Fort Smith Historical Society Oral History Center
World War II Project
Interview with Henry Loewy

HL: My name is Henry M. Loewy.

JW: And what is your birthday?

HL: My birthday is (DELETED CONTENT)

JW: And what was your parents' names?

HL: My parents is Max Loewy. My mother's name was Irma LeFortier.

JW: And were they French?

HL: Yes.

JW: Were they born in France?

HL: I was born in France.

JW: You were born in France. When did you all come to this country?

HL: Well, my father and his two brothers were in the French Army in the first World War in 1914-1918. And the older brother was a surgeon in the medical corps in the French Army. And after the war, right after the war, there were a lot of goodwill missions between the United States and France. And he was sent to Rockefeller Institute on a trade with French doctors and American doctors.

JW: This was your father's oldest brother?

HL: Yeah. And he was so enamored with the United States and made quite a few friends while he was here, that he convinced my father to move the family to the United States. That's how we came.

JW: And where did you move to first?

HL: Well, we lived first in New York. He and my mother went to New York and then they sent for my sister and me about a year, year or two later, so I arrived in the United States in 1921. And course I couldn't speak a word of English, but they eventually put me in grammar school and that's where I started learning English.

JW: Was that difficult?

HL: Yes, it was quite an experience.

JW: Well, somebody told me one time that you were related to Raymond Loewy.

HL: That's right, he's Dad's younger brother. And he moved to the United States at the same time we did. He lived with us all the time until he got pretty well established and lived by himself.

JW: He was an amazing man.

HL: Yes, he was. He's a unique designer.

JW: Right, right. Well, he's given us some of the most memorable designs in the world.

HL: Yes, very varied in the scope of what he did. He designed locomotives, as well as lipsticks. He was amazing. Some of the more recent things that you see, the Shell logo, Shell sign logo, the Exxon logo, that were his designs. He died in 1987. 2

JW: He lived a good long life and kept busy clear to the end.

HL: Yes.

JW: Well, he's always been one of my heroes. Well, did you finish school, did you go to high school in New York?

HL: I finished high school in New York and went to Purdue to study engineering, and that's where I enrolled in ROTC at Purdue. And when I graduated, I came out with a Reserve 2d Lieutenant commission.

JW: What year did you graduate?

HL: I graduated in 1934 and moved back to New York and worked in New York. And that's where I met my wife, who was from Fort Smith. And 1936, at Christmas 1936, I came to Fort Smith for Christmas and married Margaret Vaile and took her back to New York with me. And I worked there until 1939, then I moved back. Well, I moved to Fort Smith with her.

JW: And what did you do here in 1939?

HL: Well Margaret Vale's mother was Isla Rea Vaile, and had a sister, Bird Smith Johnson. They started a little box factory, paper box factory here. It's quite an interesting story. Bird Smith, Isla Rea's older sister, was working for Solid Steel Scissor Company, heard Miller was the manager there, and she was his assistant. At one time, they needed some display boards for their scissors. You might have seen them on counters sometime. They have the elastic through them and then the scissors were stuck in the elastics and they were displayed that way. They were having trouble getting the cardboard, it was lined with velvet. And Bird Smith Johnson said, well, my mother could do this, we can get some cardboard and line it with velvet and then punch some holes in it and string it with elastic. And that's how the box company, T.J. Smith Box Company, started. When I joined them, the company was about ten years old. They'd moved several times, they started business on Burns Street, and then they moved to Baldman Road. And then we were flooded in 1941 and that's when-- Well, I went in the service 1942, I was called up as a reserve officer, 2d Lieutenant, and I was called up by the Ordnance Department, the Ordnance Corps. And they sent me to Aberdeen, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Aberdeen, Maryland, and I went through a course of field artillary maintenance. And I was pulled out of that course and put into an organization that was just starting, it was called Ordnance Intelligence. It was modeled after the British MI-5 system. And at that time, 1942, about September 1942, we hadn't invaded North Africa yet, the American Army had not invaded Africa yet. So the teams were made up of five officers and twelve enlisted men.

And our mission was to capture, find, any way we could get it, German equipment, artillery, ammunition, firearms, and then send it back to the United States for study and training. Well, we shipped out. The team was supposed-- they were supposed to make teams for each theater. This is before the African Theater was established or 3 the European Theater was established. So they sent us to Egypt to be attached to the British 8th Army. We left Hampton News Port in Virginia, around December, about December 18th or 19th. We were on the Mariposa, which was a cruise ship converted for troops. There were five thousand troops on board and we went freelancing down to South America, to Brazil. What's the big port there in Brazil? Rio de Janeiro. And we were there on New Year's night. Course we couldn't go topside, the ship was blacked out, didn't want anybody to know there were troops on board. But we refueled there in Rio and then went south and rounded Africa, up the Indian Ocean and the next port was Aden. And we refueled there again, then went up the Red Sea and finally landed up in a port on the Red Sea and then went to Cairo. And the enlisted men went to Heliopolis and then the officers went into Cairo. And we established ourselves with the British Army, with the British 8th Army. El Alamein had just been finished and the British were pushing the Germans back towards Tunisia when we were there. They were, I think, had just left Benghazi, and they were pursuing the Germans who were retreating to Tunisia. We went out in the desert with the British and accumulated Tellermines and other, some artillery and some weapons. Our problem was getting it back to the United States. The British finally forced the Germans out of Tunisia, this was probably the summer of 1943. And then we had a chance, we got some lories from the British and took some of the Tellermines and some of the equipment that we had gathered and went up into Algeria, we had about six or seven lories that were full. Went to the Port of Philippeville, and there we unloaded all our equipment, got it on board a ship. About that time, late '43, there was no action in Libya or Tunisia and our unit was kind of disbanded. I was the only one left and so I was with the British and they didn't know exactly what to do with me, so they put me in a school. At that time, as you might remember, there was a lot of talk of invading Europe through the soft belly of Europe through the Balkans. And that's what we were doing, we were trying to, I guess, fool the Germans that we might be invading through the Balkans. That's why they had this school set up to train some of the officers and enlisted men. And one of the things they did, they sent us up to Haifa in Palestine and we had to make five practice jumps.

JW: Out of an airplane?

HL: Out of airplanes, yeah, which we did. Finally in January of '44, I got orders from headquarters in Washington to report to Algiers in Algeria to the ordnance intelligence unit there that had been established for North Africa, so that's where I went. From there, I was sent to Anzio, we had established a beachhead at Anzio. So I was through with the British, I was now back with the United States forces, and went to Anzio. And course we were stalled there for quite awhile. We established a beachhead and probably a perimeter of seven or eight miles. We were surrounded by hills and the Germans were in the hills and it's kind of a stalemate. They had some railway guns and they'd 4 fire these railway guns at night. And then in daytime, they'd pull the railway guns in tunnels so we never could locate exactly where they were. We knew about where they were, but this-- Radar was pretty much in its infancy then and we didn't get much help from radar. But on June 3rd, 1944, we broke

out of Anzio and that was a precursor of the European invasion to Normandy. I think we were about a day ahead of them. But finally, on June 6th, the day of the invasion, we were approaching Rome, and we had heard that the invasion of Europe had taken place that day. We finally found the railway guns. We found them in a little town of Civitavecchia in the railroad yard there. And I wrote the report to the Chief Ordnance on the guns, took pictures of them. And when he got the report, he sent for me, said he wants to speak with me. So I got orders to go back to Washington.

JW: Do you remember his name?

HL: That was in August 1944.

JW: Do you remember his name?

HL: Yes, it's General Barnes.

JW: Okay. Well, if it pops back in, I know how that works, maybe you can tell us later. I'm only asking you to remember sixty-two years ago. So you go back to DC to report to this man personally?

HL: Yeah. And then I had about a month's leave. My wife came to Washington and then was trying to get quarters because they wanted me to stay in Washington and I had no objection to it.

JW: No, I guess not.

HL: But it took about several months, three, four months to get quarters so my wife could join me.

JW: I'm sure Washington, D.C., was packed with people at that time.

HL: Yeah, but that's where I finished the war.

JW: I was going to ask you, when you left Virginia on the ocean liner, how long did it take you to get from there to your destination?

HL: Took forty days, forty days.

JW: Was the cruise trouble free? Did you see any-- Were there submarines? Was there any danger, any scares?

HL: There might have been one or two scares, but nothing materialized.

JW: Well, good. What did they do with the guns that were at Anzio? Were they destroyed or were one of them brought back here?

HL: One of them, I saw one of them. It ended up at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, right at the main entrance there.

JW: That very gun?

HL: It was one of the Anzio railway guns. 5

JW: Well, I'll be. HW: They were very interested in it for several reasons. One was the way the shells were designed. The grooves for the lands were already in the shell, and they couldn't figure out how they got the males and the females to join into the tube when they inserted the shell.

JW: This was a German made gun?

HL: Oh, yeah.

JW: Was it a Krupp?

HL: Krupp, yeah. They're big guns, you know, probably equivalent to about sixteen inch.

JW: I believe I've seen pictures of them. That's pretty amazing.

