

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM BUTLER

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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INTERVIEWED BY G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
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TRANSCRIPT BY
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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with William I. Butler on April 19, 2005 in Knoxville, Tennessee at The University of Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

JASON JUNG: ... Jason Jung.

KURT PIEHLER: And let me thank you, one, for coming so far to take part in this interview. You're the second person this year who has come, driven all the way from the Memphis area to participate in the interview and we, we really appreciate it. I'm not as mobile this semester, partly because of my wife's pregnancy. But I love coming to Memphis ... and I love Western Tennessee and so I hope to come to your part before too long once our twins are born. Well, I wanted to ... begin. You were born where and when?

WILLIAM BUTLER: I was born, uh, May the 22nd, 1919 in Weakley County, Tennessee—Martin ... where the junior college is right now.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And could you tell me about your parents?

BUTLER: My parents, uh, we were farmers. My dad was a farmer and my mother, she was just a housewife. She helped with the farming operations. Small farm, 'course back in those days, in the Depression days, uh, we didn't have a lot of money, but we never did go hungry. We always had plenty to eat. Raised our own garden, milked cows. Believe it or not, I had to milk cows sometime four and five a day at six. And delivered milk and butter. And I did it in a horse and buggy. When I was about ten, twelve, thirteen years old, in Martin, I delivered about twice a week. And that's the way we had a little spending money and we got by during the Depression, no problem.

PIEHLER: What did your farm grow? Did you have dairy? Or did you have cotton?

BUTLER: We had a few milk cows, but our main crop back in that, in those days was sweet potatoes.

PIEHLER: Sweet potatoes.

BUTLER: At one time, Weakley County was the largest sweet potato producing county in the United States.

PIEHLER: So, so you didn't have any cotton on your farm?

BUTLER: One year, we had a renter and raised a little cotton.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

BUTLER: But that's the only thing I ever knew about cotton.

PIEHLER: So it was mainly sweet potato?

BUTLER: Mainly the sweet potatoes back in those days.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, um, how big, when you said it was a small family farm, how many acres did your family have?

BUTLER: I think altogether the three small farms kinda put together about 130 acres.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, and ... could you talk a little about your brothers and sisters?

BUTLER: Well, there was, uh, six of us in the family--three girls and three boys. And the three oldest were boys and the three youngest were girls. And my older brother, and I was the second boy or the middle boy, and the, uh, girls were all much younger. My baby sister was born in I guess, 1928 and she was the last one to be born.

PIEHLER: And you all worked on the farm it sounds like.

BUTLER: Oh yeah, we all worked on the farm. And when I left the farm, my daddy bought a tractor, I think in '37. And when I left to go to school, and come to Knoxville, my baby sister, she began to learn to drive that tractor and she did it during the war.

PIEHLER: So your father got a tractor in '37.

BUTLER: 1937.

PIEHLER: And before that you were using mules?

BUTLER: Mules, we had three teams of mules ... to break ground and stuff.

PIEHLER: Did you hire anyone--you mentioned having a renter one year for cotton.

BUTLER: Well, my daddy had a renter on one of the houses. Well, just had one house, I guess. And he was letting him, uh, raise a little crop sometimes, but he'd just pay him anywhere from fifty to seventy-five cents a day and furnish him a house to live in and let him have a cow to milk.

PIEHLER: And, and so it wasn't just that one year when he grew cotton, the renter ...

BUTLER: Just about one or two years, the only time they ever ...

PIEHLER: ... Oh, that's the only time he ever, you ever had ...

BUTLER: Cotton, uh huh.

PIEHLER: So, you never had any other help--hired?

BUTLER: Not any.

PIEHLER: No one to help out at harvest, or ...

BUTLER: Well, yes during the (trimming?) time. That's when Daddy had to have help digging the ...

PIEHLER: Otherwise, that was the only time you ...

BUTLER: ... That's right, the only time.

PIEHLER: The renter--when you had the rent, was he a black farmer or a white farmer?

BUTLER: No, he was white ... white boy ... Didn't have much education but, it turned out that he raised a pretty nice family later on.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm--um, did you farm have electricity when you were growing up?

BUTLER: Nope, sure didn't.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) When did you get, when did the farm get electricity?

BUTLER: In 1938, I believe. It was before World War II, I know that. But, it was after I left home.

PIEHLER: So, you did not grow up with electricity?

BUTLER: I did not.

PIEHLER: Um, and I assume then that you didn't have an indoor bathroom.

BUTLER: No, we had an outdoor.

PIEHLER: You had an outhouse.

BUTLER: We had an outhouse.

PIEHLER: Um, what about a telephone?

BUTLER: Yes, we had a telephone. But we had one that had about five or six parties around--on the, on the line. And the people at that time had to keep up their own line out in the county ... And I still remember the old telephone number I had back then, 8637. And after World War II and I got home, they let us call home. And that number was still in use.

PIEHLER: Still in service.

BUTLER: Service, that's right. Sure was.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you always had lots to eat?

BUTLER: ...We didn't go hungry.

PIEHLER: But how well did the farm do, particularly in the early '30's?

BUTLER: Well, some years when the ... froze up, maybe, we did alright. But I can remember times when we'd house those potatos and sell them off in the spring and sometimes we couldn't hardly give 'em away ... And the following year a lot of times we might get a dime or a quater a bushel. In the spring sometimes we had to, we might sell 'em or give 'em away to feed the hogs or something. There was no market for them.

PIEHLER: Did you ever, did the family ever risk losing the farm?

BUTLER: Yes, there was always that possibility of losing it. I know, uh, back then, I remember the bank closed some days. One day, the thirtieth, when the bank closed, you know?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

BUTLER: We had three banks in Martin at the time and one of them never did reopen.

PIEHLER: Did your family ever have money in that bank?

BUTLER: Not in that bank. But the bank we had a little money in, where he usually borrowed his money from, it opened back up. But it was a rough time. And back then, I remember our school teacher, she had a little money and she was worried about--well, back then they didn't even get paid sometimes they just had to take gifts or whatever and get them discounted in order to get any money to live on. Back then; some of the schools were only six months a year. And they usually start early in the fall and then turn out for a couple to three weeks for the potato picking and some of the places, you know, where they had cotton, there'd be cotton picking.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, did your school have that break for cotton picking?

BUTLER: Yeah, we always did ...

PIEHLER: You always ...

BUTLER: Picking potatos and stuff, yeah. That's right.

PIEHLER: So, you'd start school and then break for, for harvesting?

BUTLER: Right, start in August then break for about two or three weeks ... every month in the fall.

PIEHLER: And then go back to school. And then get out in the summ ...

BUTLER: ... Sometime in Feburary. So six months ...

PIEHLER: So you'd get out in Feburary?

BUTLER: Sometimes we would. Six months.

JUNG: So, you said the whole school kind of took these breaks ... for harvesting, and picking potatos. So was that kind of a crop in the general area?

BUTLER: In the particular area, yeah. Some of the other areas, they was for cotton picking and other things. But in West Tennessee, it's pretty well known it's potato picking, mostly.

JUNG: Okay.

PIEHLER: What, um ...

BUTLER: Or ... sometimes it'd be--we were in a community just one side of the county you might say had a little cotton, the other side raised tobacco ... There in West Tennessee.

PIEHLER: It sounds like ... you mentioned you had a garden, it sounds like, you mentioned you grew most of your food.

BUTLER: We did, we had a ... garden.

PIEHLER: What would be some of the things you'd buy from the store?

BUTLER: From the store?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BUTLER: Sugar and coffee and occasionally a little cereal maybe, or something like that but that's about it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, the rest were ...

BUTLER: Corn flakes and oat toasties was about all I remember having back in those days as far as cereal. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: It also sounds like most of your meat, most of that ...

BUTLER: Well, we'd kill hogs.

PIEHLER: So, you had hogs ...

BUTLER: Oh yeah, we'd kill four or five, maybe six hogs. And we'd have a certain hog-killing day and the neighbors would come in and they'd kill four or five hogs and even have the sausage ground up, the lard rendered out and cook the night. So, it was--those days back then. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Yeah, no, I--you mentioned the one the one teacher I think you got to know fairly well, who was--you know she had money in the bank, it sounds like ...

BUTLER: A little bit, yeah. She was a schoolteacher.

PIEHLER: What grade did you have her for?

BUTLER: Well, I was the only child going to this one school, and I was the only one in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Back in those days there wasn't many of those kids who ever got past the fifth and sixth grade. 'Cause they dropped out and quit school.

PIEHLER: So you were one of the few who were able to stay in school from your area.

BUTLER: Stay in school, that's right. And then when they got in the--they didn't have school buses back in those days, not in my day. I know, uh, you got to school the best way you could. Then, we had a mile and a half to school. And I'd usually have to walk. Bad days, my dad would carry us in the buggy or something, you know, to school. And then he'd come get us. Normally, we'd walk to school and back. And then, when I was in the second grade, I guess it was, we bought another farm that was a little bit closer to school. And it was just about, uh, city block from school where I continued eighth grade.

PIEHLER: When you said your father took you in the buggy sometimes when it rained. When did your family get an automobile?

BUTLER: 1932 or '3 ...

PIEHLER: '33 ...

BUTLER: An old Model-T Ford.

PIEHLER: But before that it was horse and buggy?

BUTLER: Horse and buggy and wagon. We had, one time, we had two new--I remember, we had two new buggies. Because six--five or six children and mother and dad, we couldn't all ride in one buggy ... So we got another buggy. And it'd be drawn by one horse or mule. Usually, we had a horse for the buggies.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit more about your school, particularly when it sounds like your friends were dropping out? Is that ...

BUTLER: Yeah, they did. They just--I don't know--they, a lot of times, back in those days, they just got tired of school and their parents wouldn't make them go or something. And they just never finished up. There wasn't too many in our school at that time that ever finished the eighth grade and went on to high school.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. How big was your school? Your ... elementary school?

BUTLER: That one would be somewhere; thirty to forty. And they'd take up ... books at eight o'clock in the morning and when she got through all our classes at about three, or four, or five in the afternoon, you went home.

PIEHLER: You, you mentioned you were the only one in several grades.

BUTLER: I was.

PIEHLER: So in some ways it sound like you were almost getting one on one instruction from the teacher.

BUTLER: Well, that's the way it is. But they didn't have time to spend much time with anybody, back in those days.

PIEHLER: So she was--now your school, it was, it wasn't a one room schoolhouse was it?

BUTLER: Well, at one time it was two. But there was just one teacher there, then, when I was there.

PIEHLER: So, she went back and forth between the two rooms?

BUTLER: No, at the time I was at school there, it was one teacher in one room.

PIEHLER: Okay.

BUTLER: And she'd give you a dime a day to go start the fire in the wintertime, so it was really close by, and that was fifty cents a week.

PIEHLER: What ... was your teachers name? Do, do you remember?

BUTLER: Uh, (Mayo Kilgore?).

PIEHLER: And you had her, Mayo Kilgore, you had her from what grade to what grade?

BUTLER: Well, from second grade to the eighth grade.

PIEHLER: You got to know her, in a sense, very well.

BUTLER: Oh yeah, yeah. She'd take me home with her sometimes. I'd go opossum hunting with her brother.

PIEHLER: Did she ever marry?

BUTLER: Yes. She married this guy ... he was a Kilgore. She married him ... right after she started teaching school out there, I believe it was. Her first husband had died or something like that.

PIEHLER: So she was married while, while teaching?

BUTLER: Well, yeah while ... she was married then. And she ended up, uh, I believe she was the one that ended up at the house project, The University of Martin for a long, long time.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay ... What did ... what did you like about school? What were your favorite subjects to study?

BUTLER: I didn't like too much of anything. (Laughter) We had to take algebra or something like that, I was pretty good at that. But that was about the main thing. I just didn't like English too well or--we had to read a lot, I just didn't like that.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. You mentioned going hunting with your schoolteacher's brother. Um, uh, when did you start hunting?

BUTLER: Well ... back then, about the only type of hunting that we did at night would be opossum hunting. 'Cause we didn't have 'coons back then, like we have now.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. So it was mainly opossum hunting that you ...

BUTLER: Back then, uh huh.

PIEHLER: And did you ever hunt with your father?

BUTLER: Yeah, we'd go rabbit hunting.

PIEHLER: Rabbit hunting.

BUTLER: Yeah. But that was about the only type of hunting that I used to do when I was growing up. Rabbit hunting. And I'd take the rifle along and find one sitting and you'd shoot 'em.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm ... What did you ... growing up, what did you do for fun? When you weren't working and going to school?

BUTLER: Mostly we just worked. (Laughter) We didn't do much for fun because-- sometimes on Saturday night, if you got some time, Saturday or something, you might go to town and occasionally go to the movies, and back then, I was small enough I could go on a dime. Until I was about thirteen or fourteen years old, I guess. 'Cause I was just so small.

PIEHLER: So its ...

BUTLER: A lot of the time, back in those days.

PIEHLER: So really Saturday night was the one ...

BUTLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Was the one time you sort of had off.

