go to Red River and go to work tomorrow." So that's what I done.

[03:53:15] KK: And where is Red River?

EH: Down at Texarkana, near Hooks . . .

KK: Okay, and what is Red River? For those people that don't know.

EH: It—it's big army depot. It's goin' on right now. They're the ones that's doin' more support for those armored vehicles that's goin' overseas than any of 'em right now.

KK: What did you do down there?

EH: I was a inspector.

KK: What kind of—what kind . . .

EH: Quality control. Inspect all types of material that was bein' shipped out for overseas and then when they get through with it. I first hired in though as—they hired me—they had 8s and 11s—grade 8 and a grade 11. And they hired me in as 11 because I

qualified more than that. They had some 12, but they didn't have any inspectors open. And I qualified for that. So as soon as one of those came open, I got that. And then the next thing you know, I's a supervisor again. I went on up—so I retired at S-11. S . . .

[03:54:12] KK: So you and Betty Joe and the kids moved down to Texarkana, right . . .

EH: Oh yeah. We moved—Texarkana. But I lived at Mena for four years to keep from payin' out-of-state tuition while Alan was goin' to college up here. I commuted 107 miles daily.

KK: Wow.

EH: I went through some pretty rough times. [*Laughter*]

[03:54:33] KK: You made it work out though, didn't you?

EH: Yeah, I made it work.

KK: Good for you . . .

EH: But then I, as I said, went back. When Betty passed away, well, I gave the kids—I was fair about it. I went back—every penny I had in the bank, they got half of that. I had some bonds that were not mature that you bought for thirty-seven fifty that goes for seventy-five dollars. They hadn't even matured. Whatever bond I had, I gave 'em—just like seventy-five dollars. I counted it—maturity date on it and just gave it to 'em thataway. And I

had a hundred and—I mean, had the hundred and sixty acres up here at Mena. And then down there where I lived, I'd bought sixty acres, a farm across the road from me, and then eight acres where I lived—just right across the road. And I had about fifty head of cattle and a chicken house.

[03:55:31] KK: And where—what town was that in?

EH: Malta, see. But I . . .

KK: Malta?

EH: Malta. It was a DeKalb address though . . .

KK: Oh, okay.

EH: See, I'm still in a DeKalb address.

KK: I gotcha.

EH: But it was a community called Malta. It's just like Mena, see—is out there at Nunley.

KK: Right. Gotcha . . .

EH: See, it's Mena.

[03:55:53] KK: And you lived in—you lived out—you lived in DeKalb when you were workin' at Red River?

EH: Yeah, yeah. Well, I—yeah.

KK: After you . . .

EH: Yeah.

KK: . . . after Alan finished college . . .

EH: Yeah, I lived—yeah, Alan—yeah, after he got out of college and all. But I was living down there. The first time when we moved down there, I moved to Texarkana, and we stayed down there. And I bought a new place over there, and—shoot, let me see. And at that time—wait a—he—well, he was still goin' to school. Just—yeah, that was before he went to college. Yeah. That was—I went to work down there in [19]66. So I had, in other words, twenty-three years, when I went down there, of federal service. Two years, eight months, and eleven days in the army. Then about, well, eleven years up there as a substitute mail carrier. And then—so that went to twenty-three years I had service . . .

KK: Right.

EH: . . . when I went down there. So I retired with forty-eight years of federal service. [*Drums on chair*]

[03:56:59] KK: Good for you. So you said you ended up at a grade 11 or . . .

EH: Grade 11. Well, most people had rather have a GS grade. And I don't know why. If you're drawin', say, a GS grade out at Red River and you go to Washington, DC, where the wages are three times as high, you still get just a smaller . . .

KK: Yeah, you don't get any more pay . . .

EH: You don't get any more.

KK: Yeah.

EH: But if you're a inspector or electrician, you go to that area—you're paid according to the—when you're a grade employee like the S. I was—S meant the supervisor—11. I was a grade 11. But if you're a mechanic or anything like that—if you're a grade 10 mechanic, that'd be a level a lot higher than a grade 5 that you hire in as. So you're paid according to the salary that's paid that person in the communities. That's the way they base their salary . . .

KK: Gotcha.

EH: . . . see. A GS grade—it doesn't make any difference whether you're in Washington, DC, or Timbuktu. You get the same wages.

[03:58:20] KK: So now Alan went to the University of Arkansas. Is that right . . .

EH: Yeah. He come up here. He fini . . .