HL: So I stayed in the reserve. By that time, I'd been promoted to captain and major. And I stayed in the Reserve, and 4002 station complement here at that time was Camp Chaffee. And Camp Chaffee was reopened and the 4002 station complement was sent to Camp Chaffee to reopen it, and so I was part of that group. And then I was sent to Fort Hood with the 2d Armored Division.

JW: What year is this?

HL: That was in 1951.

JW: So it was during the war?

HL: The Korean War.

JW: '51?

HL: '51, I'm sorry.

JW: Okay.

HL: The Korean War.

JW: You were called back up for the Korean War?

HL: Well, I was with this station complement here, and the whole complement was called back. And then they sent me to Fort Hood to be with the 2d Armored Division. And the 2d Armored Division, in the summer of '52, I guess, yeah, summer of '52, was sent to Germany. So I went with 2d Armored Division to Germany and spent the rest of my eighteen months with the 2d Armored Division.

JW: Did your wife get to come over to Germany?

HL: No, no.

JW: Well, by that time, you were a fairly mature soldier. You would have been forty-two years old in 1953?

HL: Yeah.

JW: So you finished up in Germany. What was your duties in Germany? HW: I was division automotive officer with the Ordnance Department. 6

JW: And what does that mean? You kept the trucks running? Does that mean you kept the trucks running?

HL: Yeah.

JW: More or less?

HL: Yeah, we'd check on each brigade and see what kind of trouble they were having, what parts they needed, make sure they got the parts.

JW: Well, I imagine by 1953, being stationed in Germany wasn't a bad thing?

HL: Well, it was a period of transition. We still couldn't go in civilian clothes, we still had to be, even on off duty, still had to be in Army uniform.

JW: How were you treated by the German civilians?

HL: Very well, very well.

JW: The hard feelings had maybe softened? HW: There wasn't any hard feelings that I knew. Once in awhile, might run into some of the-- what'd they call them? Oh, these guys that go around with shaved heads, you know.

JW: Skinheads or Neo Nazis?

HL: Neo Nazis. And you'd run into them once in awhile. I know one time, coming back from Kaiserslautern to where was it, well, it was a town-- headquarters division was in Bad Kreuznach. Bad Kreuznach is about fifteen miles south of Bingen. Bingen is on the Rhine and Bingen is about thirty, forty kilometers from south of Frankfurt. The division was spread out. There was one brigade in Kaiserslautern, which was south; there was one in Mannheim, and one in Mainz. And course, that'd make all of brigades. And one time, coming back from Kaiserslautern to Bad Kreuznach, I was on a train and there were some of these Neo Nazis. They'd had a little too much to drink and they were kind of obnoxious. That was the only time really where I ran into any problem.

JW: Well, so were you discharged from the Army in 1953?

HL: '53, yeah. I served eighteen months and discharged at Fort Chaffee.

JW: And so that was the end of your military career?

HL: That was the end of my military career.

JW: Okay. Did your wife stay in Fort Smith during World War II while you were off and also-- Well, I guess y'all were living here so of course.

HL: Except for the stay in Washington, stayed in Washington about six months.

JW: I'm sure that was memorable.

HL: Yes. 7

JW: So you came home and went back to work for T.J. Smith?

HL: Went back to work at T.J. Smith Box Company. And I retired finally, gets away from you, 1997.

JW: I wasn't sure you were retired yet.

HL: I'm retired now.

JW: And T.J. Smith is still going strong?

HL: Yeah, it's still operating. We sold the corporation to Dick Hohn and he's still operating.

JW: Well, it's quite a tradition now all these years. Did you and your wife have any children?

HL: Yes, we had two children. Son, Raymond, and my daughter, Margaret. It's a strange thing, Margaret, I call her Peggy, is a biologist major, she's a PhD and made quite a bit of research on heart development. She's now with Duke University, full professor, and has a lab there with about twenty people that she supervises. And my son, Raymond, who is older than she is, works for her and they get along beautifully.

JW: And what is her name now?

HL: Margaret Kirby.

JW: Well, that's fairly impressive. Certainly doing fine work.

HL: She's been all over the world. She's been to Japan a couple of times, England two or three times, France once or twice, Greece, she's been a lot of places as a professor.

JW: That's very interesting. And when did your wife pass away?

HL: She died in 1964, around October 1964. And then I remarried, I married Blanch Packard in 1967. And Blanch had two daughters, Penny Packard and Dee Packard and I keep up with them. Then Blanch died in 1990, so I've been a bachelor since then.

JW: Well, you keep a neat house for a bachelor. Well, are there any exciting T.J. Smith stories to tell?

HL: Well, there probably is, but I can't recall them.

JW: Well, I always wondered how you got to Fort Smith, and I didn't realize that you had married.

HL: I've been here since 1939. I married Margaret in 1936, but we didn't live here until 1939. So I've been here-- How many years is that?

JW: Well, it's about sixty-seven, I think.

HL: About sixty-seven years.

JW: That's a long time.

HL: So I'm almost not quite a newcomer anymore. 8

JW: No, I'd say not. You've got me beat by thirty years. Can you think of anything else that we need to know? HW: No, not that I can think of.

JW: Okay. Well, I sure thank you for sharing your story. HW: As I said, I'm no hero, you know.

JW: Well, most of the veterans--

HL: I've had a lot of varied experiences, but I never got a medal for it.

JW: Well, it was still pretty good, pretty large sacrifice to stop what you were doing and go away for years at a time and defend the country. And no telling what they learned from the German weapons that you sent back that might have saved some lives, probably did.

HL: I think the Tellermines that we sent back were a big help because it was real interesting.

JW: I bet. Well, you saw some pretty amazing places at an amazing time and lived to tell about it.

HL: That's the important thing.

JW: Well, I sure thank you for your time.

HL: You're very welcome. 1

EL: I put in forty years all together.

LO: In service?

EL: Yes, seven in the regulars and thirty-three years in the reserves.

LO: Forty years in the Navy?

EL: Forty all together.

LO: Okay. So seven in regular?

EL: Yeah.

LO: And then thirty-three in the reserves?

CB: Navy Reserve.

EL: Navy Reserve, and I retired.

LO: Then you worked at the post office?

EL: Yeah.

LO: And you retired from there?

EL: Yes.

LO: You were a mail carrier?

EL: Yes.

CB: How long were you a mail carrier?

EL: Thirty-two years. That's why I was able to complete the Naval Reserve, because if you worked for the government, they encourage you, and I'd already had seven years in.

CB: My cousin was a mailman and retired from there. Billy Orham?

EL: Oh, I know Bill. He's a clerk. I coached his son.

CB: Did you?

EL: Yeah.

CB: Danny was a good ball player, wasn't he?

EL: Yeah.

LO: How old were you when you went in the Navy?

EL: I was eighteen.

LO: Eighteen?

EL: Pearl Harbor, I was nineteen.

LO: You enlisted?

EL: Yes, right out of school in 1940.

LO: You graduated from high school here in Fort Smith?

EL: I went to Darby and then the old Fort Smith Senior High. I graduated in '40. When I got out, I went to WestArk for awhile.

CB: You ready to start?

JW: I'm ready.

CB: Well, let's just do it. We'll ask you to state your name and birthday and birthplace first. Mr. Lundquist, where were you born and what was your birthdate?

EL: Born in Geneva, Illinois, 1922.

LO: Is that Geneva?

EL: Geneva, Illinois.

LO: 1922.

CB: What were the dates?

EL: February 27.

CB: What were your parents' names?

EL: Mr. and Mrs. Gustaf Lundquist.

CB: G-u-s-t-a-f?

EL: Yes.

CB: What was your mother's first name?

EL: Katherine, with a K.

CB: Now, at six weeks, you said you went into the -- 2

EL: Six months.

CB: Six months?

EL: Uh-huh.

CB: Into the --

EL: Norwegian Lutheran Children's Home, right.

CB: Norwegian Lutheran Children's Home.

EL: And that was at Park Ridge, Illinois, which is just outside of Chicago.

CB: And you stayed there until you were --

EL: Fourteen years.

CB: Until fourteen years old. And where did you go after you got out?

EL: Fort Smith.

CB: What brought you to Fort Smith?

EL: My aunt and uncle lived down here. And they thought that it would be better for me to get out of the home and help them with their farm. Now, where Denny's is, that's where we had five acres, and we had all animals; but they needed a little help, so they sent for me.

LO: What about your sister? Did she come with you?

EL: She had already been down here, and then she got married later on.

CB: What was your uncle's name?

EL: Nils Muhr. And he had a welding business called Twin City Welding in Fort Smith.

CB: And they lived where?

EL: On Highway 22.

CB: East of Fort Smith?

EL: Yeah.

CB: I remember that farm down there.

EL: That was wild country back then.

CB: There was a little house on this side of Denny's, a little white house?

EL: Yes.

CB: That was there? Was that their home?

EL: No, no. When the interstate came in, the government bought that five acres. That house you're talking about belonged to Hollands and they only just got rid of it here about four, five years ago. That was Hollands.

CB: Where did you go to school?

EL: I went here in Fort Smith.

CB: To Darby?

EL: Darby, yeah. And then the old Fort Smith Senior High.

CB: And graduated in --

EL: 1940.

