

AL 126

Interviewee: Walter P. Smith III

Interviewer: Patricia S. Garretson

Date: February 3, 1991

William Smith is Patty Smith Garretson's father, and in this interview he recounts numerous adventures throughout his life. He was born September 21, 1921, at Women's Hospital in Baltimore. His father was a petty officer in the navy (he eventually retired as a captain), and the family moved quite a bit. His mother was quite ill, and he recalls Maggie O'Melia, their "companion" from Ireland. She spoke English and Gaelic, and Smith developed quite an Irish brogue because of her influence. He graduated from Severn Naval Academy Preparatory School in Annapolis and enrolled at the University of Virginia to pursue a degree in liberal arts.

Smith completed three years of college and then enlisted in the army around 1942 or 1943. He joined the airborne division and received training as a glider pilot. His first assignment was at Port Moresby, New Guinea. He managed to secure TAD from the 882d Airborne to be the skipper (as a PFC!) of a tugboat crew. In addition to their regular duties, they made a lot of money taking out fishing parties. D-Day was looming, and he wanted to be a part of that, so he returned to his unit. He participated in the invasions of Leyte, Mindanao, and Okinawa. He has vivid memories of his part of the operations. He was in Okinawa when the atomic bombs were dropped. He developed hepatitis and spent the rest of his enlistment in hospitals, from Okinawa to Woodrow Wilson Hospital in Staunton, Virginia.

After a discharge from the army, Smith went to "Sunshine U.," the University of Miami, Florida, on the GI Bill to major in engineering. He met Alice E. Carr there, and they were married in 1948. They returned to his family's farm in Bel Air, Maryland. Farming was hard work and low pay, so he took a night job in the water department of the Army Chemical Center. He then successfully competed for a job in the water works in Miami, but the position was embroiled in scandal and was held up until the issue was settled. The mayor of Miami, Robert High, wrote a letter of support, but unfortunately he died before the case was resolved.

Smith went into the boat building business instead. He copyrighted some changes in construction and instructions in the Optimist pram (named for the Optimist Club of Clearwater) and made kits to ship all over the country. His boats won state, national, and international championships. When demand and his physical health declined, he turned to the stock market and became a "professional gambler."

G: I am interviewing Walter P. Smith III, my father. We are in his winter travel trailer, which is parked in the woods at the back of my property, located at Route 2, Box 472, Alachua, Florida. It is Sunday, February 3, 1991. I am Patricia Jane Smith Garretson.

Would you mind giving me your full name?

S: Walter Prescott Smith.

G: That [Prescott] is an unusual name. Is that a family name?

S: Oh, yes, it is indeed. It is of English origin and goes way back in the family. It is a direct blood name. [It has] been handed down.

G: Who were your parents?

S: My father was Alan P. Smith, and my mother was Iris Anthony Ringer. The Ringer is Holland or Dutch [in origin]. My mother's father's people were Dutch. Her mother was a Hathaway, which is also English. But my father and grandmother on my father's side were all of English origin.

G: Where were you born?

S: I was born in Baltimore at the Women's Hospital. [It is] the same hospital in which you were born and [at] which our great-uncle was chief of staff. He was one of the [Johns] Hopkins specialists who came up with the idea of women having their own hospital. I can brag of being one of the few males that was ever in the Women's Hospital.

G: Were your father and mother from Baltimore also?

S: Yes, they were both born there.

G: Your earliest memories are from Baltimore?

S: No, Annapolis. And even Miami.

G: That is where you grew up?

S: My younger days and grade school days were mainly in Annapolis and Baltimore, and for a short period in Miami and Ponte Vedra [FL].

G: So you traveled around a lot?

S: We never stopped. We were constantly on the go.

G: Why did you travel?

S: For one thing, my father and mother liked to travel. The navy also kept him going.

G: Your father was in the service, then? He was in the navy?

S: Yes. He enlisted in the regular navy before World War I, underage, and he was thrown out, or at least he was discharged.

G: [He was] found out?

S: Yes. Then he turned around and lied about his age again and went in the second time. That time he stayed. He eventually received a commission. He retired as a captain in the navy after World War II after periods of active and inactive duty. He spent an equal amount of time as an enlisted man as he did an officer.

G: So he traveled a lot. That left you and your mother home?

S: Yes. We traveled. I claim I have been in every state in the Union but Wisconsin and Minnesota, I believe, and most of them more than once. We have lived in California. We had a house at Laguna Beach [and] an apartment in Long Beach. Of course, [we lived in] Miami. Dad was a chief petty officer at the time. I was very young. His specialty was radio. He had the [navy] radio station there. In those days [it was] rather small. It was on Miami Beach. The ships in the South Atlantic or the Caribbean could communicate by radio to Miami, and then the messages would be relayed on to Washington or wherever. I remember Miami. I was very young. I learned to drive in Miami, I remember. But my happiest memories were of Annapolis, where I made many friends.

G: What did you do there? Where did you go to school?

S: I went to Severn Naval Academy Preparatory School, from which I graduated. That, of course, was high school. Before that, for grade school, I went to Boys' Latin School in Baltimore. Severn was both a day school as well as [a boarding school]. It had resident students. Then, too, I went to Tome. I spent two years up on the banks of the Susquehanna [River], [which was near to] where I lived. I had to room, [but] I cannot think of what you call it. You know the name.

G: Boarding school?

S: Yes.

G: Did your mother have help raising you?

S: Yes, indeed. When I was born she was very ill. When my grandfather, Dr. Walter, died, she had a companion, Maggie O'Melia, [who] came from County Cork, Ireland. She raised me, actually, from the crib. She died when I was

twelve, when we lived in Annapolis and part time in Baltimore. I loved her dearly. She spoke the old Gaelic [as well as English, and [she] raised me on both. She had no use for the English, and she and my father had frequent disagreements.

G: So you were very fond of her?

S: I was more than fond. I was very close to her. [I loved her dearly.]

G: She was a nurse?

S: Yes. She was a second mother to me because my own mother almost died and was sometimes quite ill and [a] long time getting well. So Maggie announced that she was going to take over and raise the baby. She was unmarried [and] knew nothing about babies. [laughter] She learned.

G: How did you address your nurse?

S: I called her Goggie.

G: Did you pick up the Gaelic that she spoke?

S: Yes. And I had, I understand, quite an [Irish] accent. Your mother said there were times that she could detect certain words when we were married. But after she died, I lost my brogue over a period. Sometimes my father would have some of our English friends to dinner, [and] Maggie would make comments in the Gaelic about them [laughter].

I remember once – I do not know whether you want to hear this or not--we had problems traveling in England because Maggie had no use for the English, and the English royalty in particular. So when we took a tour through Buckingham Palace, she kept making disparaging remarks about the English and their ancestry, and the tour guide kept asking her to be quiet. My father finally decided that we were about to be put out and we had best leave. [laughter] Neither one of them thought it funny, but I recall I did. I was about eleven or twelve at the time. I remember it; I was old enough to.

G: So after high school at Severn [and] you graduated, did you go on to college?

S: Yes. I went to the University of Virginia, where I finished my third year and asked for active duty. I was in the naval reserve program and eligible for Officer Candidate School [OCS]. A doctor let me in. My father was stationed at the Jacksonville [Florida] Naval Air Station at the time, so I was told to go down there and await my orders. The next OCS navy class that came up, I was to go on through. I was sworn in, [and], in fact, my father, in Norfolk, gave me my oath of

allegiance into the navy. And somehow or other they made the mistake of putting me on active duty. I was not supposed to go on active duty until I got to the basic [training]. I think it was at Bainbridge [Naval Training Center, near] Tome [Maryland], where I originally had taken two years of my high school. But the mistake came because I was not in uniform. I went out to the naval air station and got a job [as a civilian while I was waiting to get my active duty orders. I say active duty; I was on active duty, but what I mean is that I would go into uniform. I was called into the personnel office to sign a waiver or be deferred. I told the officer in there that I could not do that. I was already in the service. I showed him my identification card, and he said, "You cannot do that. You are in a heap of trouble." He said, "Is your father the exec here?" I said yes. He said, "[Does] he know about [this]?" I said: "Sure. He swore me in the navy." He said, "You know you cannot take money from both civil service and fifty-four dollars a month (or whatever it was) as an apprentice seaman." He said, "You have to get out of one or the other pretty fast, and I do not think you are going to get out of the navy." The holdup came [because] I was partially color blind, or as it was called "defective color perception," and therefore was not eligible to go into the OCS – the "ninety-day wonder" school. So the navy gave me a discharge in Miami from the Office of Naval Officer Procurement down there, which I have to this day, as an apprentice seaman. I immediately enlisted in the army. The war was on.

G: The war was on?

S: Oh, yes. The war had started then.

G: So this was in 1941 or 1942?

S: No. That was late 1942 or early 1943. Virginia was clearing out fast. Everybody was very patriotic, and it was hard to get the students to stay. I wish I had. I could have, but with all my friends going, I felt [like I wanted to go, as well].

G: What happened after you enlisted in the army?

S: I joined up in the airborne with a choice of either [going as] a glider trooper or as a parachutist. I chose the glider branch. I went in in St. Augustine. I enlisted in Jacksonville, actually, but since Dad was out at the [Naval] Air Station at Jacksonville, my official home was St. Augustine.

Say, I was sold in the auction mart there in the plaza to the lowest bidder, which turned out to be the army, and they took me right out to Camp Blanding. I was told that I was to come back, and actually [I was] made an honorary member of the American Legion in St. Augustine. That was a mistake, because I think twenty years, thirty years later I went back in there [laughter]. They told me to

come back and have a drink. I went in to have a beer, and I was told, no, there was not any such thing as honorary members. At any rate, that is where I left from, and I went on up to Westover Field [Air Force Base].

G: Where is Westover Field?

S: In Massachusetts, near Springfield. [I] took the infantry training and preparation for the airborne basic. I worked hard at it, and I liked it. It was good training in the 881st Airborne Engineer Battalion. Then the 882d was formed, which I went into at its birth. It was born at Westover Field. But we went through very intensive infantry training where we qualified. I qualified on [the M-1] rifle and the "bazooka," the anti-tank weapon, and the light .30 caliber machine gun.

G: How long did all your training last?

S: I do not think it lasted, in Westover Field, more than a little over a month. I was a squad leader. I was told if I could hold out as squad leader that I would not be replaced and that I would graduate from basic as a corporal. I held the job, and I worked hard at it. When we all graduated, nobody got promoted. We did not even get our private-first-class stripes as we were promised. We went on hikes, and we were put in real good physical condition. [We were active] from early morning to the end of the evening.

G: Was everyone then sent overseas?

S: No, that was just a start.

G: The war was going on?

S: Yes. From there we went down to Fort Bragg [North Carolina] to take our glider training. Well, since I had chemistry at the University of Virginia, they decided I would be in the water department. Being an engineering outfit, we had small water purification units. The combat engineers could switch back and forth and were doing dual duty [by working] both in combat as well as [in] some of the [non-combat activities]. [They were] not only blowing up bridges but putting bridges in, too. [They were performing] many of the service jobs that had to be done. We later were assigned miniature bulldozers – little, tiny road scrapers – and everything that could go into a glider.

G: How old were you when all this training was going on, when you enlisted?

S: I was in my early twenties. That is getting back there.

G: You were born....

S: I am a little slow. I have to stop and think and try and not lie about these things and put things together as factually as I can.

G: You were born September 21, 1921.

