RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM F. CARVER, SR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with William F. Carver, Sr., on April 7, 2008, in Wall, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Kristy Behr: Kristy Behr.

SI: Also in attendance is …

Mary Anne (Peterson?): Mary Anne (Peterson?).

SI: We will probably be joined by more members of your family later on, but, to begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

William F. Carver, Sr.: I was born in Port Richmond, Staten Island, … [on] March 13, 1916.

SI: Can you tell us what your parents' names were?

WC: My father's name was Pleam C. Carver and my mother's name was Dorothy Carver, but Pop has it a little different, I think; just a minute here. … No, that's the children. … [Editor's Note: Mr. Carver looks through his notes.] Now, do you want … where they were born or anything?

SI: Sure.

WC: Well, let's see here. My father was born in New Jersey, but my mother was born in San Francisco, California, St. Joseph's Church. … She had went to St. Joseph's Church, San Francisco, California. I believe that's where they were married, and this is Mildred and them; I'm getting ahead of myself here. …

SI: Is it on this?

WC: … Yes, it's all on there, too.

MP: And Grandma was in the San Francisco earthquake [of 1906].

SI: Really, wow.

WC: Yes, yes, she [was].

SI: Did she ever tell you any stories about that?

WC: Oh, yes. … In fact, … where she lived, the whole block, every house went down but one house, and that was (Patty's?) and he was the town drunk. He'd set it on fire about once a week. … Today, that house is still there. [laughter] … At the time of the earthquake, they went up in the hills and, later on, my grandfather, he was a hat-tip gold-leaf printer. He was a printer. In fact, … I worked for the [*Asbury Park*] *Press*, so, I'm a printer and my; now, wait a minute.

MP: His son, Michael.

WC: My son, Michael, he has a print shop up in Vermont. He's got a big shop. In fact, his building that he's got his print business in was once a bowling alley. … Well, he has a very big shop. …

SI: There is a long tradition of printing in your family.

WC: Yes. He's the third generation of printers, we say. … My grandfather was born in Ireland. He came over as a boy. Now, going back now, I grew up here on Allaire Road. We had twelve acres to run around in and I went to school there. In fact, it was a one-room schoolhouse. I was the graduating class in the eighth grade. [laughter] That was Bailey's Corner School, you know where [that is]? Are you familiar with this area at all?

SI: A little bit, yes.

WC: You know where the complex is, Wall Complex?

SI: I believe so, yes.

WC: … Well, anyway, across the street there, there's a building there, it's a house now, but that was the schoolhouse, one teacher, eight grades, and I was the … only one in the eighth grade when I retired [graduated]. … Then, I went to Manasquan High School for two years and, after that, I went to St. Rose for two years.

SI: I have interviewed a few other people who were in one-room schoolhouses.

WC: Yes.

SI: They have spoken about how you learned a lot more because you would know what was happening a few grades ahead of you, since you were all in the same room.

WC: Yes. Well, you go to the seventh and the eighth was a review of the seventh, at the end. I mean, that's [the way it was]. In fact, that schoolhouse, they had a big pot-bellied stove, like this. When it got real, real cool out there, [if] it was a little … cool in the school, why, we'd just get around the stove, instead of sitting down all the time. [laughter] …

SI: How many students were in the school total?

WC: Well, you had the one teacher for all of them; I would say, maybe, twenty. It wasn't too many. Well, one boy, he started when he was four years old. He graduated grammar school at fifteen, but he was always upset, because he went to high school [when] he was fifteen years old, goes through high school. [By the] time he gets out of high school, he didn't get into all the things. He was too young. [laughter] He'd missed a lot that way. …

SI: Let us go back a generation; can you tell us a little bit about your father and where he was from and what he did for a living?

WC: My father was a painter and carpenter, but he also followed the water, as my grandfather did. One time, he was a first mate on a boat and, in fact, when I was first born, I lived on a houseboat until I was three years old. In fact, on the houseboat, I was running around the side and I went right off the bow and Pop had to jump in and pull me off the anchor cable, and my mother said, "We're going to Jersey." This was up at … Port Richmond, Staten Island, New York. … She didn't want no more of that. [laughter] …

SI: Did he just like living on the water or did he work on the houseboats?

WC: No. Well, he was working in the shipyards at that time, but he was a carpenter and painter. I mean, that's what he followed up over the years. That's one reason why, when I was old enough to go to work, I decided I wanted to go to a job that I worked [and] I'd go all week and I'd go every day, and I went to work for the *Asbury Park Press*. I worked there for thirty-eight years. … I used to like to do the color ads. Of course, today, it's all done by computers, but, then, you had to make a page for each thing, in the black, the white and the different colors, and put them together and zero them in. … [When] they come out [and] you've done a good job, you feel like you [have] done something. … Growing up in the Allaire Road [home], we had twelve acres here to run around in, grew a little stuff in the garden and had to chop wood. That was one of my deals, to chop the wood, for the furnace and the cooking and everything else. …

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about the house on the twelve acres, what it was like?

WC: Well, my father, when we first moved there, we had a little yellow house we moved into and he had to add on for the family, and then, up on the hill, he built a new home for us. Now, he had one man come in, (Sid Jersey?), to help him frame the house, but, from then on, he built that house, upstairs and down. It was a two-story house. It had a big living room, big dining room, kitchen. Let's see, it was three bedrooms upstairs and … it was on a hill. In the hill, underneath, he had garage doors. He could drive his car in the cellar, but he would work there, by lantern, at night. He [was] working day and night, all his life. He was a hard worker, of course, [as were] painting [men] and carpenters then. I mean, today, you work steady, but, in those days, most times, it wasn't steady. … That's why you had to have your wood and grow a garden, whatever you could to help keep things going.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit more about the chores that you would have to do around the home and the farm?

WC: Well, we had to work and help plant. … In fact, one time, we had a lot of potatoes planted and it was getting cold and the man across the street come over with his horse and he furrowed them out, and we had to keep picking up them potatoes. I got frostbite before the night was over. [laughter] You know that it takes about seven years to get rid of it? Your feet would itch each year. But, we all had our chores. We had chickens up there, we had a cow at one time, we had a couple pigs, and everybody had to pitch in. … My brother and I, … Edgar was the oldest, I was the second one, and then, Joe; let's see, it was Dorothy, was it, next? and Joe.

MP: No, it was probably Albert or Pleamy.

WC: Oh, yes, wait a minute, was it? Pleamy, then, Albert, then, Joe. Pleamy and Albert, they were killed young. In fact, Pleamy and Al, … we were living in Neptune City then and I was going to St. Rose Church, School, rather, and Pleamy and I were coming home from school and we had to get a bus to go down to Bradley Beach and go on into Neptune City. … Anyway, we started to cross the road and I saw the car and I jumped back; Pleamy didn't. He kept going and he got killed right there on Main Street in Belmar. … Well, he was in the third grade, I think. No, I was in the third grade; Pleamy was first grade, evidently, but, then, we moved back [into the] country and on the farm, like you said, … quite a ways away from there. Then, we had another little brother, Albert, he was, Albert was very young and you had to cross the highway to get your newspaper out of the paper box. … He slipped out the back door and Mom didn't see him and he followed my sister to get the paper and he got killed, drug a hundred feet down the street, broke his neck. … It was very hard on my mother. My mother, finally, … had a breakdown at that time, and naturally, I mean, losing two children like that, and then, she recuperated and come back. Now, let's see, the chores on the farm; well, I had to cut wood, I know that, and we also had to plant and dig, and we had chickens. … Well, at first, we didn't have a well. We had to carry it from across the street. Then, my father, finally, when he built the new house, he built a big well, but I had these big, five-gallon paint pails. I had to carry all the water for the chickens, plus the house, plus the laundry, plus the bath. I would always carry at least two pails of water for the house, but, like I say, everybody had their own chores to do.

SI: It must have been hard in the winter.

WC: Oh, it was hard in the winter, especially … before you had indoor plumbing. When you had to run out there, it was hard in the winter. You have a little, square building, you know, you run out there, with two or three seats, and the wind blowing; it was cold. [laughter]

SI: You were about three or four when you moved from Port Richmond down to this area.

WC: Yes. I was about three years old when [we moved]. Well, we moved to Bradley Park first. … Then, we went into Neptune City. Then, we moved from Neptune City up here to Wall Township there, to on Allaire Road, but, let's see, when we moved, … I'm just trying to think. … I went to St. Rose Grammar School; well, we still went to St. Rose Grammar School after we moved. We went, … for awhile, in public school, and then, we went back to the grammar school in St. Rose. They sent a vehicle out for us. [Editor's Note: A door opens and more members of Mr. Carver's family enter.]

SI: Let us take a break.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were just looking at some papers.

WC: Now, my father was born in Bay Head, [New Jersey], and he lived up and down, a good many places, in Jersey. He also lived in Staten Island, because he worked in the shipyards up there. That's why we were up there. …

SI: When you came back to this area, was it because of your father's job or did he want to live closer to his family?

WC: No. Well, like I told you about me going off the boat there, when I was three years old, that's when we come to Jersey.

SI: Okay, that was the reason.

WC: We never went back to New York. My mom said, "We [will] go to Jersey." She didn't want no more of that, but, then, there was my older brother, myself, and then, … the others come along. About every two years, we added another one. In fact, … there's one thing I recall; growing up, my older brother and I, we got [concerned]. You know, my mother, about every two years, she'd have a child. … Pleamy got killed and Albert got killed, and Mom was pregnant again and my brother and I kept looking and we said, "Now, who's going to be the next one?" [laughter] That's what kids get in their head when they're young.

MP: Because, every time one of the children died, she was pregnant.

WC: Yes.

SI: Okay.

William Carver, Jr.: The replacement theory.

WC: … Yes. … Well, we figured God didn't want her having any more children. That's what got in our head, but that wasn't the true point, because she had several after that. [laughter]

SI: You were in this area during the era of Prohibition. Do you remember anything about that, how Prohibition affected this area, if there was anything going on? [Editor's Note: From 1920 to 1933, the sale, manufacture and transportation of alcohol was made illegal by the Eighteenth Amendment, which was later repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment.]

WC: Oh, yes. The people made their own. My father had a German recipe, how to make beer. Fifty-five-gallon casks, he made it in, and he also made his [own] wine. He made elderberry and dandelion and peach, and Mom made syrup from it. In fact, (Hollsfard?) Orchard, I don't know if [you know of it], the big peach orchard over here, you know, drops would go down [ripe fruit that had dropped from the tree] and some kid'd spot it. He'd go over and pick them up by the bushel. We'd make jelly and jam and, you know, we had to clean them up and made lovely wine [and] stuff. In fact, I'll tell you one; a Butler [Grocery] store in Bradley Beach, Pop was going to him and he wanted to make some wine. So, Pop told him how to do it. … He had a big vat and Pop went back and he said, "How's your wine coming?" He said, "I had to throw it out." He

[Pop] said, "Why?" He said, "Oh, the things were all flying around." Pop says, "That's what was making the wine ferment." [laughter] He threw it out.

SI: Yes, all the bugs and insects.

WC: Yes, yes, … but he didn't know the difference. …

MP: Prohibition.

WC: Oh, Prohibition; yes, there was quite a bit of Prohibition around here. In fact, Ocean Grove, that's the "holy city," and this one butcher, he'd go, "Well, there's another beer one down there." [laughter] They had their beer, too, in Ocean Grove.

SI: Even though it was a dry town.

WC: … Oh, yes, that was the Methodist Camp Meeting Association, more or less, … but everybody had their wine or they made their own beer and stuff like that. … They got away with it. [laughter] They did. [Editor's Note: Ocean Grove, New Jersey, was founded as a religious community by the Methodist Camp Meeting Association in 1869 and still retains many of its original characteristics, including bans on the sale of alcohol and tobacco, and hosting a camp meeting each summer.]

SI: Were they supposed to hide that or was it just that the law was not enforced around here?

WC: More or less. I know, … one time, Pop had; I guess you did have to hide it some, because, … in the cellar, he dug [a hiding place], under the side porch, and they had a doorway in there and he had his barrels and all in there. … He had a portable, I guess, … pool table, but it was a flat one, like this. … It wasn't, you know, a heavy pool table. It was just a board, like.

SI: Like plywood?

WC: He'd put that against the door. So, [if] anybody come in, … "No wine around here." [laughter] That was one way they [would] do it, but they all had their beer and their wine around, and Prohibition, it was pretty heavy around here. … Well, like, who was it? The Eggimans, they had a bar down there, you know. They closed them down. Then, they went across the street and opened another one. …

SI: Was it like a speakeasy? [Editor's Note: During Prohibition, speakeasies were illegal bars.]

WC: Yes.

SI: Or a secret bar?

WC: Yes. Well, the one was in under his house, the other one was in the other brother's house. … All around, they had Prohibition. Of course, I was too young for that. [laughter] That was …

long before my time. Although; no, … it was okay when I was working. You could go to bars now, when you were twenty-one.

SI: They repealed the law when you were a teenager.

WC: Yes, yes.

SI: Your family was Roman Catholic.

WC: Yes. My mother was a Catholic and my father was a convert, but, oh, yes, Mom was very, very religious.

SI: Could you tell us what role the Church, or religion in general, played in your life growing up?

WC: Oh, I was very faithful. … One time, I thought I wanted to be a priest, but I didn't. I had thought of it, but I didn't go that far. … No, we were all brought up Catholics and my mother was very strict and my father, he was a convert. He didn't always go to church, because he was always working on the house. So, Mom excused him, "He's working too hard." So, my sister, when she was older and she got married, … she wanted Pop to give her away and she wanted him, … you know, to go to church. … We said, "Well, why didn't you ever go to church before?" He said, "Nobody asked me." [laughter] Mom was always excusing him, because he was working too hard. So, he went to church, too.

SI: Which church did you go to?

WC: That was, let's see, at that time, we lived in Bradley Beach, [would] be, oh, boy, a Bradley Beach church.

MP: Was it St. Elizabeth?