CB: And what did you do after you graduated?

EL: I joined the Navy.

CB: In 1940?

EL: Yes.

CB: Do you know the dates?

EL: The official date in the Navy was October 14th, but then it took six months to call you back, to call you. So I joined, I signed up the first week out but then they didn't call me until October. They had a list, they had a quota to fill and it was already filled so I 3 had to wait six months.

CB: Where did you go when they called you?

EL: San Diego, California, boot camp.

CB: And what did you do after boot camp?

EL: After boot camp, I was sent to the USS MONAGHAN, that was in Pearl Harbor.

LO: USS MONAGHAN?

EL: Yes, and that was in December of 1940.

LO: Were you anticipating that we would get involved in the war?

EL: Oh, yes, yes. Lot of people don't know it, but in April of 1941, we had a scare with the same thing that happened December 7, except the diplomatic relations in Washington were resolved. But they told us in April, 1941, one morning they called all the captains to a meeting. And then the captains came and called all the crew together and said we may be in war in twenty-four hours, and it was relations with Japan. Well, they were having diplomatic relations in Washington and they resolved it there. So from then on, we were prepared. Now, you know, I like to bring this in. There's always stories about we slept, you know, we were sleeping?

CB: Uh-huh.

EL: It wasn't that at all. If you were on a warship, we spent at least seventy percent of the time at sea from April to December, because we knew we were going to be in war, we didn't know when. But what happened in Pearl Harbor is we had three warnings and they didn't take heed of the warnings. Six o'clock in the morning, there was a periscope sighted.

LO: That was on --

EL: That was on December 7th. And if we had just had thirty-five or forty-five minutes prepared, there wouldn't have been a torpedo plane alive, because they just came in from here to the street (indicating). You could see the cockpit in the plane, that's how close they were; but it was such a surprise. Later on, you know, we had the ammunition, but we didn't at that time.

CB: Where were you?

EL: I was a gunpointer, five inch gun. See that picture there of me on the gun? That's what I did. That's what my battle station was.

LO: Were you at your battle station when that plane came in or after they --

EL: Well, I just got through eating breakfast and we were the only ship with the whole crew aboard, and that was because on that Saturday, we had what they call the Ready Duty. And if there was a plane crash or a fishing boat in trouble, they had to have a warship ready to go out and help them. So everybody was aboard ship, we could not leave the ship. Well, we were to be relieved at eight o'clock Sunday. Well, we all ate breakfast. And two-thirds of the ship had liberty, so we were getting ready to go. I always went to Wakiki Beach because I liked to swim. And getting up, I got through with breakfast and went back into the back compartment to get my clothes on and I heard some machine gun rattling. Well, being as I went to the machine gun school, I know what a machine gun sounds like, and I couldn't imagine what in the world that sound was. And about that time, the ship's battle alarm sounded. And I had my pants on, no shoes and I had a T-shirt. And my battle station was a gunpointer on the five inch gun. 4 You want me to go ahead and continue?

CB: Yes, do.

EL: Okay. So I heard the machine gun rattling, so I ran up the ladder and I heard some more machine gun going and this was real early. So I ran to my gun, and while I was on the way, I felt a real blast of heat, and that was when the ARIZONA blew up. We didn't know then that that's what it was. Then I also heard something hit our stack and it was a piece of the ARIZONA, a piece of shrapnel. So anyway I got up to gun number two and the rest of the crew was there. And we had been out, like I say, we were practicing war so much. We had some what we call dummy ammunition still in the ammunition locker. When you come in port, you take all your live ammunition and you store it down below for safety, but we had two dummy ammunition left in the ammunition locker. Well, we opened the ammunition locker and we saw the dummy shell, and so we ordered a powder keg. It takes two things to shoot it off, and the projectile is just like the bullet and then it takes a powder can to boost it out of the barrel. So while I was waiting for the powder can to come up, that was when we saw three Japanese torpedo planes headed right for us. It came right over the mountain and they were coming maybe twenty feet from the surface. They were headed right for us because we were the outboard destroyer. And they got about from here to about a block away, I have to make it in civilian terms and it made a forty-five degree turn. And when they did that, I could see the Japanese pilot, his cockpit, everything in the inside of his plane, because he made a turn like this, and they saw the USS UTAH. When they saw a bigger target, they went after it instead of us. They were all three in formation. And I'll never forget all three of them dropped three torpedoes and hit the UTAH, and it seemed to me like in thirty seconds it was upside down. But anyway, we were trying to get the ammunition back up. Like I say, we finally got the powder can up there. And there was a submarine contact, two man sub, Japanese sub had entered the harbor and the conning

tower was sticking up. And so we loaded the gun and put the dummy ammunition in there, we were going to shoot anything. A pointer elevates and he pulls the trigger. The trainer does this, so we both coordinate. And I mean I saw that conning tower, it just filled that whole gun sight up. But there's two ways, the fire control pulled the trigger and I pulled the trigger. We do it in case one or the other doesn't work. So we both claimed we pulled the trigger. Well, to make a long story short, on that particular thing, we sank the sub. After we couldn't shoot it because we were too close to it, it fired two torpedoes at us and it missed us from here to the alley, two of them. But anyway, when we hit the sub, we rammed it, turned it under us and we could hear it scraping on the bottom of the ship. And we wonder uh-oh, if it's going to hit our propellers and then we're dead; but it didn't. So anyway, ten years later, they raised the sub up and they found a dummy projectile.

LO: So it was the dummy ammunition that got the sub?

EL: It had to be ours, it had to be ours, yeah.

LO: Isn't that amazing.

EL: I had that conning tower right in my scope. 5

CB: When did they raise it?

EL: Ten years later.

CB: Is that right?

LO: So if it had been live ammunition, there would have been an explosion?

EL: Yeah.

LO: But because it was dummy, it was just the impact?

EL: The impact. We just fired everything we had.

LO: Sure, sure.

EL: So anyway, after we rammed the sub, course, we saw the Japanese plane fighters strafing this and strafing that. And what really scared me the most of whatever happened, was those high altitude bombers. They are so high and they can be off just one degree and be off five miles. And when we saw them, we just couldn't see nothing. Anyway, that really frightened me seeing those, because we didn't know whether or not if they were going to miss their target or what. But anyway, we got out of the harbor. And course, the fighters and bombers were all over the place. And when the ARIZONA blew up, the whole harbor looked like midnight. And then of course, all the battleships were on fire. And with all the fuel that was in it, the whole harbor just turned absolutely like midnight, it was eerie. But because we had the full crew, we were the first one out of the harbor. And there was only eight ships that were able to come out of the harbor without being damaged, and we went out looking for the Japs. Course we were looking for the Japs with two heavy cruisers and five destroyers, and that was all that was available. We spent three days, and then we were ordered to come back. And the Pearl Harbor attack itself does not bother me so much as what happened when we came in three days later. I'm a lifeguard, too, so I know. People that drown, it takes two to three days for bodies to come up. Well, had two or three days since Pearl Harbor, so when we came in, there were bodies all over the place.

LO: How many days was that?

EL: Three days.

LO: Three days that you came in?

EL: When we came in, yeah. And these guys, you know, these sailors were in their white uniforms, and there were so many that they had what they call a motor launch. They had about a hundred and fifty yard rope on it. They would come to a body and throw a half hitch on it, go ten feet, put another in. There were some of them at least had fifty bodies. Now that impresses me or left a lasting impression more than the Harbor itself, than the attack. Tell you the truth, my son can confirm this, I couldn't talk about Pearl Harbor for ten years. There was something, you just say Pearl Harbor and my stomach -- there's nothing -- you can't control it, and just would crawl. And then my wife would say I had nightmares and everything. But those bodies floating --

CB: Oh, yeah. That's awful.

LO: I had one Navy veteran that said that he had to help clean those bodies up. You couldn't pull them out because if you tried to pull them out, the flesh was cooked and it would just come off.

EL: Yeah, yeah. Some of them were burnt, you know, a lot of them were burnt.

LO: And they roped them and put them in the boat? 6

EL: Yeah, yeah. That was the best thing they could do, quickest thing.

LO: What kind of boat was it they put them in?

EL: No, they didn't put them in a boat. They dragged them, they put the rope around them and then they dragged them to the pier, and then that's when the hospital people took care of them. But you know, some of those guys in the white, we probably played ball against them two days before. But we were the first ship out. And you know, it could have been different if they would just have taken the warning. We had enough warning, we could've had the ammunition up, we could've had our machine guns operating. Those two torpedo planes would've never made it.

CB: What was the explanation for not taking the warnings?

EL: Well, the soldiers that -- See, we had radar. They contacted a group of airplanes. There was a new 2nd Lieutenant on duty. And he said, oh, it's just part of our practice run. See, before December 7, when the carriers were out for practice and maneuvering, they would come in and make mock attacks. So that's what --

CB: What he thought it was?

EL: Well, they had a group of planes that they thought were some of ours because we were going to replenish Wake Island, but they were going to have a stop at Pearl Harbor.

LO: So they didn't recognize that they were Japanese planes?

