

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD F. CULWICK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Edward F. Culwick on November 6, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I guess I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your parents. Specifically, your father. Is your father still living?

Edward F. Culwick: He died this past April at 96 and a half.

KP: It sounds like he had a very long and rewarding life.

EFC: Well he had a hard one, I'll tell you that. (Laughs) He was an immigrant so ...

KP: Yes. When did he come over from Poland?

EFC: Well, let's see. Born 1898. He came over when he was about twelve, so I'd say 1910.

KP: Did he come over with his family?

EFC: A large family. He was the oldest of nineteen children.
Does that tell you something? Very good Catholics. Also careless. (Laughs)

KP: Where did they settle when they came over?

EFC: Well, the family settled in right around the Brooklyn Navy Yard and my grandfather, ... he made wagon wheels. He was a very excellent woodworker. He made wagons and wheels, but there wasn't much call for it over here. He couldn't speak the language. Got a job as a grave digger in the cemetery and my father went to school ... until the sixth grade. Coming over at age twelve not speaking the language, I don't know how he even got started, but I guess he went to school for a few years and then went out to work. Just to make room.

KP: Yes. Your father held a variety of different jobs including working as a textile weaver.

EFC: Yes. He did a lot of things. You know, a messenger in New York City, he got to know his way around. I think the family moved up towards New England and that's where the textile industry was. So he got a job as a weaver and that's where he met my mother, and they married at age eighteen. They were married over 70 years before my mother died. She died in--she was just to be 90 so she died in 1988. Spring of '88. They died within a couple of weeks of each other, calendar-wise, but six years apart.

KP: How did your parents settle in New Jersey? How did that come about?

EFC: Well, they lived up in Connecticut and worked for an outfit called Cheney Brothers which was a big textile company and I believe my grandparents bought some property in Piscataway, and that's why my father moved down this way. I guess to be with the family. And there was a weaving mill in Plainfield where they made neckties. So he got a job there. And, ah ... my grandfather then got a stable of workhorses and dug cellars before the advent of the bulldozer and the backhoe. They dug them with a scoop and a horse. They just went down and scooped the

scoop of dirt up a ramp dumped it on the side and kept going round and round and round until they got the hole pretty much dug and squared it up by hand with a shovel, and every day went to the same place. And every night the horse would take them back home and my grandpop would fall asleep on the wagon, but the horse knew his way home, so they made it.

KP: How long did he keep digging out cellars like that?

EFC: Well, until the advent of the bulldozer and the backhoe.

KP: Which was about what year?

EFC: I don't remember. I don't remember. I know I was still a teenager when I went out with them on the wagon. Depending on the soil, he could do a pretty good job if it was soft soil. With shale, like around here, whew, you know, it was tough but ...

KP: So this was into the 1930's that they were doing this?

EFC: Yes. Yes. And it's no secret my grandmother, when Prohibition came along, she was very handy and made bathtub booze. Right! She was a bootlegger and made a lot of money in the neighborhood.

KP: So she was just strictly a neighborhood bootlegger?

EFC: That's right and my grandfather then didn't have to work. (Laughs) He entertained the customers.

KP: Did they have a little speakeasy?

EFC: Just in the house.

KP: Just in the house.

EFC: And all the old boys would stop by and get their pint for 50 cents or whatever. Schnarf it down and sleep it off and then come back again. But in those days, I remember going to the butcher store to buy hops and malt. You could buy it to make your own beer. And my parents were great for doing their own, my mother would make wine, cider, pure alcohol, distill it, make cordials, rock and rye whiskey, if you know what that is.

KP: No, no. I've heard the term before.

EFC: It's very delicious. And what it is, is a whiskey and you put rock candy in it, which sweetens it and makes it like a liqueur. ... But that was for home consumption. But every year my father would go to the market and buy a load of grapes and my mother would wash them, and not like the commercial winery, we had to sit there and pluck them off the stems and put them in a big barrel, and she had the masher which was a rotary drum with diamond points that smashed

the grapes and then you pressed them through a burlap bag to get the juice out with the wine press, turn the crank Larry, squeeze the juice, put it in a good oak barrel ... with sugar and start the fermentation process.

KP: How did your parents feel about Prohibition both in the sense of being bootleggers, but also when Prohibition ended?

EFC: Well, then, my grandfather had to find a job. (Laughs) So he went to work ... as a sweeper in a Ransome Concrete Machinery factory where they made concrete mixers.

KP: So your grandfather and grandmother were the bootleggers?

EFC: Yeah. Right. My parents...

KP: Your parents just made some for home consumption.

EFC: That's right, yeah. Almost till the day they died. Of course, they moved to California in 1954. That's quite awhile ago, 40 years ago. And then, of course, they raised their own grapes and made their own wine ... just for their own use, but ... very hard working. Industrious. Prohibition was an inconvenience that's all. For my grandmother it was a windfall. She had the revenuers come around once in awhile. There was a little payola, you know. She's not hurting anybody, it's a family business. It wasn't like Chicago and the big timers.

KP: It sounds like most of the neighbors made use of her services.

EFC: Oh sure. Oh yeah. Hey, it was hard times and the only relief was a good snort.

KP: How hard of a time was it, when you were living in Piscataway?

EFC: Well, during the Depression, then you had Roosevelt come in with the NRA and the WPA and the PWA, Public Works ... Projects Administration, so you had all the ... men in the neighborhood digging ditches by hand putting in storm sewers. Any of the carpenters and masons were used to build schools. Grammar schools. They all had the same style. Cupola on top and this was done just to make work.

KP: Did anyone in your family work on any of the WPA or PWA projects?

EFC: No. My father was very industrious. He would travel and he had a book that thick (demonstrates) with all the addresses of all the weaving mills. He commuted from Piscataway to Staten Island every day just to have a job.

KP: And he drove?

EFC: And he drove a 1930 Chevrolet. I don't know how he made it, but he made it. (Laughs) And there they wove ribbon. Labels, they weren't printed then. They were actually woven with

the different colored threads and that's where he worked. After awhile he became a millwright. In other words, he repaired the looms as opposed to running the loom. I guess he was very mechanically inclined and picked it up quickly and got a better job. And during the Depression, at one point, he worked as I say, Staten Island, Easton Pennsylvania - there he had to take a room and come home weekends. He and my mother after my brother left home--he's four years older than me and I was in high school. Then my mother and father both got a job in what's called a velour mill in Bound Brook. Just outside of Bound Brook, it's called Middlesex Borough where they make a plush type of material. Weaves it through, a knife comes through, cuts it in half and you have like velvet. And times were so tough that in order to keep the job, my father had to work twelve hours a night. From six at night to six in the morning. Seven days a week.

KP: So he did not have a day off?

EFC: Never had a day off. And "Ssh! Pop's sleeping," because he worked all night. So when we came home from school, three o'clock in the afternoon, he was still asleep.

KP: When did he work twelve hours a night? What specific years?

EFC: Well, let's see, I was probably thirteen, fourteen years old then, fifteen, maybe. ... 1939. That was the height of the Depression.

KP: He was working twelve hours.

EFC: Eighty-four hours a week.

KP: How much was he making?

EFC: I said, he made good money. I don't remember. I don't think I ever knew.

KP: How comfortable were you? I mean, these are long hours.

EFC: Oh, yeah. We didn't want for anything.

KP: And your father did own a car?

EFC: Yeah. Always had a car.

KP: Did your parents own their house?

EFC: Yeah. (Chuckle) I was born in a house that is now smaller than my living room. My living room is 16 x 26. I have a pretty good sized house. And the house that my father first put up was 12 x 24. It was a half a house. Bedroom, kitchen, kerosene stove for heat and cooking, pump down the cellar for water. Outhouse in the yard covered with tar paper. That's what I was born in, I was born in the house.

KP: How long did your family use the outhouse?

EFC: A good while, because I still remember it. I couldn't put a year on it.

KP: But you grew up initially with the outhouse?

EFC: Oh, yeah.

KP: And at one point you got indoor plumbing?

EFC: Yeah. And then double the size of the house. 24 x 24. Four rooms! Then added on a little kitchenette and a little bathroom and then a garage. So it was slow.

KP: The house that you were born in, is it still standing?

EFC: Yes. I went by to see it a couple of years ago, but the party that bought it, took the roof off and made a two story house. So you wouldn't even recognize it now and it's all black. The whole neighborhood is gone. Because Plainfield had a good sized ... Afro-American population and, of course, they spread.

KP: So your house was actually in Plainfield or in Piscataway.

EFC: No. It was in Arbor, then. Or what's called Arbor then which is (demonstrates) this side of Dunellen. Do you know where Dunellen is?

KP: Yeah. I've been to Dunellen.

EFC: Well, it's just this side of the tracks. The wrong side of the tracks. My father cursed it, because he always had to go to the other side of the tracks to get to work.

KP: You went to the Arbor School in Piscataway?

EFC: That's right.

KP: What do you remember about your elementary education and junior high?

EFC: Well, we really didn't have a junior high. We went to grammar school and high school. ... You know, eighth grade at Arbor and ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, in Dunellen. What I remember most about Arbor School? Well, I got in trouble a few times by mimicking Amos and Andy and ... Brother Crawford and the King Fish, and I spoke out of turn. Now mind you, when I started grammar school I could not speak a word of English.

KP: So you just spoke Polish?

EFC: That's right. So, it was a handicap, you know. All these other kids knew the alphabet. They knew the basic words. I looked up at this dog - D-O-G, cat - C-A-T, ... it didn't make any sense to me, except the animal pictures, but it apparently took awhile to get adjusted to learning the language.

KP: Do you still speak Polish today?

EFC: No. Not a word.

KP: When did you lose your Polish?

EFC: Well, one reason was that my mother was very interested in learning English, so she insisted that we speak English at home to help her learn the language, and she taught herself to read.

KP: In English?

EFC: Yes. She could read a newspaper.

KP: Your parents, having Polish as the primary language at home, were there other Poles that lived near you in Piscataway?

EFC: Um, just my grandparents as far as I know. There might have been some here and there, but it wasn't a block. You know. It wasn't a community.

KP: So your parents had to speak English to other people?

EFC: Oh, yeah. That's right.

KP: What Catholic church did they attend?

EFC: They did not practice Catholicism. My father had a run out with the priest up in New England. The first born was a girl. She got influenza during the epidemic of 1918 or whatever it was '17 and died, and for some reason they had a run in with the priest who wanted ... to spend all kinds of money on formalities and my father didn't like it. And my mother said that in Europe the priests were not to be trusted. That if you told anything in Confession, next thing you know, everybody in town knew it. And if it was of a political nature, then you were in trouble. So she didn't have much--she liked religion, but she didn't like the Catholic Church. Even though I went, and was confirmed and I made my First Holy Communion at St. John's in Dunellen. Just to get religion. But...

KP: So, in other words, they would send you but they wouldn't go?

EFC: Yeah, well after awhile my mother found a little Polish Church in Dunellen at the other end of town. I forget the name of it, it's still there. And she would go there occasionally, because she felt you needed religion. But they weren't devout.

KP: It sounds like they brought with them their European their anti-clerical view with them to the United States?

EFC: ... Well, of course, they came over when they were young. My father was twelve. You know, he probably wasn't too accustomed to it anyway, and my mother was, I think she was like seventeen when she came over.

KP: Your parents were Republicans?

EFC: My father. Well, he wasn't at first because, you know, Roosevelt was for saving the country.

KP: So he really liked Roosevelt?

EFC: Oh, yeah. I think everybody did, because, you know, (laughs) there was no end in sight. The tunnel was black and even though you might not agree with his policies, it turned things around after Hoover and, like I said, when my dad worked 84 hours a week, he became a CIO organizer and got up on a soapbox on the street corner and was, "We got to organize, just to get some decent work conditions." And then they brought the big goons in from Easton, Pennsylvania to knock some heads. It was a rough time.

KP: This was in the 1930s?

EFC: Yeah, in the '30s.