WC: No, St. Elizabeth's [is in] Avon. … I forgot the name. I was an altar boy and all in there, too, or started to be an altar boy. That was something, too. My brother and I were both studying to be an altar boy and we were going all the time. Well, I'll give you one good thing. Going down, … we had one bicycle and he was pedaling along. I was on the handlebars. I said, "Edgar, you're going too fast." "Nah." First thing you know, my foot hit into the front wheel and we went flying through the air, [laughter] but, like I say now, we both become altar boys. … He was older and I always depended a lot on him and I was satisfied. … So, what did they do? They sent out two priests, put me on the main altar, my brother on the side altar. I got so shook up, finally, I had to move the book. I forgot my Latin. To this day, I don't know a bit of Latin, shook it right out of me. I knew it then, but it shook it right out of me. I was on the timid side.

WCJ: A little bit of stage fright, huh, Dad?

WC: Stage fright, I was petrified. [laughter] Yes, it was stage fright.

MP: You also went to … St. Margaret's, right?

WC: Oh, yes. When we lived in … Wall, we went to St. Margaret's Church. In fact, let's see, St. Margaret's, we went to St. Catharine's first, and then, they built St. Margaret's. Then, we started going to St. Margaret's. They have two of them in Spring Lake now, you know, St. Catharine's and St. Margaret's. Now, in St. Margaret's Church, they started a school in the basement. They kept adding a grade each year until they got eight grades, and then, they built a new school, and, now, it's St. Catharine's, the school there, but we were very faithful. … My father, he's always working, he'd take us down to church and we'd come out after church [and say] "Where's Pop?" Boy, we started walking, and, you know, it was quite a walk from Spring Lake up to where we lived, about half a mile, a mile, well, about a mile, I guess. … We would get almost home [by] the time he [would] come. … [Pop said], "Are you here already?" He'd be working, forgot about us, but Mom always … made sure we went to church. That's for sure.

SI: Did you walk to most places or did your family have a car?

WC: My father had a car, but we did a lot of walking, and I had a bicycle, as I got older. In fact, the first bicycle I got, I went to the dumps and got a couple of bicycles and made one.

SI: You made a bicycle out of other bicycles.

WC: Took the parts from one to the other and built one, until I got working, where I could buy one [of] my own, a new one.

SI: You spoke earlier about how you worked a lot on the family farm, but did you work outside of the family home?

WC: It wasn't a big farm. We mostly had vegetables for ourselves. We had twelve acres, but we didn't farm it, because he was a painter and carpenter, but we had chickens. We had a chicken pen and we had a lot of chickens. … At one time, we had a couple pigs; oh, that was a funny thing. My father, I'll tell you the kind of farmer he was. We had two pigs and they were growing up. The first thing you know, one of them pigs had babies. Pop said, "I thought they were brother and sister." That's the kind of farmer he was, yes. [laughter]

SI: Did you work anywhere as a teenager, any after-school jobs or in the summers?

WC: Oh, yes. … When we lived in Neptune City, I used to go to the store for some woman, and then, after, when we moved back [to the] country, I used to work for a woman by the name of Mrs. Hamilton. I used to go over there and I would vacuum the floors and it just didn't stand up to vacuum. She had one of those [models] on the runners, you know, crawling along, pulling it behind me, and I did the dusting and I did all kinds of work, whatever had to be done around there, and worked in their flower beds, gardens and stuff. … One time, I had a pail of water and I was doing the ceiling or something. It went down on the floor. Well, the father, her husband, was there, "Boy," he said, "Bill, I'm glad it was you, boy." He said, "I'd never [have] heard the end of that." … She had him intimidated. [laughter] … Well, when I was fifteen, I first started working here and there, wherever I could. Then, when I went to school, I'd go [to work]. In

fact, the nuns would come over; … they [the Hamiltons] lived in Jersey City and they were here in the summertime. … They'd come down and the nuns [would] come over [and say], "Oh, Mrs. Hamilton wants you after school tonight." They'd come over and tell me, and I'd go on over. Instead of going home, I'd walk over to their place and walk on home later. So, I learned how to work very young and I always, always, had something to do. … Well, I managed a grocery store in Spring Lake. Bennett and Height had a grocery department. I managed their grocery store for them, but, before that, I worked at the A&Ps. I got practice in there, and then, … Bennett and Height I went over there.

SI: Was that when you were in high school?

WC: No, that was afterward. Let's see, when I was in high school, I was still working for Mrs. Hamilton, but, in the summertime; … when did I start working the A&P? I'm trying to think. I worked two different A&Ps in Spring Lake. … I was about fifteen, I guess, when I started working in the A&P, because, when I was nineteen, I was driving a car for a butcher, delivering his goods to the stores. … Spring Lake, I mean, it was quite classy. I mean, it's like Sea Girt. People, some would come to the store, but a lot of it was delivery to the store. In fact, one person, he used to have a couple blondes there for entertainment all the time at his house, I mean, his family. I mean, they had these blonde girls to entertain their customers, but Spring Lake is quite a place. I worked there several years. … Let's see, when I left the A&P; I'm trying to think if I was still working there when I went to high school, the A&P. I remember walking from high school over to Mrs. Hamilton's, and then, when I got older, Joe got the job.

MP: So, you worked for Mrs. Hamilton and the A&P?

WC: No. I worked the A&P later. Well, she was only down in the summertime.

MP: Oh, okay. So, you worked at the A&P when she wasn't here.

WC: Yes, before that. I was working there before I started working for the A&P, and then, as I got older [and was] working for the A&P, then, Joe took over my job for Mrs. Hamilton. Oh, he was happy, my younger brother, [laughter] but, oh, boy.

SI: Was it difficult to find a job during those years, during the Depression?

WC: There was a lot of people out of work in those years, the Depression years, but a kid could find, you know, work, … like going to the store, stuff like that, but, like I say, I was working for this woman. I would … vacuum the house, I'd scrub the floors, I'd work the garden, you know, [the] flower garden, and all that stuff. I did all that. …

MP: And the money you made?

WC: My money I made, that wasn't for me. That went home to my mother, to help feed the family, because Pop wasn't working all the time. Times were tough. No, I never kept it myself. … My mother always got it, until I grew up. Later, of course, when I got married, then, that's something else; … enough of that. [laughter]

MP: Then, Mom got it. [laughter]

SI: How often would your father not be able to find work and how long would those periods last?

WC: Quite a bit in the wintertime. Quite a bit in the wintertime, they'd be out of work. In the summer, it was pretty good, you know, and then, you had rainy days, I mean, [as] a painter and carpenter. It isn't like today. I mean, they work right on through, but not in those days. Things were tough.

SI: Was he ever involved in any union activity?

WC: No, no, not then.

MP: Tell them about the Ku Klux Klan.

WC: Oh, yes.

SI: Yes, I was going ask about that.

WC: The Ku Klux Klan? Oh, that was a funny thing. You know, the Ku Klux Klan, I mean, we're Catholic and Uncle, not Furnace, the other one, Leon, in Point Pleasant, … he was a Carver and he was [a member of the] Ku Klux Klan. … Every once in awhile, we'd get a basket of fruit brought over to "those Catholics." [laughter] He'd leave a basket of fruit over to us, but, yes, the Ku Klux Klan, they were pretty strong around here.

SI: I was going to ask if there was any anti-Catholic sentiment at the time.

WC: There was some, yes, but it wasn't too bad, like, … when we lived in Neptune City, there was a Methodist church on Sylvania Avenue and the school was further away. … Anyway, Mom said, "Don't go down by … near that Methodist church," because that's where the Ku Klux Klan were all the time. They used to gather there. Mom always said, "Stay away from that place." …

SI: Were there ever any marches or cross burnings, anything like that?

WC: Yes, there were, there were some. I don't remember seeing them myself, [in] particular, but there were cross burnings and there were marches. … A lot of your businessmen were in it. Of course, they always had their hoods down. You don't know who they were, but you found out. I remember, the Palmers were Ku Klux Klan. They lived down the street. Not this Palmer; that was another Palmer. That was a Palmer in Neptune City. We knew who was who, [laughter] stayed away from them, that's all. Yes, they congregated, mixed with people, you know, but they had their own ways. I think they used to march in Asbury, every so often, too.

MP: Or Hightstown. I think you told me about Hightstown.

WC: Hightstown?

MP: That they marched in Hightstown.

WC: I did?

MP: The Klan. Yes, I think so.

WC: They probably did. I forgot that part. [laughter]

SI: Hightstown is pretty far away. Why would you be over in Hightstown? Did you just read about that in the paper?

WC: No, Hightstown is quite a ways away, Mary.

MP: Yes, I know, but, I don't know, you just told me they were pretty active there.

WC: Well, they were active in Neptune City, I knew that. That's where we lived, then, when they were pretty active. … In fact, well, later, they changed their name to Firefly, or some other name, other than the Ku Klux Klan, … fire something or other.

WCJ: I don't remember that.

WC: No, yes, they did change it. The Emerlys were Ku Klux Klan. … Joe and Ward … were good friends of the Emerlys. [laughter] We're Catholic, they're Ku Klux Klan, but we didn't mix that part up. … We never got in any trouble with them, but they were against Catholics, of course. … What was it, in Orange, I think? Back then, there was a Ku Klux Klan group there and the Catholics got together and chased them out of the town, at one time. It was up in the Oranges. I didn't see it, but I heard about it. … There was a lot of that going on then. … We're on a different track here again. Now, Pop was at Bay Head. He also liked to follow the water, like I said, we lived on a houseboat and he'd been a skipper, first mate, out for other people at times. But, not as I remember it, that was before my time. … Like I say, he also worked in the shipyards, up in Staten Island, when we lived up there. You ever remember the Black Tom?

SI: The big explosion? [Editor's Note: "Black Tom" refers to an event that happened on July 30, 1916, in Jersey City, New Jersey. Germans agents sabotaged American ammunition supplies to prevent the materials from being used by the Allies during World War I.]

WC: Yes. Pop was working in the shipyards then, I think, about that time.

SI: Did he see the explosion?

WC: I'm not sure. … One thing he did see, a guy, one time, … he wasn't paying attention and he reached in the damn saw box and he cut his hand right off, his arm right off.

SI: Your father lost his arm.

WC: No, another person in there.

SI: Another person.

WCJ: [laughter] … I didn't know that part.

WC: Well, I tell you, I always, when I use a saw, I'm very careful. When I'm using the band saw, I'm not going to get near that thing, because Papa always told me, "Be careful of them." … Another thing can happen with a band saw, you want to hold your wood down, you don't want to hold it loose, because, if that hits that blade, that can kick up. …

WCJ: Like the table saw up in the barn?

WC: That's right.

WCJ: Got hit in the stomach a couple times with that thing.

WC: Well, you ought to know better. I told you not to do that.

WCJ: Well, I held it right, just the table was crooked.

WC: Well, that, … that's a homemade table, that's why. I made that.

WCJ: I know, Dad.

WC: … I couldn't afford to buy a metal one, so, I did with what I had. Raising you kids, you know, wasn't easy, even then. [laughter]

WCJ: Look at all the rewards you got out of it.

WC: Oh, yes, never sorry, Billy, never sorry.

SI: Can you tell us a little more about the Depression and how it affected your family and the area? Were a lot of people out of work in the area?

WC: Oh, yes, more people out of work than were working, during that Depression. Yes, it affected a lot of people. That's why I say, back then, [if] you had a piece of property, you could grow some vegetables or potatoes or grow stuff, and you had some wood, … trees, on your place and you'd go cut trees for wood. We didn't buy coal or oil or anything like that. … Everything was wood, woodstove, to heat, heat the house, to heat your rooms, and, at nighttime, why, you'd put plenty of covers on. You didn't have too much heat upstairs. [laughter]

MP: Plus, you slept with other people, didn't you?

WC: Oh, yes.

MP: You, as a child.

WC: Yes.

MP: You had your brothers and you shared beds.

WC: … Oh, yes, my older brother and I, we slept together. Yes, we had to share beds. It was warmer that way, too. On the houseboat, we had bunk beds, one top, one bottom, but that was just Edgar and I, I think, was up there. The rest of them was all born down in Jersey. …

SI: Some people I have interviewed talked about transients coming through the area and asking for food.

MP: Tell him the story. [laughter]

WCJ: I remember that one.

WC: We told Mary Anne, "Now, when you're going downtown;" she's going down this way.

MP: No, not that one.

WC: I said, "Watch out for the jungle bunnies." Is that the one?

MP: No, that's not the one.

SI: No, during the Depression.

MP: … The one with Grandmom; this … doesn't have anything to do with my dad.

WCJ: With the baseball bat?

MP: There used to be hobos; that's what my father meant by the "jungle bunnies," were the hobos, that rode the trains. They were all sitting down by the tracks.

WC: Yes, they'd drop off there, used to be an open field out there. … Now, it's all grown up.

WCJ: In that woods over there, there used to be a spot, a ballpark.

WC: They used to have a spot in there, too?

SI: Like a Hooverville? [Editor's Note: A "Hooverville" was a Depression-era shantytown.]

WCJ: Small, a little bit.

WC: Yes, but this part here was all open. That's all grown up now. … Now, before that was grown up, I'd get water in the cellar, but, now, that's all grown up there. I don't get no more water in the cellar. … That's between this house and the railroad.

SI: Just before you get to Lake Como?

WC: Yes. That's all woods now, but, at one time, that was all open and the water would lay in there, and then, it would back up in your cellars, if you didn't [guard against it].

WCJ: Well, you'd hit water two feet deep out there, because we used to dig the holes to catch rabbits and hang the carrot, [laughter] and, [if] you dig it too deep, you know, the rabbit would drown in the water.

WC: … To catch the water from the washing machine, I wanted to put in a big drum, you know.

WCJ: Yes, you put fifty-five gallon drums in, yes.

WC: Yes. I had to put hip boots on to dig down … to get the drum in first, because I hit water before I got it down there. [laughter] … Well, the water table was only about four feet or so down, or less than that, I guess, you'd hit water, sometimes.

WCJ: In the field, it was about two feet.

WC: Yes, it was quite a bit of water in there, then. That's all gone now. It's all trees in there.

SI: That was all open.

WC: It was open field back there, yes.

SI: Hobos would come off the railroad.

WC: Yes, they'd drop off in there.

SI: They would …

WC: Whatever.

MP: And Grandmom, my mother's mother, would feed them.

WC: Oh, yes.

MP: That's … the story I'm talking about.

WC: Oh, yes, yes. She would feed them sometime, but one of them got fresh and, boy, the men ran him out of town. He started getting fresh and the men all got together; no more hobos.

MP: Well, they got rid of him, yes.