S: Yes. So what would I have been then? Twenty-two or twenty-three? [I was in] my early twenties [or somewhere] in there. Maybe [I was] a little older than that.

G: From Fort Bragg, where did you go?

S: First, at Fort Bragg the glider training was great. We thought that was wonderful, except that I was in a glider accident in which I went through the front end of the glider. I would like to tell about that.

G: Well, do tell!

S: First, we had to put in so many times flying around in the old C-47s, and then [we had to] help [with] putting up poles with the nylon ropes on them so that the [tow plane could hook to the gliders]. The C-47 came down with a long hook, and it snatched the glider up off the ground. That was something that had just been developed when I was getting into it. They call them gliders, but tow planes is what they are. The purpose of them was to be able to get into and out of tight places that planes could not land. Helicopters have since taken their place. The old CG-4As proved impractical. In World War II they were very costly in [terms of] personnel, but they were used successfully in the CBI (China-Burma-India) theater and during the Normandy invasion of Europe. My outfit eventually went to the Pacific instead of going to Europe, as we suspected we would probably go.

G: When you first left the country, where did you go? Where were you first stationed after your military training?

S: At New Guinea. I was going to tell you how I was standing up between the pilot and the co-pilot when we hit a big stump. It was rough up there. We had to cut loose [and] come down. I was supposed to have been in the back hanging on. [laughter] We landed, I guess, at about thirty or thirty-five miles an hour in high grass, and this huge, big stump hit right between [the wheels] and tore the front end of the glider open. I stretched out because I was hanging onto the rung over my head, and I went right through the front of the thing and just kept tumbling. [I] got a lot of gravel in the top of my head, but I thought it was great afterwards. But they put us right [back] up in the air immediately. They ran us through first aid.

I do not know how some of the other men fared, but there were less than a

dozen of us, I think, [and] that was all. The pilot and co-pilot were in their early twenties, too. As I recall, the highest rank they got was flight officer. Half of them were staff or technical sergeants, anyway.

That was the end of that glider. We immediately were taken – we were spotted from the air and rescued – and put in a C-47. We flew all over the place because the colonel knew he would never get us back in a glider again if he did not immediately get us up in the air.

G: I understand.

S: I am taking too much time on this, am I not?

G: No! We are just here to talk about your life.

S: After further training, we went to Richmond, actually, for our equipment. We were given some of these very small pieces of equipment and learned how to load them into the old C-47, which was a marvelous plane. There are still a few of them around today flying out of Miami [and] down into the West Indies and the [Caribbean] islands.

G: So you had further training in Richmond?

S: Yes. [We had] a brief stay in Richmond in learning how to use some of this equipment. I remember we put one of our cooks on one of these small bulldozers, and he promptly ran it into a tree and could not get it to stop. But we were all supposed to know how to operate interchangeably.

From there we went out to San Francisco and went on board ship. [We] went aboard the old united fruit [vessel the *Cape Neddick*]. Boats they called them, [but] they were small ships. They were not boats at all [but, rather,] liners. [She was a] beautiful, beautiful vessel. She was in her war paint. It only took our whole battalion and what equipment we had. We did not have all of our small equipment with us. We had mainly trucks and jeeps and some of the small water purification units and small portable pumps.

It took us a month to get to Port Moresby, right down at the bottom where Australia and New Guinea come together. We went unescorted. We were coming up the Great Barrier Reef. [We] stayed as far away from Japan or any possibility of submarine traffic [as we could]. We ran up on a reef. [laughter] We heard all this crunching, and the captain stopped the engines. We were getting close to New Guinea, and we were just off Australia. She slid on over this reef with all these crunching sounds. [laughter] We knew we were close because we were seeing coconuts floating in the water. [We] went on in to Port

Moresby. We got our orders there to continue on up to the Cape Breton peninsula, or Finschafen, or Lae, which we did.

G: In New Guinea?

S: Yes, in New Guinea. And the Lae area – Cape Breton is right across from New Britain – had been taken by one of the few airborne operations in the Pacific. We were apparently too late for it. The Australians did most of dirty work in that area. We got a combat star or a campaign ribbon for being there. We were there for about a year – every bit of a year.

G: What did you do while you were there? What was life like?

S: Well, I will tell you. I had a fine time. Despite knowing Captain Weems and his navigation as a kid and some [other] small experiences, I took some of what amounted to a motorboat operators' license [course and passed it]. And I was on my second issue. [There was] beautiful water [and] beautiful islands there, and there was a diesel specialist in our outfit, a sergeant. I cannot remember his name, [although] I should now. I went along with him, because I was off duty, to see what he was doing on this tug. He was working on the diesel engine on it.

While I was there, [I ran into] this major who was the port captain. I told him how I just wished I were back on the water again. I loved the water as a kid. I was always out on it, one way or another – in it, under it, on it, or what. He said: "Well, we are getting together to put this boat in commission. We seized her from the Japanese. She was built in Australia. The Japs seized her, and we are just going to use her around here as a pilot boat and for towing." There was a PT boat harbor there. Later, I told him about the two tickets I had that might help to qualify me, though I had very little [experience and] I had no real commercial experience on the water.

G: Tickets?

S: Yes. Captain's tickets. [They were] the most limited captain's tickets you could get, but, nonetheless, that is what they were. I have forgotten the tonnage [rating that was on them], but they still have the same thing now. The coast guard, I believe, issues them now. It has been so long ago. I was only about sixteen or seventeen years old when I took the exams. I took them in Baltimore and passed them.

G: So a ticket was a license?

S: Yes, it is a license. It is a limited captain's license. For the test there, because of the color blindness, all I had to do was pick out different colored wool balls out

of a basket, in red and blue and so on. I just pulled all those out. I did not have any trouble with them. So they went ahead and issued me the ticket. But the navy would not honor it. They said [that] as far as the Department of Commerce [was concerned] it was OK with them, but it was not all right with the navy.

At any rate, I went down to report. I got off from my duty with my outfit on temporary duty. They released me, no problem, and I went back to the dock to report for duty on this boat. This major was there, and he introduced me to Sergeant O'Hara, I believe he was, and Corporal Thompson. And here is Private First Class Smith – finally got his one stripe [laughter] – as the captain of this tug. I, for once, kept my big mouth shut because I was so surprised. I did not expect to get on that thing as captain. I did not know the first thing about a tugboat, and still do not for that matter. I would come to find that not many people out there did either. [laughter]

So he told us to make ourselves at home and make sure we had [comfortable] quarters on board. The first thing I did [was say] to the other two: "Look. You both outrank me. This is a peculiar situation. I do not know how you feel about it, but I feel kind of [strange]." The major, I think, said, "You will get an automatic promotion once a month until you get up to somewhere in sergeant," which, as I recall, I think I got. But I lost [that rank] when I went back to my outfit. I started out on the boat, anyway, as a private.

First thing I did was [go] to the [American] Red Cross there and get all the fishing tackle that I could from them, including fishing lines and hooks and feathers, and we immediately started rigging up fishing lines. We [did not tell the port captain that we] did not have fishing poles. Then we were issued local charts. I was shown where we could go in and out of the channels there, to Dregger Harbor and the ships' docks. There were several big ship docks there. One of the easiest things and first things we did was simply go out and lay offshore. When a ship came along, we would just hail them and say, "Follow us." And the ship would follow us on in [to the harbor]. It was easy. We had a great time [as pilots].

G: You fished on your free time, then?

S: Yes. We were making money right and left taking fishing parties out, because New Britain was still occupied, you see. It was [under] radio silence. I already knew my code and my blinker. I could read all the lights, thanks to my father, in communications. I was familiar with charts and navigation, thanks to Captain Weems. So I was in my glory on her. As for being patriotic, I do not know about that, because we would get orders to go down the coast a little way. Somebody would be broken down there, or some PT boat would need towing up to Dregger Harbor where they had repair facilities. On the way, of course, we would see

troops on shore, and we would pull over and for some outrageous fee take them out fishing. [laughter] Gee, the fishing was great! It was excellent fishing!

So then we had all this money, and we would take it back and give it to the port captain – oh, gosh, that was not his title; he had a different title – and [we would] turn it in to a soldier's savings account. He wanted to know where all this money was coming from [laughter], and we would tell him [it was from] gambling, or [we would] think up something.

Finally, when my outfit was getting ready to leave – and I could have stayed on – I requested to go back to the old 882d. As it turned out, we were making the D-Day or the [initial] landing on Leyte in the Philippines, and I did not want to get left behind. So I sacrificed my rank on the boat, which I all but tearfully left.

G: Before we go on to the next part of your military career, you mentioned a couple of times Captain Weems. What was his full name? Who was he? What was his relationship to you?

S: Philip Van Horn Weems. He was the world's greatest navigator. He revolutionized the science of air and marine navigation. During the war, he was commodore of part of the Atlantic fleet that ran convoys to Russia on one of the worst possible runs. But he developed – along with Ed Link, for whom the Link trainer was [named]. [Ed] was an old buddy of his, and that is going back to the days when the two of them [were together].

G: How did you come to know Captain Weems?

S: He was a contemporary of my father and a neighbor and a very good friend. He, [my father], and Captain Halpine, the three of them, were all very closely associated. Dad wrote the radio section for his book. He taught in his school [Weems System of Navigation] and gave occasional lectures at the naval academy and St. John's College [in Annapolis]. Captain Weems used to haul his son, Bee Weems, who went into the naval academy and was [our other daughter] Becky's godfather. He was later scheduled as a young man, though in his late twenties, [to serve in] our astronaut program. He was killed in an air accident. His father loved youngsters. You remember him. I guess you do.

G: Oh, I do.

S: He was a tremendous athlete. He went to the Olympics twice as a wrestler. [He was] a big man. [He] leaned on us youngsters being in good [physical] condition. But he was most noted. He won the National Geographic Hubbard Award, for which the Cousteaus – [both] father and son – were present, [along with] a number of dignitaries.

G: So the Halpines were family friends, and the Weems were family friends? Who were the Halpines?

S: Captain Halpine [was] later head of the navy's Department of Meteorology.

G: What was his complete name?

S: Charles Greham Halpine. His textbook that he wrote on meteorology was used at the naval academy for a number of years. I think it has been replaced, as has Captain Weems's textbook on marine and air navigation. My father did the radio section in the book, Captain Halpine did the meteorology section, and Captain Weems did the actual navigation. The three of them were very closely associated.

G: Getting back, let us see. We were in New Guinea. You had been there about a year?

S: Oh, yes.

G: But you gave up your commission and your boat?

S: It was not a commission. I did not get that far. You cannot exactly call a buck sergeant a commission. I reverted back to private when I went back to my outfit.

G: This was about 1943?

S: I guess so. Somewhere in there. I have to look up the date. It was in October that the invasion of Leyte took place.

G: And you were a part of that invasion?

S: Very much so. We were in the initial landing – well, let us say the initial landing, as far as I recall. We went into Leyte Harbor. The ships and the planes were bombing and strafing the beaches for the troops to go ashore. Later that day, as I recall it was, the signal was to go on in and land. Well, we went on in. We had one company of us on an LST [landing ship, tank], and we went in, and we thought it was really great. Oh, man, this was exciting. Then we started to see some splashes in the water ahead of us. [laughter] We did not realize that the Japs were shooting back at us until we got up there. We heard some funny zinging sounds from the front of the LST. A shell hit the water and exploded right under her bow, and then another one hit the water and exploded right under the stern. We were sent off – told to get out of there – [because in] that particular area the Japs were firing artillery and mortar shells in there. So we turned around and immediately went up into Surigao Strait, as it is called. [It is]

maybe fifteen or twenty miles away.