KP: At which point was he trying to organize?

EFC: It was the one in Bound Brook, because that's where he worked 84 hours a week. But he always spoke well of the owner who happened to be Jewish, Mr. Goldstein. Never forget. He said he paid good wages, but he had to do what he did in order to survive. And it was take it or leave it. ... But when things got a little better, my father said, "Hey, you know, there's no reason, what am I living for? I eat and I sleep and I work. ... Don't even get a day off." You get Christmas and Easter or something. Two days a year or something like that. So, he said, "What's the point?" And anyway, when the textile business went South and the war began, one of my aunt's husbands worked in a bearing factory also in Middlesex. They made oil-less bearings. And he got my father a job in there, because it was defense related and he learned the machinist trade and he did very well at it.

And when he went to California in 1954, he got a good job with Convair which was an aeronautical outfit, and he became shop steward and then all the rank and file went, "Hey Frank, you know, we got to get new contracts. We need more stuff here: more benefits, higher wages."

My father got to thinking. He says, "You know you guys are going to kill the goose that laid the [golden] egg. You just can't keep demanding." He says, "What's wrong with what you have? You want a cost of living increase? That's fair. But what's with all this excess?" And that's when he said, "Forget it." It's getting out of control and he felt that the Democrats were too liberal and he became a registered Republican. Never told me about it until a few years back when we were out on a visit one time.

KP: When did he make this shift? Was it in the 1950s or 1960s?

EFC: I'm guessing, I would say the '60s. In that area. '70s maybe. I really don't know. I was shocked!

KP: Oh, you were very surprised?

EFC: Oh, yeah! I wouldn't have believed it.

KP: Did your mother switch to the Republican party?

EFC: Well, she wasn't registered, you know. ... Whatever Pop did, that was okay with her.

KP: Did your mother work when you were growing up?

EFC: Yes. Very hard. At first she worked piecework. One of our neighbors was a woman who was a forelady in a children's dress factory in Plainfield, ... and she would bring home work for my mother to do piecework which was smocking. I don't know if you know what smocking is?

KP: No.

EFC: It's taking a thread and you gather the material in a pattern and different colors. And it's very intricate and very pretty. And she did that for whatever, a few cents a dress by kerosene light, because we didn't have electricity. Then she worked in a laundry ironing shirts. ... She always wanted to have a supplementary income, because my father was a little loose with the buck.

KP: Loose in which way?

EFC: You know, I think I'd like to have that. Yeah, how much? Okay, wrap it up. You know, and lived pretty close to the vest and my mother liked to have a little backup. So she always had a job of some sort and she worked hard. Sweatshop type work and it was only a few years in between jobs when she wasn't working, but she'd be busy doing something. And like I said, just when I was in high school then she worked nights with my father from after the 84 hour period. You know the wage and hour law, Wagner Act, was 40 hours a week. Anything over that was overtime. Then they worked from eleven o'clock at night until seven in the morning.

KP: So the Wagner Act and the Wage and Hour Acts were pretty important to your family?

EFC: Oh, yeah. It got them a decent work week. Then my father could stay home on weekends and drink beer and smoke cigars. Like a gentleman. (Laughs) Which he did.

KP: Growing up, in high school, did you have any jobs?

EFC: Unfortunately, yes. I worked in my senior year. First of all I got the lead part in the high school senior play and then I decided that I wanted to chicken out, so I went and got a job. ... Now today all the kids have cars. I mean if you wanted to solve the gas shortage a few years back when the Arab oil embargo was on, all you had to do was prohibit kids from driving cars to school and you would have solved the gas crisis right then and there. When I was in high school I was one of three that had an automobile in the whole high school. So on the premise that I needed a job to buy gas for my car, I begged off my lead in the high school play and got a job working in the Art Color Printing Company, which is a big operation right along side the railroad tracks, for 45 cents an hour which was big bucks: eighteen dollars a week, from three to eleven. Needless to say, I didn't get my homework done. But somehow I managed to graduate, I think seventeenth in the class, something like that, so I did something right. Either that or--I remember my chemistry teacher telling me when I was nodding, he would say, "Culwick! I know you make more money than I do, but you can at least stay awake in my class." (Laughs)

KP: How did you like this job?

EFC: It was terrible. I got sick as a dog, because of the fumes. See, at high speed printing you use a lot of solvents. One of which is toluene, xylol, and in the wintertime you didn't have a lot of ventilation, because they wanted the heat to stay in. And these presses run so fast over steamheated rollers to dry the ink before it goes to the next stage. You get all these fumes and they build up and you get sick to the stomach. And I remember going outside the building and flaking out on a bench--shivering, freezing cold, and the foreman would come out and try to encourage me in and I'd say, "Listen I got to go home. I'm deathly sick. I can't take it." "Ah, we need you inside. You'll be all right. Take a few more minutes. You know, take a few more breaths and come on back in." It was a bummer.

KP: What was your job in the printing shop?

EFC: Well, at one time I helped clean the blades on a printing roll. It has a type, that's called rotogravure. It has a big copper drum with the characters etched in below the surface and that ran through a tank of ink and you had a big, long--as wide as this room--knife that scraped the ink off the surface of the roller and only left it in the characters. And then that pressed against the paper and printed out. And these blades would get gummed up, so for a time I helped scrape the gum off, wash it in a solvent in a tank, and, of course, you breathe in all this garbage again. And then, I got put on a press, which you call a jogger, and this was a magazine factory, not newspaper. It was a magazine which was fine shiny paper and very sharp. And, of course, the whole magazine didn't come out. It was sections, and it was rough cut and it came down a chute and you would take a sheath of them, maybe a stack that thick (demonstrates), ... and they were not all lined up.

So you would have to take this and spread it out with your arms like this (demonstrates), called jogging.

KP: Yes, you had to squish them together to make them even.

EFC: Yeah, but you had to hike them up, you know, kind of dance them up and down to keep them loose, so you could get all these lined up, and, of course, it would cut your shirt to ribbons, and, eventually, slice your arms. To the point where when I went in the service, and had to get, you know, blood drawn and stuff, the guys says: ... "What the hell is this? I can't get the needle in." He says: "You've got an awful callus there." I said, "Yeah, it's one sheet of callus from constantly ... getting paper cuts and scar tissue." And so when I graduated high school, I quit that job. Gave up my eighteen bucks a week for fifteen dollars a week, as an apprentice machinist. Of course, my father being a machinist, then my brother became a machinist, and I figured, well, what else. So then I took a job for thirty-seven and a half cents and hour. Three dollars for eight hours which is more than I paid a babysitter an hour.

KP: Had you had any thought about going to college before the war?

EFC: No.

KP: Really. In a sense, you expected to follow your father?

EFC: I did. That's right. It was a good living. A decent job. An ... honorable job in that it was a technical job as opposed to just a layman. So I felt it was a good field to go into.

KP: So in school, did you take a general course?

EFC: Yeah. Yeah. It wasn't academic.

Troy Dayton: What did your parents think around 1939 when the invasion of Poland took place? How did they stand on the war? What were their feelings?

EFC: I don't think I heard them talk about it too much. They weren't happy about it, I'm sure. Now my Dad's side, his whole family was over here so he didn't really have anyone left behind. Whereas, my mother had her father and mother and sisters and [a] brother still there. So she was very much concerned about their welfare, but couldn't contact them at that point. So she wondered how they made out, and after the war they were able to get in touch with them, and my mother constantly sent over clothes. One of the nieces or nephews came down with some sort of an infection. At that point streptomycin had been discovered, and so my Dad arranged somehow to get that and sent it over, but you were never sure whether it got to the addressee because they tore everything apart at the post office before they delivered it. But as far as we know, they got most everything that was sent over. They had it tough over there. They lived--you know, everything was bombed out so they were living in caves and in basements and huts.

KP: When did you have contact with them and when did you lose contact with them?

EFC: In Europe?

KP: Yes, in Europe.

EFC: It was pretty late 'cause I remember my mother was still getting letters when they were in California. I never was in contact with anybody myself.

KP: Did they loose contact during the entire six years of the war?

EFC: Oh, yeah. Completely. Totally.

KP: Your parents never went back to visit Poland, did they?

EFC: No. My father said he would have liked to, but being under Russian control, he said ... they probably wouldn't let him out 'cause he was too vocal. He figured he'd open his big mouth and get in trouble. (laughter) So he didn't. He would have liked to, but...

KP: It sounds like your father could be opinionated.

EFC: He was very aggressive and very--even though he didn't have much formal schooling--he was very well read. He read the Greek Odyssey and the Iliad. He spent a lot of time in the library.

KP: So it sounds like he was very well rounded?

EFC: Yes, he was. And he was a helluva talker. Never a dull moment from dirty jokes on up to philosophy. (Laughs)

KP: You mentioned he was a CIO organizer. What labor leaders did he admire? I remember reading that John Lewis also used to read the Odyssey and the Iliad.

EFC: ... I don't even recall who the leaders were in those days other than everybody remembers John L. Lewis. ... But during his era, I don't know who the others were to be honest with you. I don't know if he admired them as much as he wanted to get something done in his own area and had to use the major unions for leverage.

KP: Going to high school, what did you know about what was going on in the world?

EFC: Well, you know, you were forced to read the paper for current events. It didn't concern us at age sixteen or seventeen a great deal. Oh it's bad, sure it's bad, but it wasn't here, you know.

KP: Yes

EFC: It was over there. And we weren't directly involved until 1941. The end of 1941, so I didn't pay attention to it until I graduated high school and then I said, "Uh, oh! Uncle Sam's looking." "I want you!" (Laughter) Then you paid attention.

KP: When did you learn about Pearl Harbor? Where were you when Pearl Harbor occurred?

EFC: I was ... I'll never forget it! I was in my Aunt's house in Brooklyn, New York. St. James Place and it was Sunday morning and it came over the radio that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and that was a shock. Very stunning and everybody got panicky and knew what was gonna happen so, hopped in the old Chevy, through the Holland Tunnel and back home Sunday night. That's what I remember most vividly was, where I was, when it happened. Just like when Kennedy was shot; I was having lunch.

KP: And did you have a sense that the Pearl Harbor attack meant that you would be going to fight?

EFC: Yeah, yeah..

KP: How much did you know about Japan before the attack on Pearl Harbor? Did you know where Pearl Harbor was? A lot of people said they had to look it up on a map (laugh) when they heard about the attack.

EFC: Well, ... I couldn't even tell you what I knew about Pearl Harbor. I know that one of my aunts' husband, uncle, not a blood relative, was in the Army Air Corps long before the war and was stationed in Hawaii so I knew of it. Pearl Harbor, as such, didn't mean much as a name, you know. But I spent a lot of time there after I was in the Pacific. So I got to know it pretty well.

KP: You spent one more semester in high school, how did the war change your high school? Did you do any bond drives or any scrap metal drives?

EFC: Oh, that's what I was going to talk about. How did I feel about Japan? I felt pretty bad, because as a kid I scrounged the dumps and collected scrap metal and took it to the junk yard on Second Street and Front Street in Plainfield and got 40 cents a hundred weight for it. Ten cents for 100 pounds of newspaper. And then to find out that it was going to be hurled back at us, you know.

KP: So you remembered all that scrap metal?

EFC: Yeah. I remembered it very well, because 40 cents was a nice piece of change for a 100 pounds of scrap. Take it down in the wagon.

KP: What had happened at your high school?

EFC: Oh, drives and all? The only thing I remember and someplace I even have the certificate for taking a course in being able to recognize all the airplanes: Japanese, American, and German. That kind of thing.

KP: Did that aircraft recognition help you at all?

EFC: Well, I ended up in the Navy Air Corps so it did help.

KP: So you actually recognized some of the planes you were taught to recognize?

EFC: Oh sure! Yeah. (laughter)

KP: Did your father join the civil defense or any defense organizations? Or your mother?

EFC: No. No, no. Mom was strictly a homebody. Never felt comfortable in a group, because she did have problems with her English. And my dad ... was busy working. A factory worker. Didn't get into the community end of it.