WC: Yes.

MP: And there was only, like, one policeman at the time, one sheriff, or something in the area.

WC: Oh, yes.

WCJ: All of Wall Township.

WC: Yes, Wall Township, we had one cop.

MP: And so, they took the law into their own hands. [laughter]

WC: … How big is Wall Township? Yes, one cop, (Cotrell?), and he was afraid of his shadow. Anytime he had any trouble, he'd call the State Police [to] come down to help him. [laughter] … We got cars now. We got a lot of cops. Of course, there's a lot of people here now, too. There wasn't that many there before.

MP: But, even when I was growing up, I guess, if my father was saying to, "Watch out for the jungle bunnies," there were still … hobos out there on the tracks.

WC: Coming down, yes.

MP: … Well, the story was, I was looking for giant bunnies to come out of the woods. [laughter]

WC: Yes. We called them "jungle bunnies."

MP: But, yes.

WC: … This here, originally, was a farm here. … This was before Helen's parents. Her grandparents had the red house across the highway. It's a story-and-a-half. He raised eleven children in that house. Of course, he had two wives. … The first wife, … the third child was born and she died in childbirth or something. … The sister came in to help out and he married the sister. So, between the two of them, he had eleven children. He had quite a few children. [laughter] … I'll tell you how much land they had; when the children grew up, … each one got two lots. This is our two and Uncle (Dory?) had two … across the street here, the stores up there. … Well, originally, … you know, people didn't have [cars], you know, a horse and buggy, going back far enough. … The people, they all, more or less, intermarried amongst the people …

SI: In the area.

WC: In the area. That's why there's so many of them are related around here. … There was five men, that's something, too, … I think it was five men, at one time, from around Belmar here, owned the beachfront.

MP: Not the whole beachfront, part of it, certain avenue to certain avenue.

WC: It wasn't the whole beachfront?

MP: No.

WC: No.

MP: No, and that was our, what?

WCJ: Great-grandfather.

MP: Great-grandfather, was one of the five men, … on the Brown side, on my mother's side.

WCJ: … I thought it was nine men.

WC: No, it was five.

MP: It's family lore. [laughter]

WC: … I always heard five, … but he had a big family. [laughter] … Those days, people did have big families, you know. I mean, today, they're mostly all small families, but you just had a lot of kids, that's all. Well, for one thing, they could use the kids to work, help with the farm.

SI: Yes, help support the family.

WC: Yes. In fact, … in the back here, there was the building there that has the house up top. Well, that fellow had a boy. He adopted a boy and that was Helen's uncle. I'm trying to think of his name. Well, anyway, he had a farm and he was using the boy on the farm. They took the boy away from him, said he couldn't use him for a worker. He was a young boy. Well, he's just in the early teens or under, but they took … him away from him.

SI: What did your family think of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal?

WC: Oh, that was good, as far as I'm concerned. We … all thought a lot of Franklin Roosevelt, but he was a Democrat and I'm not a Democrat now, but I was then. My parents were all Democrats, but, around here, most of them were Republicans.

SI: Back in the 1930s, this was a very Republican area.

WC: … Yes, in this section here, and (Francis Hurley?), [who] was my best friend, he said, "Bill, you're not a Democrat, are you?" So, I've become a Republican, too. [laughter]

MP: … They wanted to go to work for the program, … instead of going to high school.

WC: Oh, yes. Well, during the Depression, they had different programs and one of them was the …

SI: The CCC or WPA? [Editor's Note: The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) were both New Deal employment programs.]

WC: CCC, yes, they wanted me [to work there]. Now, my older brother was working. He went through grammar school and I brought his diploma home for him. He went right to work, and then, [when] it was my turn, I was in high school, they wanted me to go to [the] CCC. I said, "No, I want to finish high school." So, I did. I stayed and finished high school, and I'm glad I did, because it helped me out in the service and everything else. I mean, in the service, [it helped that] I worked in stores, I managed grocery stores. When I went in the Army, like I say, I was in the training center and I was there a short time and the supply sergeant wanted me to help him do the paperwork. So, [I was] doing the paperwork, doing all the forms. He wanted to get in combat. So, he went in combat and I took over the supply room. I became a staff sergeant.

SI: The work you did at A&P and the other grocery stores helped you.

WC: Oh, come in good, yes. Yes, I was a supply sergeant. … In fact, in Fort Knox, Kentucky, I had a model supply room. They used to send the kids from the school over there to practice, but I worked it like a [grocery store]. In fact, one of the majors, he'd come in and he would complain. I was on vacation and the man was issuing out gas masks, that he started complaining. I said, "You know, he was issued a lot of gas masks and stuff." … I knew he was an A&P man. I said, "You want it just like at A&P, like they do in the A&P." "Yes," he said, "that's the way I keep my supply room." Well, we got along good. [laughter] Of course, I got him a pair of shoes, too. [laughter] One hand … takes care of the other.

SI: In the later 1930s, were you aware of what was happening in the world, such as Hitler's taking over the countries in Europe, Austria and Czechoslovakia, or when the war broke out in Europe? Did you follow the news on what was happening overseas?

WC: Yes. … I'm just trying to remember how interested I was in that. … Do you know the dates on that?

SI: I think Czechoslovakia was 1938.

WC: '38.

SI: Austria was 1936, maybe. [Editor's Note: Nazi Germany took over Austria during the *Anschluss* in March 1938 and much of Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement was signed in September 1938.]

WC: Yes, I was quite aware, because I graduated high school in '35. Now, wait a minute, not 1935; they built St. Rose's in '35. … When did I graduate high school?

KB: 1935, I believe, is what the paper said.

SI: Yes, 1935.

WC: '35, yes.

SI: You were out working when all these events were happening.

WC: Yes. In fact, when they were building the … church, when I was in the third grade there, they told the kids, "Don't go over there where the men are working." … Well, there was a big mortar box and there was a round barrel and … this mortar box was on this barrel. Well, there was one kid in there; by the time we got through, there was twelve of us in there and, boy, Sister lined us up, "Put your hands out." We got it across the hand with a ruler. We didn't get … [into trouble] anymore after that. The nuns …

WCJ: Vicious.

WC: No, they weren't vicious. They trained us, "You'll have respect."

SI: Do you have any questions before we get into the World War II period?

KB: I just wanted to know, what did your parents think about the war that was starting to happen over in Europe? Did they feel like we were going to enter into the war at all?

WC: Well, when the war; let's see now. That was; I'm just trying to think here now.

SI: It started September 1939.

WC: '39. Pop was working in the shipyards, and that Black Tom explosion was back about that time, too, I think, wasn't it, or was that later?

SI: Black Tom was during World War I.

WC: World War I?

SI: It was in the teens, 1916, I believe.

WC: I know Pop was involved in that.

MP: I don't think Grandpop was in the shipyards for World War II.

WCJ: For World War II, no.

WC: Not II, for World War I, he was, yes, yes.

SI: That would make sense.

MP: Now, for World War II, what did your parents think about it?

WC: Oh, the war over there? Well, … they were concerned. Uncle Bill was in it, her brother. He was in; well, he was in World War I.

MP: He was in I, not II.

WC: … Well, my mother had a nervous breakdown because I had to go in the service and Edgar had to go in the service and …

MP: Uncle Joe.

WCJ: Uncle Joe.

WC: Uncle Joe had to go. I mean, that's three boys, one, two, three. … My older brother, he went over to France and into Berlin. In fact, his outfit, Third Armored, they took Berlin and Roosevelt said, "Pull them out. Let the Russians take them. They'll treat them worse than we will." You know, they always say the Russians took it; they didn't take it. … We took it first, and then, give it to them. [Editor's Note: By V-E Day, the Third Armored Division had advanced to Dessau, approximately 130 kilometers southwest of Berlin, deep in what later became the Soviet occupation zone.] … Yes, he was a tank commander, my brother was. I was a supply sergeant. …

KB: Your oldest brother was in the Navy, right?

WC: No, my younger brother was in the Navy, yes. That's Joe. He was in the Navy. He's lighter-than-air.

SI: The dirigibles.

WC: Yes, yes, … North Carolina [and] down here. He never had to go over. …

SI: Was he at Lakehurst, [a US Navy air station located in Lakehurst, New Jersey]?

WC: He was at Lakehurst and he was down in North Carolina, too, but he did get to go three miles out in a dirigible once, so that he got overseas time. [laughter] After three miles, you get some time, just to get it on his record.

SI: That reminds me, do you remember the *Hindenburg* disaster? [Editor's Note: On May 6, 1937, the German airship *Hindenburg* caught fire over Lakehurst Naval Air Station. Thirty-six people perished in the fire.]

WC: Yes, yes, that was quite a disaster here. In fact …

WCJ: Uncle (Carl?) took some of them in his house.

WC: Yes, he was a German, Uncle (Carl?) was, (Carl Marx?). That was my sister's husband. He took some of the prisoners in his home there. …

SI: They were survivors.

MP: Survivors.

WCJ: They were burned and he took them in and cared for them in his home.

MP: Survivors.

WC: Yes, but Helen, I was thinking of Helen there. … She got up to see it because she knew someone over in Manasquan that was a Coast Guard or something and she got up to see it. I didn't get up there to see it. …

MP: Helen's my mother.

WC: And, in fact, I was at a dance in the Adelphia Fire [House], Glendola Grange, when that happened.

WCJ: There's that dancing again.

WC: Oh, I loved to dance. [laughter] Boy, I loved to dance. I used to go all over to dance and go every week. You would go and you'd meet somebody and you'd dance with them, until, finally, I met Helen. After that, [I] forgot all the other girls, just Helen; she was the one. [laughter]

WCJ: Well, didn't your dad also paint the hangars for the dirigibles in Lakehurst?

WC: He did, he did, at one time, yes, because, I mean, him being a sailor, … knowing water and all, he would make his own rigs to paint up in the tops, you know, because you've got to sit in a chair, more or less …

WCJ: He'd make a boatswain's chair.

WC: Boatswain's chair, yes, and he'd make it and pull himself up and down. In fact, he was doing some kind of work, and there was union in there, you know; [they said to my father], "Pleam, … don't work that fast." They kept getting after him. He was working too hard. They wanted to spread it out, the unions did. …

SI: Did your father not like the unions, or did he?

WC: He never joined the unions. I don't know whether he didn't like it. I don't think, I don't know, in the end, if he ever joined the union or not. Now, I forget that part. My memory is getting rusty at times.

SI: That is okay.

WC: But, my mother, she worked in the button factory down here. … That's how he met my mother. Mom was originally from New York. … Well, she lived in Bradley Park then, I think, in Grandpops' house. …

SI: You graduated from high school in 1935 and you entered the service in 1941. During that time, were you working in the grocery stores or did you have other jobs?

WC: In-between?

SI: Yes, after graduating from high school.

WC: Oh, yes, … like I say, I worked in the A&P. I worked two different A&Ps. One time, I worked for a butcher, delivering the groceries in Spring Lake there. I was nineteen when I worked for the butcher, and, well, my brother …

MP: When did you work for Bennett and Height?

WC: Bennett and Height? in-between. I worked for the A&P, I worked in the summer and I went to school, and then, I went to the little A&P. … I'm just trying to see how I got to go to Bennett and Height. Oh, I worked for (Eddie Lyons?), delivering meat, and then, Bennett and Height, I went to work for Bennett and Height. … He had a grocery department. I went in there. He had a manager that would go to Florida in the winter. So, in the wintertime, I'd take over the grocery store. That went on for a couple of years. So, finally, I took over the whole grocery store there, for Bennett and Height. … Whether he stopped coming up or what, I forget. He probably stayed in Florida. He's getting older, which all that stuff helped me, though, when I went in the service. I was a natural for supply work. … When I went in, … [I] went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for my basic training and, during that time, like I say, I was helping out in the supply. … Then, eventually, I was in Fort Knox, Kentucky, two-and-a-half years, as a supply sergeant. It was part of the training part and, you know, the whole time, but, then, … at Fort Knox, I went out to; see, I've got it all down here, something. [Editor's Note: Mr. Carver shuffles through his papers.] I left there and went to Fort Ord, I think. You've got that. … Refresh myself, again, "I was inducted into the Army on August the 8th, 1941, at Trenton, New Jersey. From there, I went to Fort Dix, New Jersey. One month later, I was transferred to Fort Knox, Kentucky, where I received my basic training in the armored force. I became supply sergeant in this training company, in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and, later, was promoted to staff sergeant. In 1944, I was transferred to Camp McCain, Mississippi, for a refresher course in infantry training. After completion, I was transferred to Fort Ord, California. On October the 19th, 1944, I departed to New Guinea. From there, I was transferred to New Britain, where I joined the 40th Infantry Division and [was] assigned to Company G, 108th Infantry. We participated in the South Philippines liberation of Luzon, Masbate, [and] Panay. We then went to Leyte, where we

were training for the invasion of Japan when the war ended," and I thank God it ended, because they told us afterwards what the particular regiment I was in was training for: we were training to go onto a little island south of Japan two weeks … before the other troops, to draw the Japs down there. I'd have been cannon fodder. [laughter] I was always thankful that the war ended, but they didn't tell us until afterwards. [laughter] Thank God for that. You went wherever you were told. … Another thing, at one time, we were on a hill and this Jap was coming along. See, I was in the Pacific, my other brother was in Europe, but he was coming along and coming along. Halfway there, he had his hand up, coming along. He took a hand grenade and blew himself up. He didn't want to be captured.

SI: Was he trying to kill GIs in the process?

WC: No.

SI: He just wanted to kill himself.

WC: He wanted to kill himself. It's an honor for them to die. … We want to live as long as we can and [make it] an honor for them to die. [laughter]

SI: Was that the first time you saw something like that?

WC: Yes, where they blew himself up like that, yes.

SI: Were you shocked by this?

WC: Well, sort of. It's a different idea of things. … Going into the Army part there, well, we were in the Marshall Islands. … On Christmas Eve, we went by Lingayen Gulf, the bottom part of Luzon. Christmas Eve, we went on around, we went on back to [the] Marshall Islands and, the next day, we come back and went in and we were lucky. We didn't hit too much resistance. … Whether they figured we went by or what, but the ones that went in at Clark Field, they hit a lot of resistance, on the other side of the island. … Of course, we did have some resistance, but not like we expected, and another thing, … at one time, we were going in, they have different ships, you know. There's one there, you go down a ramp, like. You've got your full pack on your back. This little guy was going down this ramp, full pack on his back. He got to the end, "Blub, blub, blub," right over his head. [laughter] We had to pull him back. He was too short. [laughter]

SI: He dropped in the water.