G: Leyte is near Mindanao?

S: No, Leyte is north [of Mindanao]. Mindanao is the very most southern island in the Philippines, whereas Leyte is the central and Luzon is the northern. When MacArthur invaded the Philippines, he divided [the islands]. It was rainy season, and it was not expected that he would go where he did when he did.

But our LST, because of the fire and the confusion – and there was plenty of that – went on up into Surigao Strait and landed on a little peninsula there with orders to work our way back to the main body of troops. There was one problem there. Between us and the main body of troops was the Japanese army. I have forgotten just how many of us there were. It could not have been more than two platoons in the LST. [They] were small platoons, at that. I judge [there were] less than a hundred of us in all.

But we started inland. We were met by some Filipino men who claimed they were Filipino army scouts. There could not have been more than a dozen of them, with young boys. They said they were Filipino scouts who had stayed up in the mountains through the entire occupation of the Japanese. They were actually in rags that were just tatters. You just wondered how they even held together. They had several young boys that were about twelve years of age that were with them, and they had left the women and the girls back up in the mountains still hiding up there. When they heard all the shooting, they came lickety-split down because they knew the invasion was on. They figured that the occupation by the Japanese was perhaps going to be coming to an end.

So they joined us. It was raining. We were tired; we had spent two or three days without sleep. A lot of the anti-aircraft fire was coming down thuppety-thup in the mud around us. I watched one plane come over low and spot us. I was surprised it would waste a bomb on us. But we watched it release the bomb, watched it come down at us, then quickly turned around, watched it go over our heads, and [it] blew up a whole lot of palm trees. We decided maybe this war business was not as glamorous as we [first] thought it might be.

G: Were there many casualties during the first couple of days on Leyte?

S: Yes. I do not know exactly [how many there were] down where the main group came in, but there were casualties. Oh, yes.

G: From your platoon?

S: From our battalion. But my company was split. They were only two platoons on

this one LST. I do not know why there were so few of us on that particular one. We came up from the northern part of New Guinea. Hollandia is where we made our so-called staging from, and then we went on in from there. Finally we backed out. We left. The Japanese kept pushing closer to us. We retraced and went right back out on [a strait over which] I understand now there is a bridge. But we could look over and see Surigao. It was a very narrow strait with sharks and swift water – oh, treacherous water – in it. If you were going to swim over to Surigao, it was like you were about to swim from Fort George Island to Mayport at the entrance of the St. John's River, which is not exactly something you would attempt to do. Maybe [it was] even worse than that.

But the Japanese ran us right out into the water that night. We had one walkie-talkie, and one of the men got in touch, or [in] some way a plane picked up our distress signal, and they sent an LST back to pick us up. I drove a truck with a big, mean, nasty monkey in it, and Pedro, a twelve-year-old Filipino boy, drove the thing as far out into the water as it would go until she just stopped. We were not too happy about staying in the truck, not only because of the monkey, but in the darkness you could see the outline, and the Japs could take potshots at the truck. I held Pedro. I was in waist-deep water, and he was in neck-deep water. I remember, finally, we had to get into the cab, anyway. The huge, big monkey would not let us in. I do not know where we picked him up, but we did.  
[laughter]

An LST came in just before dawn and turned on its [landing] lights. We took shots at shooting out the landing lights because it made a target of us. We gave Pedro's father clothes, which was strictly against the rules, and rifles, which was even more so. Everybody had supply source of extra arms and ammunition. In turn, he gave me a great big machete.

G: Pedro or Pedro's father?

S: His father. I have [the machete] to this day, hanging in my den. He said he did not need it anymore.

G: What became of the monkey?

S: I do not know, but he did not get on the LST, that is for sure! [laughter] [Maybe the army recruited him as a driver and made him a corporal.]

G: Did Pedro get on the LST with you?

S: Yes. And I wondered if his father [survived, because we] never saw his father again. I do not know if the Japs got him or if he got away or he got back to his wife or what. It would have been a miracle if he got out of there, but he may

have. I do not know. But I had Pedro and was later assigned Pedro. [It] was my responsibility to take care of him. And I did not mind. He was a nice kid, very cheerful, and very courageous. His clothes were just falling off of him. I did have undershirts, so I gave him an undershirt. That was his total wear. It was one of these brown or olive-drab undershirts that hung down below his knees. But I remember when we got into the [LST]. They lowered the ramp, and we got aboard the LST dead tired. Pedro had some bananas with him. We had not eaten much but some of the K rations. He gave us some bananas.

Then we returned from there, and we went back on around and came into Tacloban [Philippines]. They set up a [big] tent for us with a whole lot of cots in it, because we had gone either two or three days without sleep. [We were] mud soaked, water soaked, [and we had] whiskers. We went in, lay down on the ground, and went to sleep. With all those cots, which were all folded up, there was not a man in there that took the trouble to open up a cot. We were just so exhausted.

G: Was the invasion of Leyte successful?

S: Oh, very much so, yes. Old General Yamashita, the butcher of Bataan, was the Japanese general, and he was pushed over. Then we got reorganized, and we started to move across the island to "the dusty road to Carigara [Philippines]," as it was called. "Dusty" was water soaked.

G: Because it was muddy there; it was not dusty at all.

S: Oh, yes. [It was] all mud. In Tacloban I finally found some Filipinos that were cousins [of Pedro]. We set out to find – and I was told to see if I could find-- somebody that knew who the boy was and [who could] get him back [to his parents] or get word some way to his parents that he was all right. When we had mess call, after I ate he would wash my mess gear for me. And then he would go through the line with what other men there were, and he would get fed--in his undershirt hanging down below his knees.

G: So how long were you in charge of Pedro?

S: I was more responsible for him. I have forgotten just exactly [how long it was]. It could not have been very long. I would measure it in weeks – not in months but in weeks. Tacloban had a lot of so-called collaborators in it, and there were snipers about. It was not safe to go about by yourself in the town. I ran an army [water] purification unit there, a mobile unit. [The water] came out of a deep well, and we pumped it into a fire hydrant to try and get water to anybody there [who needed it]. Then we turned that unit over to an [army] hospital [unit] there, and we proceeded to join our outfit and head on across the island until it was

secured.

But I remember taking Pedro to this Filipino family. There were some kids there, and he just started playing with them. [He was] a real nice kid [and] nice mannered. You could not help but like the boy.

G: What did you do at that point of the war?

S: The Japs were coming in at nighttime and dropping bombs. There was an airstrip there. [They were dropping] personnel bombs wherever they could.

S: We were sleeping on cots. I had found an old cot for Pedro. He was so short that one end of it had completely collapsed or would not go together, but he was quite comfortable on the other end. We had a long ditch or a trench beside us so that when the alarm went off we just rolled out of our cot and into the mud puddle in the trench. It went off one night, and I rolled right out. Then I immediately realized within seconds that Pedro had not [gotten out]. I thought, Oh, my gosh, because explosions were going on, personnel [bombs] – "bouncing Betties" or "daisy cutters," as they were called. [I thought] perhaps Pedro had gotten hit. I climbed back up to his cot, and he was lying there sound asleep. So I grabbed him and pulled him down into the trench. He was so tired. We [had] played him out. He was all right. [He was] just tired and so used to the firing, if you could call it that.

G: So you found some of his family and you left Pedro with them. Then where did you go?

S: Then we prepared for the Mindanao invasion, which we made the initial landing on, too. [It is] a big island. Now, and even then, as we were to find out, it is occupied by many of the Muslims, the Moors from the South China Sea. Mindanao borders on Borneo and some of the islands, so that the two-- Mindanao and Borneo--run together with the numerous islands between the two. We loaded up in LSTs again and went down through the islands. Instead of going out and around and coming up, we just took the shortest route down and went between islands that were occupied by the Japanese. We would go along at night seeing the Japanese lights on shore. We were told not to make any undue noise. Of course, no cigarettes were allowed. We were constantly on guard duty for just that, for a fire, for any sabotage. Or [at] the hatches you made sure that anybody that went in or out [did not show any lights]. They had double curtains to go in. They had red lights in there to help your eyes adjust to the outside.

So we went through pretty much the same thing on the Mindanao invasion, only this time from an LST. I got in, and my assignment, since I could operate any of

the trucks or machinery, was simply to get things on the beach, to unload. I never fired a shot. Not then in the initial landing on Mindanao [on] the first night, anyway. But that night I remember – oh, my – it was nasty. Wounded were coming back. I dug my foxhole to get into it with my steel helmet. The next day we started moving inland. It was a relatively short fight. It got pretty nasty for a while.

G: A lot of casualties?

S: Yes, there were casualties. I recall one [that was] real nasty. I was talking to a man, and he got shot by a sniper. That was embarrassing. I did do a little bit of shooting there later myself. I think I was telling your mother [and] laughing about it. One area that we occupied was supposed to have been well secured. There were not supposed to be any Japs in it. Colonel Walker was a West Pointer. That night we were tired from being several nights in the action area. We were to get a little bit of a break. You would just get to sleep, and you would hear a few rifles go off nearby. Colonel Walker would shout down to shut up and quit being trigger-happy and get your sleep while you could. The men were saying there were Japs out there. He said, "No, there were not any Japs out there," and "Shut up and go to sleep." This went on through the night, and we thought he was about ready to start shooting at us. The next morning, there were about a dozen dead Japs lying around.

But we got into the San Roque airfield, [and] one side of it was occupied by the Japs. I was right up on the edge of it. We were just trading point-blank fire right across. The artillery fire was going. We did not know whose artillery was whose because you would hear shells going over you. They were confusing because sometimes you did not know whether it was an enemy shell exploding over you or whether it was your own artillery firing. I remember, clearly, [that] finally an American plane came in – a Corsair or whatever it was – and landed on this strip. It [the landing strip] was not very wide. The pilot got out, and as soon as he got out, a Jap shot him. We had to call for more help. Some of the planes and artillery came in. Finally, by ground troops moving across, we got the Japs out of the other side so we could bring planes in and out. Once the planes came in, then they took over with their bombing and shelling and strafing, and things were pretty much under control.

G: I know that during the war you were injured and you were ill for a period. Where did that occur?

S: We were in the Okinawa invasion, too.

G: All right. Let us just keep on in chronological order here. After Leyte –

S: After Leyte came Mindanao. I do not know whether I should tell it or not, but there was a young officer who took about a dozen men in an LCVP [landing craft, vehicle and personnel] and went over to one of the islands that was within easy sight of us to get some equipment he saw over there. He saw some barrels and stuff; he could see through the field glasses. The men and other officers – his companions, that is, compatriots or whatever you want to call [those who were of] equal rank – told him that that island had not been secured, and it was no place to go until it was. He said he would not leave the equipment over there. So he took an LCVP, a small navy landing craft [that] we could request when we wanted it, and he went over there. And he was ambushed; the men [with him] were ambushed. They got shot up pretty bad. But when the shooting started, he went right to the LCVP [and] came back into our company headquarters. The LCVP went back, and some Filipinos rescued our men. [They] got our men out of there.

G: So he left his men on the island?

S: Yes, he left his men on the island and came back. His men were running all around our headquarters area. They said if they ever saw him they were going to kill him. And they were. As soon as they saw him, one of them was going to shoot him right on the spot. They had [gotten] wounded and they were bleeding. They looked a mess. They looked like they had been [in] what they had been [in] – an ambush. We never saw him again.

G: Good for him!