[03:58:25] KK: And when he came out—now he was also in the military, right?

EH: Yeah, he—if I'm not mistaken on this, when Alan went to work—I mean, came to college, he joined the navy. He wanted to be a pilot, and I didn't know that at the time. But anyway, he joined

the navy. And he was—when he graduated, that was when he starts to—in the navy, and they commissioned him—as you go in. But the marines got a hold of him, and they told him that if he could pass their stiff examination, mentally and physically, that they'd give him a hundred dollars a month and then give him flight instructions. So he had his own—he was a pilot when he left college up here. The day he graduated—my wife had never been in a plane—swore she'd never get in one. [KK *laughs*] The day that he graduated and my wife come to get him [*laughs*], he had a plane rented. She said, "I'm not goin' up with you. I'm not goin' up with you." "You got to." Said, "Your dad's the one's paying for this." [*Laughter*] Said, "I've already got the plane rented." She decided to go up, and he still laugh—tell about it now. He said, "Mother, what do you think about this?" And said, "She was ahold up there, and said that he j—her hands was just as white." And she said, "I'll be glad when we get out." That was her first and only trip, and it—come to find out, that was the first passenger Alan had ever had. He'd never flown with anyone. He'd done solos and all and flown alone, but never have a passenger with him until then.

[04:00:05] KK: [*Laughs*] So did he—so he became a marine pilot?

EH: Yeah. He went out on then and went to Kingsville and took his

training down at Kingsville. And—but he was commissioned, you know, as soon as he went. And he was promoted on up through, and he was lieutenant colonel when he was forty-two, so he retired. He had over twenty years.

KK: Wow.

EH: I think—I know he communicates practically daily with him—General McCorkle. And see, General McCorkle couldn't understand that—he wasn't but fifty-one years old when I was out there at—and I could outrun him, you know. And then them big marines—and they made them marines—he did—I forget where Alan was, and me and my lady friend went out there and babysitted. I was runnin', and General McCorkle, I guess, is the one that made them guys—they'd be doin' their exercises, and I'd go by [*claps*] down there [*KK laughs*], and he'd make 'em get up and salute me. They knew it. They—when they'd come. You know, they—they'd a thought I was some officer—bigwig officer, I think. [*Laughter*]

KK: So you're quite a runner, I understand. Or was for many, many years . . .

EH: Well, I was. But I'm not—yeah. Yeah, I can go . . .

KK: When did you start running for fun, like marathons and stuff . . .

EH: I wasn't—I was fifty-five before I ever started running. But I

was always—I was going to tell you about that hay haulin'. These people—they get crews haulin' hay and have them things to haul hay. I could take my little boy, Alan—he couldn't even—all he could do—I geared it—you know, I—he could put it in gear, and he could let out on the clutch. Get down on the floor and do that—he couldn't set in the seat or anything—put anything on him. And if I'd holler, "Whoa," he didn't hit the brake. He just jumped down and throw it out of gear. And it'd stop, you know, because you didn't wanna slam it.

[04:01:59] KK: How old was he when he was doing that?

EH: He started doing it when he was four years old.

KK: Wow.

EH: He'd get down in there. And he'll tell you, and I laugh about him now—we's on the airport there at Mena one time. And he was gettin' over pretty close to some of them bales. And I ca—I was the one—I handled every bale. I'd stack it. And them boys that throwed it to me—we'd go down through there—I hauled after three balers. There'd be guys a-goin'—if they hauled five or six hundred bales a day, they'd done somethin'. But I've hauled hay—seven days in a row that I'd haul over three thousand bales a day.

KK: Wow.

EH: And I handled every bale. You didn't go throw it off on the ground like you do today—your hay. You had to stack it in a barn. And I'd throw it in the loft to the guys and then two other guys—see, I had a guy on each side that would throw it up to me, and I'd stack it on the truck. And I'd tell 'em—I'd say, "Boys, within ten minutes we better have this truck loaded. Hundred and twenty bales." [*Claps*] We'd go to the barn with that truck and unload it—back. And I could stand no—at that time, and throw a bale of hay all day long plumb over that truck. [*KK laughs*] I was . . .

[04:03:21] KK: And so you started runnin' when you were fifty-five?

EH: Yeah.

KK: And you . . .