WC: He walked right into it; different things.

SI: Was that a Higgins boat?

WC: I don't know what they called that one. The LCI [landing craft, infantry] is the flat one that flops down, and I forget what they called it. It comes to a point, the bow, and they had ramps on

the side you go down, where the others, the whole front, it's like a barge, it just flops down and you go in. I forget what they call it now. It's too long ago.

SI: That is all right.

WCJ: What about the canteen?

WC: Oh, yes, I'll show you that, too. … The chaps were way over this way and it went up on us. … Oh, I know what it was. … They were bringing this one kid up on a stretcher and I was about to [help]. I said, "I'll take that over." No, I was on the stretcher. I was on the stretcher.

WCJ: … You were carrying it.

WC: Carrying the back end of the stretcher, and the Private said, "I'll take that, Sergeant," and he took it. He just … went a few steps; he got shot right in the back. That could have been me. That's how quick those things happen, but, then, now, the canteen part. … Oh, I know what it was; the "knee mortars." [Editor's Note: Knee mortar was a nickname for the Japanese Army's Type 89 grenade launcher. Mr. Carver may be referring to a US Army rifle grenade, grenade launcher or light mortar.] Our knee mortars lit the grass on fire when we were moving up. So, we had to retreat. We had to go back in a hurry and I'd run awhile and I'd drop and I'd say a "Hail Mary" and I'd run awhile and I'd drop and I'd say a "Hail Mary." … I said, "Boy, that guy almost got me." … "You see, he wasn't just a rifleman," he [another GI] said, "he was a sniper," and he shot right through my canteen, missed me [by] that much. I've got the canteen outside.

SI: Was it on your back?

WC: It's got a hole right through it. We wore two canteens over there. I'll show it to you later, I've got it, went through the back side and out the other side of it. So, that come, [Mr. Carver makes the sound of a bullet whizzing by]. … I forget which side it was on. Oh, he's [his son] going to go get it. Yes, I made sure I brought that one home. [laughter]

SI: Was that on Luzon?

WC: … Yes, that would be in Luzon. Yes, that would still be in Luzon, yes.

SI: If you remember anything else from later in the war, just go ahead and say it, but I want to go back and take you from before Pearl Harbor through when you got into the service. Before you went into the service and before Pearl Harbor, do you remember people talking about whether the United States should get involved in the war, if they would get involved in the war, if people were against or for it?

WC: Oh, no, I think we wanted to get in it. Roosevelt; well, first, let's see how the involvement started in the first place. We go back to Roosevelt; let's see.

MP: Local people, you, your family.

SI: Yes. You do not have to give us the whole history.

MP: Yes, they know that.

SI: For example, did your family think that we should get involved or not get involved?

WC: Oh, yes. [Editor's Note: Mr. Carver's son returns with the canteen.]

SI: Wow.

WC: That was on my butt.

SI: We are looking at the canteen. There is a bullet hole going in one end and out the other.

WC: … That was close.

WCJ: Yes, you could say, Dad.

WC: That's why I always made sure I brought that home with me.

SI: Very close.

WC: Yes. … I didn't even know it until … I got exhausted and I was in the hospital, I think, and I went to take a drink of water. He says, "Sergeant, you're not going to get any water out of that one." [laughter] We had two canteens on [us].

WCJ: You were in the hospital because you had malaria, wasn't it?

WC: Yes. I had malaria, later, yes, but I think that's when I; no, maybe it wasn't the hospital with this.

WCJ: You can put it on the table, Dad.

WC: But, anyway, that's dirty.

WCJ: You don't have to put it on the floor. [laughter]

WC: Well, yes, I had malaria. That's right. You get that very easy over there. You take what they call; well, the Japs had all the quinine, so, that was good for malaria. We had what they called Atabrine, [an antimalarial drug]. … When I first come home, you'd think I was a Chinaman. It turns your skin yellow.

SI: Yes, it makes you jaundiced.

WC: Yes, you look jaundiced, but it did good. You'd go along and, … some day, [if] you didn't feel too good, you take another Atabrine, take an extra one. … It kept you going.

SI: I have heard from other veterans that they sometimes were afraid to take the pills because they thought it would cause infertility.

WC: No, I never heard that; might be. …

SI: No, it does not actually cause infertility.

WC: No, but I don't remember any of that. We were glad to have something there to keep going.

SI: We were talking before about whether people were for getting into the war or not. Were there any German-American sympathizers in the area, people who were pro-German, or pro-Italian?

WC: There were some. There used to be a *Bund*. What did they call them, the youth, Hitler Youth movement?

SI: Yes, the German-American *Bund*?

WC: Yes, around Eatontown, I think there was a *Bund* group there, at one time, young fellows that were for it. … No, we wanted to get in [World Ward II]. We expected to get in and we knew we'd be in it. … We didn't fight against it, as far as that part goes.

SI: How did you feel about the draft when it was instituted, in 1940?

WC: Well, everybody had to do a year. I wound up four-and-a-quarter years in. It was a year … or until the war ended. So, while I was in my year, the war … started, or, anyway, I wound up four-and-a-quarter years in there. So, no, we all felt we should do our duty, as far as that part goes. There were some, some went to Canada, some people took off, but that was quite a few people, I think, went to Canada, to get out of it.

SI: Were they going to Canada to beat the draft or did they join the RAF?

WC: To get out of the war. No, everybody had to do a year.

SI: During World War II, or later?

MP: Are you sure it's World War II that people went to Canada, or are you thinking of Vietnam, Dad?

WC: You got me, Mary Anne. It could be Vietnam.

SI: Yes.

WCJ: Yes, … because Canada was involved in World War II. …

SI: In World War II, people went to Canada to join the RAF and the Canadian forces.

WC: All right, that's right, they did. They went to Canada and they were in the service before we got in it, for the Canadians.

SI: Did you know anybody who did that?

WC: No, but there were some that did. Some of them went to England and joined … before we actually got in with Hitler, but I wasn't stupid enough for that. [laughter]

MP: And most of your friends went in the war.

WC: Oh, yes, oh, we all went. All of us, that I know of, went in. I don't know. You had to have something wrong with you. You had to be 4-F [unacceptable for military service] [if] you didn't get in it, something wrong, and you wouldn't admit it. I could have gotten out of it, I think, because, … at the time; I have to go a lot [to the lavatory] and I always thought I had weak kidneys. I have one kidney that is too small and makes me go often. … In fact, they kept testing me and albumin kept showing up and, finally, "Oh, you made it." One more test, … I'd still be home, but I wanted to go. I didn't want to stay home. My brother went, I went, my other brother went. … Joe was later, because he was younger, far as that part goes. He went in the Navy, but it was hard on my mother. I didn't know. … They said, "Mom had a nervous breakdown then and she had one later, when the boys went in."

MP: … That's then. When the boys went in was then. She had one before.

WC: Yes.

WCJ: … When your brother was killed, isn't that when she had her first nervous breakdown?

WC: No. She had one when we went into the service.

MP: That was her second one.

WCJ: No, but the first one was after, what was it, Albert?

WC: Oh.

WCJ: When you moved out to …

WC: Oh, I know what you mean, yes, yes.

WCJ: And he got hit by a car there. …

WC: That's right, yes, yes. That was a long one. She lost the two boys.

MP: Yes, and some of the (surviving boys?) went into an orphanage.

WCJ: So, one boy was killed in Belmar. They moved out of Belmar to go out in the country. …

MP: Yes. Dad told that.

WCJ: Oh, you already went through that? [laughter] Well, we got here late.

WC: Yes. She was up at Marlboro [State Psychiatric Hospital] for about three years. It was too much for her.

MP: And the rest of you were scattered.

WC: We were scattered around, yes. My sister, Gertrude, was the baby. She went to, let's see, Aunt Grace had Gertrude, and Ida and Agnes, I think, went to Aunt May. That was Mom's sister. Now, Dot stayed home with Edgar and I. …

MP: And Joe.

WC: … Let's see; no, I don't think [so]. Did Joe go somewhere? I don't remember Joe being home with us. He must have been, though. I don't know, now that you mention it. I remember, what, Dot was, what, sixteen? and I spanked her, and she got mad, [laughter] for something, I don't know. She was the one home with us. She was doing all the cooking and everything. … Yes, things were tough. My father, … it was Depression times and I don't know if you know the area, but, from here, do you where Marlboro is?

SI: Yes, Marlboro.

WC: We lived on Allaire Road, and he would walk, because he couldn't afford gasoline for the car, he would walk to see my mother up there, when she was up in the hospital there. That's a walk.

SI: Yes, it is, probably took him all day.

WC: Yes, but, finally, a little later on, he found out the man down the street was working up there and he'd get a ride, but, for a long while, he walked.

SI: Were you still living at home when you went into the service?

WC: … Yes, I was at Tenth Avenue, Belmar, then. We were living in Belmar then, when I went in the service. I wasn't there too long in Belmar, I don't think, when I went in the service. I went from Belmar.

SI: Was it difficult to make the switch from civilian life to military life?

WC: Yes and no. I got in supply. … Well, when I finally went into [the] service, besides the store, I was a Fuller Brush Man, at that time, going house to house, selling brushes, and I knew my time was coming up. … You know, it was time to go and I had to get rid of all my brushes and stuff and I was through, oh, ahead of time. So, I went up and I went in anyway. Why wait? … Everybody had to go anyhow.

SI: Did you ever consider enlisting in the Navy or Marine Corps?

WC: No. My younger brother went in the Navy. He went to lighter-than-air. My older brother went … to Germany. Like I told you about that, he went … in Berlin. He went to Germany and I went to the Philippines. He was fighting … the Germans and I was fighting the Japs. We split it up a little bit. He had some rough times over there, too. You know who the snipers over there were, in Germany?

SI: Who?

WC: The French women, shacking up with the Germans. They were the snipers, yes.

SI: Your brother told you that.

WC: Yes. … I can't think now, just what part they went in, but, anyway, no, we all knew we were going to have to go sooner or later. None of us believed we could be out in a year.

SI: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

WC: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, … I think I was in the Philippines when Pearl Harbor was attacked; no, that'd be after.

SI: No. Was it Fort Knox?

WCJ: … Weren't you working at Bennett and Height when Pearl Harbor was attacked? I think I kind of remember a story of a customer coming in, saying they'd bombed Pearl Harbor or something.

WC: No, … you're talking about the *Morro Castle*. [On September 8, 1934, the SS *Morro Castle* caught fire off the coast and ended up near the Asbury Park, New Jersey, boardwalk, where the wrecked ship became a tourist attraction until it was towed away in March 1935.]

MP: That was the *Morro Castle*.

WC: … I'm trying to think …

WCJ: That's a big difference.

WC: … Where I was when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

SI: You were in the service.

WC: I was in the service already.

KB: I think he was probably at Fort Knox.

WC: Oh, yes, I was at Fort Knox, Kentucky, yes, yes.

KB: Did you notice any changes in the military after the attack, or in the men around you?

WC: Yes. … Instead of twelve weeks of training, you got eight. They started moving them up faster. Yes, they started moving them up quicker, and everybody was raring to go. Of course, there'd always be some, probably, [part of you that] was afraid, but you knew it was your duty and you just did it.

SI: Do you remember how the news broke and how people took it that day?

WC: Yes. Now, the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked, … I was in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and we were getting ready to go out on a bivouac for a week, in the field, you know, woods, field. … I had a new group [that] was leaving. That's right. We were having a big dinner for this group, because they were finishing their training and they were going to leave and they were, you know, drinking their beer, a pitcher for the sergeant, a glass for them, and, you know, we keep going on and on. … Well, anyway, Pearl Harbor is attacked and they had to go, the next day or so, to, I think, Washington, they went [to] first. … Was I in the post when it happened or was I coming home for furlough? … There was something about Pearl Harbor. Was I coming home on leave then? It was the end of a basic training group. Well, we'll forget about that. I can't click it back in there. It'll come up. …

SI: Were you already in the supply end of it at that point, training people in supply?

WC: Oh, yes. …

MP: You never had basic training, right?

WC: Eventually. I didn't have any basic training. I went right in supply. I went in there and they shoved me right into supply work, helping the supply sergeant. I never did get out and do any of the basic training, the firing the gun and all. … Finally, I had to have it on the record. They got this, you know, big M-1 and this Corporal (Godfrey?), he's teaching me. I said, "Corporal, you know, I didn't have any dry run." "You didn't have any dry run on this?" He was scared worse than I was. I didn't hit the target, either. [laughter] I didn't get any basic training until I went …

MP: Before you had to go over?

WC: Before I went over, … the basic training I got in New Britain. I finally got my basic training. No, … at Fort Knox, Kentucky, I got my basic. That's right, but New Britain …

SI: Before you went over.

WC: Yes, that was before I went over. No, they shoved me right in supply and I never did go. … Instead of going out, and, you know, you're supposed to exercise in the morning, I'd run up and get breakfast. No, I'd go open the supply room up, until it was time to go eat, and then, I'd eat. I didn't want to do all that exercise. … Every once in awhile, though, you had to do, like, a twenty-five mile hike, or something like that, but they let me go in-between, not right with the troops, so, I wouldn't have to keep in step … as much as they did. [laughter] That helped, but I got through it. Yes, you would come home, you're glad to get home, but, yet, you'd be home awhile and, you know, you still missed the boys you were back there with. You know, even though you were home, you enjoyed it, but you were ready to go back when the time was come.

SI: You would miss the guys from your supply unit.

WC: … The group, the supply unit; I was the supply sergeant, I mean, … and I took care of the whole [group], you know, my own people and the trainees. … When they moved out, now, their eight weeks, when they're moved out, everything had to be perfect. [If] their shoes were bad, they had to get [new ones]; clothes were ripped, they got new clothes. When they left, they were all spic-and-span, ready to go.

SI: Did you feel there were always enough supplies, and the proper supplies, to go around for the troops?