EL: No, not on radar. Nowadays, yes. So you know, they came through. And then also, the Destroyer WARD was on guard duty out there in the harbor. We did that, too, while we were in port; but this time, it was the WARD's duty. And they spotted a periscope. And then later on, they spotted the conning tower. And on TV, it's taken what, sixty years? They found that submarine.

CB: I saw that.

EL: And that was the WARD. But no, they let the headquarters know, but nothing was done.

LO: So if they let headquarters know, was it because the message was not given to the --

EL: It wasn't sent, it wasn't sent. Or it wasn't take heed, that's what it is. And some of the fellows that, course, they're passed away now, but some of the signalmen that tried to get headquarters said there was nothing done.

CB: Well, this little submarine that they found, they figured that it had been trapped in the harbor, didn't they?

EL: Well, it came in behind an oiler. See, we had gates -- I mean from April the 7th, I mean April of '41, they don't tell you about we took all precautions. The ships had, the big ships had torpedo nets. They weren't there December 7.

CB: Where were they?

EL: We don't know. Now, we had been told that it takes fifteen torpedoes to sink a battleship, if it were just left standing and just fired fifteen. They were supposed to have an Admiral's Inspection Sunday, which means when an Admiral's staff comes aboard ship, they go from the bridge down to the keel, everything is open, all the compartments are open. And they were open Sunday morning, so it only took three or four. Now, if it'd been what we call water tight integrity, they would've never been sunk.

CB: Isn't that interesting. I've never heard that before. 7

EL: All of them, all the battleships. And we had torpedo nets for frogmen, you know, keep the enemy frogmen from coming in. They were not in use. So when somebody says we were sleeping, the fleet wasn't, the warships weren't, but you know, it's just the warnings.

LO: Well, it's almost like they had information that y'all were vulnerable at that time, that your nets weren't up.

EL: Well, the field artillery, they used to have ammunition on the beach and it was all stored up in the mountains.

CB: Oh, really?

EL: Uh-huh. So, you know, you just never know. We lost three thousand sailors. Eleven hundred of them are still in the -- I don't know if you've been to Pearl Harbor or not, but the ARIZONA is still there. And what's really weird is it's dripping oil, every oil comes up. They had over a million gallons when it was sunk.

LO: Was it because of the inspection that they moved the ammunition from the beach to the mountains?

EL: I don't know. No, I don't think -- No, the Army didn't have this inspection that I know of.

LO: Do you know, when I was young, just a kid, I guess in junior high and high school, I heard my grandparents' friends and my grandparents talking. And you know, the talk was that Truman knew Japan was going to attack, that he --

EL: Roosevelt.

LO: Roosevelt knew that Japan was going to attack and wanted to be attacked so that the people would want to go --

EL: There's a saying Churchill knew.

LO: Yeah, I've heard that, too.

EL: So there's just a lot of speculation there, you know. But we knew we were going to be in war, those in the fleet. We were out constantly. In fact, training and practicing is worse, it's worse than being in active battles. Battles don't last thirty minutes; but you practice for forty-eight hours, you're up forty-eight hours. That's just the difference. Battles, Navy battle is just thirty minutes and that's it.

CB: What happened with your ship after Pearl Harbor, after you came back in after three days?

EL: Well, course, we were, you know, all these battles, we were in the Coral Sea, Battle of Midway.

CB: First you went to the Coral Sea?

EL: Yes. Well, the first one, three days after when we came in, we were in three days and we loaded up with ammunition and everything, we were going to go with the carriers to Wake Island. We were still on Wake Island. And we got about halfway and decided to turn back, so we turned back to Pearl. And then we made another run and we didn't get there, came right back. So that was getting to be --

CB: Why did you come back?

EL: I don't know. We don't know.

LO: It was wiped out?

EL: Well, the Japs, well, the Japs, they weren't quite established on there yet.

CB: When would this have been?

EL: That was in February. Then of course after that, they were having problems down in south, by Australia. The Japanese were down there getting ready to take over New Guinea, and then land on 8

Australia, and so they had what they call the Coral Sea. And we had what ships that were left, we operated with the LEXINGTON and the ENTERPRISE. And we went down there and that was the first really contact we had with Japanese. We sunk one of them carriers, Coral Sea, and we kept them from coming then at that time. Course, they came later on.

CB: What carrier did you sink? Do you remember?

EL: The Japanese carrier? I don't know. But I remember over the intercom on the ship, said "Scratch one flat-top." That word's been printed everywhere.

CB: Scratch one flat-top?

EL: Yeah.

LO: When you pulled out of Pearl as a group and y'all pulled out of Pearl and actually got word about how much of the Navy had been destroyed --

EL: We didn't know how much.

LO: They didn't tell you how much?

EL: Battleships were on the other side. And course, we knew it was bad because of the smoke and everything. But it was when we came in when we saw, well, when we were going out, we looked down the channel and the OKLAHOMA was doing this (indicating), just turning over, just turning over on its side.

LO: When you realized how much of the Navy had been destroyed, was the feeling generally one of hopelessness or --

EL: No, no, never felt that way.

LO: Never felt it?

EL: Never felt. See, we were just lucky we had the two carriers out on maneuvers. They were after the carriers. And up until then, you know, if you were a Navy strategist, you'd know what I'm talking about, but it was battleship against battleship. That's all we did was line up with battleships and do that kind of maneuvering. The Japanese, in one day, changed Naval warfare.

CB: Right. They did, didn't they?

EL: Yes. And so all we had was battleships to fight carriers. But we had the two carriers and they just happened to be out south of Hawaii and they escaped that. But anyway, those two, we went down to Coral Sea and kept them, the Japanese, from invading New Guinea at the time. And the LEXINGTON, we lost the LEXINGTON down there. And here's another, I was headed for the Academy and they had my records on the LEXINGTON, got sunk. But they told me later they wouldn't release me anyway because I'd been to gun school and machine gun school and all that.

CB: They needed you?

EL: But I was ready to be Academy. I took the fleet exam. But then we got to Coral Sea, and then course after that was the Midway. And we were with the ENTERPRISE, ended up with the YORKTOWN turning upside down from a Japanese submarine. And the torpedoes, the Japanese submarine fired four torpedoes. One hit the YORKTOWN, one went under us, and two hit another destroyer in the battle, but one went under us. And because I'm a torpedo man, that's my trade in the Navy, different ships, you set the depth. A destroyer only draws eight feet; a carrier, thirty-five. So you set the torpedo down. That's why it went under us.

CB: Right. Fortunately? 9

EL: But I had a rude awakening. I was down below when that happened. And if it'd hit us, I would've never known. Back then you're afraid to go to sleep, really, you know, during war you're out at sea, they had mines floating and submarines and all that. It's kind of in the back of your mind; but when that torpedo went under us and didn't hit us, I slept like a baby. I said if it happens, it's going to happen. That's my theory today.

CB: You bet.

EL: But our ship, there were thirteen battles and we were in twelve.

LO: There were thirteen battles total?

EL: Total. We were in twelve, yeah. They needed a student to go to torpedo school in San Diego, and I hadn't been to torpedo school. So they sent me off the ship, gave me thirty days leave and then went back to school. And the first day at school, I picked up the paper, the USS MONAGHAN had sunk with all hands. They got sunk with a typhoon. See, when I left the ship in Seattle, they gave me thirty days leave. And then I went to San Diego, that's where my torpedo school was. And while I was in school, I picked up a newspaper, and the first thing I saw was the MONAGHAN. Well, when I left Seattle, the ship, two days later, left for the Philippines because that was our next invasion. Well, they hit a typhoon and was sunk, along with three other destroyers. And these fellows on the MONAGHAN were two hundred and fifty Pearl Harbor survivors that had survived that.

CB: And where was that?

EL: That was in Philippines.

CB: It was in the Philippines?

EL: Philippine Sea, yeah. There was a lot of damage on there. I went to school and I got orders to go to Key West, they were opening a submarine base. So that's where I was sent, it was a new submarine base. We had an Italian sub, we had a Dutch sub, we had a German sub down there, we were kind of experimenting; but this was in 1944.

CB: What were you experimenting with?

EL: Experimenting like the snorkel, the air breathing thing the Germans had. And we were looking at their torpedoes and things like that. We had them in, you know, we captured them; so we had them down at Key West. But anyway, my job down there was we overhauled all types of torpedoes. Now, you've heard of the six planes that were lost in the Bermuda Triangle? They had our torpedoes on there. They were out for practice. And they told us in the morning to have the torpedoes ready and then we shipped them out, and then we were supposed to reload them that afternoon, and we never heard anything. And it was ten years later I found out why because they kept it secret. All

those planes were lost in the Bermuda Triangle. They're still looking for them, and they're going to find them one of these days.

CB: Yeah, they'll find them with your torpedoes.

EL: All the torpedo planes, the pilots that were trained in Pensacola, would stop in Key West and get loaded with our torpedoes that we worked on. And when the torpedo left the shop, I was a senior man. I signed it and that means it better work, you know, I mean before it went to the fleet, I signed. And then the submarines started coming down there, so we started working on the submarines. And then I went out on different trial runs with them and everything, worked on their torpedoes. And we had a captured Italian submarine 10 down there, and had six volunteers that stayed with the sub.