S: Yes. They did not shoot him, but he left. He left town in a hurry. Things like that did happen. It is a shame. The sad part is that he went off and left his men. You could have accused him, I suppose, for taking [the men] and going over where he should not have gone.

Oh, and there was one in New Guinea. Can I tell you about [it]?

G: Yes.

S: We had some Jap prisoners there; there could not have been more than two dozen. There was a real funny instance happen with some of the Jap prisoners. There were some not-so-funny ones, too. Three of us were sent over with some portable water equipment. The little island was, I would say, about a mile or a little less than a mile offshore. It was a good place to keep them [the prisoners] because [the water] made an excellent fence. We went over. We had an LCM [landing craft, medium], [a] small, heavier duty [craft] assigned to us. The prisoners were walking back and forth carrying rocks. [They were] picking up [a] rock on one side and putting it down on the other. We though, Oh, my. What a

waste of energy. There were guards walking around there carrying their rifles. A young lieutenant – [and] there were not any lieutenants that were not young, I mean, [they were] in their early twenties or about that – was telling us – he was lonely there, too--that the poor guards had to really tow the line. He said if one of them took [a break] and stopped to blow his nose and leaned [his rifle] against a palm tree, the Japs just came tearing over to his tent, hollering and carrying on, making a whole lot of noise, and pointing to the guard with his rifle leaned against the tree. They were so afraid that somebody – [as] I understood, one of the Japs – might make a grab for it or cause trouble. They did not want any trouble. It was not so much the lieutenant keeping the guards on the ball as it was the Japanese.

They had a few old magazines. They ate well. They had cots in the tents. They were all right. [It was] just terrible boredom. The lieutenant, who had quite a Brooklyn accent, was upset because one of the Japs spoke perfect English. He was the professor of English at the University of Yokohama [laughter]. The prisoner spoke better English than the [lieutenant from] Brooklyn! [This is said] with all respect to everybody from Brooklyn. I had a friend who was from Brooklyn. Their English sometimes is fractured, or their accent is. We enjoyed that. We enjoyed talking to this Jap prisoner. He was very friendly. We were friendly enough with him. They watched us.

Oh, Patty, there was one more on the prisoners, if you can stand all this.

G: Oh, yes!

S: On Leyte we had taken about a dozen Jap prisoners. I have forgotten what part of it we were in, but we had them in a compound with a rather fragile fence around it. It was more just a mark, an old wired mark where they were. We resented them because we had work to do. We had equipment to work on. [We had] to get ourselves in shape, our clothes cleaned up, sew up holes, and trade socks in for new ones. We never washed them if we could trade them in for new ones to the supply tent. So these Japs were sitting out, absolutely in the open, with the exception of – No, I do not think at that time, they did not even have a tent. I think we were just putting up tents. They had a hole dug in the ground with a very crude two-holer [latrine] over it. And I heard this awful commotion going on one afternoon at the area right there, and I ran over real quick and grabbed my rifle to see what was going on in the prisoner area. Well, it turns out that there was this Jap sitting totally naked on the two-holer, and a Filipino crawled underneath the fence and was crawling up behind him with this huge, big knife. [laughter] He was about to do the Jap in. Some of the sentries and guards discovered the Filipino. You can imagine when the Jap turned around while sitting on this crude john [and] saw this Filipino crawling up on him with a big meat cleaver [laughter].

Another time there was a Jap plane bomber [that] came down, and the four of us in the so-called water department thought, Gee, we could get in out of the rain in there. There was a navigator's table we could sit at in there, and it was quite comfortable in what was left of this bomber. We noticed how similar the engines were to our Pratt & Whitney 2800, even to having stamps on them like an American-made engine, which they were not. At any rate, we discovered a sack of wine – saki – in there [laughter]. Of course, we consumed half of it or better. Fortunately, we were out of action for about twenty-four hours. We did not do the invasion much good there, but we survived.

G: Which invasion was this?

S: That was Leyte. This Jap bomber crashed among palm trees. It was good wine. We did not realize it was pretty potent, too. [laughter]

G: So you did not have many luxuries in the Philippines?

S: Luxuries? We did not know what the word was. We spent a Christmas there. The invasion was in October, and we were still there [at Christmastime]. We had been eating rations all along: K rations, C rations, [and] an occasional so-called hot meal. [We usually had] Spam for breakfast [laughter].

G: Mmmmm.

S: I will not tell you the name of what we called bread with chipped beef on it. It had a name, and any man listening to this who has been there [in the military] knows exactly the name that it was called [laughter]. Well, it was "(you-know-what) on a shingle" [laughter]. The toast was usually hard [or] burnt. Then [we had] some black coffee, and that was breakfast.

[When Christmas came] we were told we were going to be in for a treat, like the soldiers over here [Stateside]: turkeys. Well, we were going to get turkey for Christmas, and, sure enough, we did. We went from rations to turkey. We had delicious turkey. It was quite a shock going from rations to a nice Christmas dinner. We spent most of the time in foxholes or ditches because we knew the Japanese still had some air power in there. [They were still] coming in and bombing us. The next morning we had turkey hash. Then for lunch we had turkey sandwiches. For supper we had turkey again [laughter]. But after awhile we did not care if we saw another turkey in our life, because it was either turkey or rations – K rations or C rations. And it reached a point where we were about ready to go back on the K rations, which were dried biscuits. But we were so delighted to get the turkeys.

G: How soon after Mindanao did the invasion of Okinawa occur? Were you a part

of that?

S: Yes. We did not make the initial landing, but we came into Okinawa. The campaign there, as I recall, was slow to start anyway. I think we were a week or ten days after the initial landing. But it was a very quiet landing because the Japs had moved up and moved into caves and fortifications, so there was little resistance at the landing. We came in [on an] LST again. We went ashore and then worked our way toward the northern peninsula. As we worked our way up, we started to meet resistance.

Once again [with] the old water department I remember setting up in a spot. I read later, somewhere in some magazine, where somebody wrote something about this. I do not believe I saved it. We pumped water. The truck or jeep would come in with either cans or anybody that wanted drinking water. It was a little spring. There was a problem with drinking water in Okinawa, as I recall. Even Japanese civilians – women or old men – would come in. We would give water to anybody that wanted it. But come evening, all of a sudden, gee, the sparks started flying around that place. The Japs started dropping artillery or mortar shells on us, and we cleared out. I mean, we did not waste any time getting out of there, because we knew they were zeroing in on us. But they did not get our equipment. We left and went up on a nearby hill, and the Japanese moved in. They took over, and they pumped water all night [laughter]. The next morning we called for artillery and got it, but [we told them,] "Do not hurt our equipment." So we chased the Japs out, and we went back down [and] pumped water through the day. Then sure enough, as we expected, come night the Japs moved in again [and] pumped water through the night [laughter]. That is the truth. Finally, I think it was the second or the third night they [quit coming in].

G: How long were you stationed in Okinawa?

S: I have forgotten. Long enough. I ended up in the Motuba area. [That] is where the outfit was. The farther north we worked the worse it got. There was some very nasty fighting there. I did not see it to the extent [that others did] where they used the flame throwers on the caves, and I am certainly glad I did not. But at nighttime we got very little sleep for a while. [I] did machine gun stand at nighttime. If anything moved out there, we shot at it. [It] was often a dog or a horse. Occasionally there would be some villager.

I remember [after] one night, morning came, and there was [the body of] an elderly, old lady – a Japanese woman – that had been shot out there. I will never know whether I shot her or not. I would like to think it was not me. It was just one of those things. We assumed that she got panicky or mixed up. [We do not know] what she was doing out at night. We stayed put. If anything moved, we shot.

G: Were you ever injured in the war?

S: Well, only to the extent that I twisted my ankle. And that was all. What are you laughing at?

G: I knew you were very ill during the war at one point.

G: Well, when the war was about over, Okinawa was being secured. We had gone through the typhoon there, and I was getting bouts with what I thought was malaria. We were taking Atabrine pills that made us very yellow. It suppressed the malaria. It did not get rid of it, but it suppressed the symptoms to a large extent. One day I was really shaking like a leaf, and I was told to report to a medic. I remember that my CO [commanding officer] or platoon leader told me I had not been taking my Atabrine or I would not have been shaking like that with a fever. He told me that I was probably through.

The Okinawa campaign was [nearly] through. At any rate, I cannot remember too much of it. I went into a field hospital in an area where there was still plenty of shooting going on. It was one of the so-called MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] hospitals, where they patched you up and then sent you to a station hospital. I remember some nurses in there had great big .45s on their hips, which medics did not do. [They] were not supposed to be armed.

G: Why were they armed?

S: I do not know. Maybe to prevent capture (to shoot themselves) or to shoot anybody. If they saw some Jap [that was] going to attack them, why, they would shoot them. Or maybe [the guns were to] prevent capture; maybe they did not want to be captured. I do not know. But I do remember that nurses there were wearing [guns]. It looked all out of proportion, is what I thought. This huge, big pistol on the side of this little, tiny girl. But the army nurses did a marvelous job. I probably would not be here today if it had not been for the army field nurses. In fact, I know I would not.

On Okinawa, when the typhoon hit, I was getting bouts of fever. When [the typhoon] started up, the only shelter I could find [along with] another man – [we were] both from the same outfit – was [on the side of a hill]. We pried open on the side of this hill this Jap grave, a tomb. There were urns in it. It was not very big. It could not have been more than six [or] seven feet across, if that, with urns all around. We could see because it was still light enough to see. We got in there because the winds were picking up. The storm ended up [causing great damage] during the night. It put ships up on the beach. It was later found out [that the typhoon packed] 200-mile-an-hour winds, maybe better.

But the whole landscape – everything – was just wiped out clean. When we came out, I just sat on the ground. We had nothing to eat: no breakfast, no supper, or anything like that. [There was] nothing to drink. In the daylight, we did not know where we were. We had only the landscape [to get our bearings], and there was great confusion.

Somehow or other we got separated, me and the other man. I was trying to find my way back to my outfit, and I suddenly discovered I had two Japanese prisoners [laughter]. They could not have been more than seventeen [or] eighteen years old. They were not very big, and they could not have been very old. They were not aggressive at all; they were very sheepish. Here I was, wet, cold, shivering, hungry, dirty, and they were, too. They could not speak English. I could not speak Japanese. But I was trying to find my way back, asking, and I was trying to get rid of them. [I would say]: "Somebody! Hey! Take these two who are following me everywhere I go. I cannot get rid of them, and I am trying to work my way back to my platoon."

Finally I did [get back]. I think I went in with the two of them, and the CO took them. I thought it was rather odd. They were funny.

G: Why do you suppose that these two Japanese soldiers followed you?

S: They did not know where to go. They were probably hoping [for the best], and they did get fed.

G: They would rather be a prisoner of the Americans?

S: Yes. I think if you were tired enough and hungry enough and wet enough and do not feel well, you do not feel very much like fighting anybody [or] anything. You are just ready to give in. But I know [when] I turned in, I was awfully sick.

G: You were sick.

S: Oh, was I! The outfit was going into Japan. The Itsugi [airfield at Yokohama] was [where we were] going to make a glider landing, a paratrooper landing, to patch up [the field]. Then we got word the war was over. I just had gone into the field hospital, and word came in. [This was] the second time [I was in the hospital]. I went in twice to a field hospital. One time they sent me to the navy hospital on Guam, and the second time, after the war, to the army hospital on Saipan.

G: Why did you go to the hospitals?

S: Well, they diagnosed it first as malaria [and] then dengue fever because the

Atabrine was not working and [the] blood tests and what [were not showing signs of malaria]. Then I came down with hepatitis, and I almost died.