KP: When did you decide to enlist and why the navy?

EFC: Well, my brother had been in the navy, because he graduated from Metuchen High School in 1937. Couldn't find a job. Got a job painting steel windows at a factory over here in South Plainfield and decided to join the navy just for a livelihood and put in his hitch before the war started, and I figured, well, it's cleaner than slopping in the mud in the army, so I joined the Navy. And, let's face it, if you didn't do it, Uncle Sam was going to tell you where you were going to go. You wouldn't have had a choice, so you had to enlist if you wanted a choice of branch. And even then you weren't sure, because ... three of us went down together and enlisted in the navy and I was the only one accepted. The other two were rejected and had to go in the army. One was color blind and the other guy had one testicle. Why that qualifies for the army and not the navy, who knows? But, that's what it was. (Laughs) So like I said, even though you may have wanted a choice, you didn't necessarily get it.

KP: The aversion to slogging around in the mud, you are not the first one to say that. How did you know the army was slogging around in the mud?

EFC: Well, you know, when you see the ... Pathe News in the movies on Saturday afternoon, and shots of the war, in the trenches, in the winter time, or the spring time, or whatever, it's pretty mucky! (Laughter)

KP: Did you also see some war movies when growing up that also left an impression?

EFC: Not too much.

KP: It's really the newsreels that shaped your view.

EFC: Yeah, ... because before that you didn't see a lot of war movies. It was, you know, Tom Mix and Hoot Gibson. Cowboy stuff.

KP: How did your parents feel about you going into the service? I mean, your brother had gone to the navy during peace-time, but now it's wartime and there's a good chance that you could get killed. Did they express concern?

EFC: Yes. They didn't talk about it much. Mother wasn't too comfortable and my father, was, you know, give'em hell and yippee. I don't know. He probably did concern himself with it, but he didn't show it.

KP: Yes. Did they write you often when you were away?

EFC: Write often?

KP: Yes. Write to you.

EFC: I don't know if I ever got a letter. I wrote home. But I don't recall getting mail from my dad. Nope. Just don't remember. Probably did. Kind of busy at the time.

KP: Your father was a war worker. How many hours did he work? Did he go back to working a really long shift?

EFC: No. I don't know that they put in a lot of overtime. They just had enough manpower to run, you know, three shifts a day and five days a week, whatever, to get their work out. Now when I was an apprentice, the war had started. It was, like I said, six months old, and they were already geared up for war work, and I suspected ... somebody knew a lot more than they were telling to be able to mobilize that quickly. You know, all of a sudden you had plants for this equipment and that machine and that airplane and this ship and whew! Before you knew it, it was there! You don't do this in six months. So there was a lot of planning done unbeknownst to the general public in order for that to come about. ... Even though I was an apprentice and normally the union rules were you couldn't work over-time as an apprentice, but I worked ten hours a day. Five days a week. It might have been six. I don't remember. Five days a week, yeah. Anyhow, big bucks, as Judge Ito would say.

KP: And if it had not been for the war, you might have stayed a machinist?

EFC: Probably would, probably would.

KP: Did you like the work as a machinist?

EFC: Well, of course, I didn't spend, but about six months at it. But it was interesting, because, you know, start out learning how to use all the measuring devices: micrometers and calipers, and that kind of thing, and inspections. Then you moved up to the glory job of deburring which means scraping rough edges with a sharpened file and then you moved to a drill press and then a

lathe and then a grinder and so on until you learned all the machines. Well it was interesting. I probably would have got bored afterwards, because you usually end up doing one machine or another and that's, that gets pretty boring. So I don't know what I would have done, but I never went back to it, so I don't know.

KP: Were there any women workers coming in when you were in the machine shop?

EFC: No, didn't have any.

KP: But you and a bunch of other people must have been leaving for war. Were people starting to leave?

EFC: ... Oh, yeah. Mostly the younger guys, you know, because everybody started out real quick and then gone real quick. And who replaced us? I have no idea. No idea.

KP: Where did you enlist? In New Brunswick, Newark or in Plainfield? Where did you actually go to try to enlist into the Navy?

EFC: It had to be New Brunswick. That was the county seat and then we went into New York to take our physical and all that sort of thing. And right after you took a leak, they asked you to supply some urine for tests. Thanks a lot! (Laughter)

KP: So you reported for your induction and physical in New York and then where were you sent to?

EFC: Sampson, New York-- on the Finger Lakes. Wine country. 43 below zero, 43 below zero! I didn't think it happened in the United States, but it got cold off the Lakes. Crunch! When you stepped on the snow, it went, crunch! That was a bummer. That was January.

KP: You reported to the Finger Lakes area. And that was for your basic training.

EFC: That's right. Twelve weeks of freezing.

KP: What was your initial reaction, especially to the cold?

EFC: Well, of course, you know, you're still eighteen years old so you're still basically a kid and we were always outdoor people in the wintertime, summertime, whatever, swimming, sledding, you name it. But not that extreme. ... And then when you go into basic training, the first thing you do is you get all shot up with tetanus and typhoid and all the antis, so you're sick as a pup anyway and they run you through all these calisthenics to see what your level is at entry stage, and then before you finish basic then you got to show them how much you improved physically and go through this grind again, you know. And everybody's trying to outdo the other guy with 150 situps and pushups and pullups and all that nonsense so you're killing yourself the whole time. ... You always run into funny people, you know, who have no use for authority. ... Here you are ... in a barracks where you have three high bunks, (demonstrates) boom, boom, boom,

and lines of them. I think there's 110 guys in one room, basically with a cold stove over in the corner and lights out. And the guy down the other corner was in charge of your group. He said, "Knock off the chatter!" Because, it's too early to go to sleep. Just because it's dark. I mean, it's dark at 4:30 in January and so everybody's buzzing. "Eh, you guys want to march?" You have one guy who was a perfect mimic for Donald Duck. Quack, Quack, Quack. Like blow it out your butt, you know. "Who said that?" Nobody knows. "Somebody knows who said that. Unless they tell me who it is, you're all going out." Nobody would rat so you'd all get your clothes on and you're out in the snow, in the dark, marching for an hour, because this guy wants to be a wise guy.

KP: How early was that in your basic training? Was that like the first week?

EFC: Well, no. It takes a few weeks for these guys to get adjusted and start to rebel. (Laughter) ... I said, what is this? We're men now. We've got a uniform. But you run into interesting people and interesting situations.

KP: What other interesting people did you run into? Do you have any other stories?

EFC: You mean up there?

KP: Yes. Were there any other stories?

EFC: Not too much. A lot of card players we had to watch out for.

KP: So a lot of poker and money is exchanging?

EFC: Yeah, yeah. Even though you didn't make much, you know. What was it? Thirty some dollars; 27 dollars a month; or something like that; when you were first in there. But nothing else to do with it anyway, so guys gambled.

KP: How was the food?

EFC: To tell you the truth, I don't even remember eating. I remember having kitchen duty where you had to crack eggs and after awhile you got a little careless and some of the shells ended up in the eggs mixture which was always scrambled. You got these eggs in a crate and you took them out in your hand and you went (demonstrates a crunch) on the edge of a big one of these Hobart Mixers they called them. Restaurant type things. And put the eggs in there ...

KP: Crack them two at a time.

EFC: ... and then Whoops! (Laughter) Hit it a little too hard. Oh, well. (Laughter) It would be a little gritty. (Laughter) But I don't remember the food, honestly.

KP: So it wasn't either particularly good or bad it sounds like?

EFC: It didn't make an impression; let's put it that way.

KP: What about your training? What did you do?

EFC: Did a lot of marching as I recall. Otherwise, I don't remember.

KP: Was any of it useful later on? Did you learn any aircraft identification? Any shipboard practices?

EFC: No. I'll tell you we may have had sessions, but I either blocked them out or just plain forgot them.

KP: It also sounds that you did a lot of the day just marching?

EFC: Yeah. That's right. You know, it's discipline more than learning. After your basic training where you're getting ... physically fit, ho, ho, and indoctrinated with discipline, then they decide where you're going to go from there. Oh, you have a machinist background? Okay. We'll send you to aviation machinist school. Totally unrelated, because an aviation machinist is not a machinist, he's a mechanic. You repair the engines. You don't make the parts. That's what a machinist does. So anyway that's how I ended up as an aviation machinist.

KP: Where were you actually assigned when you were initially inducted or at basic? Do you remember?

EFC: Oh, you're assigned after you are almost finished with your basics. Then they go through your resume and see what your background is. Education or whatever--work experience and assign you from there.

KP: Was there anyone who did not make it through basic, because they were discipline problems or other reasons?

EFC: I don't remember.

KP: Who were your instructors? Were there any regular navy people there?

EFC: Probably the chief was a regular navy man, but I wouldn't know. Just yes, sir. No, sir. Never go to hell, sir. (Laughter)

KP: Where were you assigned? You mentioned that you were assigned to be aviation machinist, but where did they send you?

-----END OF TAPE, SIDE ONE-----

EFC: Memphis, Tennessee-- ... Naval Air Training Station. Where they also trained pilots across the road in an adjoining facility. So every morning at daybreak it was the drone of the

Steerman biplanes across the way warming up for the student pilots to train. We went to class. I had to learn engines, fabrics, ... aluminum airplanes, you had to learn how to make a patch in the fabric, right? Which I did very well, because I could sew excellently, because I had no sisters and my mother was an excellent sewer and she taught me.

KP: So that got passed down to you and your brother?

EFC: Oh, yeah. You know when you're a kid, you don't have them today, but we had kneesocks and knickers and first thing to go in this big long sock was a hole in the heel. Well, you didn't throw the sock away, you had to darn it. So my mother showed me how to darn a sock. And when you repair a hole in a fabric airplane wing, you have to do it very precisely so no pucker and no gaps. It has to be a perfect fit. Taut and everything else with the thread just stitches perfect. That paid off.

KP: You probably had an advantage in terms of your--in that particular function?

EFC: Yeah. That and having worked on some ... old cars, you know. Model A Fords and my old Chevy which I sold for \$35.00. 35 bucks! Today, ten grand you could get for it! (Laughter) If you had a place to keep it. But, yeah, in school you had to learn Morse Code, semaphore, and I looked at that blinking light. You had to learn it in a week--one hour a day. In a week you had to learn how to read messages from a blinking light. It doesn't make sense (demonstrates) dot dot dot dot, dash dash dash, I said I'm gonna flunk. I'm gonna flunk! Just like that (snaps his fingers) it came to you. Oh! A, B, C, D, learn the alphabet. Next thing you know, you got it. But that had me worried. When it came to the mechanical, I didn't have any problem.

KP: So even though the reasons for placing you there were not the right reasons you wound up having the skills and the ability?

EFC: That's right. The mechanical end of it, I had no problem, and after your aboard ship, you don't read the blinking lights anyway. That's the signalman's job so, you know, it's nice to know, but if you're ever on a raft someplace and some guy's blinking a light at you, or you need to know the SOS.

KP: What other useful or useless things did you get at aviation machinists school?

EFC: Useless.

KP: What was useless and what was useful? You mentioned all the codes were not that useful.

EFC: Pretty much everything was useful. You know, you learned what they call today, karate. In those days it was judo, jujitsu and hand-to-hand combat. That was interesting. Mainly because we had an instructor who always ended up an exercise ... after you disabled a man, invariably knee to the groin, so we nicknamed him "Invariably". (Laughter) But most of it was useful. I didn't spend a lot of time on extraneous stuff.

KP: Did you have any weapons training in terms of either ship weapons or even small arms weaponry?

EFC: Well, after I graduated the machinist course, then I was in the top ten of the class, they gave you a choice. The top ten had a choice of certain duties and the plum was, what they called lighter than aircraft, which is dirigibles. Lakehurst, New Jersey. You don't want to go home, there's a war on. Plus this big blimp floating around. That can't be any excitement, so I turned that down.

KP: Did the Hindenburg have anything to do with it?