CB: Italians?

EL: Italian subs. Every one of them wore Germany's highest medal, the Iron Cross.

LO: The Italians on the sub?

EL: Yes. Well, they were fighting for Germany, see. We had the Italian sub there. And now, this was in 1944. They had already surrendered, see; so they came over with the crew. And every one of them had earned that Iron Cross with a suicide torpedo. And I got into it. What it was, was a regular torpedo, except where the warhead is, which weighs nine hundred pounds and is twenty-two inches around, instead of the warhead, they built the little cockpit in there.

CB: Oh, they got in the torpedo?

EL: Yeah, with the bubble, yeah, they got into it. But see, now, there was two torpedoes. The real torpedo, I mean the one that maneuvered them in position, had a torpedo strapped under it, a smaller torpedo. And when you got into this human torpedo, you had a little glass bubble and that's all you saw. And nothing could pick up, even sonar couldn't pick up this little glass bubble. Enough for them to steer to see where he was going, and you had your pedals, you had your steerer and everything right here. All five of them had sunk our Allied ships in the harbor. The mother sub, which was the ones that carried them, would launch them about five miles from shore at night.

CB: From over the side?

EL: Yeah, uh-huh, and they would launch them. And then when it was time, these guys, because it only had enough fuel for maybe three or four hours.

CB: What kind of fuel was it, diesel fuel?

EL: It was alcohol, yeah, some of them were different, some of them were battery.

CB: How did they get back? Was it truly a suicide mission?

EL: Well, they had enough fuel to get in there and get out. Course, they lost a lot of them that never made it, but these five guys made it.

LO: So the ship launched them like --

EL: Launched the submarine --

LO: Just like they would a torpedo?

EL: Well, they had hydraulics and everything, and it rode on the mother sub. These were small and they rode on the decks of the big German sub. And then they would release them four, five miles from the beach. And they would have enough fuel to go in, launch their torpedoes and then come back out. And five of them made it, and they wore that red cross, I mean that Iron Cross. I had to give them a message one day and I went in and they were all taking showers, they never take that Iron Cross off.

CB: Even when they bathed?

EL: That's right.

LO: But they had been captured so they were --

EL: They surrendered.

LO: They surrendered, but they were prisoners of war while y'all had them?

EL: No, they volunteered, they came on our side. When Italy surrendered, they came to our side. 11

LO: But yet, they still wore those --

EL: Oh, yeah. Oh, sure.

LO: Was it a matter of pride?

EL: Well, to get the Iron Cross was like us getting the Congressional Medal of Honor.

LO: But I mean were they still --

EL: They were on our side, helping us, but they earned an Iron Cross, so that's what they wore.

CB: Isn't that interesting. You said you had three subs. What can you tell us about these three subs that you captured?

EL: Well, we didn't capture, they --

CB: Surrendered?

EL: They surrendered, yeah.

CB: What did you discover after you looked at these subs?

EL: Well, we had the more scientific people doing that. We just -- Now, here's the funny part. The Italians brought their torpedo in our torpedo shop, and we have a torpedo cart, we set it on there. And we couldn't speak English with each other, but you know, let's start it, let's see what it runs like. When their torpedo was running, it went like this (indicating up and down), and how in the world could they hit a target with the thing. So we had one of ours alongside of it. I had a cup of coffee. I set it on ours and I run it, and it just --

CB: Just purred?

EL: Didn't do nothing, that's the difference. To this day, I don't know how, how in the world that torpedo ever sunk ships.

CB: Where did they build those torpedoes, the Italians?

EL: In their own country. Germany probably supplied most of them.

LO: I need to get straight in my own mind here now. These men, they were in a bubble, they had a bubble over their heads?

EL: Yeah, it was a one man deal.

LO: And it was actually a torpedo that was --

EL: It was the head of the torpedo, yeah. The tail part of it had the fuel and everything. And they wouldn't let me in the harbor to do it, to get in there; but I got in in the shop, I sat in there. It had pedals for the up and down, and you know.

CB: That is amazing. Have you ever seen a picture of one?

EL: No, no.

CB: I never have. I'd love to see what it looked like.

EL: But they were suicide people, and they all lived. This is the thing about volunteer. I don't care what nationality you have, we have them, they were a volunteer suicide missions.

LO: And in your opinion, is it because they don't fear death, because they don't believe they'll die or they're just so --

EL: You don't feel you're going to die. You don't think you're going to die. That's what carries you through the war. You see guys killed all around you. It's not going to happen to me. After you see so many, here, there, dying, getting their head blown off, it's just not going to happen to me.

CB: I guess you get numb. You can't think about it.

EL: Well, you just, you know, really do. I get numb at funerals.

CB: Oh, I do, too. When you were in Key West, there were a lot of Nazi submarines around down there?

EL: Down in the Caribbean, yeah.

CB: In the Caribbean. 12

EL: That's what our subs were doing, too.

CB: Right. How were they looking for these, what kind of reconnaissance would they do?

EL: Well, we had our subs. See, the Germans, they had these make-believe freighters and they were gun laden freighters. And they would haul a Norweigan flag, a Puerto Rico flag or whatever if some airplane flew over them. And what they were, a lot of them were down there in the Caribbean because we were shipping things from South America and Australia. Australia was shipping a lot of

troops, things for the United Kingdom. And so, we had subs down there looking for them, and they got a few of them.

CB: There was a fellow here in Fort Smith, Red Ross, who took his airplane down there, and it was used as a reconnaissance plane.

EL: They were there quite a bit.

LO: How did y'all feel, as servicemen that fought against the Italians, the Germans, how did you feel about them when they surrendered and came --

EL: We're glad they did.

LO: Okay. But there were no -- there was no animosity or --

EL: The only animosity I have is the Japanese.

LO: The Japanese. The rest of them, you didn't?

EL: Yeah. You know, I took a reserve training, I was on my way to Key West on my training, and I was on an airplane. And a Japanese young businessman was sitting alongside of me. I figured with his age, this was in the '60s, I figured he had parents or something about Pearl, and I just got nosy enough. I was in a Navy uniform, I got nosy enough to ask him where he was from, he says Japan. And I asked him do you know anything about Pearl Harbor? You know what he said? "I can't believe we surrendered." That's exactly what he said, and he was twenty-five, twenty-six.

CB: Unbelievable.

EL: Yeah, 1960.

CB: Seriously uninformed, wasn't he?

EL: Well, they don't know that.

LO: They get another story, I'm sure, through history.

EL: I'm telling you, the Japs were cruel, they were vicious. There's a story of when the Marines landed at Guadalcanal. They painted a building down there, the Japs, with a Red Cross sign, you know, hospitalization, and the Marines were within sight of it. The Japanese sent the nurses out there, the Marines thinking they were going to surrender. The Japanese opened fire on the Marines, used the nurses to entice them. Japanese pilots would be shot down, we would send boats out there to rescue them. They would wait until you got to them and then they'd pull out a .45 and kill them. We didn't fool around anymore. That's the way they were, to surrender was the worst thing they could do.

LO: Wonder what their hatred was?

EL: They're born and raised. From the time they are born, they are war-like.

LO: Well, knowing what you knew, being in the war against the Japanese, how did you feel about the internment of the Japanese, the American-born Japanese that were here?

EL: Well, at that time, I hated all of them.

LO: You hated them all. 13

EL: I mean every one of them was as sly and sneaky as they were. But I mean there were some true American Japanese, you know; but at the time --

CB: During the war, the propaganda would make you hate them if you ever dealt with them.

EL: Yeah. Well, see I've been back since the Japanese almost owned Hawaii, all the businesses, hotels. San Francisco, you go into San Francisco, the year I went, everybody was talking Japanese, there were so many. In fact, some of the Pearl Harbor survivors that went to some of the reunions

there in Pearl Harbor, they said if the Japanese knew you were a survivor in a restaurant, they wouldn't serve you.

LO: Really?

EL: Yeah, that's how they became over there. But they're not there anymore, they overextended themself. Now they need some help. But San Francisco, they own San Francisco. They really got into business. We helped them, of course.

LO: Well, they got into business in the United States, too.

EL: That's what I mean.

LO: Banks and all the farmlands.

EL: But anyway, that's --

CB: Well then, you ended up your active service in Key West?

EL: Yes, uh-huh.

CB: When was that? When did you come home?