BUTLER: Yeah, and then, I remember in 1936 or '7, I started working at the grocery store. I'd go in at noon and work until nine or ten o'clock until it closed that night for a dollar. And I had to get a social security number when it came into being. I had to get a social security number. And he's supposed to take out a penny on the check and he'd match it with a penny. So I got one of them early social security numbers.

PIEHLER: So you must have a very low number.

BUTLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... Did you ever play any sort of sports?

BUTLER: Well, a little bit of baseball in high school ... Occasionally baseball. But I never was big enough for football, or fast enough for basketball.

PIEHLER: Did you ever play sports with any of your neighbors?

BUTLER: Yeah, the kids, we'd have a little team or something, you know. On Saturdays or Sunday afternoon, we'd go to the pasture field somewhere and play, uh, a little baseball or something like that.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like during the week you were too busy ...

BUTLER: Oh gosh, when you got that farming, you'd get up four or five o'clock in the morning and feed the mules and go to the farm by daylight and stay 'till after dark. Summertime, we were bailing hay and we did custom bailing, you know. We'd bail--start at about ten or eleven o'clock, when it got dry in the afternoon, we'd bail hay and then

after you got through at eight o'clock at night, you'd haul it in sometime, and then you'd have to go milk them cows, you'd get to bed at ten o'clock.

PIEHLER: And you were ... how old were you when you were doing all this?

BUTLER: Well, I was ... starting high school when I was helping bail hay. We'd get ten cents a hundred for helping bail hay.

PIEHLER: 'Cause you mentioned earlier that you milked the cows at a really early, you were milking ...

BUTLER: Oh yeah, I was milking cows when I was--uh, let me see, I guess I started milking cows when I was about five, six years old.

PIEHLER: Could you ... talk a little, you mention your mother was a ... housewife. What did she do on the farm? And what did your father do on the farm?

BUTLER: Well, she did the cooking and, uh, stuff like that and helping with setting out potatoes and plants, and she helped do all the plants. She was ready to cut 'em on out and come to the field and help us in the field right there. She was setting out potato strips and stuff.

PIEHLER: And ... I'm curious you mentioned, um, you went into town on Saturday night. How often did you go into Memphis growing up?

BUTLER: Well, as far as going to Memphis, the first recording I ever had of that, my daddy always liked to show ... corn he'd raised. Stuff like that. And he'd bring in some of the corn to Memphis and we got to go to the Mid-South Side, in the, well, let's see, I guess about the mid 30's ... And we'd go to Mid-South Square in Memphis. That's the first time I'd ever been to Memphis. I remember that first red light when you're going into Memphis, back then, was, uh, summer and way down Summer Street. And that was about first red light going into Memphis.

PIEHLER: Did you have many stoplights in Martin, when you were growing up?

BUTLER: Stoplights?

PIEHLER: 'Cause you mentioned the red light in Memphis.

BUTLER: Uh, wasn't many there in Martin either. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And how old were you, again, when you went to Memphis, um, the first time?

BUTLER: I guess I was around--we'd already gotten an old Chevrolet car, I believe it was a '31 Chevrolet or something. And it was about two years old so I would have been

about twelve, thirteen years old.

PIEHLER: So twelve or thirteen was the first time you went to Memphis?

BUTLER: ... Went to Memphis, oh yeah, mm hmm.

PIEHLER: What are, before you went to college where else had you visited or traveled to?

BUTLER: Well, very seldom anywhere. Because in a horse and buggy you didn't travel very far. I had a cousin that lived over in Kentucky and sometimes we'd take off over there in a horse and buggy and spend the weekend with them. Because it'd take 'ya about two hours to get there, or three, and then that much to come back in a horse and buggy. So, you didn't go anywhere, hardly.

PIEHLER: Um, so what's the farthest--is Kentucky the farthest north you went before going to college?

BUTLER: ... Yeah, back then it was.

PIEHLER: You never took the train somewhere?

BUTLER: No, not a train ride until during the war.

PIEHLER: ... And I guess did you ever make it to Nashville before college?

BUTLER: Um, no, never did get to Nashville as far as I know.

PIEHLER: And how about into Ala--into Mississippi or Alabama, did you ever?

BUTLER: No, never did get too far away from home.

PIEHLER: So, so ...

BUTLER: I remember when I was a boy, we had a neighbor that bought an old Chevrolet car. So, uh, they were home one weekend and they invited my brother and I to go back with them. And they lived in Union City. And boy that was a long place. It was about six miles from Martin there's the junction to Union City, and that old car and them dirt roads and stuff, back then. I think it took us nearly two hours to make that trip at that time. We spent a week with 'em. I remember that deal. I was a little young.

PIEHLER: Did you have a radio growing up?

BUTLER: Never did have a radio at home until after, I believe, after I left home. Then my daddy may have gotten an old battery operated radio. 'Cause I can remember the first radio I ever saw.

PIEHLER: Where was that?

BUTLER: That was in Martin. I had an uncle that lived out in Martin and he had a neighbor that had one and, boy that thing was about four feet long, and had an old thing that set out on the front of it, and you had to know how to operate all them buttons. And that's the first one I ever saw. I remember seeing it. Then, in the uh, 20's, late 20's, I guess it was, when we moved to another farm, we had a neighbor, and now I think we'd gotten some ... going, it was battery operated. And we'd go to his house, like on a Saturday night and listen to the Grand Ole Opry. And that was a ...

PIEHLER: The Grand Old Opera?

BUTLER: Yeah, yeah. The Grand Old Opera.

PIEHLER: Um, what kind of movies did you enjoy?

BUTLER: Old westerns. Serial movies, you know. You'd want to know what happened, you'd go back and see the next movie, see what happened to that guy that fell off the cliff or something like that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you like Tom Nicks, is that?

BUTLER: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: Any others that ...

BUTLER: Well, I don't remember. Uh, some of those little movie deals.

PIEHLER: What, what about church, did you?

BUTLER: We did, we went to the ... (Bob Union?) Baptist Church. That was a church in our community. An old church house and of course no lights. And they'd usually have a summer revival after we'd get through the crops ... And then have, we'd carry lunch and we'd have all day, morning and afternoon, services and dinner on the ground. And I remember going to those. And most everybody then went in a horse and buggy or wagon. And you had to hitch your horses and all out a fence or feed or someplace. So, I wouldn't call them my good old days, but that was way back. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... Jason, anything more about?

JUNG: Well, I guess ... if you wouldn't mind talking more about your religion growing up. Was this something that was pretty important to your parents when they raised you--or?

BUTLER: Yes, they made sure we went to church. And 'course, it was so rough back in

those days, and nobody had money--my daddy, he was kinda secretary and treasurer of the church. And I remember we had a, we had services on a Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, uh, once a month. And we paid the preacher, I believe, about seventy-five dollars a year. And it was hard for my daddy to even collect enough money to pay him maybe seven, eight, ten dollars every time he'd come every month. And he'd have to put him up for the night and feed his horse or something. And he'd come on horseback or buggy or something. He lived about fifteen, ten or fifteen miles away at the most.

PIEHLER: How big was the congregation?

BUTLER: Oh, it'd be about, maybe, with kids and everybody about forty or fifty. In the old church.

PIEHLER: So you describe growing up as, in some ways, its a very small community.

BUTLER: Well, it was around where I grew up. And nobody, the old saying goes, had a pretty home or anything like that. A lot of 'em--I know the house where I was born in, to start with was just a three room house with a lean-to on the back and stuff like that. It'd get so cold that my mother would take some chairs and hang a quilt around and put us over between that and the fire place to keep us warm as kids. I 'member that. Sometimes you could see the chickens through the floor, through the big cracks in the floor. Until we moved to another place that was a little better ... Had a fire place and about three rooms. Had to cut the wood.

PIEHLER: So, three rooms and six people.

BUTLER: Well, I think, in that house, my younger sister hadn't been born.

PIEHLER: But still, you had five or four people in three rooms. It's ...

BUTLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It's crowded. (Laughter)

BUTLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you all, you and your brothers and sisters get along?

BUTLER: Well, we would get along pretty good except my younger brother. He was always causing trouble, and starting a fight and being rough. Well, mother and daddy would whip us both. Right now, they'd be charged with child abuse ... Sometimes, you'd remember those and you didn't do it no more. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You went to high school. You mentioned earlier that most people didn't make it past fifth grade. How big was Martin High School when you went?

BUTLER: There was thirty-eight of us in the senior class when I graduated. In 1938.

PIEHLER: Which isn't a big class.

BUTLER: Not a big class. (Laughs) Not like they are now. Sometimes in Savannah when they graduate now they have about three or four hundred that graduate at one time.

PIEHLER: ... Were you--I'm curious, did you think you would go to college when you started high school?

BUTLER: Well, not really. But my older brother, he did. And he, of course, started out there at Martin. And he got ten cents an hour for digging stumps out there 'round the old campus at Martin. And I remember when Martin first became a junior college. Before that it was a hall. Hall Moody. It was a Baptist deal. And they bought it out and started a junior college.

PIEHLER: When did that happen, you sound like you remember it pretty vividly?

BUTLER: I do. I remember it real well. When it happened, there was a guy in Martin that was kinda responsible, I think, for buying it out and starting a junior college. He was a lawyer or something, I believe. I can't recall his name right now. And when I started out there in 1938 as a freshman, there was, I think, about 250 students.

PIEHLER: And this was ...

BUTLER: I started being a freshman. That was when the high school ...

PIEHLER: You started ... you went to Martin?

BUTLER: Martin, the first quarter.

PIEHLER: The first quarter.

BUTLER: And my brother, my older, he'd already graduated two years there and had transferred to Knoxville. To get the rest of his four years. And he was, maybe three years uh, ahead of me. And the reason, I dropped back one year in grade school because when I was supposed an exam deal or something, we only had a six month school year. And the teacher said, well, she'd help me and maybe I could make it and pass the county exam or something and go on. And I said, "Naw, I'll just stay another year." So I just took it over again. Back then you had to have a high enough ...

PIEHLER: Even high school was only six months.

BUTLER: No, in high school it was up to, um, seven or eight months, I believe.

PIEHLER: Okay, so high school was longer than your elementary.

BUTLER: Yeah, 'bout that it was back then.

PIEHLER: Did you have Latin in your high school?

BUTLER: Never did have Latin, foreign language.

PIEHLER: No foreign language.

BUTLER: Uh huh. No foreign language.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned you played a little baseball ...

BUTLER: A little baseball and that's about it.

PIEHLER: Did you school, did your high school have a football team?

BUTLER: Oh yeah, uh huh, yeah. They had a high school football team. There were times that they got into a little trouble by playing an ineligible man or something like that. I remember that one time too. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did your, did your school have, have--what kind of social events did your school have?

BUTLER: Oh, not too much, back then.

PIEHLER: You, you didn't have dances?

BUTLER: No, uh, I never did go to a high school dance, I don't think. I know, back then, during the Depression days, a time or two, they graduated in uh--let me see, in (gingam?) dresses, the girls did and the boys in overalls and stuff like that ...

PIEHLER: ... You mentioned overalls for graduation. Did you ever own a suit before?

BUTLER: Not until--yeah, I had a little, old suit. I had two sets of clothes. Work clothes and church-going clothes ... that was about it.

PIEHLER: So you had one set ...

BUTLER: Right, that's about the way it was.

PIEHLER: And then you had Sunday's ...

BUTLER: Mm hmm, 'cause back then, most of the clothes you wore, the knees were patched, you know, and stuff. 'Cause you were doing things. Now, you have to have patches in your clothes and stuff like that. (Laughter) Back then, everybody had 'em.

(Laughs)

PIEHLER: ... Did your family get a newspaper when you were growing up?

BUTLER: Well, they only thing we got was the ... The Weakley County Press, or something like that.

PIEHLER: Uh huh.

BUTLER: It was about the only thing we got. Another thing, occasionally, my daddy would get the Nashville Banner, I believe. It'd come only Mondays, you know, a Sunday paper on Monday and stuff like that. And we'd get a Nashville paper every once in a while just mostly for the funnies. I remember that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Um, what did your family think of Franklin Roosevelt?

BUTLER: Well, I'll tell 'ya. I 'member the, uh, the Depression real well and ... the day that they had the banks closing and all that stuff. I remember that quite well. And, uh, when was running for presiden--'course, I remember the Hoover days, too. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What do you remember about the Hoover days? (Laughs)

BUTLER: Well, that's when it was about all started, I guess, you might say. We had soup lines. And I remember when they--and the best thing then, Roosevelt had come out, was the start of the [Civilian Conservation Corps] days. And I remember the [CCC] camps and the boys that went to camp. 'Cause they got, I think it was, thirty dollars a month, but they could only keep five, 'cause the rest of it had to go home to their parents. And every town or place just about had a [CCC] camp, back then.

PIEHLER: So you remember seeing a lot of CCC camps?

BUTLER: Oh yeah, yeah ... sure did. And you know they had 'em until World War II.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Yeah, no, until 1942.

BUTLER: And my oldest brother, when he graduated in Knoxville. He was one of the first ones to graduate in the class of agronomy, back then. ... So he got a job in (Americus?), Georgia. And went down there and he was the guy that was supposed to work out the farm's land, you know, for the [CCC] boys. And ... he wasn't married at the time. One summer, in 1940, I was in school here and kinda hitchhiked and went down there and spent a week to ten days with him.