WC: Yes. … Well, actually, … I'm in the training center, so, I don't [see what happens beyond that]. They'd sometimes waste supplies. I remember, one time, what was it? We were supposed to go in town, and then, they made us go out to fire these knee mortars. We didn't fire [them]; we just dumped them, "Doop, doop, doop." "Get rid of 'em, so [that] we can go to town," at that time. [laughter]

SI: You felt that was a waste, or was there something else being wasted?

WC: Well, yes, but we wanted to go to town. We were there all week. …

MP: Was there more waste than that?

WC: Oh, yes. There's a lot of waste. … I'll tell you what happened. I was in combat then; I was in the Philippines. … They brought some new troops in. They had all these; now, how did that happen? They had all these new guns, but they had guns. They just threw them overboard. Instead of recycling them, they just threw them overboard, "Get rid of them." The Army is very wasteful at times, very wasteful; still is, I imagine.

WCJ: That's why we pay taxes.

WC: I know.

SI: Can you tell us about the period when you found out you would be going overseas and how you felt?

WC: … Where was I, when I went to Camp McCain, Mississippi?

MP: Were you married when you got your orders to go overseas?

WC: Oh, yes. …

MP: He married my mother when he was in the service.

WC: I was in the Army, well, let's see, about a year, I think. I was in a year when I got married. … I went in in '41, got married in '42, I think, but I was at Fort Knox, Kentucky, for so long there, … training center, and I know Helen's father didn't like the idea, especially when I was going overseas. He was afraid he was going to be home there with a … daughter and a baby, or something. That was (foolish?). We didn't have any children, though. We were [married] four-and-a-half years before we had any children. Then, I had Mary Anne. Then, sixteen months later, I had Michael, that's my other son, and then, what was it? eight years later, Billy came along. Helen was forty-three by that time.

WCJ: Mom would hang that in the window.

WC: Huh?

SI: A blue star [service flag].

WC: Yes, they all had them stars.

MP: I didn't even know that.

WC: … Where did you find it?

WCJ: They used to do that, up until Vietnam, and then, they stopped doing that. … Now, there's a guy that's actually doing it privately. The government doesn't provide them anymore. They put a gold star if you're, you know, killed-in-action.

WC: Yes.

WCJ: If it would be one person, … you know, at war, it'd be one star. If there were two people out of the family, there'd be two stars, and so on, and so forth. That was hung, Mom hung that, in the window.

WC: Yes.

WCJ: It showed your patriotism.

WC: Yes, oh, yes. Oh, you're proud, and we were all ready to go, no.

WCJ: Proud or scared; one or the other.

WC: No, not really.

MP: Were you scared?

WC: No. I never had any bad [times]. I was nervous at times, when they were shooting at me, but I wasn't scared.

MP: … All right, but not to go, either?

WC: No, I wasn't afraid to go.

MP: Was Mom?

WC: I heard she had a breakdown after we went.

MP: No, no, not your mother.

WC: Oh.

MP: My mother. [laughter]

WC: Oh, Helen?

MP: Yes.

WC: Well, I guess she had reservations, more or less. She had her times, I think. Well, she stayed here, … kept with her father. She stayed here.

MP: … Well, she wasn't going to war with you. Did she say anything to you?

WC: Not that I know of, no. We'd write all the time.

WCJ: Yes, you've got the boxes of letters up in the rafters of the barn.

WC: Have I still got them?

WCJ: Yes, a whole box of them, between you and Mom.

WC: I know I had them, but you kids started taking the stamps off it.

WCJ: I never.

WC: I don't know if you took the boxes. … I was wondering if you were reading them. [Are] they still there?

WCJ: I never read them.

WC: Somebody did. I don't know.

WCJ: I took the stamps; [laughter] I didn't read them, though.

SI: Were you able to come home on leave often, or was it mostly just through letter writing that you stayed in touch?

WC: Well, when I'm in the States, I could come home, yes. … You'd get a furlough, [a leave of absence], a week, or something like that, but I always got a three-day pass and let my furlough start after that. I'd be home [by] the time the furlough started. I added a couple days that way. … I could do that, but, no, you're allowed so many; oh, let's see, I don't know if it's thirty days. You're allowed so much time over a year, but you get, like, a week at a time. You wouldn't get it all at once, or maybe you could get a couple [weeks]. It's a little vague, sometimes. [laughter] …

WCJ: To be expected, Dad.

SI: Yes. Can you tell us about your training at Camp McCain?

WC: Well, Camp McCain, [Elliot], Mississippi, that was where you were [stationed when you were] ready to go over. … You went from there to New Guinea, if I remember right. …

SI: You stopped at Fort Ord first.

WC: Oh, Fort Ord, [near Salinas, California]. Yes, Camp McCain, Camp McCain, I've got to refresh myself on that. [Editor's Note: Mr. Carver checks his notes.] Now, Fort Ord, oh, where the devil is that? I'm picking Camp McCain here.

SI: That is at the bottom of that paragraph.

WC: That's Fort Ord there.

SI: Yes.

WC: Yes, I went to Fort Ord. I don't see Camp McCain. … You pick it up, Mary Anne. …

MP: Camp McCain. "In 1944, I was transferred."

WC: Yes, in '44. Well, that was coming back, then. No, no, that was in the beginning, yes.

MP: Camp McCain, what did you do there? What happened there?

WC: Camp McCain?

MP: Yes.

WC: … Fort Ord is where you leave from. …

WCJ: Camp McCain, … they retrained you again.

SI: Is that where you completed your basic training?

WC: Yes, "Course in infantry training." Oh, yes, see, originally, I was trained at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in Tank Corps and, at Camp McCain, they retrained me in the infantry. Yes, we were there a short time. … I don't think I was there very long, though.

MP: What was it like, your training?

SI: Did they give you weapons training or calisthenics?

WC: Yes.

MP: Was it hard?

WC: Well, you know what was hard, … I was home on furlough and I got orders not to go back to Fort Knox; I was to go to …

MP: Camp McCain.

WC: Camp McCain, and how'd that work out? … I was home on furlough, so, I didn't have my duffle bag with me. I did have my duffle bag, yes. Finally, I went back and I got my duffle bag and, when we went to Camp McCain, the guy said, "Oh, Sergeant, the truck comes out every day. Don't carry your bag. We'll bring it to you;" yes, a week later. [laughter] I'm in my suntans, [a tan summer uniform], out there. … Oh, I missed my uniform, my fatigues and everything else. … [laughter] That was a mess, but, finally, it came to me, got there.

SI: You had built a little life for yourself at Fort Knox, with your friends and your unit and the same routine.

WC: Oh, yes.

SI: Now, you were thrown out of that.

WC: Yes. Well, Fort Knox, I mean, we'd go into town, you know, on Saturdays. …

SI: Were you pretty much by yourself at Camp McCain? Did anybody you know go with you from Fort Knox?

WC: Yes. They [would] have a USO [United Service Organizations] in these different towns. You go in there and go, and you go to a dance, sometimes. You meet someone or the girls come out there and dance with the fellows. They used to bring girls out to the post and they'd have a band there and dance.

MP: Is this Camp McCain?

WC: No, this is …

SI: Fort Knox.

WC: Fort Knox.

MP: Yes. So, it was completely different when you got to Camp McCain?

WC: Oh, yes, you're waiting to [go overseas], staging there, more, if I remember right.

SI: Did anybody else from Fort Knox come with you to Camp McCain or were you sent by yourself?

WC: That, I don't remember. I really don't remember that, but it's possible. … Being I was a supply sergeant, I probably was by myself, more than likely. See, I went as a supply sergeant.

SI: You knew you were going to be in supply, back in a supply role.

WC: Supply, yes, but, when I went in combat, I wasn't in supply. [laughter] I had the right stamps. In fact, when we landed, [laughter] when we first went in combat, I'm doing a PFC [private first class] job and I've got staff sergeant's stripes on my arms. That didn't last long, though. That didn't last long. The platoon guide, or something, I took over for him.

SI: Can you tell us about the trip over to New Guinea, what that was like?

WC: To New Guinea? Let's see, we went by ship. You know, we'd be down in the hold there, the officers up top, having steak, and we had to go past there, … smelling their steak, got our pork and beans on the tray. [laughter] There was a little resentment there, but they'd say, "Well, they pay for theirs." "Yes, but they get enough money to pay for it." They probably get extra allowance. … If you were married, you got an extra seventeen dollars a month [in your] pay to help support your wife. She could live on the post, but Helen's father was alone. There was no sense to it. So, I was working in supply all the time anyway. …

SI: On the ship, you could see a real division between officers and enlisted men.

WC: Oh, always, always.

SI: Could you see that even before, like at Fort Knox?

WC: You could. … In other words, you can't fraternize with the officers. The officers [have] got to be with the officers, the enlisted men with the enlisted men. Of course, you could take, like, … the Captain over to his wife, or something like that. … You could drive him over there, something like that, or drive her over to him and stuff like that. Same way now, when, like, I was in the training center and we had to take the laundry up, well, we had to have a truck for the laundry. Well, a lot of your trainees, they could drive, but you've got to have a noncom [noncommissioned officer] to take it out of the motor pool. So, a supply sergeant would have to go over, requisition the truck, take it back, give it to the private. Then, he did his chores, and then, I'd have to take it back again. That's the way it worked, but you got friendly with the privates, as far as that part goes, some of them. Of course, the noncoms stuck together, the officers stuck together, too, the privates, when they went to town, but there would be some you would cater to and some you wouldn't. There was one boy, I forget his name, he was from California. He always said that … [singer and actress] Lena Horne, he said she was his nanny, when he was a kid. Whether it was true or not, [I do not know], but he always said so. She was in California; that's where he came from. He was from a rich family, I think. … His family had money. So, it's possible. [laughter] All kinds of things happened, … but you go along with it.

SI: Before you were on the ship, was it as blatant as that, where the officers were eating steak and you were eating pork and beans?

WC: Oh, yes. They had their own quarters. … You know, you're in a big, big place [cargo hold], bunk, bunk, you know, bed, bed, bed, and they have their staterooms and stuff like that, and they dine separate, too. Like, for ours, in fact, you don't want a rough sea while you're there, they have a big tray [railing], like a table across the ship, and you [have] got your tray there. You're standing there, eating there. One time, the wave comes, [Mr. Carver imitates a wave crashing into the ship], trays go down the line. [laughter] You never know, but you'd go by, you could smell their steak, while you're going past their quarters, and you've got whatever they had, pork and beans, beans, a lot of beans.

MP: Was it like that on land?

WC: On land? Well, you got K rations on land a lot. …

MP: … Did they eat better than you? Did they have better …

WC: Oh, yes, yes. Well, same way, like, you know, when we were on the Marshall Islands, … let's see, they allowed you to have two bottles of beer, I think, and they got their quart of whiskey, stuff like that, you know. …

MP: And even in the States?

WC: Not in the States. That was overseas.

MP: So, you were more equal in the States?

WC: No, no, no. They had their own [privileges]. In the States, you bought your own beer. It wasn't issued.

MP: Well, no, I didn't mean that.

WC: [laughter] Yes. They bought their own liquor, but they had enough money to do it, but they had better rations and everything.

MP: Food.

WC: But, while you're in combat, I suppose they had to eat like the rest, more or less.

SI: How long was the boat ride over to New Guinea?

WC: I rightly can't remember that now. …

SI: Do you remember if it was very long, or just a week or so?

WC: Might have been a week. … Oh, coming from the States to New Guinea?

SI: Yes.

WC: Oh, we went on the USS *President Polk.* They had that in World War I, too, that ship. [laughter] … [Editor's Note: The USS *President Polk* (AP-103) was launched in June of 1941.]

SI: It was an old ship, yes.

WC: Yes, it was an old ship, yes. I think it was a week or so. … Coming back, we went to Seattle, Washington, and, from there, we come back here, flew. They flew us to Newark, to Fort Monmouth. … One guy didn't want to go. … It was wintertime and one plane going home, out in … one of them cold states, the motor froze up. They all died. Plane went down. We were holding our breath when it was our turn, [laughter] but we got through it all right, but I think they didn't go [for] a longer trip. They, you know, stopped with us [at] different spots first, where the other one, I think they went straight over.

SI: Did the ship travel alone or was it in a convoy?

WC: Oh, they're in a convoy. Yes, you don't go alone.

SI: Was the convoy ever attacked?

WC: Now, wait a minute; going over, though, you're not in a convoy. Going from here to there, I think we were alone, on the *President Polk*, but, other times …

SI: When you were going for an invasion, you would be in convoy.

WC: Yes, that's in the convoy, yes.

SI: Were there ever any submarine scares?

WC: There's some, yes. There were some. They had to watch. They had sonar checking, and you'd go down, one ship we're on, … they throw these rope ladders down. You're going down there and, [if] somebody got a little too fast, you got your little fingers clipped.

SI: Was that during an invasion?

WC: Not really. That was when we were first going in. In the invasion, I forget which way we went now, now, our outfit. Oh, there was another one there, that, you know, these ships open up and they opened up and the half-tracks go out, you know? This (colored, young?) fellow, he was going out; he didn't want to go out there. "That last guy went right on down." [laughter] He didn't want to go out there; that last guy went right on down. So, he had to pull back and pull in further. [Editor's Note: Mr. Carver seems to be describing an LST offloading onto land that could not support the weight of the vehicles, causing them to sink.] [laughter] He was scared. I don't blame him. …

SI: Tell us a little bit about when you got to New Guinea. What happened in New Guinea?

WC: It was hot. We got there; we did a lot of marching. In fact, … it would be so hot, you'd be wringing wet and you're out there marching and you'd dry right out before you got back. [laughter]

SI: Did you have the proper uniforms and the proper supplies for being in the jungle?

WC: Oh, yes, oh, yes. You had all your equipment. … There was a certain type sweater. It was a smooth knit sweater that you had, long sleeves. Now, in the daytime, it's hot, at nighttime, it's cold, and this long-sleeve [sweater], it was wool, it would keep you warm. … In the daytime, you could roll it up and put it in your pack, on your pack. … You didn't need it. You just used fatigues, but they were nice sweaters.

SI: Then, from New Guinea, you went to New Britain.

WC: New Britain, yes. That's where we joined the 40th [Infantry Division], in New Britain. New Guinea was a staging area. They'd come in there and they'd group them up, and then, send them over to New Britain to join other outfits, wherever. You never know just where you're going. … Some might have gone somewhere else; I don't know.

SI: What was the unit involved in when you got there?