EFC: No, no. But I remember that. 'Cause I was a kid when that happened, and one of my neighbors was a rescue squad worker and they shot ... down to Lakehurst when that occurred. That didn't have anything to do with it. I just--it wasn't very glamorous, you know. Jacksonville was offered--Florida. But my brother was living in California 'cause after he got out of the service, he married a California girl and lived out there. ... I then had a choice of going to gunnery school, which is called aircraft gunnery in Alameda, California. So I said, "Okay, I'll go." And I did. Plus my dad was an avid hunter and in fact I started the Rifle Club in Dunellen High School 'cause we didn't have one. So when we started that we had two members who had rifles, and we had a Rifle Club.

KP: So you used to go hunting with your father?

EFC: Not with him. But I went. ... But he had gone hunting in his earlier days, but I don't remember going with him. I used to go with my uncle quite a bit. But having had some experience with guns, I did pretty well in gunnery school only to find out that I couldn't fit in the turret anyway. I was too big. That was smart, you know. They didn't say: "Are you too big to fit in the gun turret?" Nobody asked. And I didn't find out until I went to get in-- you know. Start out shooting skeet, trap, shotguns, flying pigeons and stuff like that. You graduate to a shotgun in a machine gun frame, and then they take you up on the mountainside out in Stockton, California, where they have railcars with turrets on them, simulating a turret in a bomber or a torpedo plane. ... Just incidentally, Robert Stack, the movie actor, was in charge of the gunnery school, because he was an excellent skeet shooter ... and being a celebrity, he got a plush job--being in charge of this gunnery ... range. And I went to get into the turret and I said, "I couldn't make it." Well, that's okay. You could shoot from over here. Tracer bullets at night, that kind of thing. The only place I would have been able to do it would be in a big PBY. You know what they are? The old Catalina Flying Boats. We called them the Black Cat which was a fuselage and then one main strut and a big wing that sits on it. So it was a sea plane and they had two blisters where you sat. You weren't in a real confined area and you could shoot a machine gun out of that blister.

KP: So there is one plane you could fly in?

EFC: One plane ... and I ended up flying in that plane for awhile.

KP: During training?

EFC: Yeah. As a flight engineer, actually, because in that particular airplane in this strut which holds the wing to the fuselage is a compartment where the flight engineer sits and a little window on each side, and you communicate with the pilot and you have control of the fuel mixture and cowl flaps and that kind of thing. Don't ask me why, it's not that he couldn't do it. I guess they wanted to make a job for somebody. So it was a dual mission in that I was learning flight engineer duties, and the pilot was practicing touch and go landings. So we're thumping around, thumping around, and "Hey you, fuel rich, lean it out". That kind of thing. It was interesting. But I never got to use it, because from there I went aboard ship.

KP: And then you came back to do what you were trained to do as a machinist. As part of the navy, you had gotten to see a good part of the United States. You mentioned you went to Tennessee and you described it before the interview began as cockroach country.

EFC: Yeah. You wouldn't believe it, but you ... had text books in school ... and you had lockers, see, and you'd go to your locker and you'd say okay and you'd open this cover, like this (demonstrates by opening a book) and out would go a cockroach. It was in between that page. They could flatten themselves out that flat. Well, New York State, Memphis, Alameda, California, Astoria, Oregon, waiting for a ship to be finished. Sixty days, sixty days of rain. Every day. On the wrong side of the mountains. Mossy trees. And from there I was aboard ship and then you got to see ports on the West Coast. Like San Diego was basically a home port. A few times we made it back and other than that Pearl Harbor was the main supply port. So as far as the mainland goes, it was the West Coast and basically that was it.

KP: You mentioned cockroaches in Memphis. Were there any other experiences in Memphis that made it exceptional?

EFC: Yeah. I had. I was dubbed the name of "Chief Bitcher" which means complainer. My wife still calls me that after 47 years of marriage, because I complain when I think things could be done differently or better or easier. But in the service you have so much time to kill that they make work and you have to do it the hard way to stretch it out. So I complained about it. From standing in line to eat, to mopping the floors. Why don't we get a squeegee and just (makes sound) swish. Can't do that. It goes too quick.

KP: So I take it there were some things that the military did that you would have preferred to dispense with.

EFC: That's right. Even aboard ship when they made the mistake on a carrier of painting what we call the hangar deck which is below the flight deck. It's steel plate. Painting it battleship grey slick paint, so you slide all over the place. You tied the planes down. If you didn't tie them down absolutely tight, it would slide.

KP: On a level deck.

EFC: Yeah! So, what do you have to do? Well, you paint it again. Pretty soon you run out of your quota of paint. Now you got to chip it down to bare metal. And what do you chip it with? A hand scraper. Now this is a deck that is bigger than a football field, and you got a little piece of bent metal with a sharpened edge and you got to scrape this paint like this. (demonstrates). I said, "Wait a second. We've got some air guns, chisels (makes sound of drill). ... Just chisel it right off, man, quick." [He said,] "Can't do that. It's going to go too fast."

KP: So you had the duty where you were actually chiseling the paint off the deck?

EFC: That's right. Scrape. Scrape. Scrape. And as an aside, one of the fellows that I happened to be teamed up with had been in the navy longer, and he had been on the USS **Ranger** which is an old full sized carrier and most of the navy ships, a lot of them that were hit by bombs, burned. It's a steel ship. How could it burn! Paint-- thick layers of oiled based paint. And when they got hit and they caught fire, the thing was a torch. Steel didn't burn, but the paint burned and you couldn't stop it. So he took me aboard the **Ranger** which happened to be in the port in San Francisco or someplace and it was bare metal. I said, "Geez, this is ugly." He says, "Tell me about it." We work day and night scraping the paint to survive, hoping that we wouldn't get hit before we cleaned it off. So what had been, you know, standard practice. Paint it! Paint it! Paint it! Was, Clean it! Clean it! Clean it! And after that, they developed the fireproof paints without the oil to avoid that problem.

KP: Hence having to chip the paint off the deck?

EFC: Yep. Uh Huh.

KP: What did you think of California? Or the little that you got to see when you were not in training?

EFC: California. Basically, nice climate, but desert. You know, I mean, it's kind of dreary. Shabby looking eucalyptus and palm trees. Not too bad palm trees, but soil wasn't nice. Good for grapes, I guess. Orange groves here and there, but it wasn't what I was used to. I was used to a lot of green. Over there was a lot of brown. They called it the Golden State, because most of the year the ground cover is brown or gold. And I thought it was strange that one time I went out there in April and everything was green and I said, "I don't remember it being this way." I was there in the winter-time. Well, that's the wild oats. All the hills in California are covered with wild oats and they're only green in the spring-time. And once they turn, they look like dry wheat. That's why it got the name the Golden State. But to me, it wasn't attractive.

KP: Because your family ended up in California. You are almost the exception for not ending up in California.

EFC: That's right. My brother is still there.

KP: And your parents moved out?

EFC: Well, my father, for years, he wanted to get out of this stinkin' state of New Jersey. It's nothing but slush and mosquitoes. The only good thing about New Jersey was you could: if you couldn't find a job anyplace else, you could probably find one in New Jersey, because it was industrialized. But the climate he didn't like, so he was tempted to go to Florida, and then my brother said, "You don't want to go to Florida. It's too humid and too buggy. Come out to California." Well, that was his mistake. Because now he had to put up with my father. (Laughter) And he still rues it to this day. ... [My father] liked it. He thrived on it. Like I said, he lived till 96 and a half.

KP: Had you traveled much before the war? I mean, you got to see three very different parts of the country.

EFC: Yeah. I traveled a lot--to Brooklyn and back. Because, ... I call her my aunt, but she was actually my great-aunt. My father, his family was ... so strung out with nineteen kids that my father was the same age as one of his uncles so they visited every holiday. Every holiday they exchanged visits. If it was Fourth of July at our house, it was Labor Day in Brooklyn and it was Thanksgiving in New Jersey and Christmas in Brooklyn and so on. So that's about it. We didn't travel much. We used to go crabbing down the shore every once in awhile, but other than that. Oh, Massachusetts ... 'cause my mother had a sister living in Massachusetts and we used to go up there maybe once a year or something like that. Other than that, I didn't see anything. Not much. Again, a lot of the years growing up were lean years and those years that my dad worked seven days a week, you didn't go anywhere. Period. If you had a weekend after that period, you still didn't go anywhere. Hey, I got Saturday and Sunday off.

KP: So your father liked his cigars and liked to have a drink?

EFC: Yeah. He did. Oh, yeah. He liked his liquor, but he never drank during the week.

KP: That was very much a weekend event.

EFC: That's right. He was all business when it came to work. Working around machinery, you don't fool around. So in that respect, he was smarter.

KP: I have interviewed mainly officers, but even the officers said that the navy compared to even the army and the air force, especially compared to the air force is a very hierarchical service. They talk about the real difference between officers and enlisted men, and you sort of hinted that the navy does things: the navy way. Like painting the ships. Any other observations you have about the navy way of doing things and about officers?

EFC: Well, ... I would say I was right on the edge. As I said I didn't like to do things the hard way if there was an easy way, and I didn't mind telling people regardless of who they were. I didn't care if he had a gold stripe. I was very close to insubordination. But it was an opinion and I got away with it. Maybe that's why they sent me to officers school. I don't know.

KP: So what kind of run-ins would you have? I mean you mentioned that you would question the scraping of the deck.

EFC: Well, towards the end of the war, the last engagement I was involved in was Okinawa and at that point the Japanese were in such bad shape that they resorted to just cutting mines loose--floating mines in the sea lanes, anywhere. They didn't have that many ships on the water, but we did. And they hoped that we would bump into one. Magnetic mines. And, of course, in the day-time you could look out for these things, but at night you can't see a little thing with sticks poking out of it. So it was a very scary time. And you would have ... four on and eight off, eight on and four off, whatever. You had to rotate watches and you might have look out watch, binoculars, and you're staring at the black looking for something. You can't see anything. Pretty soon the ensign comes by and says: "Hey. Man on the bridge wants to know why you didn't call that object on the horizon?" "What object on the horizon?" "There's a ship out there. We got it on RADAR." "So big deal. You got it on radar. We got these damn magnifying glasses! How do you expect us to see what you see on RADAR?" "I'm going to report you, blah, blah, blah." I said, "Calm down, calm down." But you know it was very testy. It was difficult to say nothing in times like that, when many of the things they expected were unreasonable.

KP: Were there any other unreasonable expectations?

EFC: Nothing glaring. Except that one time ... we went through a typhoon and I had--I couldn't stand the smell of stinking feet and armpits. And on a ship ... you had to slide into your bunk this way. (demonstrates) You couldn't sit up or roll over even. You just were on a shelf.

KP: I have seen it. I went to the Intrepid and the one thing that shocked me on all ships was the space for enlisted men, but even for officers there's not a lot of space.

EFC: Not a lot of space. Officers had the Waldorf compared to us. ... In the South Pacific when it's hot, you know, the Equator, and so on. The ventilation wasn't that good and you had all you could do--I'm very sensitive when it comes to smell. I said, I can't do this. I can't sleep down here. I'll get sick to my stomach. So I finagled a deal where I could sleep in what's called the metal shop where they had a bench--a work bench with steel drawers under it for tools and stuff. I had a mattress that was this thick (demonstrates) straw mattress. I laid it on there and I would sleep there. So when it was my turn to be awakened for watch, they knew where I was. 'Cause they wouldn't find me down ... where I was supposed to be. ... So this one night we hit a typhoon and I just rolled off and caught my pinky toe in a handle of a drawer--on the file cabinet handle--and it ripped my pinky toe. So, of course, you go to dispensary and infirmary and you get it stitched up and bandaged up and hobble around. Captain's inspection. I said, "Gee, I can't get a shoe on, how can I go to captain's inspection?" "I don't care how you do it. You get up there." Okay. So I get up on the flight deck. And we're all lined up, and the captain comes by and says, "Put that man on report he's out of uniform." Damned if you do, and damned if you don't. What am I supposed to do? I didn't appreciate it. So out of the corner of my mouth I said, "Dumb son of a bitch." Somebody heard it, but they didn't make an issue of it so I got away with that one also. But it was that kind of thing, you know. They don't use their head. Say, hey, put you down

as in sick bay, whatever. You can't make it. No, get up there! So they force you into a situation and then they give you hell for it, so.