EH: They had a—they gave one down there at—I worked at Mira Loma, and I was supervisor, and they got the—that was the first one they had—they was having a 5K out there. And they said—they was all after me, and I had one boy that was thirty-two years old. But he was on the heavy side, and he told me he was a runner. And he—"Why, you oughta run. You oughta run. You're in good shape, Mr. Hale." And I said, "Yeah, I know." I said, "I think I could outrun any employee I've got right—today. Unless it was quittin' time and the whistle blows, and I couldn't

beat 'em to the parkin' lot." [*Laughter*] That's what I'd tell 'em.

But anyway . . .

KK: Hey, come on in.

JE: [*Unclear words*].

[04:04:06] KK: We just went way ahead and kept talkin' till you got here.

EH: Yeah, they eatin' down there yet?

Walt Eilers: I have no idea. We just got into town. [*TM laughs*]

EH: Oh, well—just got back? Well . . .

KK: He's—you've done a great job.

JE: My CF card is out too, so . . .

KK: Okay.

EH: Yeah. You better cut that all on—I'll finish this tale.

KK: All right.

EH: Now, what was it I was on—when they . . .

TM: We were talking about the hay balin' and the . . .

EH: Okay.

JE: Running.

KK: Well, then we . . .

EH: Hay baling.

KK: . . . then we went to the fact that . . .

JE: Beating 'em—everything but the parking lot.

[04:04:34] KK: Yeah—you were talkin' about how you could outrun everybody.

EH: Oh yeah. About the runnin', and he can vouch for this—what was I, about fifty-five when I started runnin'? Somethin' like that.

WE: Yeah.

EH: Yeah, I was fifty-five—at least that. And then after I ru—I went that day, but I didn't run that day. They kindly kept begging me enough, and then I was kiddin' 'em about—and so, some of them women, I decided I'd walk with 'em. But they couldn't commence to stay up with me. [*KK laughs*] And so this boy that was thirty-two years old—well, we was already past the half mark. It was one that you'd go out and come back. And I thought to myself, "Well, I can do what he's a-doin'." And so I just took off after him and stayed behind him. [*Laughter*] And when I got up there, I went around him. Before we got to—and I came out number three in my age group, and I'd never—and I had no idea.

KK: Right.

[04:05:26] WE: When he finally got a pair of running shoes that worked, he did well . . .

EH: Yeah. Oh yeah. [*KK laughs*] So him—see, he runs all the time.

He'll run—what around—you—hey, how many marathons or
how . . .

WE: Just finished thirty-two.

EH: See, marathons that he's run.

KK: Right.

EH: But he'll tell you right now that I could outrun him, you know.

[*KK laughs*] [*Unclear words*] down there. But anyway, him and
Alan—they came to see me when I had that—bought that place
down there at Malta. And they were running every day, and
they'd go around a circle. But after that race—and I thought,
"Well, shoot, if I can do that good, I might as well"—said, "I
could beat those other guys."

KK: Sure.

EH: You know. [*Two dogs run into the room*] Thought I could. So I
just had on an old pair of tennis shoes—Walmart. [*KK laughs*]
And I'd get up and down that road there [*reaches down to pet
dogs*]—"Hello there, guys!" Anyway, I decided . . .

WE: [*Snaps fingers*] Kris.

EH: . . . they ran one day, and they—and Walt there—as he'll tell
you, he said he's not so speedy, but he's got a lot of stamina . . .

KK: Yeah.

EH: He stays in there. So I'm the same way. But I never take a

drink of water, like I told you, on a trip. But they's a-runnin', and that first trip—and he's gone, but it was about eight miles. And they—no, it may have been—it couldn't have been that far because Walt ran it in an hour. But anyway, I said, "Well, I can do that myself." And Alan sa—and it took 'em an hour. And I said—he said, "No way, Dad." Alan did—my son. He—now he is speedy. [*Laughter*] So I said, "Well, what do you want to bet?" And he said, "Well, just make it light on yourself." And he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." He said, "I'll get you a good pair of running shoes if you could do it—against a one dollar bill that you can't run that circle in an hour." [*KK laughs*] And I said, "That's a deal." So he said, "Don't you run in this hot weather though." He didn't—I said, "That hot weather don't bother me. If you'd hauled as much hay as I have, it won't bother you." So the next day—and I ran it. And I ran it in fifty-nine minutes.

[04:07:38] KK: And how old were you when you run that?

EH: I was fifty-five.

KK: Fifty-five.

EH: Yeah.

KK: Well, I guess we'll stop there.

EH: Yeah.

[04:07:46 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]