PIEHLER: And he was still working for the CCC?

BUTLER: Yeah, he was still working for them. And I remember going to Andersonville Prison, back during those days. And that's where the southerners kept the northern

prisoners. And the situation in that camp back in those days was very similar to our situation that I went through later on.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you thought about that visit to Andersonville quite a bit.

BUTLER: Oh, I did. And then, after--since then, when they'd made the prisoner of war camp an office, I've been back to it.

PIEHLER: But the first time you went was in 1940.

BUTLER: Yeah, I went there in 1940.

PIEHLER: When your brother was in Americus, Georgia?

BUTLER: Yeah, working.

PIEHLER: Working.

BUTLER: And I guess he's the one who started all that kudzu.

PIEHLER: Are you sure? (Laughter) I don't know if you want to have him take credit for that. (Laughter)

JUNG: So that's who we get to thank.

BUTLER: But at that time that was the thing for erosion and stuff.

PIEHLER: Yeah. How bad was the erosion where you were growing up?

BUTLER: Well, they left the potatoes and washed the farms away. It was good soil. 'Cause it was a good soil type. But it just washed it away, gullies and all. And even on the farm that we ended up with. Uh, it was just about washed away and stuff. So, my daddy had to--well, he was one of the first ones, I guess, to start using lime and stuff on the land. And had a little tobacco farm, I remember that, that sat down on the side ... And that was just before the war. And he had such a pretty patch, back then, when he started a strawberry patch ... they started getting prizes for the best strawberry patch, you know, and the best strawberries you'd bring in and stuff like that. And I was working the horticulture department up here and guy by the name of Drain, Brooks Drain--I don't know whether you know him or not ...

PIEHLER: No, I don't.

BUTLER: But he was in the horticulture department. And I was working there too. And he told me he would help me sell them 'cause my daddy had the best strawberry patch he'd ever seen. And I forget how many crates of berries we sold that first year after that. But several, I mean a bunch of 'em. 'Cause back then, that was twenty-four quarts to uh,

to watch you call it, a crate, or whatever it is. And, I believe it was, he got about two dollars and seventy-five cents for 'em. And now, when he made that money from just about three years of sales, he put it to the farm.

PIEHLER: From that strawberries?

BUTLER: From growing strawberries.

PIEHLER: Who, who convinced him to grow strawberries?

BUTLER: Uh, I don't know where he got that idea to grow the strawberries.

PIEHLER: Was it from an agricultural agent?

BUTLER: Well, it could be because I know I was the first county agent on this ... I used to go to 4H camp with him. We would go to an old West Tennessee filling station, that's where they had the camp. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you were in 4H?

BUTLER: Yeah, the girls stayed in the round house there and the boys stayed across the creek in tent city over there.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you have some fond memories of ...

BUTLER: Oh, I do.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little more about your 4H experience?

BUTLER: Well, back in those days, uh, we were very active in 4H. Someone to come out to the farm and talk with, you know, and stuff. Some reason, Mother and Daddy always raised corn and would have a good corn display at the fair. At the county fair, and the Martin fair, and stuff like that. And one year, they had an opportunity to take some boys from Weakley County to the 4H Club Conference in Chicago. And in 1937, I was fortunate to go to the 4H Club Conference in Chicago.

PIEHLER: So that was ...

BUTLER: First time I'd ever been away from home riding a train.

PIEHLER: So you ... did go ...

BUTLER: Yeah, I forgot about that train ride. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So in 1937 you went to Chicago. What do you remember about that trip?

BUTLER: Well, we stayed at a, I believe, a YMCA building or something. And I know the guy that was the agent or somebody that was supposed to have been in charge, and he kinda missed me. He was supposed to be up there, or something. But when I got there, I just got off the train. I think I--I don't know how I got to the hotel or wherever I was supposed to go, but I remember going to the hotel there. And there, of course they had meetings planned for us and all--one time, I went out ... or something and had breakfast. And the International Harvesters had us out the their place one day. And I've got a picture now that was made in 1937, I think. On the roof with us all. I used to, couldn't find myself on that picture. We were all there. (Laughter) There were a hundred of us up there. That was a big time. That was the first time I'd ever been away from home like that before.

PIEHLER: And ... so 4H was--when you would go to this little camp, that was your old ...

BUTLER: Yeah, camp. Summer camp.

PIEHLER: Did you enter any competitions, uh, in the 4H?

BUTLER: ... Not like they do now.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you didn't ...

BUTLER: They didn't have judging teams and all that stuff.

PIEHLER: Yeah. That ...

BUTLER: Uh uh.

PIEHLER: Were you in any other clubs or organizations, like the Boy Scouts or church groups, or ...

BUTLER: No, no. Not then, they didn't--in our community they didn't have any.

PIEHLER: So it was really--4H was the one.

BUTLER: That was about the only thing we joined back then. We didn't have anything. That started in 1914. Three or four years back, 1914. That's when all stat universities had to have extension agencies ... That's when all that started.

PIEHLER: Do you, you were not on the Delta, but do you have any memories of the, of the great Mississippi flood of 1927?

BUTLER: Oh, I real do, yes sir. Because Lake County. All them people from Lake County had to move 'em out to come down to come up to the college there ...and they took tents and stuff for them to live in around the college. And they got out there shooting

so many squirrels and stuff. I remember that deal. (Laughter) And (Paduca?), Kentucky was underwater. And I remember we had a neighbor that had a daughter or somebody over at Paduca. 'Course there was about seven foot of water in Paduca there. I remember that well. And at one time, over there at the end of the river around (Hickman?), Kentucky, they thought part of that was gonna fall into the river at one time. That was kinda scary.

PIEHLER: Um, did you, uh, how aware were you of the Lindbergh flight? You were a small boy, did you ...

BUTLER: Yeah, I remember the Lindbergh deal and all that. But that was about all I remember about it. Not too much of the flight and stuff.

PIEHLER: You didn't follow aviation very much when you were growing up?

BUTLER: Uh, no.

PIEHLER: No.

BUTLER: No, I never was on a plane or anything 'till--thinking back, there was a little old deal come along one time. And we went up out to the airport and for a dollar or two you could just go up for a few minutes in a plane. I might have went with somebody then. And that's it.

PIEHLER: You, you mentioned that your brother went to college, how was he able to make it through college?

BUTLER: Well, just like I did, working for it. He started, as I tell you, digging stumps for ten cents an hour and when he went up to Knoxville, he started working for (Brooks C. Drain?). And I don't know, probably started out for twenty cents an hour. And he moved on up until he graduated and then they hired him here at the university for awhile he had developed the Margot's Tomatoes. He developed that while he was here. And it's still a old tomato. A pretty good tomato. Margot's. If you look on the back of signs and stuff, you'll see that it was developed by Horace Franklin Butler when he was in college here. But then, the reason I came on up here, he told me I could get his job, that he had. He was leaving and going to Americus, Georgia. Well, when I came up here, if I remember right, I had about twenty dollars. Back then, to live in the rooms, it was ten dollars. And I got a meal ticket down there at the little ol' store or grocery. It's right here on the end of Fifteenth Street down there. I got a meal ticket down there for five dollars. And I got a, um, room at one of the boarding houses on Fifteenth Street for five dollars for the month. And that was my twenty dollars and I worked for twenty cents an hour. And I could work as many hours as I wanted to out at the college out there. And I had, if I had two hours or three hours between classes sometimes, I'd go into the office there and do some work for them. Brooks C. Drain and stuff like that. And then on Sundays, they wanted me to go out and check the temperatures in the sailor house they had down on the river. I'd check that for 'em and I'd get an hour or two time for that. And all that working,

I just about made my own way through there, I guess.

PIEHLER: How ... oh, no, you were going to say something.

BUTLER: Well, you remember, maybe, I don't know whether you remember Dr. Bishop or not. Bill Bishop.

PIEHLER: No, I don't.

BUTLER: Well, he, he ended up in the institute of agriculture. Vice President for the agriculture department. But anyway, he and I was at school at the same time, and Bill said--he had about twenty dollars when he came, and what he did, he lived in the greenhouse, out in (Karns?). And that was just--he managed it and clipped out there. And worked in the greenhouse. And made his way. And he went ahead and got his Ph.D., you know. Well see, when I started working for the Agricultural Extension Service, in 194--47, right after World War II, I had to come back and finish. And anyway, I worked for a year and left and went with Pet Milk Company. Twenty years before I came back into the [Agricultural] Extension Service. In the meantime, Dr. Bishop, knowing him, he'd already moved up, you know. To where he was the one who might be in charge of the hiring and firing, you know, of anyone in the county. And the guy in West Tennessee who was a hold of that deal--when I was a field man with Pet Milk Company, I'd help him hold meetings with all the counties around when we were promoting dairy. So, I was finally terminated when they closed one of the milk plants. And, uh, I didn't make up the ... And they terminated me, for the time. And give me six months severance pay. Well, uh, here I was forty-six years old and was without a job. So, I got to thinking, "Well what am I gonna do know?" Well, I had an inter view or two and I didn't like what I found out, so I'd written the university. Well, I got a letter back from them--I don't know whether it was Bill Bishop who sent me or who it was, but anyways, I knew them. They said then they didn't have no ...

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

PIEHLER: You said, they said they didn't have any openings, but they had ...

BUTLER: Except in youth. If I wanted to come back, you know, and start with the youth group, like working with the 4H kids and stuff like that, I could probably do that. Well, this guy that was doing the hiring and the firing, you might say, in West Tennessee, I'd been knowing him for, I don't know, several years. He used to be the county agent over in (Higgs?) County and he moved up to the extension leader for West Tennessee. He was in charge of the hiring and all. So I wrote him a letter, and I hadn't heard from him and I didn't know what was going on and finally, one day, telephone rang. And it was (H.T. Shores?). And he said, "Bill, can you be in my office tomorrow morning at nine, ten o'clock?" I said, "Well, I'll try to be there." Well, when I walked into his office and sat down, he said, "Now, you know ..." --uh, home agent, and I forget her name right now and (Gene Turner?) was his associate at the time. And I knew them both because I'd worked with them even when I was in the milk business. Helping promote young people and

dinner shows and this, that and the other. And they all knew me ... So, when we sat down there, he said, "Well, Bill, here's your start'n salary." And he pitched it over in front of me. And I said, "Well, I hadn't even made up my mind for sure I'm coming back." Oh I, he said, "I was hoping you would." [He] said, "we got an opening for you now." And that, it was in (Hardin?) County. Well, anyway to tell a little story about my first wife--uh, when Mr. Shores was up there to tell them that where I was, was leaving going to ... there'd be an opening. And she got up, and she was a home agent at the time, and says, "Well, Mr. Brooks whatever you do, send us a signal man up there. 'Cause the three of us old maids need to talk with someone." Which was no lie. So, when they sent me up there, each one of 'em she was wanting to do the most fun, stuff like that. Now, that's believe it or not. But anyway, the one I ended up marrying, she had an apartment out there with a lady. Every once in a while, she'd cook me up a big steak and have me out to eat with her and stuff like that. And one of the girls said, "Well my mother used to have roomers down at our house, and we'd like to come down and have a roomer down there to live." Well, one of the other girls said, well, her mother liked to have roomers too. (Laughter) So, they decided to get me fixed up anyway there. (Laughter) Well, anyway, I ended up marrying her. My first wife.

PIEHLER: And that was because of the job in the ...

BUTLER: Well--but you know what happened? Back then, they wouldn't let married girls do Extension Service, work in extension. They had to be single. At one time, it was the same way with home ec. ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

BUTLER: They changed the law later, you know. But anyway, when I married her, I lost my job. I mean, she lost her job. And the guy that was over the hiring of all agents, he also was on the school board up there. So he told her, he said, "You're not going to leave us. You gonna teach school in Hardin." And he had three sons up there. And you know, I knew all of them, too. You ever know of (Pete Godfrich?)?

PIEHLER: No, I don't.

BUTLER: Well, anyways, Pete was the Vice President for the Institute of Agriculture. He retired here a few years back. And he's still in Knoxville, somewhere.

PIEHLER: Well, one person I do know who was involved with the College of Agriculture and the Extension Service was James Pointer. Do you know ...

BUTLER: Oh, I know Pointer.

PIEHLER: Oh, ok.

BUTLER: Dr. Pointer.

PIEHLER: Yeah, we've interviewed him about his--yeah.

BUTLER: But anyway, uh, he--I had him as forest boy. In Benton County, where he grew up. There were three of those boys. Pete, and, there were three of 'em. All of 'em went ahead and got their Ph.D. degrees. And Pete ended up at the University of Tennessee and ... to start with, and moved on up. And the oldest one, he was a beast man in the ... out in Texas. And the youngest one, Billy, he is at Clemson University now and he's still working over there for only a period of time. But I knew all three of them when they's growing up in Benton county. They showed cattle. And that was my first experience working with kids was over there.

PIEHLER: What was it like to work with kids?

BUTLER: Well, I enjoyed it, back then.

PIEHLER: What year was this that you started working with, with the Extension Service?

BUTLER: When I come back?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BUTLER: It was after, well ...