TD: How was it to be on the ship? Do you remember anything about the typhoon? What it was like being on there--even though you were on a big ship?

EFC: It wasn't a big, big ship. It was not the length of a regular carrier, see. It was 468 feet or something like that, where an Essex class was close to 1000, 980, something like that. So it was pretty much of a cork. I was seasick most of the time. Mainly, because it was ground swells in the Pacific. And this carrier only went like 15 miles an hour, which is not fast. So you're up (makes groaning sounds) and that got me. So I lived on chewing gum and apples. When we got to port, I ate. When we were in a typhoon, I didn't get sick, because it's violent. It's like going out in the ocean and trolling. You get sick when you troll. If I'm hanging on for dear life, either I'm too occupied to get sick, or it doesn't bother me. It's the difference in the motion. So I didn't enjoy that sea duty at all. Especially, when my battle station turned out to be behind the smoke stacks of the diesel engines. Okay. You've ever been on a bus with the diesel fumes?

KP: Oh, yeah.

EFC: So, picture this now. Our ship had guns up and down both sides facing sideways so they shoot at airplanes coming in broadside. They didn't have anything at their back. They had one five inch gun. A cannon! You don't hit airplanes with a cannon. I don't know what the hell it's there for. Shoot another ship, maybe, if he's coming up your rear end. So me being an aerial gunner, they said, "Good, you shoot a machine gun, don't you?" I said, "Yeah." They said, "Okay, we'll weld the bracket on the railing at the end of the back corner of the flight deck and you look for planes coming in at us from behind." No armor protection, just a piece of canvas. And coming at you from forward is all the fumes from the stacks, because they don't have these big chimneys like you have on cruise ships. They're at the same level as the flight deck. Because they don't want to stick up in the air in case a plane goes off. The only thing sticking above the flight deck is the ... control tower. So these fumes are in your face. And your duty at general quarters every day is a half hour before dawn, and a half hour after sunrise, so that's an hour that you're breathing this stuff. And half hour before dark and half hour after dark, because that's when you're most vulnerable. When the sun's low and you're looking into it, these guys come in low. Radar doesn't pick them up and you don't see them, because they're coming in with the sun behind them.

KP: Did you ever have attacks at those times.

EFC: No. Lucky.

KP: Did you ever get attacked when you were at battle stations?

EFC: No. We were pretty much a support group. In other words, we would have planes on board that weren't in a squadron. They were to replace planes that were shot down from other carriers. Full size carriers. Operational carriers. So they would send pilots over to us. Breeches

Buoy and what not, and they would take off our ship with torpedo bomber or Wildcat or Hellcat or whatever, and fly to their ...

KP: So in a sense, you were a big replacement depot?

EFC: That's basically it. Yeah. We would on occasion collect damaged aircraft and transfer them to an island that had been secured and had the facilities to repair them or whatever. And then when we'd pick up other planes to have constant supply. At one time we had the First Marine Corps Night Fighter Squadron. I don't know if you know what a Corsair is, but it was the nicest. Oh, it was like the '51 Mustang, you know, with the gull wings and that sort of thing, and it was the first squadron that was equipped with the radar air to air. ... It looked like a jet engine stuck on to the wing of this Corsair, but it was a radar. And they could then fly at night looking for targets. So we took them on. ... And they took off from our ... ship and went to Saipan or one of the islands that was secured, because it wasn't a good airplane for taking off and landing on carriers. You couldn't see too well. In fact, do you know what the reason for the gull wing was? It was to get the landing gear close enough to the deck, otherwise there would be big stilts. You see, ... they had the most powerful engine of any plane and it had a seven foot propeller so in order to clear the deck with the propeller, you had to slope the wings down to get the wheels close enough to keep the propeller off the deck. And, of course, this impeded the pilot's vision. It was a very difficult airplane to take off and land on the carrier. But it was a mean plane. Very powerful.

And next [question]. This was ... 3:30. That's not bad, I figured two hours. We're denting it. (Laughter)

KP: In a sense you did not have a regular squadron of planes and pilots. Your dealings with them were much more random?

EFC: ... Oh, yeah. Itinerant. In fact, I was one of the crew that would start the plane up down below on the hangar deck and warm it up. Then you'd go forward onto the elevator. Take you up to the flight deck and then you taxi it to the take off position and then you turn it over to the pilot. They either go by catapult or try to make it from the back end to the front end without ditching, which happened.

KP: How often would it happen?

EFC: Several times. Mainly because it was very difficult to time--each plane had a different takeoff distance shall we say. And when you're in a rough sea and you've got to head into the wind so you take advantage of the air speed. You're going directly into the waves. And if you got any sea at all, you're going down and you're coming up. Now it's up to the flight officer to say, "Go." Guy lets off the brakes, gives it full throttle and taking forever to get going. If he doesn't time it just right, and the ship happens to be nosing down, kerplunk. He's in the water. Many times a brand new airplane. Pilot pops out with his Mae West blown up and the destroyer back aft picks him up.

KP: Did you lose any pilots?

EFC: No. They usually got out. You didn't have ejection seats in those days. But you always took off with the canopy open and if they did ditch, and they always banked immediately to avoid being hit, run over by the ship, so to speak, they always went to the ... left or right and just jump out.

KP: Did you ever engage in any search and rescue operations at all?

EFC: No. I had an interesting time once taking pilots on by Breeches Buoy; if you know what that is. That's when a ship's side by side with a clothesline in between. When they go like this (demonstration) the clothesline goes down and the guy in the basket goes kerplunk. And when a ship goes this way he goes boring! back up in the air. I mean, it looks hilarious, but I'm sure the guy doesn't enjoy it. (Laughter) And if you've ever heard of Ernie Pyle? Well, he came on that way, because he was, I forget which island, Iwo Jima, or one of those and he ended up coming to our ship by Breeches Buoy, because we were going to Guam or someplace. ... So he was on our ship for a little bit. But that's the way we took him aboard.

KP: How many days was he on the ship?

EFC: I really don't recall. Probably a week or two.

KP: Did you ever get to meet him at all?

EFC: No. Someplace I have a picture of him. You know, **Navy Magazine** picture clipping. But a lot of the stuff I can't find anymore. It's either buried in the attic someplace or got canned.

KP: What was your chief like?

EFC: Chief? I don't even remember. He couldn't have been too obnoxious. Probably just an ordinary guy who was easy to get along with.

KP: But it sounds like you had some obnoxious officers.

EFC: Oh, a few.

KP: Would they tend to be Annapolis or Naval Reserve, or you did not make the differentiation?

EFC: Well, you had some of each. You had the ninety day wonders who thought they were wonderful; and you had the old salts who thought they were invincible, and they were so much better than any anybody that was, you know, beating the draft and ended up in their presence and so on. So you had both kinds.

KP: You mention that below deck was pretty smelly and so forth, how about the food?

EFC: Bad. In that, scrambled eggs, for instance, were powdered eggs. Plus powdered milk and water to make scrambled eggs, and they were cooked on big black sheets. Like a black frying pan only it was a sheet. And what you didn't want to do was turn them over. You know, a lot of times you don't keep the eggs moving, they end up like a pancake. And if you flip it over, then you see it's kind of green on the underside and blackish green, then it's not too palatable. And the coffee was horrendous. And I wasn't a coffee drinker, but that was about your choice. It was either powdered milk or coffee.

KP: What about lunches and dinners? Did it get any better?

EFC: No. In fact, one time the food was so bad that we called the medical officer into the mess and said, "Just try this." "Tell us what you think." Because it happened to be mutton that we got from Australia or someplace. Ran out of meat and we got mutton which was like fat. ... It smelled bad, looked bad, tasted bad, everything about it was bad. And, um, "The best we could do, fellas. If you can't eat it, have some cabbage." (Laughter) That's it, until the next stop. And, you know, the supply situation had to be a tremendous thing to deal with when you had ships all over the place, all kinds, all sizes and you've got to supply fuel oil and we made our own water from salt water.

KP: Did you take fresh water or salt water showers?

EFC: Ugh, salt. When the system was working well, we could take fresh water, but it was so corrosive that it ruined the ... distillation equipment. So you ended up a lot of time having to take salt water showers which you just couldn't ... get a lather with the soap and then once you got greased up with the soap, you couldn't get it off again. So it wasn't a lot of fun.

KP: Did you ever go to services aboard ship or any time in the navy?

EFC: Religious services?

KP: Yes.

EFC: No. Not that I remember.

KP: Did you have any chaplains aboard?

EFC: Yeah. Well what you had was benches on the hangar deck between airplanes. And Sunday morning you'd have a Catholic service, and Saturday you had the Jewish service. I don't know what the Protestants did. Protested, I guess. (Laughter) Might ... [have] a minister. I don't know. (Laughter)

KP: But you never went to mass while aboard?

EFC: No.

KP: How well attended were services?

EFC: I really don't know. I think the movies probably got higher attendance than the religious services, but ...

KP: So what movies did you get to see?

EFC: I wasn't a buff for that either, 'cause I didn't enjoy sitting on a damn bench under an airplane wing trying to see a little spot on a screen of an old movie with bad sound. I'd rather sleep. Forget it.

KP: What did you do when you were not on duty to pass the time?

EFC: Well, you know, other than scraping and that kind of thing, ... you were pretty busy, because you're on watch. And then plus you had general quarters that even if you got off watch at four o'clock in the morning, and sunrise was, let's say, at six, ... you had to go to your battle station at five, you couldn't hardly sleep in that hour. So after general quarters was over, then you tried to grab a couple of hours sleep. And if you had something else to do, I didn't remember the work days that much. Sometimes you didn't get a lot of sleep. Between, like I say, general quarters and watch duty, and chipping paint, and that kind of stuff, there wasn't a lot of idle time. When there was, you tried to get some sleep.

KP: What about cards? Did you play any cards?

EFC: No. Well, I got stuck once with a smart Jewish fellow from Chicago, his name was Weiss. It's funny how you don't forget people that stick you. I'm not sure if it was a set-up or not. Because I was the kind of poker player that, you know, that I had to have the chart to tell you what beat what. And these guys were playing poker down in the mess hall, on the table, and over the loudspeaker comes, "Weiss report to the so and so." He says, "Oh, geez, hey Ed, take my hand; I'll be right back." I take his hand. Sure, it looks pretty good. So he counts his money before he leaves. I said, "Gee, he'll be mad if I don't bet this. I bet two bucks or whatever. Ended when he did get back that he was out ten more dollars. He said, "Hey (whistles), you owe me ten bucks." I said, "For what?" He says, "You lost ten dollars of my money." I said, "What'd you ask me to play for. Don't do me any favors." So I never played again, you know. You know, I wasn't a card player. And I should have said, no thanks in the first place, but being naive and stupid ... it cost me ten bucks to learn that little lesson. And also, never take your watch to the shower, when you're going to take a shower. Hang it on a hook and then put your towel over it and when you're through with your shower, you take your towel and walk off without your watch and you never see it again. That was another unpleasantry.

KP: Was there any problem with theft or any other similar incidents? Looking at ships, not having served on one, it looks like you are with a lot of people in very close quarters. I mean even in officers country, you know, but especially being a sailor, you are with hundreds of people.

EFC: Other than that one ... incident, personally, you didn't hear a lot of it. Didn't hear a lot of it, no. There was more stealing when you're taking supplies. You know, like canned stuff coming aboard, like fruit cocktail, mmm, (laughter) One goes this way and another goes that way. One for the boys in the back room. (Laughter) A little extra supplies. One poor guy made the mistake of--we had beer, couldn't drink it at sea, but if you anchored off an island and went ashore for a little R&R, then they took some "near beer," it was, khaki cans, G.I. issue, and you'd have a little beer party. And he made the mistake of stealing a case of beer. And he got caught and he got court martialed for it.