G: How long were you in the hospital?

S: Oh, my. Several months. First, in the navy hospital, it must have been two or three weeks, at least, and then another two or three weeks on Saipan. Then they sent me back to the States, to Walter Reed [Army Medical Center in Washington, DC]. It was loaded up, and the auxiliary branch was at Staunton, Virginia. I went in to the Woodrow Wilson Hospital in Staunton.

G: This was after the conclusion of the war?

S: Yes. It was all over.

G: So you continued to be in the hospital for some time after the war?

S: Oh, yes. I spent most of my time after the war in the hospital, the bulk of it. After the end of the Okinawa campaign, the war ended. I was on Okinawa when they dropped the atom bomb.

G: What did you think of that?

S: I did not like it. I did not think much of it at all. I thought it was a terrible thing to happen. Of course, I was an ill person, but I thought, Why the death and destruction of so many civilians? Innocents. I did not think it was at all necessary. But what was my decision? I mean, that meant nothing, my opinion. President Truman, I think, gave the go-ahead, and [it was] a tough decision on his part. He figured if it saved American lives, it was the thing to do [because it would] shorten the war. I do not think the Japs would have held out that long.

But the outfit went on to Itsugi airstrip by paratrooper and by glider, and I missed it. I always regretted that. [They] filled in the potholes [and] put the airstrip back in shape for General MacArthur to go in. He immediately started winning the Japanese over [and] rebuilding. If I am not mistaken, [General] Eisenhower was opposed to the [atomic] bombs, to the two that they sent off.

G: So eventually, I guess, in 1945 you were released from Walter Reed?

S: From [Woodrow Wilson Hospital in] Staunton. The doctor was writing me out a medical discharge. I remember it. At the typewriter, he started asking me questions. I did not understand what he was doing. He said, "I am writing your discharge out, a medical, for you." I said, "Oh, horrors! Why a medical?" He says, "You are not well." And I said: "I will be soon. I would rather come out with

a regular discharge." I felt the medical would be a strike against me, especially if I went to get a job. He said: "Oh, no. You get medical. You get certain benefits." I said: "No. I want to go out [with a regular discharge]." So he gave me two months' hospital leave. I came back at the end of a month, and he said I was doing better. At the end of two months, I went back, and he said, "We will send you up into the nearest [place] where they let you out of the army." Or they would have sent me back to St. Augustine, for that matter, to Jacksonville. And I chose Fort Meade.

G: So you were discharged from the army, and then where did you go? Where did you meet your wife?

S: Oh, well, now. After that, with the good old GI Bill, [I went to] "Sunshine U." in Miami [University of Miami]. That is where I met Alice.

G: At the University of Miami?

S: Yes. I was much older than she – eight years older. She was just out of Miami High School. Of course, I had three years of college behind me. So I robbed the cradle.

G: And your wife's name is Alice Ernestine Carr?

S: That is right. Your mother.

G: Yes, I guess that is how I know that. [laughter]

S: Well, for the record. But you see, the time I was overseas everything back here [went on]. I do not know about [what] other men [thought, but] I figured all the girls were the same age, and maybe I was, too.

G: So you were three years in the army?

S: Yes, I was [in for] three years.

G: When did you get married? What year?

S: Do not ask me such an embarrassing [question]. 1947. 1945? 1946? 1948? Was it that? 1948?

G: Was it March 10, 1948?

S: Yes! Absolutely! I knew it all along! I was just kidding. I am getting signals here. I have to get the rock off my head.

G: This is the part that does not get transcribed and the professor does not hear.

S: That is all right.

G: So you had a couple years, though, between the time you were discharged and the time you met Mommy.

S: No, it was not all that long.

G: So you went to Miami, and then where did you go after you got married?

S: I was released in custody of my father, [his] being a naval officer. The medical officer did not like the idea of letting me go without some [limitation]. He said, "Provided." Dad did not come and talk to him. I do not know why. I never understood why my father did not [talk to the medical officer].

But I went back to the farm [in] Bel Air [Maryland] – not Annapolis [but] Bel Air. They owned both places. Theoretically, [I was released] in the custody of my mother and father, who promptly packed up and left for Florida.

G: And you went with them?

S: No. I said: "Listen. I have been traveling and traveling." I came all the way across from California in a railroad hospital car, which was a nice, slow trip. I came from the other side of the world. I had been traveling ever since, except for a year in New Guinea, of course. It seemed like I never stopped. I [thought] I just had to stop.

G: So you stopped in Bel Air?

S: I stopped.

G: At the farm?

S: Yes.

G: Then, eventually, you went down to the University of Miami to finish up your degree or to continue with your studies?

S: But I did not get my degree. For one thing, Miami did not recognize a lot of the credits [that I had earned] at Virginia simply because I went from liberal arts into engineering. It was almost like starting over [at] sophomore level.

G: That is where you met your future wife?

S: Yes.

G: So when you were married did you continue to live in Miami?

S: No. We went back on up to the farm.

G: Tell me about the farm.

S: It is a hundred-acre farm in Maryland. [It has] been in the family for many generations – six or seven generations, something like that. We thought it would be the good life, so we went to raising chickens and pigs –

G: Children?

S: Farming and children. Farming the fields. I did that for twelve years. I think it was about twelve years. We decided farming was a tough life, and it was. [There was] a lot of work and low pay. We decided there were better things.

While I was there, farming was not paying that much, so I got a job working for the Army Chemical Center, and I had a shift at their water department there. It was a responsible job. [It] paid me well enough. I did well at it. I got some promotions. I got my rating up to the highest water rating that the army would give. I came out of the army with the highest technical rating that the army would give. That was a technical [rating]. I was qualified to operate mobile, portable, or land stations. I did not have much trouble getting a job because the army operated the water plant there, although they supplied civilians, too. The federal government does not usually supply water to civilian areas, but in this case it was primarily at [the] Army Chemical Center. The town of Edgewood [Maryland was] all in there.

G: This is when you lived in Bel Air?

S: Yes.

G: What kind of crops or animals [were you producing]? What kind of a farm [was it]?

S: Oh, we had more land than anything else. We set about building chicken houses and hog houses and planting fruit trees. [We] had a big vegetable garden. We did well with our crops. We planted and we grew good corn, good wheat, and oats. It was just a time when it was hard to make a living at it.

G: So you moved to –

S: So then I picked up the job at the Army Chemical Center to supplement the farming. One day when I went in [and] I was not feeling well. I remember I went in to see the doctor and said, "What is wrong with me?" He said: "I think nerves are getting the best of you here, for one thing. Besides, you are still feeling [poorly] from your hepatitis and malaria and the hangovers from them." He asked, "[Are] you working the farm?" I said yes. He asked, "You [are] working a full-time job at Edgewood, working [the] night shift at Edgewood most of the time?" I said yes. He said: "You durn fool. Do not come in here wasting my time complaining about not feeling well if you are doing all that." He said, "You have to give up one or the other."

Well, we were tired of the winters up there and the struggles, and we went back down to Miami. I applied for a [job with the Miami water system]. I knew that there was a break – I had the senior water operator's license – and that the equivalent at the Miami system, which was much bigger but simpler, although they pumped a great deal more water, [was less complicated]. The Edgewood system, as government owned, had the best of everything in it, more than a lot of the city water [systems] could afford. I applied, and I had to take a written as well as a physical exam. There were twenty of us [who] took the written exam, which was mostly technical questions. I have my card somewhere. I passed the test number one out of twenty. I had the highest score. They told me if I passed the physical exam, the job was mine. So I did. I took the physical and I passed it OK. On that basis, we moved to Miami.

The morning I was going to work – correct me on this, Alice – I picked up the newspaper, and here on the front page of the *Miami Herald* was [a story] on the big scandal in the water department. I had been out [to the plant]. This man [in the paper] was retiring. [He] had his own shift out at the Hialeah plant. It was good pay, good work, [and] clean work. I was going to take his place. He had shown me all through the plant and how it all worked. I was delighted because it was all push-button operated and neatly done. See, the water coming out of the wells did not begin to need the [extensive treatment until later]. It was decalcified, filtered, chlorinated, and sent out into the system. [The] pH was adjusted on it, and that was mainly it.

So it [the newspaper] said there was this huge scandal, and right in the job that I was to get, [with] the operators that were responsible for operation, maintenance, and repair over an eight-hour period. [It was] just continuous. [But] the maintenance and repair job in Miami was greatly done by so-called civilians, by private contractors. The people in the position, [including] the man [whose place] that I was taking in that job, were taking bribes – payoffs – from the contractors. They were making money hand over fist. For example, when a pipe broke at night or a standpipe gave trouble somewhere or if somebody dug up a pipeline or ran over a fire hydrant or something like that, why, it was a private contractor

who went out to do the repairs.

G: So did you get caught in the middle of this big scandal?

S: They held up my new job. Yes, I was. I was caught in the middle of it, absolutely. My job was held up. [I was told not] to report to work until they got it straightened out. [They had to discover] who was innocent and who was guilty. And there were guilty ones in there that were accepting these bribes.

G: When was your first child born? About this time or before?

S: We had had the three of you. You were all born up there in Maryland.

So, to finish up on that, if you want to hear the end of it, it is a sad ending, in a way. It [the new job] spelled security, and I burned my bridges behind me in Maryland. I had nothing else to do there. I did not know what I was qualified for or really what to do. I went to [Miami] Mayor [Robert King] High, and I went to appeal because they told me: "You can go over to the sewage plant. We will send you over there to work, see?" I said, "Well, I do not know anything about a sewage plant," and I was not very sure that I cared to." The personnel department said: "Well, go ahead and try it. It is not all that bad." I went over there for one day, and it stunk something awful. I thought, No, I would rather wait until the smoke cleared until I could get the job for which I was best qualified, even if it turned out to be an assistant rather than the full operator's job.

I qualified for that. People came from out of state to take that exam; it was not just local [or in-house]. It was an open exam [for people] from all over the country. We had [an] oral [exam] as well as a physical. So then I went to say afterwards, and then told me, no, I would have to reapply all over again out at the water department. The head of the water department later went to our church. We knew him. His wife and your mother became friends. We liked them very much.

G: I used to babysit for them.

S: Yes. But the head of the actual water department had no control over it. It was the personnel [department of the city for all city jobs]. They said that since I had worked a day and turned it down, then that tie severed me from the whole thing. I had to reapply all over again. And I asked, "What was the likelihood of getting the job again?" They said it was not [very likely] because the guy that had been next under me just moved up. I was really shook up about the thing. It ended up that Mayor High, if I am not mistaken, agreed that it was a gyp, that I had been shortchanged on the whole thing, that I was well qualified, and they should use

me in the water department. I have a letter from him to that effect somewhere. The letter [said] the first opening that came along, I would be moved into it. As the mayor, he had the authority to do that. Then I felt better. While I was waiting, Mayor High died. That ended that [laughter].

G: How did you happen to get into the boat business? Was that very long after you had moved to Miami?

S: Just about started and ended in the garage. After that, I did not know what to do. I still [had] my love for boats and what. I saw the little Optimist Prams. I built one and sold it. I built the thing in my father's garage and took it down to Brownrigg Marine, and right away he said, "Let's put it in the window." He did, and he sold it. Then he said, "Now go build another one," before he even sold it.

G: The Optimist Pram is a –

S: A little Optimist Pram is only eight feet long, and it was developed way back in 1947, first by Clark E. Mills in Clearwater, with the idea that the Optimist Clubs could have something in Florida other than soapbox derbies down long hills. Mills is a very clever architect. He came up with a good, small design on it. It was only one small page.