PIEHLER: 'Cause you said you were forty-six.

BUTLER: I know it--forty-six? But when I married my first wife, we left and went to Pet Milk Company for twenty years. And then, I came back after I was terminated from the milk company. They started closing plants and stuff. And I came back in 1968. In March of '68, I came back to the Agricultural Extension Service.

PIEHLER: So the first stint was back when you, back in '47?

BUTLER: '47. 'Bout a year ...

PIEHLER: And that's when you met your first ...

BUTLER: Wife.

PIEHLER: Your first wife.

BUTLER: And then, of course, when I came back--working with the extension in '68, when I moved back to Savannah and got my house and stayed with them about nineteen, twenty years, until I retired in 1985.

PIEHLER: '85.

BUTLER: And then my first wife died the next year after I retired.

PIEHLER: ... Going back to the university, do you think you would have--it's hard to say the 'what if's', but, how crucial was your brother in, in your going to college?

BUTLER: Well, he always wanted me to go to college, too. So that he influenced me.

PIEHLER: So, you really had an expectation that you would ...

BUTLER: That's right. But at that time, I'd just as soon stayed home and farmed, I believe.

PIEHLER: Really? How did your parents feel about you going to college?

BUTLER: Well, they thought I'd be good for me to go on to college, too.

PIEHLER: I, I might add--oh, no, go ahead.

BUTLER: And ... one of my sisters, she never did go to college. And she married during World War II. And he was in the Air Force when they married. And then, uh, my younger brother, he worked a little ways part-time over at Martin, I think, until the Army got him. And then my baby sister, she went awhile, I believe, and her husband, he finally graduated from college ... And that was kind of our family deal.

PIEHLER: 'Cause I should note your older brother went to college and you went to college and none of your other family went to college. But ...

BUTLER: Not completely.

PIEHLER: Not completely, but they all finished high school.

BUTLER: Oh yeah, they all finished high school.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Which sounds like in your area, where you grew up in Martin was very exceptional.

BUTLER: Yeah, it was for all of a family like that, in that day. Yeah, it was.

PIEHLER: And neither of your parents had attended high school?

BUTLER: No, I think back then, my daddy went to the fifth and sixth grade, I guess. And my mother, probably about that far. But, back in those days, there just wasn't to many farm people and stuff that went into college.

PIEHLER: In your high school class, I mean, how many went to college? Do you

remember the number?

BUTLER: Um, I don't guess a whole third of us went on to college up in Knoxville.

PIEHLER: And do you ...

BUTLER: As far as I know.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah. And you mentioned you first started out at the junior--which is now UT, Martin. Was then the junior college.

BUTLER: Yeah. Uh huh.

PIEHLER: And you, you studied there one quarter.

BUTLER: One quarter. 'Course, I stayed home and drove back and forth. We had an old, oh, Chevrolet, if I remember the car that I drove back and forth. We lived three miles out of town.

PIEHLER: And how did you pay for tuition?

BUTLER: Back at first?

PIEHLER: Yeah, the first tuit--the first semester. The first quarter.

BUTLER: I might have got enough from my daddy and working or something to pay the first ... But the other, I told you about how I ...

PIEHLER: Yes, yes. When you transferred.

BUTLER: When I transferred. I had twenty dollars or something like that.

PIEHLER: Which wasn't a lot of money, even then.

BUTLER: No. I only had one boy that I knew of that had a car back then. And he had an old '28 Chevrolet, or something. Because his daddy was an extension agent in West Tennessee and I'd ride back with him sometimes when I'd go home. At the end of the semester.

PIEHLER: How did you get to college the first time? How did you get to Knoxville?

BUTLER: Oh, I rode up with my brother. 'Cause he'd gotten a car when we went to Americus, Georgia.

PIEHLER: So he took you to ...

BUTLER: That's right. He brought up here the first time.

PIEHLER: What did he tell you? What advice did he have about college do you remember?

BUTLER: Well, that I needed to go ahead and get an education, I believe, is what it was.

PIEHLER: Did he recommend certain professors and discourage other professors?

BUTLER: No, I don't think so back then. Except he graduated in agronomy and he and two more were the first three students to ever graduate in the school of agronomy. And then when I come along, I graduated in field crops.

PIEHLER: You mentioned this really--you were basically working and then class all the time.

BUTLER: Oh yeah, I was either working or in class.

PIEHLER: Did you have time for anything else?

BUTLER: No, every once in a while, I'd go to a movie. But I had to go to the booth out here on Cumberland [Ave.]. I couldn't go in town, 'cause that was forty cents. I could spend twenty and go to the booth out here.

PIEHLER: Where was the booth? I've never even heard of it.

BUTLER: Out here on the left, going out on Cumberland.

PIEHLER: ... On Cumberland?

BUTLER: Cumberland out there.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I've never heard of it. I've heard of the other theaters out there.

BUTLER: I could walk to it. 'Course the one downtown cost you forty cents. This one out here cost twenty cents.

PIEHLER: So the movies was one of the few. Were you in ROTC?

BUTLER: Yes, I was. Not at Martin. But I got up here, they put me in ROTC. And ... no, I had it in Martin, I guess. Up here they wanted me to keep up ROTC. With my schedule, finally--'course they generally mailed it, then, and they was gonna make me take ROTC. I had my schedule worked out, and they it turned out, I had farm classes and hill classes and all that. And I just went to 'em and told 'em. I said, "I can't take ROTC. I gotta work to stay in college." And finally I went down to talk to Neyland about it. Finally he says, "Well, I guess you'll take school instead of ROTC." And I didn't take

more ROTC. I just had to, I told 'em I had to work to stay in school. 'Course I did, back then.

PIEHLER: What was your most difficult subject when you were here?

BUTLER: I guess it was English. I wasn't too good at English.

PIEHLER: What subject did you like the most?

BUTLER: Oh, I don't know, back then. I wasn't too good at any of 'em 'cause I didn't have the time to study like I should. I know, uh, I just almost flunked out of chemistry. And they gave me, uh, I forget what it was called, back then. 'Till I passed my junior English exam. But you know, I passed the junior English exam. And made that alright. But when it came back, they had that deal on my chemistry deal, and it wouldn't check back. They said, "Well you passed your junior English exam, so we'll go ahead and give credit for that now." (Laughter) And the only honor roll I ever made was my last year up here in school. I did make honor roll.

PIEHLER: Your last semester.

BUTLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It was your best semester. (Laughter)

BUTLER: Yeah, that's right. I was taking some courses then that I kinda liked, you know. Graduate courses. Well anyway I had, one class, I know, was Dr. Bell. You ever heard of Dr. Bell?

PIEHLER: No.

BUTLER: He was Ag. College. He still living up here. His brother (J.I. Bell?) was a big politician in Savannah. His brother, J.I., his brother, younger brother, went to school up there in the college of ... and stuff. But anyway, on some of the courses, I made--one course, I made two or three A's. One year, a couple of A's and several B's or something, I don't know. And that's all the honor roll I ever made.

PIEHLER: Did--oh, no, go ... you mentioned you still have football season tickets, did--were you able, able to go to games at all when you were here? Football games, or whatever ...

BUTLER: Oh, back when I was in college?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BUTLER: Well, before the war, I think student tickets were five dollars. For the four or five games or however many they had, or something. So sometimes I'd sell my tickets

and get five dollars for that one game and sit up on the hill and watch it from the hill.
(Laughter) Before they had the enclosure.

JUNG: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And what about any--did you date at all while you were in college the first time?

BUTLER: Date at all?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BUTLER: Very little. I know one time, they had a ... or something. And this little girl from (Fletcher City?), I believe it was, I had dated a time or two, or something, and I got up nerve enough to ask her to go dance with me. And I remember then it cost about ... fifteen, twenty dollars to pay for that dance. But I managed to do it one night, to go to one of the dances. But very seldom could I take anybody out to eat or anything, because of the amount of money. I could take 'em to the movies. There was one girl here, and she's dead now, and she used to wonder, she said, "Bill, why didn't you ever date me? I always wanted to know what it is." (Laughter) But when I got back after the war, she'd already married somebody else, see.

PIEHLER: She, uh, when did she ask you this?

BUTLER: That was years ago, but I remember it pretty well, now.

PIEHLER: ... Did she ask you this at a reunion?

BUTLER: Well, what we did, we'd go to church together.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

BUTLER: Up at First Baptist on Highland [Ave.].

PIEHLER: That's when you were in school here?

BUTLER: School here, that's where I went. And that's where I was when the war broke out.

PIEHLER: You were in church services at First Baptist?

BUTLER: Well, I was called back. The service, I, uh ... And that where I was going, First Baptist here. And Rodgers, he was mayor. You remember Rodgers, used to be mayor here?

PIEHLER: No, that's way before ...

BUTLER: Oh.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BUTLER: Well, he turned out to be, he was substitute director or something, and he ended up as the Mayor of Knoxville. Dr. Rodgers.

PIEHLER: What else do you remember of the campus and going to being a student here before you were drafted? What else sticks out in your mind?

BUTLER: Well ...

PIEHLER: One, the campus ...

BUTLER: Standing over here on Common [St.] and thumb a ride out to the farm. You usually had to walk or run between here and the farm to class. I remember that well.

PIEHLER: So you, you either walked or--and you said only one person had a car.

BUTLER: Yeah, that I knew of.

PIEHLER: So you, and there was no bus.

BUTLER: No buses, no.

PIEHLER: So had to ...

BUTLER: We'd stand over on the corner and people in town here, knew where we was going, they'd stop and fill the car and carry us out there, and we'd get out of the car.

PIEHLER: Your agricul ...

BUTLER: Now back then, the morning classes started at seven forty-five out there. And here, it was eight o'clock. But in the afternoon, it was the same. So, sometimes you'd have to have an afternoon class out there or an afternoon class here and then get in the car in ten minutes. The only way you can get there and make it. Well, maybe you can run fast enough to get it. And I remember that well.

JUNG: So, were you late quite a bit because of this?

BUTLER: Very seldom.

JUNG: Okay.

BUTLER: People were good about picking us up, letting us ride.

PIEHLER: What did you, what did you know about the sort of, coming of war in the 1930's between--against Japan and Germany?

BUTLER: Well, 'course back then, we knew, you know, things were looking pretty serious. Because, uh, things had happened, you know, and this, that and the other. And then, the draft came along in 1940. And I turned twenty-one, oh, just a few days before the draft. Which meant they were taking the twenty-one to thirty-eight the first go around for the draft. And I got a very low number. So, uh, I had to uh, matter of fact, I was supposed to have gone in fall of '40. But since I was a junior in college, they said, "you can finish your junior year and then you'll get drafted." So as soon as I finished my junior year, they drafted me. But you know, not long after that, they said if you completed two years of college, you can go ahead and finish college before you got drafted. But I was on the way to the Philippine Islands before that took place.

PIEHLER: Were you disappointed that you couldn't finish ...

BUTLER: College? Well, in a way, but it seemed like those days, working like I'd been working, that in a way it was kinda a relief, you know, to not have to go or something, I don't know.

PIEHLER: Now your brother working for the CCC, when did he ...

BUTLER: Now he got drafted earlier than I did. And went in the service.

PIEHLER: Went in service. Where did he serve?

BUTLER: In the, uh, I don't know, but anyway, he got drafted and he was stationed down in Georgia, I guess it was. And he went to OCS School and made captian and was killed in, uh, maneuvers or something here the states.

PIEHLER: So, he was killed in the war.

BUTLER: Yeah, and I didn't even know it until I got back after the war was over. But he was over around Middle Tennessee having maneuvers or something over there.

PIEHLER: And he was killed in ...

BUTLER: Well, what it was, he'd been home, his wife--he was married--and his wife had a little baby. Eleven days old when he got killed. He'd been home to see his baby and his wife, mother had 'em at her house, out down there in Martin. And he was going back and he met a boy up there somewhere. And they were in a jeep or something and somebody sideswiped 'em or knocked 'em off the road or something. And my mother said they called her and she went up there and he was in the hospital, and didn't think he was hurt all that bad. Somehow or another during the night he bled to death and they couldn't stop it or something. You know I'm gonna have to go to the bathroom.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, no, no. Just a very short break.

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: Did you have a thought that you'd want to finish before I go on to the next question?

BUTLER: No, go 'head. No, I'm alright.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, did you follow the debates at all, before you were drafted, about intervention in the war?

BUTLER: Not too much uh uh. Not too much.

PIEHLER: How did you feel about the draft?

BUTLER: I said I might as well go ahead, because it looked like we were gonna have war anyway. And that's kinda what happened to me later on. When I was drafted, I was sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. That's where all the draftees went, back then. And at that time, most of them were being sent to the infantry or the medics. And I didn't want any part of that. So, there was a recruiting sergeant there in camp and said he had an opening for about ten or twelve boys to bring a company of ordinance up to strength in Savannah, Georgia. But the only way we could go there is to take a short discharge and reenlist in three years. That was ten or eleven of us that did that. And went to Savannah Air Base. And that was the wrong thing to do at that time, I guess.

PIEHLER: Were you aware at the time that you were talked into doing this that draftees, at that time, couldn't be sent outside of the country? Were you aware of that?