KP: What happened to him?

EFC: Well loss of rank. 60 days in the brig. All kinds of nasty stuff.

KP: You had marines aboard.

EFC: We didn't, no. The big carriers did. They were bellhops, I guess. I don't know what purpose they served.

KP: Did you ever see any enemy action? Any enemy airplanes? Did they ever attack your vessels directly?

EFC: No.

KP: No Kamikazes?

EFC: No. It was very close ... in the neighborhood, let's say.

KP: Yes.

EFC: You know we were laying off when Saipan was hit. We were laying off when Iwo Jima was hit. We were laying off when Okinawa was hit, and we got to bring back a lot of the wounded. That was horrendous. You know, guys that were maimed pretty badly in battle, whether they were aboard ship and bombed out, or on land, you know, you got these guys with body casts and casts all over, you name it. ... And we ended up filling the whole hangar deck with cots and maimed guys to take them back to a secured island where they had hospital facilities.

KP: And would doctors come aboard?

EFC: These fellahs were pretty much stabilized.

KP: Yes.

EFC: You know, they already had the basic repairs done.

KP: And would you do anything to help them?

EFC: Well, you had to help them with their food and bathroom activities. That kind of stuff. Get them around. And other things that were a little unpleasant, you know, you see all this concern over retrieving bodies of servicemen in Vietnam. How the hell do you keep track of this stuff? Who worries about that? We didn't worry about it. Maybe we worried about our own, but you don't worry about the enemies. Because I remember vividly seeing [when] we were cruising along close to an island that had just been secured and there was all these Japs floating in the water, dead, and there were guys in little boats and launches taking scrap or rocks, whatever, to sink 'em. Just so they wouldn't have a disaster health-wise. And you didn't worry about their families back home finding out where they were, what happened to them, where's the remains and all that kind of stuff.

KP: Did you have any deaths aboard where you had burial at sea?

EFC: Deaths? No. Not a very exciting interview this is. (Laughs)

KP: No, actually it's been very informative, because I have interviewed mainly the navy ships from an officer's perspective which is a lot different.

EFC: It may be a little embellished as well. (Laughter)

KP: You mentioned that you had been to Pearl Harbor and to other ports. How many times did you get to Pearl?

EFC: Quite a bit, quite a bit. Because we would maybe take a jaunt to Midway or Wake or Kwajalein or Guadalcanal or wherever and end up coming back to Pearl for a repair of some sort or what not. And maybe the captain needed a little visit with some of his friends, and I got to see quite a bit, because I was a pretty good driver and I got to be the captain's chauffeur, or, you know, and executive officer's chauffeur. Hey, you want to see some other friends on the other side of the island, so you get off. We tied up to the Arizona which is now the monument at Pearl Harbor. It was there. You're tied up to it, instead of a dock, and then you took your little launch to the wharf, and you get a jeep and go across Ford Island, get a ferry over to the mainland and take the captain or the officer or whoever you had to serve that day and tell you how to get there. It was a good break. Not just sit around the ship all day.

KP: By being this driver you got off on land more?

EFC: Yeah. That's right. You get to see more. Because you had pretty strict limitations on what you could do even though you were there. You might get a day leave, but you had to be back on board before dark so you didn't have a lot of time.

KP: What would guys do on leave? When you did have this kind of day in port?

EFC: Oh, you'd go into town. Have a few snorts. Some guys got sick as hell drinking bad booze. Other guys would go to the Royal Hawaiian, pig out on ice cream or hit the beach for a

day. I remember one fella went tearing into the water figuring he's gonna dive into the surf. There was this much water. (demonstrates) He came up ... all bloody, because the coral is coarse, its not sand-like [like] Long Beach Island. It's like sandpaper. And it's shallow for a half a mile. So you ran into all kinds of stuff. And a lot of guys, you know, went in town and hit the houses, so to speak.

KP: What about other islands? Any other islands did you get off?

EFC: Yes. Guadalcanal, we tooled in there on Thanksgiving one time. It must have been 1944, because I got off in '45. And everybody got sick on tainted turkey, except me.

KP: So literally you have this mass case of food poisoning.

EFC: I don't know what it is. You know, they say that some people are immune to a lot of stuff. But I had my turkey and a cigar and worked. Did my day's work. And you were able to go off and roam around. They had a lot of coconut groves on some of these islands that weren't just atolls. If they were volcanic, you know, you'd have some terrain, you had some soil like Hawaii, you know. Can you imagine 400 inches of rain? Did you hear that on the weekend?

KP: Oh, in terms of the Philippines? Yes.

EFC: No, this was Hawaii--Maui. I happened to have gotten off my ship in Guam and then took an airplane to Hawaii, ended up on Maui to catch a ship back to San Francisco to come to Princeton to go to officers school. And the Kapalua Golf Tournament, Professional Golf Tournament, was on Maui this past weekend and they said they had 400 inches of rain average per year. That's 3 feet a month! I mean, what do you do! (laughter)

KP: Is there anything in terms of shipboard life or in terms of servicing the different planes, which planes did you like? You mentioned one that you thought was a great plane. Were there other particular planes?

EFC: Well, of course, the old F-6F. I can't remember which was the Hellcat and which is the Wildcat now. Must have been the Hellcat, the bigger one. F-4F was a smaller version. Exact same looks, but the F-6F was bigger, faster. That was a nice one. The worse one as far as operations went, danger went, was the torpedo [bomber.]

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

KP: You were saying about the planes.

EFC: Oh, the torpedo bomber had such a large wing area, because of the weight it had to carry for lift. But when it went to land on a carrier, if it didn't catch the tail hook immediately on the first wire, the wheels hit, it would just float back up in the air again. It didn't always come back down where it was supposed to. Because very often a ship is tilting and you might hit the right wheel first, or the left wheel first, and it bounces the other way. And several times we had them

crashing into gun turrets. Wrecked the whole damn plane. So that was not a happy airplane to be on a small carrier.

KP: How many crashes would there be that you remember?

EFC: Well, we didn't land a lot of planes. Only if we were getting from another ship to take on board and then meet another ship to transfer them to. Normally, we'd get our replacements from an island storage depot. So we didn't have a lot of takeoffs, but enough that there were too many accidents per takeoff number, you know. Only because they're so damn small. Dangerous. And you talk about other interesting islands, one was the Admiralty Islands off of New Guinea where we stopped and had a beer party and we saw these giant, giant black--brownish black bats flying. ... They have a wing span like that (demonstrates) and a body like that (demonstrates), and they hang from the trees. They were like this long (demonstrates) when they fold up their wings and that big around. (demonstrates) I mean, that's scary! And then you see the natives that, you know, our Negroes here are fairly smooth skin and almost shiny. Down there they were fuzzy black. It was almost like they had tiny little hair follicles. Maybe they didn't bathe enough. I don't know, but they were fuzzy black, black. So you met and saw different interesting things.

KP: Did you have any contact with any sort of people on these various islands?

EFC: Not usually, no. They kept their distance and you kept your distance. You weren't allowed to wander too much. Confined to the beach.

KP: Was that to make sure you got back on board the ship?

EFC: For one thing. You might get in trouble otherwise. You never know.

KP: How did you wind up getting into officers candidate school?
Is there a story there?

EFC: Either they wanted to get rid of me or the chief and the warrant officer thought that I was material. Because I was sort of a take charge guy, you know. I mean, whatever had to be done, I could do that. When we had a plane crash, I was the one who operated the crane, which was an overgrown lift truck, fork truck, whatever a fork truck is, with a boom and a cable on it and a hook. Now the airplane weighed more than this truck. Even though it had a big cast iron thing on the end of it so (makes sound) crash up there. "Ed, get the crane up on the ... elevator up to the hangar deck and now you're in the sea." That's why it crashed, because you're bobbing and weaving and the poor guy didn't grab on. So the next thing you know, ... I'll tool on over there and I'll say, "Hey, wait a second." You've got to tie me down. And every so often on a ... on a flight deck, there's a steel channel with zig-zags in it and you could hook a cable around it and strap me in it with a cable. You know, winch it up tight and put a clamp on it like you do guy wires on a phone pole, and strap me to the deck, so the plane doesn't end up taking me over the side. And then you've got to holler at the stoop on the bridge, who's got the gold, saying: "Hey! Get out of the swells, you're rolling." Because, you know, you go "Whoa, you're going over."

No, you're not. Oh, yes, you are. Oh, no, you're not. You got to head the ship INTO the waves so you're going this way, and you're not going in the direction.

KP: Sideways. You want to go straight into the waves.

EFC: So, here you are, big deal, you're a[n] aviation machinist mate second class telling a first lieutenant or something on a bridge. "Hey! Stupid, you know." Go into it. And, while like I said, for whatever reason, they either wanted to get rid of me or thought they should elevate me. I don't know. But, in not having had an academic curriculum in high school, I didn't have geometry, trigonometry and algebra--which dear Miss Farmer passed me from the goodness of her heart, not because I passed the course. But the chaplain on board had been a teacher of mathematics so he tutored me in geometry and trigonometry. While I'm waiting to get to a point where I could get off the ship and be transferred back home. When I got to Princeton I had to actually take the test to pass the so-called entrance exam ... in math. Which I did. And went on from there. Otherwise, I'd still be turning cranks I guess.

KP: So you ended up, in a sense, starting college in Princeton?

EFC: Yeah.

KP: When did you finally arrive in Princeton?

EFC: It was, let's see, I got off Okinawa, it was April first. April Fools Day '45. I got off the ship in Guam about the tenth. ... Flew back to Hawaii, got a transport to San Francisco. It was en route to San Francisco that came over the wireless that Frank--FDR had died, and that was April the 14th or 15th. As I recall. So I got off in San Francisco, then you have to spend a week or two there go running through the red tape machine, and transported back to Princeton. And it was early May. And, of course, I was no sooner there than the war in Europe ended. So, we're going to cease operations in Princeton. You guys you'll go to Tufts, you'll go to Dartmouth, you'll go to Chapin, and I got transferred to a little liberal arts school up in Maine, Bates. And they lasted one semester. And they quit, because then you had V-J Day. The war's now over. Well they don't just dump you out, say: everybody go home. ... Well, transfer to Dartmouth for another semester. Now we're getting ready to get everybody out. And they said, well you could either stay and run the course for your commission and then serve so many years and go to sea during the summer. Ugh! Forget it. I said, how do I get out? (Laughter) So I chose to get out in 1946. Spring of 1946. Got to Dartmouth in September, it snowed and never saw the ground again. ... Not even the day I left. You just got snow on top of snow, on top of snow. (Laughter) What's the temperature this morning? 26 below. Andover, New Hampshire. 26 below. And then I got out in Long Island and then I came to Rutgers under the G.I. Bill.

KP: You saw a number of different colleges, including Princeton. What did you think of them? Admittedly you were still in the navy and still doing all those navy things, but what did you think of the academic instruction you got?

EFC: Well, it was tough. Not having been in school for four years ... and the biggest difference was that you were mixed in with eighteen year olds.

KP: Even in the V-12.

EFC: Yeah, I mean civilians. I mean these were kids fresh out of high school. The war's over, they're going to college, they're not going in the service. Still had Selective Service, but they could get into college first and then when their number's up so on and so forth run through the machine. But big difference in the maturity and the dedication. I mean, you know the kids were goof-offs, most of them, out for a good time, and the vets were very serious to get it over with and get out. And get an education ... 'cause you saw the value of it, while you were maturing. You know, 'cause you're in your twenties at that point.

KP: Because it sounds like the V-12 plan program and the G.I. Bill really was a decisive break for you.