I thought I could make a lot of improvements and changes on his basic design, which I did. I went to see him. [He was] an old countryman. [He] had a huge, big marina in Clearwater with big yacht sales. He had I do not know how many docks on the inland waterway over there, [as well as a] sail loft, Levinson sails, engine repair, and so on. But Mills was still a very plain man. He had these salesmen in these fancy suits and neckties greeting people and selling them the big yachts. Say you would want [to] hunt him down. You would find him out in one of the sheds, hanging over the side by one foot, somebody holding him, hammering away on a nail on the side of a boat, or something like that. He had the genius of design, and he designed several sailboats that are of "one-class" design.

But this little Optimist, I saw its potential, and it was already getting rapidly popular. I made some changes in the methods of construction and the instructions and the instruction sheets, and [I] copyrighted a lot of it. [I] took it out in the name of the Optimist Club of Clearwater, as well as my own name. His original had to be copyrighted, too, which we did. [We copyrighted] that original small drawing, which I turned back. I am sorry I ever did, because it is apparently scarce as hen's teeth. It could not have been more than 12" x 14", something like that. [It was] bigger than a typewriter sheet. [It is] probably valuable now, you would think. [It would] certainly have some historic value. We ended up developing the kits for them, which were quite successful.

G: And you did this into the 1970s?

S: Yes, until 1979. We shipped kits all over the country. We shipped them to Bermuda [and] started a fleet. One of the members of the Bosch family, who own Bacardi liquors with headquarters in Miami, came by the house one day. [He] wanted to see me about starting a fleet in Bermuda.

G: And then you moved from Miami?

S: No. I pushed these things along. When I had my heart attack, which really put the skids under everything, I think I had a backlog of about forty prams. I could not begin to keep up with building new ones and the championship races that were going on. It kept me busy. It was a garage affair. I had all kinds of power tools, lathes, [and other] equipment in there. As fast as I could turn out the kits and the boats, [they were purchased]. I custom-built some. [I] had some state champions, U.S. champions, [and] world champions as the name developed. I think that the four clubs in Miami alone, with their fleets, and the one down at Matheson gave me all I could take care of [and] all I could do.

But Carlos Bosch came by the house one Sunday afternoon in a taxicab. He is very wealthy [and] one of the Bacardi [rum] family. Many years before [we] had been to Bermuda several times. We had been to Europe several times and Mexico and Canada and all over Europe. I had a guest membership to the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. [We had] a card that Robert Tucker had arranged and given us--my father and family and me. So Mr. Bosch was a member, and he said, "Oh, great." I found the old card, which had long [ago] expired. He said: "Well, I want to establish a fleet of these boats in Bermuda. Will you help me do it?" I said, "You bet." And I did. I have a little article [that] came out in the Bermuda paper, the local paper, [that] he sent me. Nora Hershel sent me a copy that came out in a Dutch paper, an Amsterdam paper.

G: Who is Nora?

S: Nora Hershel, our Dutch friend from Utrecht. I enjoyed doing it, but I ended up [damaging] my lungs badly, which brought on – apparently in the long hours, again – a heart attack. After that, I was not much account.

G: Is that when you sold your home in Miami?

S: Eventually, yes. The income was down, and I was not up to physically doing a lot of anything.

G: Since then, you have made your living on the stock market as a professional gambler?

S: That is what it has amounted to, yes. That is what I like to think of it, more as a title of a professional gambler [or] amateur gambler. It is certainly a tough racket, but I have managed up until now. I do not know how much longer I am going to manage, but we have managed to be winners more than we have losers. As a result, we lead the simple life. [It is] an enjoyable life. We have our cottage up in the mountains and the trailer and you-all to come to and Becky to visit, which we do not do [as often as before. We do it] less and less. [We are] getting around less and less.

G: Is there anything we have left out that you want to add?

S: Oh, yes, my goodness gracious.

G: We can always come back to this again. This is probably enough for today.

S: Well, I had one more thing that we left out were some of our travels. I got to go, as a youngster, [on] many trips to New York City. But one that I remember [was] in the early 1930s. Captain Weems used to haul his son Bee and me off with him when we were kids. Wiley Post was an early pioneer in aviation, and he and Captain Weems would haul us up to New York while they went around visiting museums and selling navigational equipment and promoting Wiley in the public's eye. Captain Weems taught him navigation, and they were good friends.

Post was killed shortly thereafter. He was flying Will Rogers somewhere when their plane went down. His old plane – or a plane – went down. I do not know the details of it, but the old *Winnie Mae*, his old plane, is in the Smithsonian right now.

But, gee, we traveled I do not know how many times back and forth to California. I remember going at an early age when we followed markers out on the prairie. [The] only [way people] went out was on a train or by bus. There were some places that the buses actually followed markers – dirt roads. It was not until the late 1920s or early 1930s that any decent roads started to go through.

We had a house in Laguna Beach, and it was in a private area. [There was] a great big fence around the whole place. There were a number of movie actors and actresses there in the area. They had a guard at the gate [who] had to know you to get in and out. Nobody got in and out of the place [if the guard did not know you. It was a] beautiful location on the side of the hill, and it looked down on this beautiful bay. Our across-the-street neighbor was the movie actor Dick Powell, and at the time his wife was Joan Blondel. He had two wives.

G: One at a time?

- S: One at a time. Dick Powell and Joan Blondel. There was another movie actor, and I would see him occasionally. I used to fish off the point with him.
- G: [It] sounds like you traveled across the West at a [early] time. Was that in the 1930s?
- S: Yes. That is right.
- G: [In] the 1920s and 1930s it was still somewhat of a frontier.
- S: We went to Europe several times. [We] went to Bermuda twice. [We went] to Mexico a couple of times. [We went to] Canada a couple of times.
- G: Did you have any adventures on the western frontier?
- S: Oh, yes, indeed. I had a fine time as a kid in New Mexico, Arizona, [and] Santa Fe. I traded with the Indians [for] anything I could get hold of to get pottery and baskets and what. I have still around somewhere a supply [of] arrowheads. Oh, yes. I loved the Indians. I thought they were great.
- G: Did you have an experience once with a bear out West? Was it in Yellowstone?
- S: Oh, more than once. [I] sure did. That was back when they fed the bears in Yellowstone. They fed the bears out on a feeding ground in the evening, at nighttime. You went out with a ranger to watch them. I was not very big then; this is one of the early trips out. We were staying at the Old Faithful Lodge. We were walking back to the lodge, and somehow or other my mother and I got between a mother bear and her cubs. The ranger and my father were ahead, and they saw us behind. The mother bear was not happy about it, as you could imagine. The ranger told us, "Now, do not panic." He had his rifle up on the bear. He said, "Now, very calmly and quietly, just walk to me." Well, my mother's feet and mine never touched the ground [laughter]. We are known to this day as the phantom of Yellowstone, I think. We went by that ranger – whoosh! We were the first ones back at the lodge.

At other times I went off by myself. I went out in the woods once, and I came up on this old bear. I turned around and left, and the bear followed me. The faster I went, the faster the bear went. We had a tent that was up at the Old Faithful area. It was just a plain old tent built up on a wooden platform, and I went sailing in and closed the door with the bear right at my feet, right behind me. [My father asked,] "What is wrong?" I said, "A bear has been chasing me." My father thought, Well, maybe he has, maybe he has not, knowing me. And I said, "Well, he is right outside." Dad opened the [tent] door and looked out, and here is the bear, sitting there at the door, just sitting there [laughter]. He said to my mother,

"He is right!" He closed the door, and there I think we stayed two or three hours. The bear stayed a couple of hours at least. Finally, the bear went away before we could come out. That was an incident. I was told that bears love bacon, so I refused to have any bacon in the morning with my eggs [laughter]. I was afraid a bear might smell it on my breath.

Another incident happened in Long Beach. I do not know whether you want to hear this one or not, but I will never forget it, either.

G: Yes.

S: We were on the pike there, and there was this man in a wrestling ring giving a show on snakes. Now, you know, my mother was scared to death of snakes. She did not want to stay out on the pike by herself, and she did not want to go into the tent with the snake show on. But Dad and I both like snakes, as you do. To this day, I have pictures of you with snakes, holding them up in the air, and one wrapped around your neck. He had snakes all over the place, and he was lecturing away up in the ring. The man had a pretty good crowd in there, too. My father took his foot, and he went right up the back of my mother's leg with his foot. Well, she let out the worst, loudest, blood-curdling scream [laughter]. It was awful. You could hear it all over the place. The man, within a few seconds, was without an audience because they all left in all directions underneath the tent flaps. The man in the ring was disgusted, my mother was mad, [and] Dad did not know whether to laugh or what, because it was not funny at that point.

We have had a mountain lion jump at us. [We were] out, and we had stopped for coffee. Several times [we] had seen mountain lions. At Laguna we used to hear the coyotes howl. They would come in and could not get into the area we were on account of the fence. They would come in, even into town. We would hear them at night singing. But we had stopped for coffee early one morning.

One trip out there was with Uncle Jess and Aunt Georgie. Uncle Jess was manager of WTOP in Washington – JSV, WTOP, and WFBR. He and my dad had gone out. Dad was not on active duty in the navy at all, and we had gone out there. They had some friend, Robert B. Lee, who produced a lot of films. [They went] to see him about what chances there were of getting into the film industry. They had a chance to do it, but they decided against it. In fact, I am not sure but what the two wives were not happy with them because it was a rather Bohemian style of living, and a lot of people were not exactly the – It was a fast life. I think it was a little bit too fast for either one of them.

Uncle Jess had a little old flivver that I used to like to ride in the back of. [I] had some cherry bombs, and I remember riding along with Uncle Jess. I would light a cherry bomb, and I would hold the thing until it was about to go off. Then I

would throw it down outside, and the thing would go off. He would pull off to the side, get out, walk all around the car, [and] look at his tires [laughter]. I would keep a straight face. I think I would get a little scared, too, at that point. But he never did know, as far as I know.

G: Was he your real uncle?

S: No. [We] lost touch with him. Even after the war, he managed –

G: What was his name?

S: Jess Willard, and Aunt Georgie. They had a radio program for a while; "Jack and Jill," they were called. Dad played an awful trick on him. We were coming up out of Mexico [through customs with] the two cars, and they passed us through. My father said [to the customs officials]: "The people in that car behind us [are] very suspicious. I think they have something or [are] hiding something." I have forgotten what Dad said [exactly]. They stopped Uncle Jess. They took the seats out and looked under his car. [They] examined what luggage they had. They just sent us right through, but they checked him all out all over.

And shipboard. Oh, my, I always had a good time on shipboard. Trips to the West Indies [were] thirty-one days on board ship. To Europe we travelled mostly either *Holland America* or the British ships. [In] 1937, I went with the Boy Scouts to the jamboree in Holland. Every day that I could I would climb the mast, and I would go up to the crow's nest and join the sailor up there and stay as long as I could, so long as I was not seen from the bridge. I had a fine time. I made good friends. There was a bet on, too, [to see who would be] the first one to sight land. I think Bee started it on board. Everyone was looking to see who would first see land when we got over there, or came back, it was. No, it was going over. I won the bet, hands down. Nobody doubted it. I saw land first [laughter]. They said, "How do you see land?" I said, "I was up in the crow's nest."

G: Well, I have really enjoyed asking you questions here, interviewing with you, and I appreciate your taking all this time.