BUTLER: That wasn't a possibility because I didn't know where they could be sent out-- yes, they were sent out of the country then ... because we had guys in our outfit that were draftees that were sent with me.

PIEHLER: Okay, because I thought that 1940 draftees couldn't be sent outside the United States.

BUTLER: Well now, at that time though, the Philippine Islands belonged to the United States.

PIEHLER: Okay.

BUTLER: (And they sent you to?) the Philippine Islands, that was the problem. I guess.

PIEHLER: ... Yeah, so the draft, that wouldn't have made any difference.

BUTLER: 'Cause a lot of the boys in my outfit were drafted. But I volunteered and took that discharge, I mean, uh ... deal and went to Savannah Air Base. Because they ... sent me to ordinance of the 27th Bomb Group. And they'd been on maneuvers in, down in Louisiana or someplace. Performed real well, they said. So, they'd already ordered McArthur to rebuild the Philippine Islands. Gettin' ready for war in case war did come. And he was trying to get more airports there and trying to get more tanks and different things, you know. Because he'd already retired and was living in luxury in the Philippine Islands. Had a sweet in the big (nice?) hotel there, the Philippines. And anyway, when we went to Savannah, Georgia, they did all these maneuvers and did well. And they got orders, we'd been there four months, I guess. And all the training I got was at the air base. They never did send me to one of the ammunition deals ... maybe a bomb with ammunition. I didn't go to school like that.

PIEHLER: I just want to back up a little. You reported to Fort Oglethorpe, what do you about that experience? Was it ...

BUTLER: Oh, I'll tell you. The first day down there, they give me a mess kit and stuff and went through the chow line and they'd throw corn and every little thing ... the whole thing together, you know, and give you a spoon and a cup. And I said, "Is this what the army life is gonna be like?" (Laughs) And we'd go out there and sit down eating. (Laughter) ...And when they had you try the shoe size on, they'd give you a bucket in each hand and measured by shoe and said, "Seven and a half D." And do you know I still wear that same shoe? Seven and a half D. (Laughter) I remember that well.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned you didn't want infantry or ...

BUTLER: I just didn't think I wanted any part of that.

PIEHLER: ... Or medical. Did you ... start basic training?

BUTLER: Do what?

PIEHLER: Did you start basic training?

BUTLER: The only training ... well, I already had a little (scorecard?) drill in ROTC.

PIEHLER: Yeah. But when you enlisted in the Air Force, how quickly from reporting to Fort Oglethorpe were you talked into signing up for three years?

BUTLER: Well, that was just--we'd only been there about a week or less.

PIEHLER: So you hadn't even been placed anywhere?

BUTLER: No, they was gonna ship us somewhere else, probably.

PIEHLER: So, when you were sent to Savannah, Georgia to join this unit, your unit. You

never had basic training?

BUTLER: No, uh uh. They give us a little close order drill for about a week or ten days down there.

PIEHLER: Down where?

BUTLER: In Savannah Air Base. And then put us on sod detail. That was a new base, and it was sandy and everything. So we had to go out and get sod and put it all around the building and everything else. And that's what I was on afterwards ... sod detail.
(Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you never had, for example ...

BUTLER: Any real training.

PIEHLER: You know, like rifle range, and field marches, and ...

BUTLER: Well, at one time, they took us out to the rifle range, I guess it was. 'Course, I'd known how to shoot rifles ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, you--you never had the experience of going through a gas chamber?

BUTLER: No.

PIEHLER: No ... or obstacle courses or ...

BUTLER: ... And we had to pull guard duty, there. Go out on the range and guard duty. While I was in Fort Oglethorpe, I mean, yeah, in Georgia. Savannah Air Base. We had an ammunition dump and we had to guard them right there.

PIEHLER: So you were basically without any training, so to speak?

BUTLER: Yeah, you might say that ...

PIEHLER: Thrown into this--you went to no special school.

BUTLER: No, uh uh.

PIEHLER: Even though you were in ordinance.

BUTLER: That's right.

PIEHLER: And ... it sounds like, as you described it, you learned it on the job.

BUTLER: We did, uh huh.

PIEHLER: What were some of the things you learned when you were in Savannah?

BUTLER: Well, not a whole lot right there when I was in Savannah, at the time. Except, uh, as I say, about all we did ... was sod the place down. (Laughs) We did go down and build a bombing range one time, I remember that. Took a bunch of us down there for a day or two and built a ... bombing range for these bombers to drop bombs in, you know and stuff like that. To have something to shoot at or something. Things like 'at is all we'd ever do ...

PIEHLER: So you really didn't do any work with ordinance, so to speak?

BUTLER: No, not really.

PIEHLER: ... In terms of arming bombs and ...

BUTLER: Oh no.

PIEHLER: No, no ... How did you like still being in the, then, still Army Air Corps.?

BUTLER: Well, that part of Savannah Air Base wasn't too bad. I liked it down there pretty good. 'Course they had another thing, said if we wanted too, we could go to school. And they offered me pay for it. If you wanted to take classes at night, you know. And they carried us up there and I signed up for two or three things and started taking some classes at night. I thought, "Well, I guess I'll go ahead and better my education, and do that." And I started that. And two, they had ... church services you'd go to church service on base. But, I had a friend that ... found that out and he said, well, he'd been going to (Bull's Creek?) Baptist Church. So, we started going up there on Sundays to church. And met girls and such ... And I started doing that on Sundays. And kinda enjoyed it.

PIEHLER: ... What was your daily, you mentioned literally building the base and sort of landscaping. What was your typical day like at Savannah?

BUTLER: Well, of course you had reveille every morning at a certain time, and you'd go out and lead sergeant would lead some many to go to KP [kitchen patrol] that day or some many to do so and so. And they always told me to never volunteer for anything. 'Cause you might end up peeling potatoes or something like that. So, I started going to KP, got to get to KP or something like that. (Laughs) ... So, I didn't hold up my much for stuff like that. (Laughter) I learned that the hard way.

PIEHLER: Why do you say you learned that the hard way? When did you volunteer for something?

BUTLER: Well, I don't really know right now, but ... I found out, just don't volunteer. (Laughter) So, that was part of it.

PIEHLER: ... Did you work Saturdays? Was Saturday a--when you were in Savannah?

BUTLER: In the air base, on Saturdays?

PIEHLER: Yeah. Was that part of a ...

BUTLER: If you's on duty like KP or, we had uh, guard duty or something, yeah.

PIEHLER: But not necessarily every Saturday?

BUTLER: No. Uh uh.

PIEHLER: How easy was it to get a pass to get off base?

BUTLER: Oh, it wasn't bad at all. They'd give you a pass.

PIEHLER: 'Cause you mentioned going to church and ...

BUTLER: Yeah, you can get passes off base most any time. And then on Saturday weekends, they had dances. The girls come out, you know, on the base and have Saturday night dances and stuff, it was pretty nice.

PIEHLER: Did you go ... to those dances?

BUTLER: ... Sometimes I did.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, the people who were talked into joining this special--talked into, you know, getting a short discharge and then signing up for three years. Who were they? You know, the people you served with ...

BUTLER: Well, there was ten of us that did it. And we went over there, and ... low and behold, of the ten that went over, only three of us came back and we're all three still living as far as I know. The rest of them died in prison camps, or got sunk on (hell ships?) or never did make it back. There're three of us that made it back, and one of the boys now is in a nursing home in ... Maryville. And another one is up in Franklin, Tennessee and I haven't seen or heard from him in quite a while. I told my daughter coming up, I says, "When I come back, I may try to locate him if he's still living." Which I, as far as I know, he's still living. And that's the three of us. And that's about the rate, the ratio of those who were captured over there--that never came back. ... Went through the death march, went through the ... war, survived those (hell ships?) and stuff like I did.

PIEHLER: So ... the ten were mainly from ... Tennessee?

BUTLER: Yeah, we were all, most from Tennessee. There's one boy here from Knoxville, I remember him. And then there was one from (Pulaski?), Tennessee ...

because after the war, they (typically?) would want to call me if I knew their son or something, you know. So, they had a son, the one in Pulaski, that was killed over there. And so, they invited me to come and visit. I used to do that a lot. And there was (Beaumont Jones?) from Jackson, I knew him.

PIEHLER: Do you remember the person you served with from Pulaski, his name?

BUTLER: His name was Davenport.

PIEHLER: Davenport was his ...

BUTLER: His name.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you don't remember his first name?

BUTLER: ... uh ...

PIEHLER: And you used to visit his family in Pulaski?

BUTLER: Oh yeah, and his girlfriend. They have her come out, you know, and I'd spend the night with 'em. And they'd allow her to come out there too. She was real nice. She worked at a jewelry store in Pulaski. And I can't remember her name. You knew people from Pulaski?

PIEHLER: ... Actually, when I first moved here ... one of the movers was from Pulaski.

BUTLER: Oh, is that right? (Laughs)

PIEHLER: ... I think it was Pulaski, now. But I have heard of Pulaski, Tennessee. What ... could you talk a little bit about, um, your, your--you were in the really, the old Air Force. I mean this was uh ...

BUTLER: That's right.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit about your ... Non-Coms and then the officers you encountered from your perspective as a ...

BUTLER: I'll tell you. Over there, the beginning of the war, we had a few B-17 planes, not many. I think thirty-five. That we had in the Philippine islands. And the first day of the war ... they knew that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And for some reason, they said they got orders for them B-17s to get in the air. And for some other reason, some one gave orders to come and land them. And they did, there on (Nichols?) Field. Not Nichols, but Park Field. With wingtip to wingtip. In the morning after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, our captain called us together. We were still in Nichols Field, just in tent city. Hadn't even been assigned to no place. And ... my ...(?)... with ordinance was to--my platoon, he gave us orders to go to Clark Field. Well we got in the bomb truck and five of

us or four on that bomb truck, I think it was four of us, and headed up there along with a few more other crews. And when we got there, we noticed smoke and stuff coming. And we noticed the P-40s too, just kinda hedge hopping. And the Japanese already come in at noon or just before noon and bombed Clark Field. And gotten nearly everyone of them B-17s on the ground that day. And when we got there, I pulled out onto the runway like, you know, the sirens went off again. Somebody said, "Here they come again." Like, the Japanese planes are coming back. Well, there was no place to hide or go. There was no scope of woods out there. I said, "Gosh, man, we gotta find the woods so we can hide or do something." At least, it won't be right out in the open. When I got out there, I never saw ... the bombs and ammunition was stacked everywhere. And then I said, "Oh my goodness, if they hit this place, they'll blow us to kingdom come." But, they didn't drop any bombs right then. That night, they put us over in the banana grove behind the magazine area. But, they did have a lot of bombs and stuff stored in there. So, that night, sometime, they give orders to give us rifles. In case the Japanese were to parachute in or something and try to take the field. And next morning, when it got daylight, and we could see what was going on, those with rifles and stuff were filled with ... if we had loaded 'em and shot 'em, it would have blown us to kingdom come. But that's what actually happened. Talk about being ready and prepared for war, we just wasn't ready.

PIEHLER: ... Just to up a little bit. When did you leave Savannah?

BUTLER: On October the Fifth, I think it was.

PIEHLER: 1941.

BUTLER: 1941. We went 'cross country and it was a week. We went from there, we went to New Orleans. From New Orleans we went on up to Cheyenne, Wyoming. From Wyoming we went back down to 'Frisco. ... And we was a week on that troop train getting over there to San Francisco. And then we went to Angel Island, that's where they-usually, if you were going to the Pacific, they'd keep you there for a few days and give you new shots and all that stuff. And ... I know we had to pull KP on day, the whole company. On Angel Island ... but talking about food now, that was some of the best food I have ever had. They'd bring it out there in bowls and set it on the table.

PIEHLER: ... Was on Angel Island?

BUTLER: On Angel Island. Pretty good too. Fatten you up for the kill, I reckon. (Laughter) We had a guy in our outfit, just above us. And he was supposed to have been one of our cooks. And I know, he was just a head of me or something where they would examine us or give us shots or something before we left. And he reached up on this officers desk and grabbed something, I don't know, paperclips and a bunch of stuff and put it in his mouth and swallowed it. And he said, "Oh, I gotta have my metal every once in a while." And you know, before the war he would swallow and eat stuff, you know. And there on the base, before we left, he did stuff like that and they'd make pictures of it and that stuff was down in his stomach, it's true.

PIEHLER: So, so he went over. I mean, he wasn't doing this to get out?

BUTLER: No, he just said that, you know. Because he was used to entertaining people by swallowing stuff like that.

PIEHLER: He literally used to do this?

BUTLER: Eat giant bugs and stuff, yeah. Yeah, he did it on the ship, going over. Bugs like that. And we was the last ones to ever go over on the President Coolidge. The next trip over, they did sink it down near the coast there somewhere. But, I think most of 'em all nearly survived that sinking of the Coolidge. That was a beautiful, wonderful old ship.

PIEHLER: Yeah, could you talk a little bit about being on the Coolidge?

BUTLER: The Coolidge that's right, we were on the Coolidge.

PIEHLER: What was that voyage like?

BUTLER: Huh?

PIEHLER: The voyage on the Coolidge, when you said ...