WC: … Which part? …

SI: When you joined the 40th.

WC: You mean going [to] New Guinea, [or] went to New Britain?

SI: Yes. When you joined the unit, what were they doing?

WC: … Loading the ships, loading ammunition and stuff, until we left, and then, we took off. I'm just trying to think now. … New Guinea, New Britain, we formed, then, we went to the Marshall Islands, for awhile, before we went into Luzon. That whole coral reef, the water was clear around there, near the Marshall Islands. You could see right through the water, clear as a bell.

KB: I read that the weather in New Britain was poor, a lot of rain and a lot of mud; did that affect your work at all?

WC: I don't recall now. [laughter] There probably was some, yes, but I don't remember a lot of mud, no.

MP: Now, you tell stories about people climbing the coconut trees.

WC: Yes.

MP: Where was that, your men, right, the soldiers, climbing up?

WC: No, no, no, the natives.

MP: Okay.

WP: Oh, no, … they've got their bare feet, they go right up those trees, you know, with their bare feet, right up there and pick the coconuts and bring them down.

MP: And where was that?

WC: That would be, probably, Luzon. That's the Philippines. There'd be coconuts, coconut trees.

MP: And that's where you fought, was in Luzon?

WC: No, Luzon's where we landed, but that was probably after we went in further. We fought in Luzon, yes, but we were there afterwards, I mean, when the battle was over. We didn't come right home.

MP: Oh, so, this was after, okay. I was wondering.

WCJ: Right, because of the knife you have from the Philippines.

WC: Huh?

WCJ: The coconut knife is from the Philippines.

WC: Yes.

WCJ: Says right on it, "The Philippines." …

WC: You know what that's made from?

WCJ: Railroad tie.

WC: Yes, railroad tie. They would pound them out for the GI souvenirs. [laughter] They're not as good as their ones they have. … They're imitations, yes, but those natives, they'd go right up those trees, pick the coconuts, come on down. They're good at it. … Now, I never smoked and you get issued cigarettes. They were good for buying bananas. [laughter]

WCJ: That's when he had the monkey. [laughter]

WC: Why should I waste them? … In fact, over there, some of the men were in the hospital. … You would get rations with your morning report. Well, the guys in the hospital didn't have no cigarettes. I got after them. I said, "Look," I said, "that's the time they need it the most," and they finally start giving it to them, because they [have] got to go by, you know, different morning reports for the companies. They weren't in the company then, when they're in the hospital, but I straightened it out for them. … I had a brother [who] smoked, so, that's what killed him, four packs a day. He died of cancer of the throat, after he come home from the war. That wasn't too long ago.

SI: On New Britain, though, there was no fighting when you were there.

WC: No, no. It was, more or less, … New Guinea, you went there as a staging area. … You went there, and then, from there, you went to New Britain to load the ships that you're going on. You're loading your ships, and then, you leave from New Britain to go to Luzon. That was [it], more or less. You know, you're there for awhile, but you're working all the time.

SI: Going to Luzon, that was when you said you made the pass and went back.

WC: Yes, pass, yes. … Actually, you're in combat then, but … we went right by Luzon Gulf [Lingayen Gulf] there and we turned around and come back, and then, the next day, we went in.

SI: Do you remember where you landed?

WC: Well, we went in in Luzon, … in Lingayen Gulf, but I'm not too sure [of the] exact spot. I couldn't even remember what date it was, as far as that part goes.

SI: What do you remember about the day you made the landing?

WC: Well, we were glad it wasn't, no; in fact, we were a little nervous there. You kept seeing this, all this activity back there, and we thought it was the enemy. It was the battleships shooting over there, past us, all these shells going on, our own ships, but we went in, and then, we formed into groups and, let's see, how long were we [there]? Well, I guess … we were in Luzon the whole time, practically. Well, no, Panay and Masbate, but they were little side trips, that Panay and Masbate. They're little islands. You're there maybe a day or two, five days, or something like that, but the other, Luzon, was the main part.

SI: You said that, during the initial landing, there was not much resistance.

WC: No.

SI: When did your unit start hitting heavy resistance?

WC: I've got to stop and think that one out. I don't remember now, but, when we first went in, we all hung low and went in, … moved into Luzon quite a ways, we're up on the hill and Japs was in there already, but we had to move in a ways before we contacted them. I don't remember just how long. …

SI: Was the 40th Infantry Division the first division sent into that area or were you relieving other troops?

WC: No, there was others, too. There was others alongside. I don't even remember what divisions they were, but, like, we went in there and we kept moving in and we were fortunate, in a way. We didn't hit that much resistance then. It was later on that we hit the resistance. … This one kid, he was so scared. He was a scout. He was scared. He got it, too, and our lieutenant there, … well, he did a foolish thing. We're moving up the hill there and there's a big valley and we're on this side and we're moving up here, Third Company [Platoon?]. First Company [Platoon?] was over here, by this hill, and this stupid lieutenant we had kept pushing, pushing, pushing, "Wheel 'em." He should have waited for this First Platoon [to] get up there. He would [have] seen the Japs, but, … when we wheeled them, he wheeled … us right into them. I mean, they opened right up on us. Otherwise, we would have [had support]; like, my scout got shot right away. I don't know how many we lost, … and you couldn't see them that far, at first. … You know, they have a light uniform. They blend in pretty well, but he went back. He had his thumb shot off.

SI: The lieutenant or the scout?

WC: The lieutenant. The kids thought he ought to have his head shot off [laughter] for pushing them in the wrong way when he shouldn't [have], but he [was] trying to make a name for himself.

SI: Was he the exception, or did you think most officers were like that?

WC: No, no, he was an exception, I think, on that.

SI: Did you have confidence in most of the officers?

WC: Most of them, yes. Well, I'll tell you, when they're with the guys, they're a wonderful guy. … When they're in the combat, they're a wonderful guy, but, when they're in the back, boy, they're drilling you and giving it to you, but they're one of the boys when … the things are flying around, because more than one got killed.

SI: When was the first time you remember being under fire?

WC: Now, you got me. It was in Luzon. I mean, I don't know just what part we were in when we got under fire. …

MP: Were you there very long before you got shot at?

WC: I don't think it was too long. … When we first went in, we kept moving up, and then, finally, we started hitting resistance.

SI: Did you feel you were trained enough to deal with these combat situations?

WC: We had our training. It's just that you had to use your common sense and do it. It was hard on us all when we'd lose some and you'd get new, raw recruits. That was hard, because you're trying to tell them and they think you're bragging, but you're not bragging. You're trying to keep them so that they don't get shot, because they can get shot easy. They can get shot easy. … One time there, we took this hill and we're up on the hill and a plane come over and it opened up on the hill. It was our own plane. They mistook it. They thought it was Japs. We had to back down in a hurry, and the first lieutenant and first sergeant [were the] first ones down the hill. We met them afterwards, when we got down there, everybody for themselves, more or less. … He should've been leading us, not running, but that happens. … We took that in a day; it took us a week to get it back.

SI: After you left the hill?

WC: Yes, and, when we … went back up again, why, they reinforced [it] or something, but it took a longer time getting it back than [when] we took it originally. I guess the artillery worked better.

SI: Were you acting as a supply sergeant at this time?

WC: I was, more or less; no, I wasn't a supply sergeant there, when I was actually in combat, … not until later on. I was more, like I say, it was a PFC job with a staff sergeant's stripes. As a staff sergeant, I was supply sergeant; I wasn't then.

SI: You were a rifleman.

WC: Regular rifleman then, when I first went into combat, yes. Otherwise, I wouldn't be out there firing. [laughter] Let them do it; I'll be sending stuff up to them.

SI: Yes, I was curious about that.

WC: Yes.

SI: You were telling stories about being under fire and I do not usually think of supply sergeants actually being that close to the frontlines.

WC: Yes, no. You are in the beginning like that, and they've got to bring supplies up and stuff. In fact, their supply sergeant, the company I joined, he was home on furlough. … I didn't get right back into supply in the beginning. … As a rifleman, I had the stripes and this captain from Massachusetts, he's going through the records, he says, "I've got a supply sergeant here." He put me back in supply. The other guy, I don't think he ever did get back. He was on furlough when we went over. So, you did whatever you were told to do, that's all. You just had to do it. Now, when we [were] first in combat, I wasn't in supply, but that wasn't long.

SI: When you would encounter the enemy, would you be on patrol or was it part of large pushes to get them out of a position?

WC: Well, yes, you just keep moving up, moving up, your marching positions, until you hit, you know, resistance, and then, you have to adapt, whichever, whether you're down or up or crawl or what. When I got [shot in] that canteen, I was running, [laughter] but that was coming from a different angle. They told me, "They have a machinegun," but it was because that was a form of our own [fire], lighting the grass up. We had to come out of there. That's why I had to run. Otherwise, I … wouldn't be retreating, but I wasn't going to get burned, either, but I said a few Hail Marys. They always come in handy.

EB: Do you feel like your religious background helped you through?

WC: Oh, yes. I've had more than one private come up to me, he said, "Bill, will you teach … me how to pray?" You know, a lot of them didn't know how, but they wanted to when they got there. [laughter] Like they say, "There's never an atheist in a foxhole."

SI: Did they have chaplains or services available when you were in combat?

WC: When they could, when they could. You didn't always [have one], couldn't always get one then, and, sometimes, the priest would be a chaplain for even the Protestants, or Protestants would give us a sermon. They couldn't give us the Mass, … but you don't always have one with you. You're lucky when you have one with you, very unfortunate.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about what life was like in the field, how you lived, what you ate, where you slept?

WC: Well, like, when you're in combat, you make groups of three. You're five yards apart, just so you can see across. Then, you … make three holes you [can] stand up in, like this, so that … the man over here, from that one, can touch the other one and keep in contact with one another.

… Like, one night there, this one private, he's running his soul out. He said, "That's a Jap. That's a Jap." [The] Jap's going like this with the saber at him, like this, you know. … He [the private] went out the next day on the stretcher, but he had that saber, after we shot that Jap. He had that with him, but … it did a job on him. I don't know how he made out later, whether he come out of it or not. …

SI: It was just one guy attacking the line.

WC: It was the one Jap chasing this one [soldier]. He was on the frontline part, or something, I imagine. I can't [tell]. You're laying in groups of threes and you're waiting there and he [was] probably on the end of the line and the Jap darted after him and got close enough and he went running down the line. I don't know just how it happened to be that way, but he went out of his head there, a day or two later. He was on the stretcher anyway, but he had the saber with him. I bet he took that home. I just hope he straightened out later.

SI: You think it caused him to suffer "shellshock" or "combat fatigue" as a result.

WC: Yes, yes, yes, being blunt. Well, that's a rough thing, being chased by a Jap with a saber in front of your troops. [laughter]

SI: Were you ever in a position where you would actually see the enemy?

WC: You don't see them too often, no. No, you don't see them too often, like, that one I told you [about], I saw him coming across the field.

SI: The guy who blew himself up?

WC: And we saw, … like, they were down along this hill and we were way back here, but the First Platoon was up there and we were the Third. Well, if our lieutenant had done what they told him to do, stick with the rest, you know, move up together, they would have seen these Japs there, but he moved forward and starts wheeling his men around to go up towards this hill. He didn't see them and they opened up on him, but our … First Platoon would have seen them and … we wouldn't have lost all those people. I don't know how many he lost. I know the scout died and another kid got it, in my group. I don't know about what was behind me.

SI: When you were attacked, was it usually artillery fire, mortars, rifle fire or a mix?

WC: It's mostly rifle. … We used artillery, we used mortars, and I imagine they did, too. I don't recall now, but I know we used some.

SI: Do you remember being shelled?

WC: No, no.

SI: It was mostly rifle fire that would come in.

WC: Mostly rifle fire, … for me, yes, mostly rifles. I was a lot thinner then, too. I had a twenty-eight-[inch] waist, weighed 128 pounds and I could run then, too, but I couldn't run now. [laughter] Now, I have a forty-[inch] waist and 140 pounds, big difference.

SI: Would they be able to get rations, food and whatever else you needed up to you?

WC: Yes. Well, you didn't get hot rations all the time, no, K rations. … There was K rations.

SI: C rations?

WC: C rations, yes. … Yes, there were C rations. Now, let's see, the K rations, I think, was the chocolate bars and stuff. The C rations is, I think, potatoes; I think there's a little more to it, but the hot food, that was your canteen [mess kit]. If you didn't lose your canteen, then, you had to get a piece of an airplane or something to use for a canteen, or some piece of metal, something.

SI: How many days would you be at the front? How many consecutive days would you be in a foxhole at the front? Would they pull you back every couple of days? How did that work?

WC: Well, you're back quite awhile in the beginning, like I say. You're loading the ship, and then, you go in, and then, when you go in, you keep moving up. I mean, you keep moving forward and keep moving forward. … Like, in New Guinea, you were there quite awhile. That's our staging area. … Then, they … moved you over to New Britain, and then, you're there for, I don't know, we were there a few weeks, I guess, loading the ships and stuff like that. Then, we got aboard the ships, and then, we started for Luzon. I forget how long we were there, but we were there awhile.

SI: Once you were in combat …

WC: In combat.

SI: Would you constantly be on the frontline or would they pull you back a little bit?

WC: Sometimes, you'd go, by ship, to different places and, sometimes, you're moving up through the fields and the area, mountains, whatever. You keep moving up, keep moving up. You're not fighting the whole time. You're moving more than you are fighting, actually. It's not a steady fight until you hit something, resistance.

MP: … You never went back, though. You always just advanced and advanced.

WC: Oh, yes, you keep advancing, yes. No, you don't go back, once you start out. No, of course, … we went to Luzon and, well, we kept going until we crossed it, you know, went out the other side, I think, as I recall. Let's see, … yes, we went; well, this Masbate and Panay, they were little side trips. They were little, bitty islands. You're only there maybe five days or something like that, and then, you went back to Luzon, to your regular staging area.

SI: What do you remember about those two invasions?

WC: What, them little ones?

SI: Yes, Masbate, for example.

WC: We didn't see any [Japanese], we didn't hit anybody there. No, they moved out or some other outfit got them, but we didn't. … I remember, one time, they [a group of American soldiers] said they were up on the hill. They were watching us, when I had my group with me, and they'd seen me going and there's a Japanese, with his group, going this way. We didn't see him and he didn't see us, missed [each other] through the woods there, [laughter] just as well; might have been pretty close there.