EFC: Totally, yeah totally. Wonderful, wonderful. Enjoyed it. Worked hard. It's not easy. I mean, like I said, not having basically a real solid academic course background. And, what do you want to do? What do you want to take up? Geez, I don't know. What are you going to take up? I think, I'll take up civil engineering. Eh, I don't like that too much. I'm mechanically inclined. I'll take up mechanical engineering. Oh, really! Right! (Laughs) You know, sixteen hours of labs a week and it was nose to the grindstone.

KP: Had you thought of staying in aviation at all?

EFC: Yep. I did, but I wouldn't have wanted to have been a pilot. A mechanic, what's the future, you know. Once you're in college and you make a go of it, and I fared pretty well. I forget exactly. I think I was in like the top seventeen percent or something of engineering college which is pretty damn good.

KP: I have been told that the Rutgers engineering program was very difficult then.

EFC: It was difficult and it was unusual in that the mechanical engineer just didn't learn how to design machinery. You know, drawing board. You had civil engineering, you had chemical, you had electrical [and] aeronautical. So it was a well rounded engineering education and you really didn't specialize and concentrate on mechanical things until like ... half of your junior or senior year. You had thermodynamics, all sorts of subjects and a very difficult curriculum. And the math, whew! Analytical geometry and you know, guys had their crib notes in their watch faces. Couldn't understand the stuff. (Laughter) Hyperbolic functions, ... you wouldn't know about those.

KP: No, I have just heard the term.

EFC: Had a professor here who taught--it wasn't analytical geometry, but it was analytical something, and it was the most difficult course you can imagine. And this fellow was educated in Mexico. He taught this subject here and he had a government contract to develop a recoilless cannon. So he dealt in all these physical things and what you dealt with was all these--I don't

know who even thought of these functions, but like hyperbolic equations. Square root is bad? You don't know what square root is until you see this thing. And the guy gets up there and says, "Well let's say you want to determine the rate of growth of bacteria in a cesspool. I can't wait!" (Laughter) Geez, this concerned me ever since we had the outhouse, you know. (Laughter) And he starts out on a blackboard, you know, which is the whole ... length of the room. He starts out. (demonstrates) He's got one hand in his pocket, in with the chalk, and he's putting down all these big sines, cosines, squares, oh, function after function after function. Just to show what the rate of growth is of bacteria in a cesspool. He gets to the end of the blackboard and he goes to erase it and this one--there's always one smart guy who gets this, an army vet, who still had his big old olive drab khaki overcoat, he was Jewish, and these boys are smart, for the most part, you know. He had a beard that was black, coal black. "Prof." he said, "just a second, I don't see how you got from this step here to that step?" He erases the whole damn blackboard. Fills it up on what he left out. And this one guy says, "I don't know how you got from here to there." So it was tough. And he passed most everybody that attended, you know. You got a C in the course, because you attended, not because you got the subject. Some stuff was just outrageous.

KP: How much of it was actually useful in your career especially initially?

EFC: Well, most of it was. ... Well, of course, my first job was at Johns Manville in the general engineering department so they had responsibility for everything that concerned a manufacturing process and they had at Manville fourteen individual product factories. They had floor tile; asbestos insulation for piping, another building; asbestos shingles for houses, another building; transit pipe for pressure pipe, another building; asphalt shingles for the roof, another building; so they had a tremendous product line. And in each particular building you had different problems, depending on what the process was. It might be dust. ... All sorts of disposal problems, whatever. So you got a well rounded background going from when you start out there. You're in like an apprentice, again, you know. You go from department to department and machine design. Because they design their own equipment. Then they decide, ... where you're best suited or where they need a body or someone. So I ended up in air conditioning and ventilation which I didn't particularly like. But what the hell, when you're making \$2,750 a year. Got that. \$2,750 a year, bachelors degree mechanical engineer, and competed with 47 other guys, graduates, to get the job. You don't tell them, you know, where you'd rather be, because most of the rest of the class was selling insurance or fire inspectors or estimators for contractors. Couldn't find a job in 1949.

KP: A number of people said it was tough to get that first job.

EFC: Very difficult. And then, of course, I did so well that-- after every year you get reviewed--I performed so well that I got a double raise instead of a \$250 a year raise I got \$500 which was almost \$10 a week.

KP: I have also been told that Johns Manville was a fairly frugal company too.

EFC: Some people say it's a five letter word, cheap. (Laughter) Well, you had to support Tommy Manville, you know, a playboy. How many wives did he have, I forget, eleven, twelve?

Something like that. But they were also ... not very progressive. They had a product. They didn't worry about competition and they didn't worry about improvement in production and quality and so on. They want it, they'll buy it. Until they get competition. Then they'll have to do something about it.

KP: How did you end up leaving Manville? What were the circumstances?

EFC: Well, a fellow that I graduated with here ended up working in Trenton for ... one of the very first fiberglass companies in the country. And they were designing ... what they called a pontoon, for a floating bridge, to take trucks and tanks across rivers, out of fiberglass so it wouldn't deteriorate in storage, like the old plywood ones they used to use, and aluminum was fairly expensive. So they had a contractor design and build prototypes for that. And the fellow who was on the project went into the navy so my friend called me up and asked me if I was interested in changing jobs, and I said, "Well, I'll talk about it." He offered me \$5,000 a year, instead of my \$3,250 and I said, "Gee, I don't know. When do I start?" So I ended up there doing basically design work for the Army Engineer Corps in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. So we designed the items and reviewed the designs with the engineers at Fort Belvoir and on their approval we'd build a prototype and then take it down and ... test it and so forth. It was good experience.

KP: But you would end up leaving that for another company.

EFC: Well, mainly because the owners of that particular company, the original owner sold it to a couple of playboys. One of whom was the grandson of the Sears Roebuck family. Julius Rosenwald II. JR2 was his license plate on his Porsche. And he just came there to look at the pictures he had taken in Europe or wherever, you know. He had them up on his 35 millimeter slides and he didn't work. He just came there to get away from the house. And his brother-in-law, who was a lawyer, married Julius's sister, was the president of the company, who really wanted to make a go of it, without spending money. It's not too easy. And they wanted to be the General Motors of the fiberglass boat ... business, you know. Without spending any money. So I worked up a big spreadsheet, you know, on investing in this equipment. We could do thus and so, and the return on investment was like compared to hand work, you know. \$150,000, that's a lot of money to put out. I don't know. So they just didn't want to progress and a fella living across the street from me, his father had a molding business, but it was different--it wasn't fiberglass, it was injection molding which would make things like this or that, or that, or this (points at objects on desk). High production.

KP: Yeah. Everything from tape dispensers to ...

EFC: Yeah. Right. High production and he said they were looking for a salesman. I said, "I'm not a salesman. I'm an engineer." ... But I didn't want to move because, I had just built a house down there by myself and I liked the area. The kids were small. And so I took a cut in pay and left and went to work for this outfit. But it was more technical sales. Where I did use my engineering background to promote sales. In that I would assist the customer in design or whatever, and it worked out very well.

KP: Because you ended up staying with them for the rest of your career?

EFC: Yeah, 28 years, I guess. Yep.

KP: I am curious. Whatever happened to this company that wanted to be the GM of fiberglass boats?

EFC: Yeah. Well they sold out to one of their biggest customers who was Knoll Associates. A very high priced, prominent, ... office furniture manufacturer. Exotic type chairs, Eero Saarinen design. You know, that kind of thing and they bought them out. And then Art Metal which is a giant metal desk and office furniture, filing cabinet producer bought them out, and eventually sold the business to a couple of the key employees, because they didn't want any part of it. ... It just wasn't profitable. So they eventually went bankrupt. Owing their creditors too much, and the creditors took it over. It's a shame. Disaster.

KP: And they would have had the potential to really become the GM of fiberglass boats?

EFC: Oh yeah, that's right. ... Easily, easily. No problem. ... They called in one of the most prestigious consulting firms in the country, Booz, Allen, Hamilton. And they had a guy there for a year going over everything, and he and I worked together on all these projections and possibilities and so on. The practicalities; and he made the recommendations and they end up hiring this guy away from the consulting firm to take over the operation, but they didn't give him any money. So he couldn't do anything. I don't know why he took the job, frankly. Maybe they promised him something, but then didn't deliver, so it just didn't materialize.

And I ended up, you know, working with people like AT&T, Western Electric, manufacturers who did volume business, but more sophisticated mechanical type stuff as opposed to you know, ... I mean this (points to plastic object) we call garbage work, you know.

KP: The plastic, etc.

EFC: It looks nice, but you don't make any money on it. They just wear out your machinery.

KP: What were some of the things that you produced in plastic?

EFC: Well, we only produced parts.

KP: Parts?

EFC: Parts. Okay. Parts, little pieces, components. We might have made little doodads like a grommet on the end of a cord. By the millions, you know, in all your favorite flavors. For the princess phone. Pink and blue and brown and red and black and green and olive. Drive you nuts, but good volume. And they paid well. And little desk items. Motor items. Circuit breaker items. Electrical. All kinds of stuff.

KP: Since retiring, how has the company done?

EFC: Well, when I retired, we sold the company before I retired. You know, I had an unfortunate accident where I broke my neck. I fell off my daughter's roof helping her husband put a new roof on and I fell and landed on my head and broke my neck so I was paralyzed and unable to work for about nine months. I worked at home doing the arithmetic, estimating and stuff like that and taking physical therapy. And then I went back to work for a year and then I said, I just can't take it any more. It's too painful to sit at a desk, because ... I'm wired and fused and it's very stiff. So every time you're leaning over a desk, these muscles are all tense and you end up, you're in pain all day, all night. You go to bed in pain, you wake up in pain. I said, I've got to pack it in and the boss had four sons who weren't interested in the business, so he sold it. And the buyer, who was going to set the world on fire, didn't know his butt from his elbow, bought a new Mercedes with a cell phone, came to work in his jogging suit, and decided after a year he wasn't making any money. So he sold it in turn to another guy who had been twenty-something years in the business. Worked for Johnson & Johnson as the head of their plastics department and he jaunted all over the country trying to be a big magnate, you know. He's going to buy this company, buy that company. He's going to have a conglomerate. Only he spent more money on doing that, while his own business floundered and went bankrupt. So it's non-existent, it's a shame.

KP: Because it sounds like you built a very successful business. You really contributed to a successful operation.

EFC: Well, I would say so.

KP: I guess one of the questions I also have is how did you meet your wife? It sounds like you met her on a number of trips to Brooklyn.

EFC: No. Not at all. As it turns out, ... when I was in Memphis, Tennessee, there was one of my classmates, a fellow from New York State. And my wife went to New York State to spend summers on a farm up there and this fellow was at a neighboring farm. And, of course, the guys and the girls used to get together on Saturday nights, and that kind of stuff. And he said, "Do you have a girlfriend?" And I said, "No." He said, "I got a girl for you, beautiful. Real nice kid." He said, "I'd go for her myself, but I'm getting married to somebody else that I grew up with." Okay. So he gave me her name and address and I wrote to her and we started corresponding. In ... '44. A year and a half later, I met her.

KP: So you were writing to her the whole time while you were in the navy. While you were on board ship?

EFC: Yeah. That was my main correspondence. Forget home. (Laughter)

KP: And she wrote back to you? You must have really enjoyed getting these letters?

EFC: Yeah, that's right. So end up four years later getting married. While I was ... starting my senior year here. My father said, "Oh, Christ. He's not going to finish. (Laughter) After all that hard work, he's not going to finish."

KP: How did it feel living back at home after being done with the military and then going to college?

EFC: It was a grind. Mainly, because I was helping my father build a house at the same time. I was a mason's helper and carpenter's helper and the rest of it. Then hitting the books. Plus I went to summer school in Newark to pick up some credits--elective subjects like sociology, psychology. (Laughter) Real tough courses. (Laughter) I mean no aspersions, you guys might be majors in one of those, I don't know. But they were snap courses and I needed the credit. So I was busy most of the time.