BUTLER: Oh, it was real nice. I know one time, I was laughing at all them boys getting sea sick, you know. 'Cause it hadn't bothered me at all. And once I was down in the galley, and I just--I had to run. (Laughter) Just before we got to Hawaii, I'd get a little sea sick.

PIEHLER: How long were you in Hawaii?

BUTLER: We were supposed to have been there from about ten o'clock in the morning to four that afternoon. Well, at two in the afternoon, the MPs the SPs come around trying to round up everybody that supposed to be on that ship. And we was gonna leave there at two o'clock. And there was two or three of the boys in my company, didn't make it. They didn't get back to the ship in time. Wasn't their fault, 'cause they told us we had 'till four o'clock. But anyway, we missed two or three of 'em. ... And from there on, we were in blackout at night, you know. 'Cause we were going to the Philippines.

PIEHLER: So you were in blackout after leaving Hawaii?

BUTLER: Uh huh. All the time. Because they figured if the Japanese was gonna do something, they'd do it pretty soon.

PIEHLER: Oops. Let me get this.

(Tape paused)

PIEHLER: ... You were saying about ... the ship ...

BUTLER: Oh, the cruise?

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah. You got seasick.

BUTLER: I got seasick.

PIEHLER: One, before I forget, what happened--these guys who didn't make it back to the ship, what happened to them in your company?

BUTLER: I never knew.

PIEHLER: You never knew. They didn't get 'em on to the ship?

BUTLER: No, not on that ship. And whether they caught another ship and got to the Philippines, I never knew about that. But ... from there on ... a lot of us would get out there on the deck and play cards or something like that. And one time, we were down in the mess hall and believe it or not--and the portholes were pretty close to the water line. And I remember one time--you know you see those flying fish come up?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

BUTLER: And that fish came through that porthole and landed on the table in there. (Laughter) I bet it weighed eighteen pounds. I saw that happen. (Laughter) Came in through a porthole.

JUNG: That's amazing.

PIEHLER: ... It sounds like you have found memories of your voyage over.

BUTLER: Well, everything that happened to me back then, and during the war, it was just like it was yesterday. Now names and people around here that I knew and should'a known in the last five years, I don't even know 'em. I forget 'em. My young brain, back in those days, was just as sharp as it ever has been.

PIEHLER: Well, 'cause most people talk about their voyage overseas being really cramped ... where did you sleep and how closely ...

BUTLER: I was in the (Marine tea garden?). They put in four or five, six high bunks, and you'd slide in, you know, and there's be somebody above you and below you. Or you might be on the bottom and you might be on the top. And that's what it was going over. They just partially converted it to a hospital. It was a troop carrier ship. But the second trip over was when the Japanese hit it. So that was the end of the Coolidge.

PIEHLER: Right, so you were stacked up ...

BUTLER: Yeah, stacked up.

PIEHLER: ... How were the heads, were they kept clean? The bathrooms.

BUTLER: Well, yeah, clean enough, I guess.

PIEHLER: What did you do ... was there much gambling on the way over?

BUTLER: Yes, not as much as there was on the way back. (Laughter) One guy, I think, got everybody's money coming back. 'Cause we got paid, you know, a time or two, those little payments before we got back. And that's where all the gambling took place. But during the time around everybody on weekends, after payday, they had a place in there and the boys would go in there and start gambling and playing and a lot of 'em would lose thier money. And they'd go borrow money, and pay 'em back on payday. Loan 'em five, they'd pay seven and a half on payday. The boys did real well loaning money like that. That's pretty high interest for a month. Loan 'em five and get seven and a half back. But that was the going rate.

PIEHLER: What else do you remember of the voyage over? ... You had not--you had been to Chicago and you'd been to Savannah, so you saw the ocean ... but you had never left the United States.

BUTLER: Well, I don't ... I didn't mind the voyage over so bad. But when I got over there in eight to ten days I think was when the cruise ship landed ... well eighteen days before the war started.

PIEHLER: Eighteen days. So you ended in November of '41.

BUTLER: Of '41, that's right.

PIEHLER: What did they tell you about the chances of war? 'Cause you were in blackout conditions for awhile.

BUTLER: Well, just about. But then ... we felt like, and we found out that Macarthur was trying to build up troops in the Philippines. And he'd already gotten about two tank divisions. And he'd gotten ... one outfit out of Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was all National Guard, about 2,000. And they'd landed over there. And he was sure trying to build up, and they figured the war wouldn't come before the spring of '42. But the Japanese thought differently. And when the Japanese thought it was time to strike--which was December the 7th. When they hit Pearl Harbor. And we'd been at Pearl Harbor and landed and stayed there for a while before they sent us out. And when our captain told us they'd blown Pearl Harbor, we said, "where's Pearl Harbor?" And we didn't even know it, then.

PIEHLER: You didn't connect the two?

BUTLER: We didn't know where Pearl Harbor was. We asked 'em. Oh, its in the Philippine Islands, I mean, Hawaii.

PIEHLER: But you had, even though you'd been ...

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with William Butler on April 19th, 2005. And you didn't even connect, just as the tape cut out, Hawaii, even though you'd been to Pearl Harbor. ... You had to ask where Pearl Harbor was. What was the scuttle about? What did you hear about Hawaii--the Philippines before you left for the Philippines and on route?

BUTLER: Well, the only orders we had was, as far as mailing address, it would be Plum, San Francisco. And we didn't even know where Plum was until we landed in the Philippine Islands.

PIEHLER: So you didn't know--when did you know you were going to the Philippines?

BUTLER: Uh uh.

PIEHLER: You didn't know you were going to the Philippines ...

BUTLER: They said our address would be San Francisco, Plum or Plum, San Francisco. And that was it.

PIEHLER: That was it.

BUTLER: All we knew.

PIEHLER: So when did you have a sense where you were heading?

BUTLER: Oh, I don't know except some of the crew, I guess, on the boat, or something, said we was going to the Philippine Islands.

PIEHLER: So, had anyone in your unit been to the Philippines before? Any of the officers or NCOs?

BUTLER: Um, not that I know of. No. But, we soon found out what was going on. And we found out we weren't prepared for war over there.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, I've just got to break ...

(Tape Paused)

CYNTHIA TINKER: Ok, this is Cynthia Tinker and I'm gonna finish up the interview

for Dr. Piehler. Now, I believe you were talking about the Philippines before the war.

BUTLER: Yeah. We'd just gotten over there, eighteen days before the war started.

TINKER: Okay.

BUTLER: And ... he was asking if I knew anything about the Philippines. There was a boy that I knew in college, up here on the hill, before the war. And he said, "if you go to the Philippines", he said, "look this girl up." She was a pen pal he'd been writing to for a long time. So ... we got over there eighteen days before the war started. So on a Saturday morning before the war broke out over there on Sunday or Monday, this boy and I were up town one day and I happened to think about this letter or note this guy had given me to look up his girlfriend over there ...(?)... pen pal. So we found out where she lived. And it was up, not too far from where we were there in the Philippine Islands. And I told George, I said--his name was (George Ellen?), I said, "George, let's see if we can find this girl." And we looked the map up, it wasn't too far from where we were. So we just walked out there down one of the streets down where we were. About two o'clock in the afternoon, or three, we went up to this door. And had the right address and all. And this girl came to the door and I said, "Is (Grace Mendoza?) at home, is this where she lives?" She said, "This is where she lives, but she's not at home." Well, I showed her this ... handwriting that the boy had given me and she looked at that and said, "Well, that's his handwriting all right." And she invited us in. So we went in and a few minutes, she ... came back in and she brought a can, a couple cans of beer out. And, I wasn't used to drinking much beer then, but to be social, I looked at George and he looked at me and we began sipping that beer a little bit, she says, "Well, I thought all soldiers liked beer." (Laughter) So, anyway, it wasn't long 'till her sister, Grace, came in. And we got to talking. And they enjoyed us, the company and all. And, 'course they could speak good English over there, but their mother and daddy were Spanish. And they couldn't hardly speak a word of English. So, it wasn't until later in the afternoon, and they got in, and they introduced us to them. And we sat around there a talked and talked ... about that time we was going home, it was about dinner time. They said, "Aww, you gonna stay and eat with us." So, we did. (Laughter) And when they came out, those ladies said, well, one of the girls said, "We got Philippino food and we got Spanish food and we got American food." And, too, on the table sat three or four big bottles of wine.

TINKER: Mm hmm. What was the American food they had?

BUTLER: Big half of ham, or something like that, I think it was.

TINKER: At this point, how long had you been in the Philippines?

BUTLER: ... 'Bout a week ...

TINKER: Oh, ok.

BUTLER: It was just before the war started, the United States was about to (make

enemies?). But anyways, we did stay and eat with them. But the reason they said they drank wine over there, the water wasn't too safe to drink ... and all the meals, you know, the people that could afford it, drank wine. So, they ... asked us, said, "Now next time you"--said, "we'd like you to come back sometime. But the next time you come back, wear civilian clothes. 'Cause people don't think to much of girls who goes out with soldiers over here." (Laughter) 'Course, I knew why. But anyway--and said, "Next time you come, we'll take you to one of our islands." They owned ... one of the islands. A lot of people in the Philippines own their own island. They had a banana and (cocoa?) plantation on one of the islands that they owned. They had their own cruise line of boats, or something, to cruise back and forth. And they wanted to know what we thought about the war situation. I said, "Well, it don't look too good." And they said, "Well, if war comes, we gonna go to our island." So that's the last I ever heard of them. But when they Japanese pulled out of Manila, they set fire and burned all that area where they lived.

TINKER: ... Burnt their plantation.

BUTLER: Every--burnt their home and everything out there. All of it. On (Dewey Boulevard?) that was the main street that went out of ...

TINKER: So after you had dinner with them, it was just a day or two later.

BUTLER: Yeah, the war broke out--that was on a Saturday night and the war broke out over there, I believe it was on a Sunday morning. When the officer in charge of us called us together and said, "Well, we're at war." And he sent ... my group of the ordinance, I was in the (454th?) Ordinance, he sent my platoon to Clark Field. And that day, when we pulled in on Clark Field, it was about twelve o'clock over there. Before we got there, we saw everything on fire. And so ...

TINKER: So you never saw 'em actually flying over?

BUTLER: No, no planes flying over.

TINKER: So you didn't ...

BUTLER: But, they'd already bombed part of Clark Field ... and got all our B-17s back on the ground. And then, 'course, the next day ... we were loading some planes out and this guy (Colon Kelly?), who was the first ... hero of World War II, he was flying a B-17. And ... we had a few B-17s that would fly and we were trying to service them and put some bombs on the planes. Because the Japanese were landing at the (Lingayen Gulf?) then. And invading the Philippines. So, we got three bombs on his plane, I guess it was, and he had to take off and the crew, I think he had a crew of seven or eight on the plane, with him on the B-17. And he flew out over the (Lingayen Gulf?) and dropped his bombs, so they said, and flew back over land but, you know, in what was happening, his plane got hit. And he ordered all his crew to bail out, which they did. And the next thing they knew he disappeared. And they don't know whether he flew back and ... dived his plane right into the ship or whether he bailed out and never did live or something. But he

was the first World War ... II hero. Every once in a while, I'll see an article that comes out in a magazine, or something, about (Colon Kelly?). Which--he had a son that was ... about a year old at the time of his death and Roosevelt at that time gave him an automatic appointment to West Point when he got out of school. And he--I kinda followed him up for a while and he went to West Point. And from that day on, it wasn't long until we had to evacuate into Bataan. The peninsula, you know, of the Philippine Islands. And we held out for about four months.

TINKER: And was there just a general order issued to ...

BUTLER: Well, what it was ... when they landed in the (Lingayen Gulf?), the Japanese were coming down, you see. And Clark Field wasn't too far from (Lingayen Gulf?). So, we were there on Christmas Day and we were loading planes, I mean, loading bombs and stuff on trains to ship into Bataan. So, we were working that day and one of the boys on my bomb crew, he was ... a Jewish boy and he was pretty well known ... he was from a rich family, I believe it was. In (New Orleans?) and going to Alabama to study and stuff like that. He told us that well, they had open up the PX. And he said, "You boys load them bombs on them trains and I'm going to the PX." He come back with seventeen cases of cigarettes on his truck. (Laughs) I guess that's what started me smoking. (Laughter) But anyway--and he had (fifteen?) rolls of film and a moving camera. And one of the boys picked up a roll of the film and threw it just as far as he could send it and he said, "Well, now you got forty-nine rolls left." You know, during the rest of that fighting on Bataan, he was just making pictures.

TINKER: Did he?

BUTLER: Yeah, I know when we was pulling back into Bataan ... there was planes there one day, looked like they was trying to strafe the road and we hit the ditches and all. And he had the camera and he could have made that picture that I see every once in a while now on some of the programs, you know, and stuff. While the Japanese was strafing the road. And I remember that scene real well.

TINKER: And that's why he went and got the camera? He had the presence of mind to think ...

BUTLER: I reckon it was, I don't know why he did it.

TINKER: (Laughs) I mean that's ...