SI: Did most of the fighting take place during the day or at night?

WC: Be in the day more. At night, you wouldn't, too much.

SI: Would the Japanese attack at night?

WC: … Not really. A lot of times, you can tell the Japs were coming, too, like, … on the hill. You smell the sake coming up. They'd be stoned. They'd fill them with sake and [shout], "*Banzai*."

SI: They were doing the mass attacks.

WC: Yes, some of them. … I was fortunate enough to get into [not] as much as some of the guys did. I think my brother saw more action than I did. He was in with the Germans, over there in Germany.

KB: Were you able to keep in contact with that brother during the war?

WC: Not very well; … well, when I was home, but [not] from when he was there and I was here. We did some, though, because he knew I was in the; well, I don't know. Maybe Mom told him. He knew I was in the Philippines and he was there. He said he wished he was there to help me. … I was a timid type, but I got over that quick. [laughter] You couldn't be that way. He was always the strong one. He was shorter than I, but he was always the boss. [laughter]

SI: When you were in the field, were you able to get mail and news?

WC: Yes. … Well, when we were overseas, we got mail, but not when you were in combat, you didn't get it.

SI: They would not bring mail up to the line.

WC: If you're staying in a spot for awhile, yes, but, otherwise, if you're moving up, why, they hold it and, every so often, you get mail. It wasn't a steady thing.

SI: How was morale during the combat phase?

WC: Most of it was good. Once in awhile, it got to some of them. … Once in awhile, they go over. They take off, go over the hill, … not in the combat as much as when you're back in the stationary spots, because, like, when I was a supply sergeant, that was one of the things I had to do. When they'd … go over, takeoff, I'd have to get all their stuff together, pack it in a spot and tag it and hold it for them. That's their stuff. Then, when … they come back, they get it; if not, well, it'll be reissued eventually.

SI: Where would they run off to when they were in a staging area?

WC: … They didn't take off too much overseas. That's in the [United] States more when they do that, yes, yes. No, because it's just [that] you're alone out there.

MP: Where are they going? [laughter] Swim across.

WC: Yes.

SI: You mentioned you contracted malaria when you were overseas.

WC: Yes.

SI: Was that when you were in combat or later?

WC: … I think I had it in the beginning. No, no, I had it before I come home, yes, afterwards. That's from a mosquito. They spray water with kerosene to kill them, but, you know, you don't always get them all, and not only that, well, then, afterwards, you're taking that Atabrine all the time, you're yellow. You don't know if you're getting better or not, if they're working on you. [laughter]

MP: So, where was it that you got the malaria?

WC: I was in the States, I think; … no, no, couldn't have been. I'm just trying to think, Mary Anne, where did I get my malaria? I had malaria when I come home, so, it was before I come home. So, it must have been in Fort Ord.

WCJ: Oh, well, you said that that's when you found out your canteen was shot, was when you were in the hospital for the malaria. So, it had to be right after …

WC: Yes, yes, that was …

MP: No, he said exhaustion.

WC: Huh?

MP: From exhaustion.

WC: I was exhausted when that happened, but I had the malaria from …

MP: Well, you said the Japs had all the …

WC: Quinine, yes.

MP: Quinine, so, it had to be where it was occupied by the Japanese, wouldn't you think?

WC: Oh, well, I was in the Philippines. That was all Japanese, yes.

MP: So, that's where you got the malaria. …

WC: Yes, yes, yes. Edgar was in Germany.

SI: I was curious if you had the malaria and still had to fight or if they took you to the hospital first.

WC: Oh, if you're taking that quinine [Atabrine], you could keep going, even though you had malaria. I had malaria, probably, … I had it when I come home and I didn't know I had it, because … where was I? I was in the hospital, home, here, and this father, his son was a Marine or something, was in the hospital [also]. … I'm in there and, boy, the covers started shaking, this arm was shaking and the covers started shaking. He called the nurse right away. He knew what it was. I didn't know I had it, and that's when I found I had malaria. That was afterwards, more or less, or in-between somewhere, because the father was involved in that. I'm just trying to think. … I had it overseas, but whether I …

MP: Treated it over there or not.

WC: Treated it over there. I think the time I was in the hospital was an exhaustion attack. That wasn't malaria there. I had it and didn't know. Well, I don't know.

SI: How did the exhaustion attack happen?

WC: I don't know. That was probably when our grass got caught on fire. That's what it was. We were running out and falling, running out and falling, and I was in for a short time, maybe a week, something like that.

MP: Oh, really?

WC: I wasn't anxious to go back, yet.

MP: Scared out of your wits, that's what it was, [laughter] saw that fire looking at you.

WC: Yes.

SI: You told us the story about the scout who kept saying he was scared, and then, eventually, he was killed-in-action.

WC: Yes.

SI: How did you know he was scared? Was that something you would talk about?

WC: No, he would tell you; he was really scared. I knew that. I think he's the one that got [hit]. He got hit later, but I'm not sure that was the [scout that was killed]. Well, my scout got hit and the one who was scared, I think he was one of the other fellows. I don't think he was the scout, though. I think he was one of the other men there, because we had to get him a new pair of shoes. He wore holes in his.

SI: What would you and your buddies talk about when you were out in the field?

WC: I don't know, off hand. [laughter] Off hand, I wouldn't really [say].

MP: Did you talk about the fighting? …

SI: Yes, if you were scared or not.

WC: Oh, nobody'd admit that.

MP: But, about the fighting, did you talk about [it]?

WC: Some, yes, yes, like, I know, after we were in combat and we lost some men and we got some recruits and we tried to explain to them, they thought we're bragging. They wouldn't believe it, you know. It was harder on them that way, better [off] taking a little help. …

SI: What were some of the things that you learned that you were trying to teach these recruits? What were some of the tips you were trying to give them?

WC: I couldn't remember that now, either. …

MP: What did they think you were bragging about?

WC: About how they're shooting at you and stuff like that, how you had to be careful.

MP: And how'd you tell them to be careful?

WC: I don't know, Mary Anne, I really [do not]. … You forget a lot. Now, at my age, I'm even forgetting a lot more. [laughter]

SI: Were things like booby traps or mines a problem?

WC: Oh, yes. They'd booby trap their booby traps and they'd booby trap their dead. They would. They were great for booby traps, those Japs were.

SI: Was anybody in your unit hurt by booby traps?

WC: I imagine so. I can't, off hand, remember any particular one. There's just the one guy I got in the back, on the stretcher thing, but I remember him, but you don't always see the ones [who] get hit later. You keep moving up and they're not there. You don't know whether they went back or whether, you know, they'd come back.

SI: Did you find yourself becoming more hardened to what was happening around you?

WC: You have to. You couldn't be squeamish. You've got to keep walking and, … when you've got a nice spring coming out of the mountain, that was nice, because that was nice, clean water, but some water … could be a little dirty. [If] you had to have a drink, you used Halazone tablets, so [that] you wouldn't get sick.

SI: As you were moving through Luzon, would you encounter any natives?

WC: Oh, yes.

SI: You told us a story about the coconut trees, but any villages.

WC: Yes, that's something they warn you, "Don't go near those native girls." [laughter] … That was a funny thing, too. They don't wear any [tops]; they're topless. They run around just with a skirt. So, the Army didn't want that around the boys. They issued them some cloth, you know. … They cut holes in the cloth. [laughter] They didn't want to cover up. … You'd get jungle rot and other things from them. They had all kinds of disease then, the natives did. There's some Australians in there, too, was over there. … That was in New Guinea, I think, there was an Australian bunch in there with us. One time, … I didn't see that, we're in chow line, this Jap got in the chow line to get something to eat. [laughter] One of them found him in the back of the line.

SI: Would the Japanese come in to surrender and nobody would realize it for a little bit?

WC: No, not too much. They didn't surrender a whole lot. See, to them, it's an honor to die for their Emperor. I mean, they don't mind dying. We want to keep fighting, but, like I say, he pulled the pin, he went for his Emperor.

WCJ: Well, one of the things you used to say, too, is, in one of the stories, that you could smell them coming over the hill.

WC: That's the sake. … Sake is rice wine, is what it is. … When the *banzai* attack [happened], you always hear about these *banzai* attacks, that's not just the plain Japanese *banzai*-ing. They got him all psyched up on sake first, and then, he's roaring to go. Then, he comes up. He didn't

want to die all the time, either, but it's an honor for them. They'll die quicker than we will. We wouldn't give up like that. We wouldn't pull a pin or nothing like that stuff.

SI: Did your unit suffer a lot of casualties?

WC: You don't really know how many you suffered, to be truthful, but I know we had to fill some in here and there, but I don't know how many you really suffered.

SI: You did not notice if it limited your ability to do things.

WC: No. I remember, there was about twelve, at one time, replacements we had, that we were trying to teach them what they should do, but that was just in our section, but there's a lot of sections, you know, a lot of companies and battalions. …

MP: When you took the long zig-zag, when your officer made you go up the hill, did you lose a lot then? Were a lot wounded?

WC: … No, we didn't lose them going up the hill, that I know, too much.

MP: Well, when you said the guy made you go up the wrong way, he should have waited, the officer, that time?

WC: Oh, well, we were coming across the side of the hill, that was [then].

MP: Okay. So, did you lose a lot then?

WC: They lost some. Like I say, I got it in the back and I don't know how many are lost, because I didn't see how many got lost afterwards, but I know the one kid got it on the stretcher, and I don't know how he lost [it], because I tripped on a darn rock. I'd say a Hail Mary and I tripped [on] a rock, down I went, my helmet went off, but God …

MP: … That was when … the officer made you go?

WC: When the grass; no, no.

MP: No, not with the grass. I mean when the officer made you go.

SI: Yes, when he was wheeling around.

MP: Yes, when he was wheeling around. …

WC: Oh, that was when we were moving up on the Japs.

MP: Right. Did you lose a lot then?

WC: No, no, we didn't lose too many, but we lost some, but I don't know how many we lost, to be truthful, because we pulled back and regrouped and they gave you replacements and stuff like that.

SI: Was it on Luzon when they took you out of the infantry and put you in the supply sergeant role?

WC: No, no, I was supply sergeant before. From the day I stepped in the Army, they put me in supply.

SI: You mentioned that …

WC: I was helping the supply sergeant doing his bookwork and he wanted to get in combat, and then, from then on, … I was supply sergeant. I was supply sergeant at Fort Knox, Kentucky, when I was in my training. I never did get any basic training. They put me right in supply work, from the beginning.

SI: After Luzon, did you …

WC: I had my stripes, but I wasn't always a supply sergeant, like, I was fighting as a private with the staff sergeant stripes.

SI: After that, when did they …

WCJ: After you were in combat, did you go back into supply?

WC: Oh, yes.

MP: Was that on Luzon?

WCJ: And was it over in Luzon or was it in the States?

WC: No, it was overseas. When we were getting ready to go to Japan, I was in supply then, and that was a stupid thing, the Army. Men come in [with] these nice, new, new guns. They had a lot of guns and they didn't want to account for them. They just threw them overboard, just threw them overboard; got new ones, just threw them overboard. Army is wasteful, even in the States. I've seen them just shoot ammunition to get rid of it.

SI: After the combat phase was over, you were sent to Korea, also.

WC: Yes, that's where we went, to Korea. I was there seventeen days, I think, [in] Korea. That's where we were. Let's see, I think we're getting ready to go back. … We were at Leyte to come back, but, yes, I was in Korea. … I come home from Camp Wood, but I think we went to Korea first, and then, to Camp Wood.

(Grandson?): Is that where the pile of guns was, like, different weapons that were surrendered?

WC: … Let's see, Korea; oh, we went to Leyte, where we were training for the invasion of Japan. … I was transferred to Korea. Yes, that was before, you know, transferred to Korea, from which I departed on November the 18th. That's where I come home from, Korea. I wasn't in combat there.

(Grandson?): Grandpop, when you were in Korea, was that where, like, the pile of guns was? …

WC: Where what?

(Grandson?): The pile of guns. …

WC: Oh, yes, yes. Well, I took all the guns away from all of the [locals]. They even took the guns away from the troops, some of them, because when the Japs hit Pearl Harbor, you know, they were running out there, shooting the damn rifles off, had to take them away from them, calm them down.

MP: … After the [war]?

WC: That was before. …

MP: The pile of guns, that you guys got to pick souvenirs.

WC: … Yes, that was the end of the war. There was sabers, there was guns. I could have had a saber, I could have had a gun; I took the saber.

WCJ: You took both.

WC: No, I didn't get it.

WCJ: You got …

WC: Oh, that was different. That was a matchlock.

WCJ: Yes, okay.

WC: That wasn't a Japanese gun. I meant a Japanese rifle. … Yes, I took that. I don't know how come I got [it]. … It was an odd-looking thing. It's got just a little, short handle. My other grandson has that, what they call a matchlock. … You put the powder here, … the little clicker goes down there, hits the powder, ignites it somehow. … In front of a school there, they had all the guns taken away from the people, piled in a heap, and we were allowed to have a saber or a gun. … I got that, but I also got a saber somehow.

MP: And that was in Korea?

WC: No, no, that was coming home. No, yes, that'd be in Korea, yes, before we come home, yes, yes, in Korea. Yes, that'd be in Korea, Mary Anne. Yes, that'd be in Korea.

SI: Did you have any duties in Korea or was it just getting ready to come home?

WC: More or less, we were getting ready to come home then. I didn't have any duties then, no, because I was only there about seventeen days, I think. … In fact, they made a mistake. One fellow, one of the fellows I knew, he was in another company, he said, "Hey, they called your name out over at our company." I ran down to battalion, and who was in there? The major in there used to be my supply sergeant in Fort Knox, Kentucky, supply lieutenant, Fort Knox, Kentucky. He said, "Look," he said, "if I take and keep you to this order, it'll take me two weeks or more to get you there." He says, "I'll cut you new orders." I was supposed to come home on, oh, what was it? I forget now. Anyway, so, he cut me new orders, and then, I got aboard ship. We get up aboard ship, until we're up on the deck there, and they come out and they say, "We don't have any room for you." There was a hundred of us aboard [on] deck, didn't have any bunks for us. I said, "We're not going back, either." We just stood there. So, what they had to do [was], they had to take the Navy out of their bunks and let them go back with the Coast Guard. They can sleep with the Coast Guard, they couldn't sleep with the sergeants, though. So, we took their bunks, but they're going to send us home. We weren't about to go home if we laid on the top of that deck, ready to go home then.