EL: It was January of '47. I played baseball, too, you know, from the orphanage, that's all we did was play ball. Chicago Cubs would come and we went to several Chicago Cub games. And so while I was there, there was a Norweigan ship that pulled in Lake Michigan. I was about eight or nine years old. When I saw them, I wanted to be a sailor. Then later on, I wanted to be a ballplayer. This is what I'm getting to: I was in the Navy, I mean I've had all this baseball growing up. And in fact, I was here in Fort Smith living with my aunt and uncle. Pittsburg Pirates wanted to sign me. At the time, you had to be twenty-one. Well, they wouldn't sign me up, they wanted me to take over their welding shop. So I got in the Navy anyway. But when I was in Key West, they have all these sports things for the troops. If you were a professional ballplayer, they drafted them and sent them to these bases for the entertainment of the troops. Well, I was in the torpedo shop down there, and there was a New York

Giant coach that was a Triple A coach, they sent him down to Key West. And when he got down there, he said anybody on the base that wants to try out is welcome. I tried out, and I beat a professional ballplayer. I mean I played ball since I was three years old; but anyway, I got my wish. I wanted to be a sailor and play ball. But I played ball down there, course, I still had my torpedo duties. The war was over. The coach was being discharged and he said that he wanted me to play for them Triple A, which is the next step in the Majors. He said he was going to recommend me to the New York Giants. Well, that's even better than the draft, so I depended on that. I got out of the Navy. I was a chief torpedo man, which is a pretty good paying rate and all. And I got out just so I could play professional ball. I got out, it was in January. And two months later, I was supposed to report to Sarasota with the New York Giants 14 training camp. I get a letter, I'm too old.

LO: No? You're too young one time --

EL: At twenty-five.

CB: At twenty-five?

EL: But not nowadays.

LO: First, you're too young, and then you're too old?

EL: Here's the story about that. They had to take all the players back, the ones that they drafted, they had to take, and they were flooded. And I don't care if I hit a hundred home runs, they looked at my age. But you know what? I've got a grandson that's just quit professional baseball. Every one of those Cubans, Puerto Ricans, lie about their age. They can be thirty years old and tell their parent club they're twenty-one. And so all I had to do was lie.

CB: That's interesting.

EL: But anyway, I came home, I played semi-pro. We had a semi-pro team here in Fort Smith. I played five years carrying mail and playing ball, too. I loved baseball.

CB: What team did you play for?

EL: This was a semi-pro team, South Fort Smith Smokers.

CB: Is that right?

EL: Yeah. We won the State every year we played. I carried mail, it'd be a hundred and five. I'd get home at four o'clock, put on a ball uniform, we'd go to Heavener. They'd pay us to go around to play. I just loved it. Come in at two o'clock in the morning, go back the next day.

CB: Isn't that interesting.

EL: But my kids liked it.

LO: When did you marry?

EL: In 1947.

LO: Right after you came back?

EL: Yeah. I met my wife, yeah.

LO: Where did you meet your wife at?

EL: Right here, on the skating rink, yeah.

LO: In Fort Smith skating rink?

EL: Yeah. In fact, I've been to every skating rink from the West Coast to the Philippines, Hawaii, Figi Islands. I love to rollerskate.

CB: You're a real sport.

LO: He does everything, Carole, it's just amazing. You met her in 1947 and married her that year?

EL: Yes. I got home on leave in '46 and went to the rollerskating rink out here on Midland. They had a portable roller rink out there, and she happened to be there. Never took her address, nothing. Then when I got discharged, I was at a football game at Grizzly Stadium, and I looked over there and there she was, and so we got together skating and all that from then on.

CB: You said there was a portable skating rink?

EL: Yeah, on Midland Boulevard.

CB: Where was that?

EL: Over by Kelly, corner of Kelly and Midland. And I lived on, like I say, where Denny's was, I took a bicycle from there to go to the skating rink.

CB: That's a good ride.

EL: A good ride. And night, too, back and forth. 15

LO: And what was your wife's name?

EL: Katherine, with a K. Yeah, she's part of the Judge Parker deal.

LO: And how many children did y'all have?

EL: We had three.

LO: Three?

EL: Three sons, yeah.

LO: Three boys?

EL: Uh-huh, I got ten grandchildren and expecting another one. Got one great.

CB: Now, your sons are Dennis, Tim and Ryan?

EL: No, that's my grandson.

CB: Ryan's a grandson?

EL: David.

CB: David is your son?

EL: My three sons, yeah.

CB: Okay.

EL: Ryan is a grandson.

CB: All right.

EL: He was a professional ballplayer.

LO: You've had a fascinating life.

EL: Well, I keep busy.

LO: I can see you do.

EL: We go dancing, we go dancing every week. I'm going with a nurse, retired nurse, that's the ones we been competing with, she and I. We don't do that anymore.

CB: When did you start playing the accordion and the guitar?

EL: When I got aboard in 1940, there was a fellow that was getting transferred. And I never played the accordion, but I had a guitar. I played the guitar, I learned it, self taught. And he wanted to get rid of this accordion for twenty bucks. It cost three hundred dollars, it was Italian made. So I said, sure, I'll take it. So I learned it on the ship. And we happened to have two guys that were two sailors that were drafted that sang on the radio in Wisconsin, so they helped me along. So we got a combo there, and the Captain said we'd go nuts if it wasn't for you guys. But I learned some scratch with them guys.

LO: Do you play by ear or read music?

EL: Well, I played the violin in the orchestra here.

LO: Violin?

EL: Yeah.

CB: When did you play in the symphony?

EL: No, the high school. When I came here, I came here in June of 1936. My aunt had a violin and she took two lessons. And she told me that by Christmas time, she said you are going to play a solo at our Lutheran church. By golly, I did, she made me. But I thank her for it because she gave me the background. And so when I got in the Navy, I picked up the accordion. I brought the guitar along and the accordion with with me the whole war. I took it everywhere. It was part of my sea bag. And then when I got out I wanted to play with somebody. I guess I worked for the school there and they was

talking about having a musical deal at WestArk night school, for night folks. So I'd seen the autoharp. I was clearing the mail for the school. See, I retired from the post office. I had arthritis so bad that catching mail two, three, thousand times a day, got to where if I took thirty days off, I was all right. So eventually I retired. Well, I carried mail for 16 the school around here, the center. And I told them I wasn't ready to retire, but I had to do something else. They'd say, well, I tell you what, when you retire, you let us know, we want you to work for the school, you're going to be our mail dispatcher.

CB: Down at the service center?

EL: Down at the service center. So I found this music, this autoharp, and I looked at it. Well, it's got strings on it, I know what chords are, so I took a night school course.

CB: At WestArk?

EL: And then joined this combo in Van Buren every Sunday. And then one thing led to next, next thing you know the three of us, we were going to nursing homes.

LO: Now, did your children inherit your musical ability?

EL: I'm hoping to have a grandchild. He started playing the guitar when he was in the 7th grade and was doing good, but they're all in sports. All year sports, every one of them.

LO: That's okay. That keeps them out of trouble.

EL: Well, I will say it paid for their college. I had a baseball scholarship in the school up north. And also, the post office was wanting a vacancy, and I took exams for both. The one I had the baseball scholarship was an exclusive eastern college that when you graduated, you got a job from the Senators or what, it was a very exclusive. Well, the reason I was recommended for that, one of the assistant coaches graduated from this school. And he saw me playing ball, and he had a baseball team, one of the best in the country at the time. You don't hear of them anymore, but at the time. So I was either going to go there. But then when I got home and my baseball deal fell through, then I said, well, I could go to Stockholm if I wanted to. If you had four or more years, four years was the limit; but I had over six, almost seven. And I could've gone to any university in the country, including Stockholm.

CB: On the GI Bill?

EL: On the GI Bill. But anyway, I decided to go to that school. I went to Little Rock, took that exam, passed it. But then the post office came through, and course, I was going steady then with Katherine. So the post office, so I took exam two. And so I was one of the highest ones there, so I could go to work right away. Well then, the post office, once you went to work, you had a job for life. It was steady and that's what I liked, something secure. So I went to work in '48 in the post office, and stayed there until I retired in '79.

LO: What year did you marry?

EL: '48.

LO: '48?

EL: Uh-huh.

CB: What month did you marry?

EL: May.

CB: May of 1948?

EL: Yes. We were married forty-eight years when she died. She died in a nursing home. She had complications.

CB: Have you ever been back to go to Sweden to --

EL: No.

CB: To look for family?

EL: I still have -- they're over a hundred years old. Now, in my 17 family, my great-great-great-grandfather lived to be a hundred and five, he played the violin for King Gustaf. Most of my grandfathers were musicians.

LO: That's where you got --

EL: My mother was a musician.

LO: In your genes?

EL: Yeah, it must be because all down -- I've got a tree, you know, the family, and most of them were musicians.

LO: Did your parents stay in the States or did they --

EL: Oh, yeah, they came here. Yeah, they come to the States here.

CB: Have you been in contact with your sister?

EL: She died about six years ago. She lived in North Little Rock.

JW: Did you reconnect with your parents after --

EL: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I mean, you know, everything I found out. They wouldn't still tell me a lot of things. I had to read records after they died as to why they got a divorce, and I could not believe it. It was he deserted us. And then this has only been five years ago, I found out, they never could, they never. And whenever I'd ask them about things, they just wouldn't say things.

CB: Well, they were ashamed I guess?

EL: Well, I think that's the main thing.

CB: How did you get access to those records?

EL: Which records?

CB: To the adoption records, or the divorce records.

EL: Oh, I had it from when he died.

CB: Is that right?

EL: And I looked at them, and it's only been two years ago. I got them stacked up in there. I thought it was all his past debts and things. And after we run into it --

CB: Isn't that interesting.

EL: Yeah, that's strange. My sister, see, now we had two different factions here. My sister hated the home.

LO: Oh, really.