BUTLER: But, anyway, when Bataan fell, they said they buried the film in rice or something for ... And after the war's over he went back and dug that film up, so I understand, I don't know ... I used to messages from him every year ... and about every year there, for a few years, he'd have another addition to the family. (That's quite a bit of kids?) And one day, I was going to the Philippine Islands and I stopped in Hawaii to see the Arizona. You may have to Hawaii to see the Arizona?

TINKER: I've only seen it on TV.

BUTLER: Well, I've been there twice and saw the Arizona. And because my first wife's got a first cousin that's entombed in the Arizona, he's got his name on the screen with all them names on it. But anyway, there was a guy that saw my badge I had on, something about the Philippine Islands and being a prisoner of war. And he said, "You happen to know a guy by the name of Gold--of Lou Goldstein, would you?" And I said, "Heck ya!" I said, "He was on my bomb crew." (Laughter) And ... got to talking about him and I said, "Yeah, but he got killed." He got killed in an airplane crash years ago and I quit corresponding with him. But for, I don't know, eight or ten years, I'd get a Christmas card from 'em every year.

TINKER: So how long did it take y'all to evacuate to Bataan?

BUTLER: Well, we started Christmas Day and in about three or four days we were evacuated into Bataan. And set up, and of course, first thing that was happening, we were short of food. And we started on half rations. And it wasn't long, they cut it down to fourth rations. And we were just getting very little to eat. We'd already killed all the horses and mules of the cavalry and ate them. And any thing else that just about moved or crawled on Bataan, we'd eaten that.

TINKER: And that was over a period of how many days?

BUTLER: Well, it was a period of--from the ...

TINKER: That y'all were having to kill everything.

BUTLER: From the 7th, I mean, about the, let's see--Christmas Day of '41 to the 9th of April of '42. Which is sixty-three years ago ... this past 9th of April. That we surrendered Bataan.

TINKER: When y'all evacuated, you just had little or nothing with you, food ...

BUTLER: We didn't have much left. Matter of fact, they had a lot of ammunition and magazines on Bataan and a lot of that old ammunition and stuff had been there so long ... and those magazines and all, it wouldn't fire right and stuff like that.

TINKER: So y'all were eating the horses and the mules ...

BUTLER: We ran out of food ...

TINKER: Was there any of the native animals there that you could catch and ...

BUTLER: The (caribou?), we ate all of them.

TINKER: We did?

BUTLER: Some old (caribou?), they'd work 'em and they'd milk 'em and everything. And we ate all of them on that peninsula. Because so many civilians on that peninsula.

TINKER: Right.

BUTLER: Along with the soldiers. There were 60,000 Philippino Army personnel and ... about 10,000 American personnel. And 'course, after 'bout four months there was nothing left. And then on 8th of April, General King knew it was all over. And he went in a, I think a sidecar, or something, to meet the Japanese and surrendered Bataan and that's when this Death March started. And I was on that Death March from the beginning 'till the end because I was at Marlveles about as far back in there that you could be on the Death March. Because all the roads went around this Marlveles, you might say, mountain. Around Marlveles. And ...'course--and that's where most of the ...(?)... ones that were retreating into something, you know, before the surrender, was back down in the Marlveles area. But when that Death March started on the 9th of April, the ... first day or two when didn't have no food at all and very little water. And ... the first American-speaking Japanese--that was about two days after the war started, I mean, the Death March started--he was standing up on the road there and we was down in some rice paddies. And it was about 110 degrees, and the boys were passing out, they didn't have water and stuff like that. [He was] standing up there and saying, "Well, if you'd act like soldiers we'd feed 'ya and we'd water 'ya." And he said, "Is anybody here from California?" Some of them held their hands up. [He] says, said, "Well, don't you wish you was back there now?" Says, "I'm from California." Said, "I graduated from UCLA." He was really rubbing it in. So ... he was the first American-speaking Japanese. And you know, so many more of them Japanese were the same way. They came over here to the United States and ...

TINKER: Went to college.

BUTLER: Went to college. And we schooled 'em and then sent 'em back over to fight us. And 'course, before the war, you know, we were selling them our scrap iron and everything else for a while. And that's one thing that kinda led them to going ahead and ... hitting us ... because we had quit sending them our stuff that they's wanted.

TINKER: Right, so on the march did they give ... did you have anything at all?

BUTLER: Well, so the eighteen, no, about thirteen days and nights, what I had to eat wouldn't have amounted to over two meals of rice or something ... but you, I'll tell you what, you can go a long time without eating, but you gotta have water. I know, I took a lot of chances on getting water. Had artesian wells along the road. But they wouldn't stop, you know, and let you get a drink of water like that. And once we got to stop it'd be in the sun or be in a pen somewhere, you know, and barbed wire around you, and all that stuff like that. And once, they did feed us some rice in a pen like that. But, sometimes, they'd keep you a day or two in a pen or someplace, you know, before they'd move you on further. I know the last day of the march, or about the last day, I believe it was, I said, "If

I don't get some food or something here to eat, or something, I'm not gonna make it."
Because it was just hard to move one foot in front of the other ...

TINKER: Did you have a buddy or someone that you pal'd up with?

BUTLER: Well, yeah, I did have one buddy there one time. And we was in one of them pens like, you know. He comes to me and says, "Butler, I got something off a Japanese." Found it. It was a little package of what they call hard packs, or something. And he gave me a few of them. And if we'd a got caught with them, then it'd probably have been ... for us. They'd have shot us, I'm satisfied, on the spot. But anyway, it didn't happen and then on that--farther on up the line, we came to a sugarcane field. And I said, "Boy, if I could get some of that sugarcane it'd sure help me a lot." But all the cane up close to the road had been ...

TINKER: Cut.

BUTLER: Cut and eaten by some of the prisoners, I guess. And some--there was dead Philipinos and Americans laying out there, too. I guess from breaking the line going out there. And I says, "Well, if I don't get something, I'm gonna die anyways." So I made a b-line out there and got a big stalk of 'cane. And got back in the line without getting hit. And started chewing on that 'cane. And boy, I'm telling you, every time I'd take a swallow of that, I could feel my feet getting lighter.

TINKER: Yeah, I bet.

BUTLER: And that saved my life, then. Well, we got to San Fernando in there and finally was able to lay down and sleep one night. It was a nasty, filthy place and they fed us a little rice, or something, and we got some water, I guess it was. Next morning, they put us in boxcars, like to smother us to death. To send us the rest of the trip on into (O'Donnell?). The first big camp we went to. So ... after almost smothering some of us to death, we had to walk another distance to (Camp O'Donnell?). And in this camp, they had right at 10,000 Americans and 30,000 Philipinos. And they started dying like flies. We'd bury somewhere from fifty to seventy-five Americans a day. 500 Philipinos a day, now believe it or not. In this one camp, we lost between 3 and 4,000 Americans, and I think that about 20,000 Philipinos died. Well, after a certain length of time, they let all those Philipinos go, 'cause they'd just all about died anyway. And then ... the Americans, they began moving 'em into work detail ...(?)... And they moved me back to Bataan. While I was in that one, (O'Donnell?), I came down with malaria. I said, "If I don't get something for this malaria, I'm gonna die." Well, one time, I don't know whether I volunteered or was drafted to go out and cut wood to build a fire to cook the rice. And there in the little old town of (Capais?) there was a Philipino woman, she was trying to watch the guard in the truck and all, make sure he wasn't watching. She said, "I know you need medicine out there." And she reached in her purse and got a bottle of quinine out and threw it on the truck. And we divided that. Well, that saved my life there.

TINKER: Just out of the blue like that?

BUTLER: Yeah, and then, believe it or not, when i went back to Bataan, well, I guess I'd had a bowl movement since I don't know when 'cause I wasn't eating. And when I did, I ended up with diarrhea dysentery. And no medicine. Well, somebody said, well, eat some charcoal. I was helping cook the rice pot. And there's a thing of charcoal around there. I started chewing that charcoal thinking, well, maybe that'd help me. And low and behold, another thing happened. It's unbelievable. I was kicking around out there in the area around the nice water ... I mean ... creek. In the leaves and stuff and I hit a spot, hit something. It was a bottle. I picked it up and when I looked at it about half full of some kind of liquid something. And on the outside of it, it had a adhesive certificate that said diarrhea and dysentery medicine.

TINKER: Are you kidding?

BUTLER: I'm not kidding.

JUNG: That's unbelievable.

TINKER: Now you had to think God was keeping a special eye on you. (Laughter)

BUTLER: (Laughs) ... I unscrewed the cap on that, smelled, I said, "That smells like ..." (Laughter) And I started taking that. That saved my life.

TINKER: (Laughs) That's unbelievable.

BUTLER: I know it ...

TINKER: Out of blue, a woman gives you quinine ... and then a bottle of dysentery medicine is out ...

BUTLER: ... It's unbelievable. Yeah.

TINKER: It is unbelievable. You supposed to be here. (Laughter)

BUTLER: (Laughs) I'm not supposed to be here, I'm supposed to be dead.

TINKER: No, your supposed to be here. (Laughter)

BUTLER: Well, anyway, anyway ... after that, they sent us back to this (Cabanatuan?) Prison Camp. And ... the Japanese guard told us that it's gonna be a better camp up there. Well, we got there and it wasn't much better. They're still dying forty and fifty a day ... in this (Cabanatuan?) Prison Camp where I was for two years. And I got to working on detail there. And I'd gotten pretty well over my diarrhea and malaria and stuff like that. And on Christmas of '42, we got some Red Cross packages in. And it just seemed like Christmas showing up.

TINKER: You're right. Yeah.

BUTLER: Gettin' something like that. Starved to death, no medicine and getting stuff like that. And so ...

TINKER: What was your favorite thing out of the ...

BUTLER: I got a little box, it was a British box ... and I ... heard of plum pudding. (Laughter) And a little can of plum pudding in that British box. (Laughs)

TINKER: Uh huh. You loved that, huh?

BUTLER: Well, everything I loved ...

TINKER: (Laughs) Yeah.

BUTLER: And of course, I believe most of the boxes had a little package of cigarettes in them and a, you know, a few other things. And ... they had enough medicine, they started giving those that had malaria or something, you know, medicine. And then they had enough medicine they started giving those patients with diarrhea and dysentery medicine. Well, they had a zero ward in this camp. Well, you'd go over there to that zero ward and what it was, they had all them boys in the zero ward laying there on the floor ... in filth and everything else and nobody to really see after them or wait on them. And when you went over there, it was just certain death. And they were buried before they got the medicine and stuff in. Somewhere, anywhere, from thirty to fifty a day in that camp. Go out in the morning and dig a hole and go back and carry thirty or forty out there. And it'd be rainy season ...

TINKER: Did they rotate the people that had to do the burying?

BUTLER: Well, they usually had a detail, they was on burial detail.

TINKER: They had to do it all the time?

BUTLER: Most of the time. 'Till they got so weak, they couldn't carry them and then they'd have somebody else do it. But I was fortunate enough, I got on what's called a camp utility detail. We's trying to help fix up the old buildings that we'd live in and they's all made out of bamboo and this, that and the other. It was our job to work with stuff like that and move buildings out of camp, into camp. And we'd just pick 'em up and move 'em. And they'd be a hundred feet long and twenty feet wide and you'd get 3 or 400 people around them inside and outside and you'd just pick it up and move 'em. That's the way they did it ...

TINKER: Did you--on the march and then in the camp, did--right when you first started seeing a lot of the people that had died, I mean, did it bother you at first and then you got desensitized to it?

BUTLER: ... I got used to it, I reckon.

TINKER: Do you think you got used to it pretty quick?

BUTLER: I remember one time when I went over to the zero ward, there was a close buddy of mine, was one of us that volunteered and went over there. (Elliot Hugh Hurington?). And he was just as thin as a rail and didn't have a stick of clothes on or something on him or something. And I talked to him, I said, "Elliot Hugh, you need to get out of here, you don't need to be in here." And I talked to him a little while, and you know for some reason, he started eating a little better and finally got out. And came back to the work detail side. And then got sunk on one of those (Hell Ships?) from Japan.

TINKER: Aww.

BUTLER: Yeah. The boy lived in Camden, Tennessee. I knew him well and talked to some of his folks after that. And things like that just happened. But in this camp, now, of the ... (Cabanatuan?) Prison Camp, where I stayed for about two years. Finally, I left there and went on detail down to what they call (Pan Docken?) in Manila. Stayed in the old ...(?)... for about four or five months. And while I was in there, we had to go out on the docks and load stuff and carry it out to (Pan Docken?). I don't know what all I loaded, oil drums and just different things. And we'd ... swipe stuff down on the docks and carry it back into camp with us. We'd fix us some bags and put 'em on our legs, you know, and get some brown sugar and put it in there, or rice or something, you know, and carry it back into camp. But I think the Japanese realized we were getting in stuff like that sometimes. But they didn't pay to much attention.

TINKER: Probably 'cause there were so many of you to deal with.

BUTLER: Yeah, so one day. First thing they did, when they went examine us before we went in ... And when they got through there, the stack of bags and stuff piled up three feet high. (Laughter) ... They didn't bother us too much that day, anyway. They kinda warned us, you know.

TINKER: When your in the camp ... was everybody just free to mingle? Like the civilians and the soldiers.