And, incidentally, I ended up very strangely, you know. There was a guy in school here who said, "Wow! Do you know that one of our guys is a lieutenant colonel in the army engineers corps who's finishing up at Rutgers? Whew!" I didn't know who he was. And I was doing very well in calculus. It was just (snaps his finger) for some reason it was a snap. This guy in my class said, "Jesus, Ed, you got some spare time." And I was commuting from Bound Brook. I said: "Yeah, you know, when I'm between classes. Got a free period, I'll give you a hand." So I go up to him. He was living in a house, upstairs attic room someplace, around here. I don't remember where. He says, "I just can't get this stuff." So, we go up to his room. Sits me in an old Morris chair and I look over at this Army trunk. It says, "Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Miller." I said, "Holy shit!" Everybody figured ... [you] had to be a super brain to be a very young lieutenant colonel in the army engineers. You know like, what's he need? And it was really exciting, you know, to be useful to a guy who you thought had it cold.

KP: So the rumor had been floating around about this guy and you finally met the lieutenant colonel?

EFC: Yeah! Yeah! Hell of a nice guy. Very humble. It was his freshman year when the war started so boom--he got a commission, and he went right up the ranks. Just kept his nose clean and to the grindstone, but it didn't help his ... academic abilities. So I ended up his tutor. It was interesting.

KP: Living at home and sort of in a hurry, do you ever wish that you were able to have some more fun at college? Participated more in college activities?

EFC: Yeah. Looking back at it. At the time, it was just a goal, and it was no easy way out. I mean, again, working at home, a lot of hours with labs. Homework, for me, was not a breeze. Calculus maybe, but the rest, electrical engineering, AC/DC, tough. ... So I was working all the time. Weekends, cracking the books. It was a struggle. Like I said, I ended up doing well, but it ... wasn't easy. You always envy the guy who, "What did you do last night? He said, "I went to the movies." You know, a real brain. Didn't have to crack the book. Just homework, you know, ... that's it, done. Three hours later, I'm, you know, on the fifth one or something. But that's life.

KP: How did you feel about the Korean and Vietnam Wars? Specifically, were you glad you did not stay in the navy when the Korean War came about?

EFC: Extremely, because one of my classmates, I think his name was Cunningham, he had been in the army and he was a veteran, and he went to ROTC and got his second lieutenant's commission, and immediately after graduation, he gets killed in Korea. It wasn't worth it, you know. It can happen to anybody and it happened to a lot of guys and I was very happy, from that standpoint, that I didn't pursue it. Because once around is enough. Unless you want to make a career out of it, you know.

KP: Which sounds like you didn't want to.

EFC: No, I didn't like the organization. Too much pettiness, politics and regimentation. Not that I'm a wild guy. You know, call me a square if you want, but I didn't like that kind of life.

KP: Even if you were in officers' country you still would not want to stay in the navy?

EFC: No, I wouldn't like it, no. I could have been, you know. Obviously, but it's too regimented. You had nothing to say about where you went or what you did. You had more freedom as far as your spare time, your free time than an enlisted man, you know, you could come and go in nicer circles. You know, clubs opposed to the bar down the street. But I'd rather have my freedom so to speak.

TD: How did you feel about the Vietnam War? What were your politics?

EFC: ... I had mixed feelings, to be honest with you. Having served in a war that probably had greater cause from our domestic standpoint, it didn't seem right to be over there fighting these people to prevent the spread of Communism. On the other hand, you said, well, somebody's got to do it. Because, let's face it. Stalin and that bunch from thereon, they were going to take over the world. Even maybe a little worse than Hitler. So from that standpoint I said, you know, we should be there. Not alone. It should have been more of a United Nations type endeavor, but nobody else had the wherewithal except maybe Britain, and they didn't want to bother. France pulled out. So ... I didn't feel good about the people whose sons or whatever had to go over. And it was terrible--that was like fighting the Japanese with the flame throwers, you know. I mean agent orange and the rest of it. And the jungle. I mean, there's nothing scarier than the jungle, where you don't know who's three feet away from you. You don't even see them. I mean, it had to be horrendous. And as it turned out, it was a fruitless effort. ... And you do feel sorry for these poor guys that got killed and maimed. And the irony of it is, take the entire number, and we kill that many in automobile accidents in one year. Not the same. But numbers wise, it doesn't make sense either. Geez, what's the big deal? Fifty thousand guys got killed. Kill each other in automobile accidents. What are you complaining about? Except, I'd rather die in an automobile accident, at home. Other than that, I don't have any politics on it. But I'm sure glad that Russia decided to abandon Communism, extremely surprised. Now if the Chinese would only come around. [They could] take over the world. What's the population? Two billion?

KP: Have you ever been to Poland?

EFC: No. I've been to Europe several times on vacation [and] one business trip. ... In fact, we were going to go, ... my parents were Polish, my wife's parents were both Norwegian immigrants and she went to visit her relatives over there, twice. And we were talking about going this summer, but my wife chickened out, next year. ... I would rather go to Scandinavia than to Poland to be honest with you. Because from what I see and hear, it's still a pretty sorry state. Living conditions and economic conditions and that kind of thing.

KP: Have you ever been back to Pearl Harbor or any of the places you were in the Pacific?

EFC: Well, we went to Hawaii on vacation some years back. Didn't go to the monument or anything like that. We touched down in Honolulu and transferred to a smaller plane to Maui and R&R'd for two weeks and did the same thing coming back. 'Cause, I mean, when you've seen it, you've seen it. And today, Honolulu is like Miami Beach. When I was there you had one hotel, you know. Now you got a whole line of them. And it wouldn't be interesting to me. I'd rather drive out to a pineapple plantation or something. Eat a ripe one. Nothing like a ripe pineapple. You've probably never eaten one. You know the ones you get in the store, even though they're yellow, they're white. And when you get a ripe pineapple in Hawaii, it's like the canned variety. It's yellow. It's drippy, juicy, sugary sweet. Yum!, you know. Not like here. And the sad thing is, we were over in Maui for two weeks, pineapples weren't in season. So we had one slice. Took a van ride to the Benihana Trail and saw the Seven Veils and the driver treated us each to a slice of pineapple. Green pineapple, anyhow.

KP: You never joined a veterans organization?

EFC: No.

KP: Have you ever met any of the people you served with? Or gone to any reunions from your ship?

EFC: No. ... You see, I got transferred off to go to school, and I didn't keep in touch with the guys, ... 'cause you're busy and I wasn't the type. You know, kind of tunnel vision. I got a mission here. This is taking all my concentration. That's in the past. And oddly enough, ... about a year ago, ... somebody found out where I was and I got a letter, and every year now I get a letter of the Windham Bay, which is the ship I was on, about a reunion. With all the sign-up details. ... But I wouldn't know a soul. I mean, most of the people that are involved, I recognized one name on the entire roster in the Windy Bay News reunions. The next one is in where? One was in Kansas ... Albuquerque, New Mexico. Not interested. Like I said, I wouldn't know anybody and I'm not a joiner. Some guys, you know--hey! Even, if they don't know you. How are you? I'm not that type. More introverted, I guess. So I didn't join the Vets of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. ... I support them, but I ... don't join them. Next?

KP: Anything we forgot to ask you?

EFC: Anything you forgot to ask me?

KP: Did you buy a house with a G.I. mortgage?

EFC: Yes, I took a mortgage. Yes, at four percent. South Plainfield. Let's see, what was the mortgage. Something like \$8,000. I mean the house cost \$10,800. And we borrowed some money from my in-laws--because I didn't have any money, and took the four percent mortgage and then when we sold the house to move to Trenton, why the mortgage went with it. 'Cause the buyer was a G.I. and just transferred it. But that was a good deal also. I mean, we, as veterans, got a lot of benefits. If you were able to take advantage of them, you know. A lot of guys don't. But between the G.I. Bill and I think then in the '40s, the late '40s here, engineering school was the most expensive curriculum. I think it was \$500 a semester. Now, what is it? 100,000 dollars for four years or something?

KP: Not quite that expensive. But it's more expensive than in the 1940s.

EFC: Well, only because it's a state school.

KP: Yeah, but I know a private school ...

EFC: Princeton is what \$25,000 a year with room and board? Whew! You know what's even worse? I went to a wedding. A neighbor's daughter got married a couple of weeks ago. I went to a wedding and at our table was a younger couple who had a twelve year old son or something going to George School in Pennsylvania. Private school, private school! Commuter! Not living on campus. Father drives him to school every day. Tuition: \$25,000 a year! I said, "You've got to be nuts!" He said, "The boy wants to go there." (Demonstrates) Pow! Shoot yourself. You know what I mean. That's outrageous! \$25,000. You've got to have individual attention. One student per teacher or something. God, that's outrageous! But people pay it. What can I say? Anything else?

KP: No. Unless we forgot to ask something?

EFC: No, but while I'm here I'll show you a couple of just the good old days. (shows memorabilia) And I don't even remember the guys name, but he was the nicest guy from Oregon that I'd ever met and got buddy buddy with. He's kind of dreamy eyed, because of the flash bulb, I guess. And that's the waitress at a bar in ... Los Angeles. And Sherman's in San Diego is THE place for the sailors to hang out. Here's my same buddy again and myself. And here's a little guy from Georgia. And this guy's a warrant officer ... who came through the ranks so he hobnobbed with the enlisted men as opposed to the officers snobs.

KP: Did you smoke at all during the war?

EFC: Oh, yeah. A nickel a pack. Couldn't afford not to. (Laughter) Five cents for twenty cigarettes. Now they cost you what, ten cents a piece! There's another one. There's the same guy again over here. This is another group at Sherman's. I don't know when the date was.

KP: So you had people from different parts of the country.

EFC: Oh, yeah. All over, sure all over. The only ones I didn't like came from Texas. God! They were so obnoxious. You know, they love each other. They love themselves. Nothing like Texas. These are a little moth eaten 'cause they're up in the attic being eaten by ...

KP: This is the crossing of the equator?

EFC: Uh, this one is. This is my crossing the equator. This is my plank owners certificate. See, when you are a first crew member of a brand new ship. You own one plank. Even if it's a steel ship, you own a plank. So it's a plank owner's certificate, because I was an original crew member. I have another couple of these. ... You get one when you cross the international dateline and that kind of thing. This was a type ... that's not my ship, but it's that size. I don't know what the hell they are, but some type of certificates. And this is the backside of my discharge showing me where I was at what time and all I ended up with. Sampson, New York State; Memphis, Tennessee; Naval Air Station, California; Fleet Air Wing (Hedron?), that was also in California; and then I was in Astoria, Oregon waiting for this. And I serve on that for a year and a half and then I went to Princeton, ... and they show Bates in Lewiston, Maine; and Dartmouth College; and got off in Lido Beach, New York; received American Theater Medal, Victory Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and the Asiatic/Pacific with 3 Battle Stars. Even though I didn't get hurt. So that's it. Not too bloody and not too exciting, but it was an experience. Another interesting thing, was, I think it was after we ... let's see, it had to be Okinawa, Iwo Jima, one of those, they captured a lot of Japanese planes and put them on board our ship, blackened all the insignia out so they wouldn't bomb us, which could be done you know, because here's a flight deck full of Jap planes, it must be a Jap ship. (Laughter) Kill! And we ferried them back to Guam and dumped them off. Where they went from there, I guess back to the states, I don't know.

KP: What did you think of the Japanese planes? Did you take a look at them?

EFC: ... Yeah, sure. Basically, they were Chinese copies of ours. I mean the engines were identical--Pratt and Whitney. They just copied them, but what they did do was not supply the pilots with any protection in order to keep the weight down and the range. That's why the little zero could fly a longer distance than our fighter planes, because we had all the protective armor, and couldn't fly the distances that they could. Okay! Are we done?

KP and TD in unison: Yes.

EFC: Don't think it ain't been charmin. 'Cause it ain't.

KP: Thanks a lot.

EFC: You're welcome.

TD: Take care.

EFC: I hope it's done some use for you.

KP: This concludes an interview with Mr. Edward F. Culwick on November 6, 1995 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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