S: Now, this is not – This is all unofficial. I do not know what you are going to do with what you have here.

G: Unofficial. This is –

S: Do you want to hear one more funny one?

G: All right. Let us hear one more funny story.

S: Bee and I [were] sixteen years old, and we went on the old *Narissa* down to many different islands in the West Indies. *Narissa* was not very big; she was a small ship. There were a few [islands] we did not go to. [We went to the] coast of Venezuela, Trinidad, Tobago, and turned around and came back. On board there was the man named Hoagy Carmichael [the composer], and he just recently had been married. We even think he was on his honeymoon. At one of the islands we had stayed, Bee and I had been ashore, and we wanted a monkey. We always traded. We went down at nighttime on the cargo deck. We would trade all the empty liquor bottles – and any full ones or anything left in any we could find – and we got all kinds of blowfish and souvenirs. And [we would also get] bay rum.

So we arranged for this man to bring us out a monkey. And, sure enough, he went ashore, and later on he came back that evening with a monkey. We were closing the deal and bargaining, because half the fun was deciding on how many shirts [to trade]. We traded half our clothes away: shoes, socks, and anything else they would take in trade. We were just about to close the deal on the monkey, and Hoagy Carmichael and his wife, who were overlooking from the railing right above us, bought the monkey out from under us. He gave the man cold cash for it. We were really disappointed. We were pretty put out with him. We said: "That was our monkey you bought. We arranged to have it taken out to the ship."

While he was doing that, I think that Mrs. Carmichael had the monkey, and the monkey almost bit her, and he messed around on the deck there. They decided that Bee and I would take care of the monkey. So we said, "Well, that was all right with us." It did not matter how we got it. We still had our trading materials and the monkey, too. We did not really know what to do. This monkey was a lot wilder with us than he was with [the man who brought him off the island].

We took him in our cabin that night, and it was awful. The next morning, believe it or not, while at sea, the old English captain [came around]. I remember him. He was a short, rather stout, pretty serious man. [He] had inspection. There were not that many passenger cabins on board, but there were enough. He would go along, and the English steward would stand there, and he would look in and make sure all the cabins looked nice and were neat and everything. Here we had the monkey in our cabin. [laughter] We closed the door to keep him in there. The steward did not know the monkey was in there. The captain came along, and he opened up that door. Patty, that monkey messed [even on] the ceiling. The place was a wreck. It was awful. The monkey had diarrhea, and there was not anything that he did not mess on. [It was on] the sheets [and] everywhere. The monkey then shot out the door and [raced] down the companionway [laughter].

Well, we were in bad trouble. We [promptly] followed the monkey out. The monkey went up the mast, and that is where he stayed, and nobody would walk around near the mast. Or the monkey would go out on the wire [stays].

So we were looking [into] how we were going to get our monkey. [We thought] we could tease him down with some fruit. The monkey jumped from one wire to another, and he misjudged the wind. [laughter] We watched the old monkey. He was reaching out for this wire, see, and he was still reaching when he hit the water. [laughter] Naturally, the [mean] captain would not go back to pick up the poor monkey. We felt so sad [and] worried about how that monkey [fared]. [It was] such a watery ending.

G: It is now Saturday afternoon, February 9, 1991. We have returned to finish this oral history and go back and talk a little bit more about my father's high school years and some of his adventures with his friends. Do you have some more stories you would like to tell about your high school years or grade school years?

S: Oh, I have lots of stories. Well, I went to both Tome and Severn. Severn was a college preparatory school just outside of Annapolis, about eight miles. [I also went] two years to Tome, also a college preparatory school on the banks of the Susquehanna [River]. Tome was totally a boarding school, and Severn was a day and night [school]. Since I lived in Annapolis, I was a day student there, and most of my activities were around Annapolis.

Two of my very closest friends were Bee Weems and Dick Lazenby. Dick is now [a] retired navy captain. [In] his last assignment he was a professor of Spanish at the naval academy. His home was Annapolis. He grew up there and he retired there, so it was nice that his last assignment was at Annapolis. But Bee, sadly, was killed in an air accident. He [was a] naval aviator. He had quite a career at the naval academy. He was a five-striper, which was the highest-ranking midshipman, his senior year. He was on the wrestling team. He won the United States Amateur Light Heavyweight Championship there, and he also won the Irish Championship, of which he was very proud.

But Bee later had quite a career [in] World War II. He [was a] naval aviator. He shot down enough Japs – I have forgotten how many it was – to become an ace. Then he became a test pilot. He was assigned to Patuxent Naval Air Station [in Maryland]. He used to fly over the farm we had up in Harford County for a while. He was godfather to your sister Rebecca. He put in so many hours flying the plane that came off the checkline. He would come up there and fly around and dip his wings at Becky and us. We remember him shutting his engine off and just flying on the jet-assisted takeoff propulsion.

G: This was at the farm in Bel Air?

S: Yes. Well, I will finish. Bee, unfortunately, as a test pilot, was killed one winter. [He] lost his life when his plane spun into the Delaware River. He was not flying the plane at the time. He was an observer on a type of test for a new type of pontoon. We were all very sad about it. Dick and I, both, of course, were particularly shook up, because we had known each other since we were five [or] six years old [or] something like that.

G: Was that Dick Derrickson?

S: No. Dick Derrickson was a generation older. Dick was another navy captain. [He was a] "tombstone" admiral. He did not like being called [that]. He [would have] preferred [to be] a "letterbox" admiral, a promotion on retiring. He never saw duty as an admiral.

G: Was that Dick Lazenby then?

S: Well, Dick Lazenby, yes. He retired a captain. The three of us were always into some mischief. Bee had an older brother, Phil, who also was killed in World War II as a marine. He was a reservist. [He] did not graduate from the academy. When Phil was killed, he was a major. He rose rapidly as a young man. He was tough! He kept Dick and Bee and me hopping.

Phil had a motorcycle with a sidecar. We liked to ride on the back of his motorcycle when he would let us. Well, Phil drove like a maniac. [laughter] It was a real thrill to ride with him. Phil had this old Harley that he had wired together, and one day in particular, which I think makes a bit of a story, he was coming along, [and] we could hear him coming. The motorcycle [had] no muffler on it, as I recall. He was coming down Southgate Avenue just zippety split. He was going along. The end of Southgate Avenue went downhill. There was a very small seawall there – hardly a seawall at all – and it went into Spa Creek right where the sewage emptied out.

Well, the three of us were out on the street there waiting to hail him down [and] see if he would give us a ride. But he shot by us. [He] must have been doing thirty-five [or] forty miles an hour, anyway. He was all hunkered down. We could see [a] big grimace on his face. And he shot right on down the street. Apparently the throttle was stuck, and the brakes never did work right, and he hit Spa Creek full speed. [The creek will never be the same.]

We went right down there to see. Oh, my, we were all upset. We were more worried, I think, about the motorcycle than we were worried about Phil, because Phil was pretty tough. We got hold of an old rope, and we pulled Phil out. He was kind of groggy. We drug him up on the bank. He was moaning and groaning. [laughter] So we went after the motorcycle before the water got into

the engine too much. We got out there and tied a rope on it, and we pulled the motorcycle up on shore. So we saved both Phil and the motorcycle. But Phil was not very appreciative of what we did. I think he almost blamed us, in fact. It was all our fault later.

He had a sidecar that could be attached or detached. It was quite a thrill to ride in it. And so, when Phil was not very nice to us – and, by the way, it was wintertime – Bee and I took the sidecar. And this was when I was about first year at Severn. We were not very old then. How old would [someone] be in [their] first year?

G: Twelve [or] thirteen.

S: About twelve or thirteen, I guess. So Bee and I got hold of some roofing tar from a building that was being worked on around there somewhere, and we patched up his sidecar. We put a couple of five-gallon floats on each side of it. We launched it out into Spa Creek in the middle of winter. If you can picture the two of us with about a one-inch water line – We got out in the middle of Spa Creek. Water was leaking in, and I was bailing as fast as I could. We were going to try to cross the creek. But we never made it. The sidecar sank. It separated from the two five-gallon cans, and it is down, as far as I know, in the middle of Spa Creek to this day, if it has not all rusted out [laughter].

So we swam ashore. We were regular water rats, anyway. [We] came in almost frozen [and] told nobody about it. We got wrung out and put on some dry clothes. That was one incident. Phil knew that we had taken his sidecar. He never did know whatever happened to it until the day he died.

Phil also had some older friends. They made a clubhouse, and we wanted to be members of this clubhouse. He decided no, we would not, [that] Dick and I were beneath being members of the clubhouse. So one day he went off. While he was away somewhere, we took his clubhouse completely apart. We laid it out flat [laughter].

Phil was a pretty rough sort of person. Bee was not. Bee was husky, too. As I say, he won the U.S. wrestling championship for several years. In fact, his father went to the Olympics and was on the Olympic Committee for a while. Dick was no shrinking violet, either. I was not the athlete that they were. Both were outstanding athletes, but I was not exactly. I could take care of myself, too, but not with Phil. I have a scar over my left eye now – I think there were about six or eight stitches in it – where Phil hit me in the head with a golf club [laughter].

G: I am sure that hurt.

S: Oh, it hurt, alright. It got sewed up. [I have] a few scratches and scars and marks here and there, too.

One thing I do think was a happier incident was when [we all played together]. Taney and Southgate Avenue paralleled each other, and we would go back and forth through the backyards. There [were] about at least a dozen of us in the neighborhood gang. Bee had a sister, Missy, [who was] middle aged between Phil and us. And there was the Halpine family, Captain Halpine's two daughters, Charlene and [Helen Dorn] "Dornie." Dornie was my age, and Charlene was eight years younger. When we were high schoolers, Charlene was still a grade schooler. But she was a regular tomboy. She is the one that is now married to Dick Derrickson, Captain Derrickson, and lives in Key West. [He is] retired. [They are] very good, old friends.

So Phil got hold of an old Model T Ford that we could buy for five dollars if we could all raise the money. We agreed that we would buy this old vehicle. It was an open one, too. It did not have any top at all on it, as I recall. So we all raised the five dollars, and the man brought it around down at the bottom of Taney Avenue. He got it running, and I know a dozen of us piled in and on the running boards. There was at least twelve of us, including, as I recall, Jack and Billy Owens, who later developed Owens Boats. I think Brunswick [Corporation] bought them out. [It was] quite a large outfit.

So Phil starts out, and we headed for Washington. We did not know where we were going. He took the wheel. We got halfway to Washington, and the thing quit. Either we ran out of gasoline or what. We were out in the country. I understand that it came suppertime, and the parents around there could not find any of us. [They] kept calling [each other], and they all started really getting panicky because all of the kids in the neighborhood had disappeared completely. We finally got somebody to call [our parents] and come get us. Phil kept that car for a while.

Down at the end of Taney Avenue, right on the water on the left-hand side looking down, was Captain and Mrs. Halpine's [residence]. Dornie was a real pretty girl. She was the best-looking girl around anywhere. To date Dornie [was an honor]. I mean, she did not fool with us ruffians; rather, [she] looked down upon us. She did not consider us really fit company, nor her sister Charlene, who was all tomboy.

I remember one winter the creek froze over. We were all down there at the bottom of the pier, and we were all ready to go out – the dozen of us – on the ice. Mr. Lazenby, who just lived up the street a little way, said, "No, no." He said, "Absolutely not." He said, "I better go out there and test the ice first." He said, "If you-all go out there, something [might] happen to you." Well, the ice

looked pretty thick to us. So he went out, about fifty [or] sixty feet. He was a rather heavy man, and he jumped up and down a couple of times, and he went right through the ice [laughter]. We were all lined up on the [shore]. He is out there, waving his arms around and shouting, carrying on. We [were] just standing on the shore looking at him.