EL: She was three years older. They taught her to play music. In the long run, she made her life, made a living out of music. When she was twelve, she played for the home, the organ. And the superintendent's wife of the home taught taught her to play the piano and the organ, so she was also a musician. But she, somehow or another, it was the whole story of her life there was bitter. See, I didn't see my folks for twenty years, and all they heard was the side of my sister. So when I get out of the Navy and rejuvenate, they tell me what -- I loved it. I wished I had never left because I came down here and I was a servant to everything. They treated me like slaves down here.

CB: I could imagine how that went.

EL: But up until then, the whole family heard nothing but her side. And I'm truly saying that's my home, I loved it, I wished I had never left. It was a well organized home. It was educated people. It was just messed up homes.

CB: Yeah. Well, they had the sports available. That gave you --

EL: We had everything. We went to a public school. During the Depression, we raised our own food. When you're seven years old, they gave you a job. My job happened to be taking care of five thousand chickens, and when you get a job, you stay there until you leave. So I spent seven years raising chickens. 18

LO: It's a wonder you didn't become a chicken farmer in Arkansas.

EL: Well, I still kind of cater to them. See now, the girls, now they did the laundry, they did the cooking. The boys did the lawn. And we had horses, and we had cows, milk. We raised all our vegetables, we all had to go out --

CB: Well, you ate better than anyone --

EL: It was during the Depression, I don't know what it is, in the '30s. And the home allowed my parents to take us for a vacation one week every year during the summer. And I remember going in bread lines, but I didn't know what it was then. But my mother, you know, people were so broke, they didn't have any money. We were in a bread line getting bread. See, we didn't do that at home, we had everything. We didn't know nothing about it. People asked me my age. Well, you know, you were at that age in the Depression, what kind of life did you have. I said I don't know about a Depression.

CB: Isn't that amazing.

JW: For the record, what was the name of the home again?

EL: Norwegian Lutheran Children's Home. That was our symbol up there (indicating). There were about two hundred; it was even split, two hundred girls, two hundred boys.

LO: That's a big home.

EL: Yeah, it is, yeah.

LO: Now, did you keep in touch with the people you were raised with in the home, the other people?

EL: No, no, no. I went to a reunion when I got back out in 1980 something, yeah. And come to find out, I was the youngest ever put in the home, and I was the last youngest. I was six months, and you had to be two years or older.

LO: Now when did the home close?

EL: Well, it was sold. Park Ridge is one of the richest per acre in the country, homes, million dollars, nothing less. They sold that property, thirty-eight acres, to the rich society. And that's what's on there now. They tore all the buildings down and put on these million dollars homes to this day.

CB: And that was run then by the Lutheran Church?

EL: Lutheran Church, right. We had to tow the line, I'll tell you. They had no restrictions on us. We behaved. Now, we weren't a dumping ground for wayward kids. We were really divorced people. Course, we got some rough people come in then. And this is another thing, people, you know, boys are arrested just anywhere in the country. They find out he's raised in an orphanage, he's got to be bad, he's expected, that's what happens. I got a write up here, that made me write this orphanage deal because there was a write up in Fort Smith about, you know, somebody was in trouble, two or three people in a row. They had been raised in orphanages. I wrote that orphanage deal right there because of that because they taught us everything, to respect, you know, respect elders. You do your responsibility. You do everything that you're supposed to. We had religion, we were raised like Lutherans, we went to church every Wednesday and every Sunday and we had to do our chores.

LO: Did you stay with the Lutheran Church?

EL: Oh, yeah. Until the kids started growing, getting up. And I was coaching a Catholic team here. And I saw the respect that they had for everybody. I saw the difference, the way they were raised. And so 19 this is a joke, I became a Luthic, then I became a Catholic.

LO: So you changed to the Catholic church?

EL: Yes, ma'am, yeah.

CB: And your children were raised --

EL: Yeah, raised Catholic.

LO: Did they go to public school?

EL: No, all Catholic school. That was at St. Anne's. Course, the St. Anne's, we had Catholic schools here now. St. Anne's quit, but then they got the Trinity now. They're stricter. When I worked with public school, I know a little different. The Catholic school, when they go to first grade, that first night, they got homework. Public schools, maybe.

CB: It's more disciplined.

EL: Yeah, more controlled.

CB: You learned?

EL: Yeah.

LO: Do you think your going into service at age eighteen, do you think that helped you or hindered you, as far as your future life?

EL: Well, you know, breaking out in war and stuff, you grew up fast. You know, I never saw a dead man in my life until Pearl Harbor. I never had parents or anything that had died or anybody at the home, so I wouldn't trade my life, except you don't like to kill people; but if you have to, you do it.

CB: What do you think about the current situation with the war in Iraq?

EL: Frightening, it's frightening over there. In the normal war, you got a front, you've got a front. Here, it's all around you. It's frightening over there. And the biggest thing over there now is the civil war. Here we're trying to get them, the whole country, straightened out, and now they're fighting each other. How can we straighten out that country when they're fighting each other? The Sunnis against the Shiites, Shiites against the Kurds. To be a serviceman is frightening, I'll guarantee, because you don't know where they are, when they are.

CB: Not a discernible enemy there.

EL: But when I was in the reserve, if they called me, I'd go, I'd go, my duty. I signed up, I'm ready to go. I didn't get called in the Korean War, I didn't get called to Viet Nam War because I was in the submarine reserve. They didn't use submarines. But if I had been anything but a torpedoman, a radioman, a sonar man, anything, they'd have called me. We had two hundred fifty out here at the Naval Reserve that were called to active duty. Because I was in the submarine reserve, they did not need us. But they said go, I'd go, I was ready to go.

JW: Let me ask you to clear something up. You said that your ship, the MONAGHAN, was in twelve of thirteen battles?

EL: Yeah.

JW: Were you on the ship for those twelve battles?

EL: Yes, yes.

JW: And can you name them offhand?

EL: I've got them, I've got them in my book. I've got a diary, too.

LO: Oh, you do?

EL: Yes, ma'am. There's copies and I'll give it to the library, if they want it, too. 20

LO: Look at that.

CB: Oh, how wonderful.

LO: Oh, that is wonderful.

CB: And a good picture.

JW: Let me ask you this. You fired your five inch guns?

EL: Uh-huh.

JW: Do you think you ever killed anybody?

EL: Did we ever kill?

JW: Do you think you ever killed anybody?

EL: I killed, killed them in the water with machine guns. Our ship, alone, killed five thousand Japs up in the Aleutian Islands. We sunk five submarines. We knocked down fourteen planes.

CB: When were you in the Aleutians?

EL: '43, '42 and '43.

JW: That was when the big clearing out --

EL: We were there right after Battle of Midway. They sent us right up north to the Aleutians. Oh, you talk about misery. We had people going insane up there. In one hour, you could have sleet, rain, sunshine, winds and freezing, and the ship's like this (indicating).

CB: How many Japs did you kill?

EL: Oh, I wouldn't want to say.

CB: I mean how many were killed up there?

EL: Well, I'm talking about --

CB: In general.

EL: Combination, yeah.

CB: Five thousand?

EL: Army, Navy, yes. I wouldn't want to, I don't want to admit killing people, but we had to.

CB: No, I just mean in the battle, how many were killed?

EL: Oh, yeah. Aleutian Islands up there, yeah, we were up there twice. But now you've seen how tall these trees are, forty foot waves. We are on a destroyer in the gully. When you see this wave, you're looking up like this (indicating). The ship goes up. Then when it gets on top, it comes down just like an elevator.

CB: Right.

EL: You can't sleep, you can't eat, you can't sit down. We had people going insane up there. We had them commit suicide.

CB: I'm interested in knowing about 1942-43, what the situation was in the Aleutians, in Alaska, as far as the Japanese. What was happening there?

EL: Okay. Well, see, after the Battle of Midway, the Japanese sent an invasion force up there. We had nothing but a lookout thing, and a few natives. And they decided that was good, they thought they were going to beat us, whip us, and take over the United States at that time in '43. This is '43. So they invaded Kiska, Attu. Anyway, there's four islands that they invaded. Well, after a while, we had enough forces to go up and run them off.

CB: You know we've talked to several people who were sent to Alaska and were in Nome.

EL: That's mainland, yeah.

CB: Dutch Harbor?

EL: That's where the headquarters were, yeah,.

CB: And we've heard there were attacks there in Dutch Harbor. Were you aware of that? 21

EL: Yeah. We got there two days after that happened. And they bombed a freighter that was there, yeah. We were there two days later. Let's see, this is the Navy book (indicating).

CB: Let's sit over here and look at that.

EL: There was our ship there (indicating).

CB: Oh, great pictures.

EL: Okay. Here, here is all the battles that we were in. The gold stars are the main battles. These are our minor battles. So we were in something like fifty minor, altogether. We were on a destroyer. And whenever there was invasion, we came within three or four miles and watched the Marines pass us landing, because we bombarded in front of them, machine guns and everything. We used to wave at them, at the Marines. And in Tarawa, the first group, not a one of them survived, not a one of them. And we bombed, the carriers bombed that little atoll. An atoll is only about four feet high with land, and only five miles, maybe five miles by two miles. It's just what it is, it's an island, but they call it an atoll. And the Japanese were on Tarawa, and of course everything is coral, like cement. They dug caves and then they put coconut trees on top of it. And we bombed this island three days in a row with carriers. We bombed it, we shelled it and carriers hit it. And still, the first wave of Marines were killed, not a one of them reached because they were hidden, they were hidden in these coral places. And so these gold stars are the main, main battles. You can look at that, if you've got time.