KB: Do you remember hearing about FDR's death when you were overseas?

WC: Was that at that time? I remember hearing about his death, but I'm just trying to remember where I was. He died during the war, huh?

SI: Yes, April of 1945.

WC: Yes, April '45? …

KB: It did not really have an affect on your company or anything.

WC: No, no, I think we were home. I got out by that time, didn't I?

SI: You may have been in the Philippines.

MP: Yes. … '44, you went to New Guinea. So, you were in the Philippines.

WC: I was in the Philippines, yet. Yes, I guess we did hear about it then. Yes, everybody was upset.

SI: What about the atomic bombs and the end of the war?

WC: Well, we didn't get that information right away, I don't think. … That was at the end, I think, the atomic bomb, wasn't it?

WCJ: Well, that was the story that you said, because they did that, that you weren't deployed as that diversionary force, because they dropped …

WC: Yes, yes, that was at the end, yes. … We were then training to go to Japan. That's when I was in training. … We were at Fort Ord, I guess. No, it wasn't Fort Ord.

KB: Leyte, right?

WC: Leyte, yes, we were in Leyte, getting ready to come home, to go over to the Philippines, Japan, Japan itself. Yes, I'm talking, getting confused. [laughter]

SI: No, this happens every interview. People were sent all over the place and it is difficult to keep track. Do you remember hearing the news and what the reaction was, both personally and as a group?

WC: … You mean when the Japs hit Pearl Harbor?

SI: No, when the atomic bombs were dropped at the end of the war.

WC: Oh, they were happy. Oh, yes, we were happy about that. They were very happy about that, but they only dropped the one. Wasn't it one they dropped?

SI: Two.

WC: Two?

SI: Yes, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

WC: They were getting ready to [do] another one, but some people condemn us for that. Don't condemn me; I'd [have] been dead if they didn't.

SI: What about V-J Day, the day the war ended?

WC: Oh, that's when I had to grab their rifles.

SI: Okay.

WC: Yes, yes, they were getting real mushy, shooting them off. That's when I had to turn them in, until they calmed down a bit. Yes, that's what it was, V-J Day.

SI: I have heard that story from other people, that people went crazy shooting their guns off and the bullets were coming down on people.

WC: Yes. Oh, they did, yes. They're out there shouting, … and I can understand that, but they don't have to shoot their guns off. They would shoot somebody … that way, doing that.

SI: Were you ordered to do that or did you realize that somebody could get hurt?

WC: I probably did it on my own, I don't know. I'm not sure, but, then, the Captain might have done it, too. … I was in combat … as a rifleman and this Captain, as I say, from Massachusetts, he's looking at my records, he said, "I've got a supply sergeant here," and he put me right back in supply, because our supply sergeant wasn't there anyway. [laughter] …

SI: Does anything stand out in your memory from your time in either combat or any time overseas that you would like to add to the record?

WC: Not really. I was glad to get home, everybody was, yes.

KB: Was it easy to transfer back into civilian life after you had been overseas?

WC: Yes. We went to Camp Wood, Camp Wood there, and they had German prisoners cooking the meals. You'd have anything you want, steak and eggs, the whole works. That first meal, you got the top of the line, after all those other rations you had over in combat. Yes, I remember that, but, you know, they had some Italian prisoners there, working, and they had the Germans. Some of the Italian prisoners, they let them go into town and work, because they didn't want to fight. They didn't want to fight, the Italians didn't. They were forced into it by Hitler.

SI: Did you have trouble with nightmares or anything after the war?

WC: No, I never had that. I imagine some did. Now, Henry, he had a tougher time of it than I did. He got wounded a couple times. He was a prisoner of war, too.

SI: Yes, Henry Duerkes, [a cousin, also interviewed by the Rutgers Oral History Archives], okay.

WC: Yes.

SI: I was mistaking him for one of your brothers for a moment.

WC: No, no, my brother, he was here. … I don't think Joe was in too long before he came out.

WCJ: Well, Uncle Joe never left the States.

WC: No, no, he was down in North Carolina and Lakehurst. No, he was in the Navy.

SI: What do you remember about coming home and being reunited with your family?

WC: Oh, it was a joyful time. You know, that's one thing I remember. Coming home, coming by train down and coming through Belmar, I could smell the river. I don't smell it now, but I could smell that river, … and I never did before, but, really, I knew I was home. I could smell the river, but, yet, you don't smell the river going by it now. …

MP: It was the river or the ocean?

WC: No, the river, coming in Belmar, by the … railroad thing.

SI: Did you go back to work right away or did you take some time off?

WC: No, I didn't. We were allowed fifty-two weeks, if we wanted to. I went to work, didn't I, Mary Anne?

MP: I don't know. I wasn't born, then. [laughter]

WC: I'm afraid not. … No, I went to work. No, I didn't want to sit around. What did I do when I first come home? Oh, I went to work for the *Press*.

MP: Did you work for the garage first?

WC: Roy's Body Shop? … No, wait a minute …

MP: Because wasn't your story that Mom didn't like the grease under your nails.

WC: Yes, yes. That must have been there first then. … Well, she was a bookkeeper at the *Press*. That's how I got in. No, I worked for Roy's Body Shop for awhile, but you used to have to sand the cars down there and, today, they can't do that, today, but we used to use gasoline, cuts the paint quicker, but it makes your hands smell a little bit. You had to [be careful].

WCJ: That's an accident waiting to happen.

WC: They stopped that. That's against the law. They can't do that no more.

WCJ: Wonder why, Dad?

WC: I don't know. Probably wasn't good for the hands, either.

WCJ: No, I don't think it was.

WC: [laughter] But, we got the paint off quick.

SI: You worked there, and then, you started your career at the *Press*.

WC: When I come home; … when was I working for Roy? That's what I'm trying to figure out; couldn't have been before.

MP: I would assume it was probably when you first came home, before you went to the *Press*.

KB: It is written on the sheet that you worked at the body shop in 1945, and then, from 1945 on, you worked at the *Press*.

WC: *Press*, okay, yes. I worked [at] the body shop first, then.

MP: Well, I think that's what we decided on.

WC: Yes.

WCJ: Yes, we've got a consensus on that, Dad.

WC: Yes, yes, yes.

SI: How did you get the job at the *Press*?

WC: My wife was a bookkeeper there and I went in and applied for a job, and I got it. … They were glad to get someone then, too. I mean, after the war, they were shorthanded.

SI: Did you have training in typesetting before?

WC: No, they trained me. Oh, yes, they gave me training, and I did my work. I didn't goof off, like some of them, and I got ahead. I used to, well, I first started in stereotype. That's stereotype, … for your pictures and things, they made them in lead then, you know, made the flat cast. … Also, then, they have, like, what they call a "pony." It's a round thing, like this, because your paper, your mat, is round and they make these things for [where] the paper goes over the metal. It's different today, but that's the way it was then, and … you had to pull a lever for the metal to come down and you've got to let it up quick, or she'll freeze on you. Then, they've got to chip it out. … Then, I got into … the other part, the mechanical part. I got into doing the news in the paper, and then, the color ads. Now, [in] those days, … like, say this is your paper; that was the black page, then, they have, like, what they call acetate, like isinglass, you might say, clear; for each color, [there] is one of them. They go this way, that way, or this way and that way, whatever way it has to be, and they had to be registered. You have to register them in and I used to love to do the color ones, because [it was the] same way like I like to wallpaper. It was like wallpaper, … but I enjoyed the *Press*. I worked there thirty-eight years, but, now, it's all computers. It's all part-timers, too. I mean, you'd have a hard time finding a job today that's full-time, because they can't afford the health benefits. The *Press*, I think, is all part-timers now, pretty well, too, but we were full-time, then. You used to have benefits, vacation time. No, I enjoyed working there. Helen was working there. … Well, I went to Roy first, I think, and then, over there, but I got [that] through Helen, my wife.

SI: You have lived in this area since the end of the war, and, obviously, before the war, but you have lived in this house since the end of the war.

WC: Yes. …

MP: My mother was born in this house.

WC: It was her house. … Let's see, when we got married, I was in the service, … 1940, was it? I went in in '41.

SI: Yes, 1941.

WC: … Then, '41, we got married.

SI: December of 1945, yes.

WC: What, '41?

SI: Yes. You went in August of 1941 and came out, according to this, December of 1945.

WC: August '41, yes, yes. … Helen stayed here with her father and I was in the service, come home on furlough. You'd get furlough every so often. I think, if you're in the States, you get about thirty days a year, something like that, furlough time. … I had a car out there. I didn't at first, but I had a car out at Fort Knox; I mean, not Fort Knox, up here. Where did I have a car, around here, Fort Monmouth? …

MP: No, you weren't at Fort Monmouth.

WC: Fort Dix? …

MP: You weren't at Fort Dix, were you?

WC: No, I did have a car at Fort Knox. Yes, I did. I drove out. I drove out to it, yes. Yes, I remember that, took me awhile to drive out there. Yes, I took her car and she took mine. I had a Pontiac and she had a small Chevy. No, Ford, she had a Ford, that's right, [at] that time. Yes, Cliff was alive, then.

SI: How have you seen this area change over the last sixty years?

WC: Right now, it's less than sixty years, it's changed. It's really changing.

SI: The population has grown quite a bit.

WC: Oh, you notice the houses they're building, three stories? What for, I don't know; probably don't even have a kid, you know. That's what gets me. … They're all building that. They're tearing down the bungalows and up goes the three stories. I don't know. Some contractor really must be making a bundle.

SI: Yes, they can get a huge price for homes that are closer to the Shore and at the Shore.

WC: Yes. Maybe they'll go back to bungalows, because, right now, things are getting tight, go back to bungalows again, because they can't afford it. [laughter] Who knows?

SI: Did you become involved in the community after the war?

WC: I joined the VFW for awhile. I stayed there, but I dropped out later. I could still go back, if I want. … Well, the American Legion, then, any soldier can join that. The VFW, you have to be a combat soldier, and they had a good chapter down here in Belmar.

SI: Do you have any other questions?

WC: Yes, it was good to get home, I'll tell you, but … I could have got paid for fifty-two weeks and not do a bit of work, but I didn't want to do that. I went to work. I wanted to get going.

MP: Get on with your life.

WC: Yes. Well, I was married and I didn't want to, you know, just take time wandering around, doing nothing.

SI: Do you think there is any way that the war changed who you are or made you who you were after the war?

WC: Give me more courage than I used to have, … took a lot of that timid business out, got rid of a lot of that. [laughter] No, I enjoyed life afterwards. I guess we all did, when we come home.

KB: Did you keep in touch with any of your friends from the war?

WC: No, I haven't, really. There was no one right here with me. There was one fellow, … (Audrey Riddle?), he was in Virginia, I think. I kept in touch with him for awhile, but he's married, I'm married, you know. You get going on with your life, many things to do. … After I got through working, I retired here, why, I used to love flowers, loved … dahlias, and, when I retired, why, it's '83, I think. No, I was … sixty-seven when I retired. I was going to go to seventy, but I looked at my money there and I got [to] thinking, "What am I doing? If I work three [years'] time, I'm coming in early, at three hundred dollars a week, well, why do that?" So, I quit. I went to work. … When I did retire, though, [as] I say, I like flowers. … Out back here, I had a twenty-seven-by-sixty-five garden out there, all these big, dinner-plate dahlias. When I was working, I didn't have the time for it, but, when I had the time, I mean, digging all that dirt up, that wasn't hard work. It was a labor of love. Of course, I eventually did get a tiller to dig it up. I did it by hand first, but I sold enough of them out front here to get a tiller. [laughter]

SI: Okay. You would sell them.

WC: Oh, I'd put them out. Eighteenth Avenue? people come from all over to get them. They'll put them in a jar, you know, these big dahlias. They loved them. You don't see them on the road stands so much, in the florists' or something like that. You see gladiolus and stuff. I first started gladiolus, but the gladiolus, you get one stem, you cut it, that's it, where [with] dahlias, you've got the stalk going up five feet and the flowers will keep growing. You're getting a lot more flowers and they're beautiful.

SI: Is there anything that we missed that you have heard over the years that you think we should have on the record?

MP: I think that's probably it.

WC: I think we covered it pretty well. [laughter]

SI: Is there anything else you want to add for the recording?

WC: Not really; thanks for listening.

SI: Thanks for talking. We cannot do this job without guys like you.

WC: I know, I know. No, I'm glad I had the opportunity to do it. Of course, nobody looks forward to doing it at the time, but I know I did my part and that's what counts.

SI: I do have one more question. Your son mentioned something about the *Morro Castle*.

WC: Yes, do you remember that?

SI: I know about it; I do not remember it.

WC: … No, I remember hearing about it, but, I mean, well, at the time, I was working. …

MP: A&P. …

WC: A&P, okay. It was this one on Washington Avenue, and the *Morro Castle*, before it came to Asbury [Park], it come in here, in Spring Lake. It hit ground, and then, it got on a little spot of ground there, and then, it washed down to Asbury Park. … The people come in there, you'd be waiting on them, "Did you hear about the *Morro Castle*?" Look around, they're out the door. You've got to put the groceries away. [laughter] He had to come back later. It was something, I'll tell you. You could stand outside and you could see it from Third Avenue of Spring Lake there, almost, and then, it washed further down to Asbury Park, but it came in here first.

MP: You could see it in flames?

WC: To some extent. The one guy, who was it now, the fireman? I think he jumped off the boat and rescued some woman, held her down, you know, when he jumped off with her. He didn't drown, but they were jumping right off the boat. They wanted to get out of there. Then, it washed away. Yes, that was a mess.

SI: Did you go to see it afterwards? It became a huge tourist attraction, right?

WC: Yes, oh, yes. It washed down to Asbury. It made a better tourist attraction for them, because there's a lot of people, more in Asbury than Belmar.

SI: Yes. It went with all the other boardwalk attractions, yes.

WC: Yes.

SI: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

WC: You're quite welcome.

SI: We appreciate your service.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Damian Kulikowski 3/4/09
Reviewed by Chris Hackmann 3/4/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/16/09
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 4/3/09
Reviewed by Michael Carver 9/9/2016