We did not know what to do. [laughter] We decided we better get Captain Halpine. We did. Captain Halpine came out and got a rope, threw it out, and pulled Mr. Lazenby out. Sad enough, we did not get to go out on the ice.

You want to hear another one?

G: Oh, yes. I want to hear all the stories. We had several we were talking about at the end of the last interview.

S: I had forgotten who owned a boat in Spa Creek, but it was six meters [long]. She was a beautiful sailing boat. We were getting it ready for one of the naval academy sailing races. We decided it would be good to scrape the bottom of it good and clean. We got hold of--we borrowed--this old diving helmet, pump, and some leaky hose. Being a keelboat, we ran her up onto a bar in Spa Creek. I was over on the side, and I was down on the bottom with this helmet on, some shirt, heavy shoes – not leaded shoes or anything; I think they were ankle Keds that we had in those days – and trousers. I decided after a while it was getting pretty murky and I would walk off the bar a little bit into some deeper water. I got down out there and was looking around and the air stopped. I thought it would start up again because the pump on deck was just one of these hand pumps. It stood up, as I recall, and it would work back and forth. The air did not come. I looked up to see if I could throw the helmet off and take my shoes off and make it to the surface. I was not sure I could.

G: So what did you do?

S: So I followed the line on back to the boat. As I was getting close to it, I just passed out for lack of air. I woke up slowly. I was lying on the deck. Somebody had some smelling salts, and three girls came aboard. One was Missy Weems, Elsie Dodds, who later married Captain Dodds. He is retired.

G: What was Captain Dodds's first name?

S: No, Elsie's brother Charlie married Missy Weems. Charlie retired a navy captain.

G: Who was Charlie? What was Charlie's last name?

S: Dodds, [of the] Dodds family. His father was a doctor, [and] they lived on the

Severn River. I forget who the other girl was. But at any rate, the person at the pump was so distracted by these lovely ladies that he just forgot to pump. He went over and was talking to them. I survived all right. I will tell you, I was awful careful in the future.

G: I know you were active in the Boy Scouts.

S: Yes. I went to the world jamboree with Bee and Dick. Bee's first name is really George. Where he got the name Bee I do not know.

G: But he was really George.

S: They later had an article in the naval institute proceedings about him in which both Dick and I were mentioned.

G: So where was the world jamboree?

S: The world jamboree was in Holland.

G: Were you in high school at that time, at Severn?

S: Yes. We were sixteen years old, the three of us. We were leaders in old Troop 334. That was a wonderful Boy Scout troop. We had come up through the ranks, starting in 334, as twelve-year-olds. Of course, I missed two years, being up at Tome, but I came back. We toured all over Europe. [We] had lots of experiences over there. [We] got some bicycles and rode up along the North Sea. I remember it was in Amsterdam [where] Bee and I had rented a tandem. We tried to beat up one of the bridges that was across the canal. We just got up into the arch of the bridge – it had two parts going up – and the bicycle got all tangled. [laughter]. [We] busted the chain [and] bent the bicycle up. We survived all right. [It] did not bother us any. We took the bicycle back to the place we rented it, and the man, who could not speak English, could not [understand] what we did to his bicycle. But we paid for the bicycle.

I had a letter to Lord [Robert] Baden-Powell [founder of the Boy Scouts] from a cousin of mine whose father was a roommate of Powell at college. [It was] Oxford or Cambridge; I have forgotten which, but it was one of the two. I never used it. I never went to see him. [I never] used this letter to go by and see him. But I did get to take a picture of him when we had to march by them. Queen Wilhemina and Lord Baden-Powell reviewed all the Boy Scout troops there [at this World Jamboree in Holland]. It was at Voglin Zang Bloomendale. Something like that, anyway. We had all polished up our shoes, and we went by very militarily. We marched by the stand in which the queen and Princess Juliana, [her daughter who] later [became] queen, [were seated]. I do not know

who queen of Holland is now. But Juliana, Wilhemina's daughter, was there, and Mrs. Powell, who did so much to organize the Girl Scouts. So just as we got up in front of the reviewing stand, Bee, Dick, and I whipped out our cameras and started taking pictures [laughter] of the queen, which we have to this day. [It was] most unmilitary.

[Uncle Reds Busby,] an admiral, was not a real uncle. But he gave me my first boxing gloves and made arrangements at the naval academy for me, like most of us did, to take boxing lessons under Spike Webb. [He] had quite a reputation as the naval academy's boxing coach. Uncle Reds, in his earlier days, when he was a lieutenant commander, used to take me about in his old flivver. I do not know whether Uncle Reds would appreciate me telling this or not, but he had me along. I could not have been more than ten [or] eleven years old, I guess. I will never forget it. It was a Saturday, and Uncle Reds had had a few drinks. We were going along in his old flivver out in the country somewhere, and the thing quit. In those days, the gas tank was right behind the windshield. This is the truth, too. He got out, and he thought we were out of gas, so he lit a match to look in the gas tank [laughter] to see if there was still any gas in it. The gauge apparently did not work right. The thing blew up [laughter] with an awful boom! [laughter] It burned his face, and it took his eyebrows [and] eyelashes off [and] singed his hair, [which] was smoking. I was all right. I was still in the car [laughter], but he was a mess.

G: What was his first name? What was his full name?

S: Well, he had red hair, [so they called him Reds. He retired a vice admiral.] I do not know whether I should tell this on him, whether he would appreciate it or not. He remembers it, I am sure. [He will] never forget. But his friends all said it was not the gas fumes that blew up [and] caused the explosion, but it was the fumes from his breath [laughter].

But I loved Uncle Reds. He gave me some books I still have. He used to push me around with boxing gloves a little bit to try and toughen me up a little. Of the three, Bee and Dick [and myself], I think I was the quietest one. [I was] less apt to get in fights, which I did, though.

G: You have mentioned Dick again. I still am not sure which Dick you are talking about.

S: I am talking about Dick Lazenby.

G: OK.

S: Bee, Dick, and I are all the same age. We did terrible things at the naval

academy. I remember one time we went out to the baseball game, and we had a dog. Bee had the dog; his name was Pinky. Of course, everybody called him Stinky, which was far more fitting. We used to throw balls for Pinky – or Stinky – to bring them back, which he learned to do. We took Stinky over to baseball games. The baseball field was right on the edge of Weems Creek, as it was. Any foul balls that went over the fence usually landed in the creek, or out in the mudflat out there. We would send Stinky out to bring baseballs back for us, which he did.

One time I remember was [when] the naval academy superintendent--who, at the time, had a reputation of being a grand old grouch--came to see this baseball game. He came in late. Everywhere he went, he was not satisfied. He was either in the sun or in the shade or he wanted here. But he kept moving while the game was going on. Finally, he settled down in one spot, and it was right behind the plate. A foul ball went straight up in the air, and it came down [laughter] and landed right in his lap. We watched them carrying the admiral out in a sitting position. He never did get to see the game [laughter].

We used to have a fine time at the naval academy. They had civilian guards called "jimmy legs." We gave them a rough time because they rode bicycles around. We liked to take their bicycle when they were not looking. When they would go in one of the guard houses, one of us would take off on the bicycle. [We would] take it down to the other end of the yard and leave it, just for devilment.

I think one of the things we all enjoyed [was a prank we pulled on the midshipmen]. We [kids] all had naval academy hats – caps and hats, both – the midshipmen. We had the soft hats that they wore to class with a blue marking around them. [It was] a blue band around the top to distinguish them as midshipmen. They all would leave their hats, or caps, on hooks outside the classroom in a certain order. They marched between classes; they marched from one classroom to another. We would go in, and we would mix them all up. After class they only had a few minutes between classes, so when they came out in formation they all had on different-size hats [laughter]. We would stand out there laughing at them. Some of them had their hat on top of their heads and some around their ears. And then we would usually have a couple of hats, too. Every kid in Annapolis had several midshipman hats. We would just take them off the hooks. [They were] fair game.

Alice, you mentioned Dornie. [One time] I got to take Dornie to a dance at the Gibson Island Yacht Club. This was my senior year. I do not know how I got to take [gentle ladies like] Dornie. She later married Jack Eversole, who later was principal architect and designer of the navy's LST. He was a marvelous naval architect. [He was] a graduate both of MIT school of naval engineering, naval

architect, as well as the naval academy's post-graduate school. At the early part of World War II, he was quite active in the design and building of landing craft. Incidentally, if you ever go out of Key West [by water] and [look] against the main navy dock down there on the waterside, you will see in huge, big [red] letters painted "Eversole." [laughter] A destroyer was named for him.

[At] any rate, I had Dornie [for a date], who was then Dornie Halpine, and it was a hot summer night. Oh, my, it really was. Everybody decided after the dance to go swimming. Nobody had any bathing suits with them, so they went in – everybody went in – with their skivvies at nighttime. Or maybe [they] did not have anything on, as far as I know. But Dornie and I were just a little [nervous. We] were not sure of this. And it is a good thing [we chose not to participate,] because the club manager called the police, and everybody got arrested [laughter], including [innocent] Dornie and me, too. They took us all in to the local police station.

Dornie liked to tell about it. She will laugh about it to this day, because I had to call her father and tell Captain Halpine that Dornie and I were in the Gibson Island jail. "Would he please come down and get us out?" [laughter] He did. He forgave us when he understood that we were more a party to getting everybody else out. Oh, that was a funny one, we thought, though. Dornie [would] laugh about it. She died recently. Last time I saw her, she was laughing about the time her father had to come get us out of jail.

G: I think we have about covered [everything], unless you have any other [stories].

S: Oh, I can go on, yes, [about] at the naval academy [and] some of the things we did.

G: Is there something else you would like to [add]?

S: Anytime a ship came in or docked, we were all over them. We would go have lunch on them. The old Rena Mercedes had movies every Saturday night. We would go see the movies there.

G: Was that a movie theater?

S: No, the Rena Mercedes was an old Spanish-American war ship.

G: And they showed movies on it?

S: She was the fastest ship in the navy. The United States Navy took her over. She was a beautiful ship [and] fair sized. [She was the] fastest insofar as they had to put cement piling under her to keep her from sinking at dockside. And

she was used for varied offices. They had an infirmary on board. You could eat there; they had a mess hall. We ate [there]. We were all over everything. Submarines, we were on them, [and] destroyers that came in. Battleships [that were] anchored out [in the water], we would ride out [to see them]. The old troop ship that ran between California and the east coast, we would go out [to see]. I saw the *Henderson* at Leyte Gulf, too, later. We would play all over [them and] have a fine time.

G: Well, I have really enjoyed having you share all these things with us.

S: There are some more, yes. I cannot think of them at the moment.

G: We can come back in another year or two and do some more, if you would like.

S: In another year or two. OK.

G: You will have more stories to add.

S: Oh, I just have not put my mind to thinking about what they were. We used to grease the rails at the trolley station and watch the trolley come by. [It would] come in, put on the brakes, and shoot through the station. That was at Severna Park. We would get lard cans – [we would] take them out of the kitchen – and spread lard all over the top of the rails. [It] seems like we were always up to some devilment of that sort. [We were] never really bad, just mischievous. [We were] never really good, either.

G: Is there anything else you would like to share at the moment?

S: No. I cannot think of anything else.

G: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your taking the time to share so many stories with us.

[End of the interview]