CB: Well, I do. This is the neatest thing I've ever seen. You have really done a good job. And here are the Aleutians. This is excellent.

LO: We would have been in a bad way if they'd made it through Canada into the States.

EL: Oh, definitely, yeah, sure would. They would've taken Alaska because we didn't have any force up at the time, but we built it up, then we took it back.

LO: Took that to make us see the importance of it.

CB: What a good looking boy.

EL: Thank you. I've got a movie company from California went around, and they said it was going to be on CNN, this has been five years ago. And they had the film completed until they found out that I was in the harbor and we sunk a sub. They had never had anybody that did anything like that. So they called me on the phone and said that they were going to put this part in. But they've got my picture, and then what I said over the phone, and I've got a video of it. They made five volumes, gave me the whole set. They interviewed Army, Marines, and this was the Navy part.

CB: Here's a picture of this sub, this Japanese midget sub. Is this the MONAGHAN here? No, this is somebody pulling this sub up, isn't it?

JW: That's ten years later?

EL: No, that's a torpedo. Yeah, yeah, yeah. The Japanese sub, yeah. The one we had, a little more damage, I thought. But anyway, yeah. But when they said they found a dummy projectile in there, well, I know that had to be ours.

CB: Yeah, that was you.

EL: What I don't tell too many people, but told you we had two shells, one was a dummy and one was a star shell that you shoot at night. We shot it, too. 22

LO: I probably would've thrown rocks.

EL: They were close enough, if we just had had anything.

CB: And here's all of your medals. This is a marvelous scrap book, what a good job.

EL: Well, the kids kind of --

CB: And here's the MONAGHAN.

EL: Yeah. There was over three hundred, well, at least two hundred Pearl Harbor survivors that went down with that ship. I'm just fortunate to be transferred.

CB: Goodness, you've got a lot of photographs.

LO: You were meant to do other things. Certainly wasn't your time.

EL: That's my history. Now, you can have that diary. That's a copy of it, if you want it.

CB: I'd like to scan this.

EL: Whenever you're ready.

CB: I'd like to take it and scan it, if you don't mind.

LO: This is not your original, this is your copy?

EL: Copy. I've got a copy, I blew it up because you couldn't see. I can, but I blew it up a little bit. But every page is in there. I've got it in a safety deposit.

LO: You going to donate that to a historical museum or --

EL: Yes, ma'am, if they want it.

CB: You know, the U.S. Library of Congress has a project, World War II Veteran's story, and they are collecting those things along with your stories. They have to be pretty carefully documented, but that would be a good place for them because it would certainly be well cared for. You can go into the Internet and check on the U.S. Library of Congress for their project, World War II.

EL: Now, you're doing all local, more or less local people?

CB: This is the Fort Smith Historical Society. And we're attempting to archive this material. And it will be in our files and will be kept, as well as making the videos from the DVD camera that we've got here. Plus we will transcribe some of these stories and run some of them in our journal. This journal that came out in April, the first of April, we had Dr. Art Martin's story. He was in Germany, in the Army, he was a medical officer, soldier. But our primary purpose is to archive these stories.

EL: Okay.

CB: For future generations.

EL: You know, I told you I was from Sweden. There's people from Sweden heard about me being in Pearl Harbor. I've got a newspaper clipping that they said that's hanging on the board, in Swedish.

CB: I saw that.

LO: The Library of Congress, I would think would be the place for you to put your journal and this or anything like that because people go from all over the United States there to look at what they have got from World War II. You know, we don't know, it's not taught in school about World War II.

EL: I was just telling her, unless you take history now, you don't. You know when we went to school, we had to take history.

LO: Well, I did, too. But we didn't get much on World War II, and I didn't get much in college.

EL: Oh, okay. Well, right. Unless you take history now, you don't know nothing about it. I question these kids nowadays. They could 23 care less, they could care less. Course, the Viet Nam killed it. Really, really hurt us as far as the way we fought it.

LO: Well, it didn't just -- it didn't just -- I think it -- my personal belief is I think it killed the --

EL: Patriotism.

LO: Right.

EL: Absolutely.

LO: And the young men, like when I went to school, young men wanted to go serve, they wanted to put in two to three years in the service. And today, they want to run from it. So the Viet Nam War did --

EL: That did it. And you know, it was revised on 9/11, patriotism. See cars flying American flags for about two or three years. You don't ever see that. Course, the Iraqi War has really --

CB: I think that's damaged us quite a bit.

EL: It's damaged, it sure has.

CB: Our reputation worldwide is seriously damaged; but we've learned more history about World War II from these interviews than we ever had.

LO: It's been a wonderful learning experience.

EL: Everybody's got a different story.

CB: Everybody's got a different story. And the stories provide a lot of information than I've never seen.

LO: Well, I didn't know about the invasion of Alaska by the Japanese, I did not know about it. And I ask people today, I say did you know Japanese invaded Alaska during World War II? They have no idea what I'm talking about, so I wasn't the only one.

CB: Well, I think that news was blacked out. I don't think the public got that news at the time or there would have been general panic.

EL: They were here. I was on a destroyer and they only had three hours darkness, when you get that far north. We snuck in the harbor when it was dark. I mean it could get so foggy, I'm literally telling you, you can't see your hand. The fog is so thick. We go in with radar. We can go without seeing. We went in the harbor one night, and in thirty minutes, you can have sunshine, moonlight, fog or you name it, sleet. We got in there and we started shelling them. Every night we would go in, we'd fire

one hundred five inch shells just to harass them. Course, we found out later we killed a bunch of them.

CB: What harbor was this?

EL: Kiska Harbor. And anyway, we were in there doing our thing. And all of a sudden, everything lifted and the moon shined. Boy, we were caught right there in the middle of the harbor. And course, reflection from the water, they started opening up on us. And before we got out, we could see four machine gun tracers about from here to the ceiling (indicating). If they had just come down because we were getting out of there, and course, we had to be at our gun stations. And so when we got out of there, we're exposed. We could count four tracers. See, every tenth bullet, even in our Army, has a tracer at night so you can see where you're going, where you're shooting. We could count four tracers there over our heads.

CB: That's every tenth bullet?

EL: Usually every tenth, yeah. I'd like to have a picture of you three.

JW: August 14th, 15th, 1945, depending on where you were on the 24 globe, how did you first learn that the Japanese had surrendered?

EL: I was playing baseball. I was at bat, by the way. I was in Key West. Yeah, I was on a ball team, we were playing baseball down there and we heard these whistles. All the ships in the harbor were tooting their horn. We never finished the game.

LO: Did you support Truman's decision to bomb them with the atomic --

EL: We didn't know it.

LO: You didn't know it?

EL: No. We would have lost maybe two million, because when the war was over, when MacArthur went there, every yard had a hole with grenades. And kids were taught to throw grenades. Every home had a dug-out where they could get in and hide. It would have been murderous.

CB: You'd have had to kill everybody there, wouldn't you?

EL: You'd have to kill everybody because that's the way they're born, that's the way they're raised. Yeah, that atom bomb was really -- you know, they say it's our fault. But we wouldn't have done it if we didn't have to, because we knew there were casualties.

LO: I'm just glad he had the nerve to do it.

EL: That's right, uh-huh. (Short break taken at this time.)

EL: That is written by the only Japanese submarine commander and he's the one that sunk the YORKTOWN, the torpedo that went under us, and he tells us the battle that we had with them.

CB: May I borrow these?

EL: Sure, you bet.

CB: I'll get them back to you.

EL: Use it wherever you need. (Took pictures of interviewers.)

CB: Now, this is your handwriting here, isn't it?

EL: Right. That's all mine. You know what? They said don't do that, don't keep a diary. But you know what? When the war was over, officers, all of them had it.

LO: Well, don't you think it helped you to do that, to sort of sort your mind out?

EL: I did it for some reason. Because from the first day, I never even thought about it until the first day when it was over with, when we were out in the harbor for three days, I just said, you know, I may forget this some day. And that's what I did.

LO: It was such an honor to spend time with you.

EL: Nice meeting you. I rather appreciate this, it's the only way it can get out.

CB: That's right and it needs to be.

LO: Now, for so many years, people didn't want to talk about it. My grandfather, he went to his death and never would talk about it.

EL: Well, this is my last interview, I'll tell you. I mean really. But I think, you know, for history --

CB: Well, I'm so glad that you wanted to do this interview.

EL: Well, come to find out, I'm really seeing, even the Pearl Harbor veterans, a lot of them never fired a gun. Bill McGrew, he was down below, he never saw nothing, but he was there.

JW: He was there.

EL: Actually shoot a gun, and actually see what was going on, not many, some of them were there, you know, and saw it; but we were, you 25 know, I saw everything. They just happened to be in that situation