BUTLER: ... Yeah, we had maybe three or four or five would eat together, maybe their own little table or something. All five, you know. And we'd learn to 'quant up' stuff, we'd call it. We'd learn how to take rice and soak it, and take bottle and make flour ... out of it. And we'd get a little brown sugar or anything to put in it to make it look more like a cake or something ... we'd try to do stuff like that ... (on our days off?).

TINKER: Did they let y'all bathe?

BUTLER: ... On the beginning, we went for a month or two without ever having a bath.

'Cause didn't have no water in that first camp at all. Not enough to drink, much less to take a bath. 'Cause you were standing in water line sometimes as much as a half day at a time just to get a drink of water. But then in (Cabanatuan #1?), conditions got a little bit better, they finally ... fixed up deals where could get a bath or a shower or something, you know.

TINKER: Mm hmm.

BUTLER: But no hot water, nothing like that. 'Cept barrels or, I mean, just anything we could find, you know. And you got to where you didn't even have clothes to wear, finally. All I had was a g-string to wear. But it was during warm season, which--I know one time I had a pair of shorts or something from an old (shelf?) I had, or something I'd made. And where I got the needle and thread and stuff to do it with, I don't remember now.

TINKER: Did you just smell bad all the time?

BUTLER: Oh, yeah, if you couldn't take a bath or something. And the lice (sighs) got so rough, and the bed bugs ... we were sleeping on bamboos, you know. And finally, they give us enough hot water and stuff, and we took them old bamboos out in the bay and got rid of the bed bugs and steamed it and finally ... did things that help us improve on the situation. But there--and I was there about two years until they moved us into the old building down there and was there for about four months. And then they started shipping all that was able to work to Japan on them Hell Ships. And I ended up on one of those Hell Ships going to Japan. And that was awful, that was worse than the Death March.

TINKER: Do you remember what ship you were on, the name of it?

BUTLER: ... I've got the name of it somewhere in some of my literature at home. But anyway, we ... survived our ship. But see, out of the ships that went to Japan, it was three or four of 'em that lost everybody on the wreck--on the boat just about, I think. And ... one of them boats, I think about, had about 1800 or so. One boat, and I think there were four survivors out of it. And then we was (eleven?). Started out with about 1600 and was hit twice before we got to Japan. And about 300 survived it in Japan. There's a book or two come out, one guy that I knew, wrote this book said some survived. And that was ... one of the about 300 that survived the ordeal. And then ... the one I was on, one night, we'd been out in China Sea I guess about two weeks, I guess. And one night, we heard an explosion take place. And ... the sky lit up and the Japanese covered the hatch above us and set up machine guns. And they was gonna make sure there wouldn't be a survivor if that ship was hit. And they the reason or ship was not hit, we were running pretty high because we didn't have no cargo or anything heavy, you know, to put it deeper in the water ... and the torpedo evidently went under our ship and didn't hit us. But, it got so rough that night when they covered the hatch and they did all that stuff that some of 'em praying that they'd hit our ship and get us out of our misery. And to me, that's the only time it wouldn't have made any difference whether I lived or died; how rough it was. But we had two chaplains in the hole with us. One of 'em was a Protestant and one a Catholic. And I don't remember which got up first, but I remember the Catholic Chaplain--old Hail

Grace [Hail Mary], or whatever they repeat--and our other chaplain, I knew him personally, I knew him at camp, he started reading the 23rd Psalm. That was (important?), the 23rd Psalm. And just temporarily it got as quiet as it could be and our lives were spared that night. But it was just so rough, my tongue had swollen so that I couldn't hardly talk.

TINKER: Really?

BUTLER: Lack of water. I hadn't had any ...

TINKER: And how many days total were you on the ship, do you remember?

BUTLER: 'Bout eighteen days ... 'bout eighteen days and nights, I guess it was ... in the hold of that ship. 900 and some odd thirty in the whole ship. Not ... room for everybody to lay down at one time. Hardly to sit down. And if you were, you were on top of somebody else or he was on you. And had two or three old five-gallon cans if you had to go to the restroom or someplace ...

TINKER: Was there people dying on the ship?

BUTLER: Oh yeah, we lost several on that ship, in the hold of that ship. Just died from starvation ...

TINKER: Did they come to collect the body or did they just leave 'em down there?

BUTLER: No, they piled 'em in the corner and then a time or two they'd bury them at sea. They'd take 'em on the side, top of the ship. One time, they took us on top of the ship and washed us off with hoses, like you'd ... wash cattle or hogs off. And twice a day, they'd try to let down a little water, or rice or something. And then when we got to Japan, they had to feed us about two or three weeks before they got us up, heavy enough to work. And then they sent me out to a locomotive plant where I used a big scoop. Shoveling (cinders?), slag, and ore from the camp. And we'd fill one cold, hard morning three hours and one afternoon and that's what we did.

TINKER: Do you remember the name of the plant?

BUTLER: ... I've got it in one of the books or somewhere. But, anyway, it was out in (Nagoya?), Japan is where it was. And then ... one day, we were out there working. Well, the Japanese--the Americans were still flying so high, you could see the vapor stream. But those B-29s when they first started flying, they didn't have the ... right bombsight. The Norton Bombsight was made for B-17s, and it wouldn't work on B-29s until they rearranged that bombsight. And then it would work. And then they started hitting the targets. And I know one night ... wasn't long before they dropped the Atomic Bomb, we heard the planes start flying over about midnight ... and they were bringing incendiary bombs. And from midnight until ... daylight, there were 500 (B-ni duku?), that's ... B-29s, came over and dropped their bombs and burned the industrial area of (Nagoya?) to the

ground. Seventy-five square miles, largest industrial area in Japan, I guess. And bombed it to the ground. And then, we's been there ... almost just a year, when they'd dropped the Atomic Bomb. But, the Japanese--all we knew was there was something big that took place, big, you know. We knew, we didn't know what that was until on the ... 4th of September when they signed the Peace Treaty on the Missouri and we were liberated then on the 4th of September. But anyway, the ... Japanese came in--rushed us back into camp on the 16th, I believe it was, of August of '45. And said we would have nothing, no work to do for a few days. Says, they gonna reorganize the plant. But that's after they'd bombed it to the ground and nothing left out there. But they sent us back out there to load up stuff and try to get ready to rebuild and all that stuff.

TINKER: So right, so before the bomb was dropped, did you ... were y'all able to get any news is what ...

BUTLER: Yeah, oh yeah, we did. Matter of fact, these ... there was some Limeys or Englishmen that ... could read some of that Japanese stuff. And every once in a while, they pick up a Japanese paper or something to camp and bring it in. And they could make out, you know, about where the war was going on, where the fighting was taking place. And then in the Philippine Islands, there was a civilian in one of the camps where I was, temporarily. Built a radio receiving set. And used earphones, it didn't have no speaker or anything on it. But he built the old set. And at night, I was in the campsite ... two or three weeks, and ... somebody would always be getting the news at night. They'd pick up London and they'd pick up Australia and places like that and know about where the fighting was going on. That's all we knew. And we stuff like 'at ...

TINKER: Well, that's something, if you still ... could listen to the radio like that.

BUTLER: ... And they finally ...

TINKER: But you didn't have any idea about the bomb ...

BUTLER: No ...

TINKER: But did you know America was gettin' ready to do something?

BUTLER: Well, we knew that they was getting closer all the time after they started bombing Japan.

TINKER: Right, ok.

BUTLER: And they were flying high and all that stuff.

TINKER: And were ... your living conditions in Japan any different than ...

BUTLER: Well the quarters where we lived in the buildings and all ... it was very lightly constructed in this (cold, hot?) building. I mean, they didn't have no insulation in this old

pine building like a construction built. And they ... in Japan it'd get about like it would be here, in the United States in the winter times. It got zero sometimes ... and we'd go out to work wearing all the clothes you had on and old army overcoats they'd give us to keep us warm. And you'd wrap your feet in something, you know, and had them old cloth shoe or something to wear. You'd go in at night with no fire in the buildings and stuff like 'at ...

TINKER: Did they feed you any better?

BUTLER: Well, for a while, it was a little bit better. But then, at the last, the Japanese were starving too. And, 'course, I got down to ninety-eight, ninety-one pounds. Nearly used my ... And I know when the Americans--the Japanese finally carried us in one day and said we's rest a while. And that's when they was negotiating about the peace. And then, on the 20th ... of August, in '45, a Japanese interpreter came in. And said he had a very important announcement to make. Says, "Your country and our country just shook hands. Pretty soon, your troops will be in here to get you."

TINKER: And that was the first y'all knew about it?

BUTLER: Exactly. We knew something was taking place, that the war was over. And that afternoon, there was planes off the (Wasp?) came over and kicked some food and stuff out on the parade ground above us. And some information wantin' to know if there was anybody real sick, needed to be--have certain medicine or something immediately. And they spelt out on the parade ground, 'penicillin.' And in about two hours, a plane came back, and had it wrapped in a pillow, and knocked it--kicked it out on top of the (dispersion?) there in the camp, and it rolled off. And then the next day, B-29s came in, dropping food to us. And we started eating a lot of extra stuff and all.

TINKER: And did the Japanese just leave you there, or were they still around ...

BUTLER: No, they ... told us that, "We are supposed to protect you." Because in the treaty that was signed--and I left a copy of that, and, I think, the professor said he had a copy of that, too ... I give him a copy of that somewhere.

JUNG: He made copies of that ...

BUTLER: Yeah, he made a copy of everything.

TINKER: Okay.

JUNG: It's back over there.

BUTLER: It's in there somewhere, that treaty.

TINKER: Okay.

BUTLER: But anyway, it said that Allied prisoners must be liberated must be liberated

immediately. That's in the treaty on that deal. I guess that's the reason somebody sent me a copy of that. Just to know that that was on there.

JUNG: Yeah.

TINKER: Well, how did you feel ...

BUTLER: Oh, I felt like ... I don't know what. (Laughter)

TINKER: Did you start dreaming about home. (Laughs)

BUTLER: Well, I ...

TINKER: ... Or just food. (Laughs)

BUTLER: You got a copy of the letter I wrote home from the (USS rescue?) ... my feelings, you know, after three and a half years of, you know, and the bed bugs and everything else. And no white sheets and--it was just from hell to heaven over night.

TINKER: ... How long did it, how long was it before y'all started going back home, before they started bringing you back?

BUTLER: Well, we were liberated over there on the ... 4th of September. I was taken out to this rescue ship, hospital ship. And then, they took us up there to (Yokohama?) and out to the airport. (Sugi?) Airport, I believe out there somewhere. And they flew us back to ... we had a stopover in Okinawa, spent a night there. Where the Americans landed, you know, and took over Yokohama, I mean, over there on ... the island. But anyway, we flew from there on back to the Philippines the next day. And we stayed in the Philippines there at the ... replacement depot for about a week before they put us on boats and ships back home. They flew some of them back ... those that were sick and in bad shape, they'd fly them back. But, i was able to get around pretty good, eat all I wanted. I started gaining weight like a hog, I guess. (Laughter) I gained about two pounds a day, I guess. From ninety pound, ninety-one. When i Got back home on the 5th of October, I think I was weighing about 160 pounds.

TINKER: What was the food you wanted the most? When you were able to ...

BUTLER: Anything, I guess, I know the first real cooked meal I had was on the ... hospital ship. After we entered, we got on that ship about nine or ten o'clock in the morning and they ... deloused us or give us new outfits to put on, and stuff. Told us we could go to the galley and eat. if I remember right, I don't know, I must have had--they had ... eggs and bacon and bread and, I don't know I must have eaten ...

TINKER: (Laughs) I bet it was good.

BUTLER: ... A loaf of bread, I guess. (Laughter) I don't know how much of that eggs

and bacon. And then, from then on, they told us ... at the replacement depot, anytime you want a steak or something, you just go over there and have them fix it for you.

TINKER: Wow.

BUTLER: Even at midnight. (Laughter) So, they treated us well coming back. Yeah, and then when we got home, it wasn't like the Vietnam War. They was there to meet me and greet me coming back home. I know my baby sister, she played in the band, I ... when I left San Francisco after arriving there, coming back, we had an option, I believe then, to go direct home to the nearest hospital place, where you lived ... and when they told me Memphis, Tennessee, I said, "Well, I otta go to Memphis." Because, I live in Martin. And I said, "I'd like to have the land route, and stop off at Martin for about ten days or two weeks before I go on to the ... hospital in Memphis." They said, "Well, we'll fix that up." And I thought I did. Well, they put us on the hospital train. And we nearly a week going from California to ... Chicago.

TINKER: Did you have to wait very long in San Francisco before you ...

BUTLER: Well, we got a week in San Francisco before we left. They ran ... tests on us and give us shots and I don't know what all there. They even gave us a little money, partial pay. So ... when we left there in the hospital train--matter of fact, most of us still had hospital clothes on, because we stopped in Cheyenne, Wyoming and some boys got off and they got left. (Laughter) And the ... engineer on further down said, "Well, they gonna fly them boys into (meet us?), right there. (Laughter) And meet us somewhere else." (Laughter) So, that's kinda the way it was. I know, when I got in Chicago that night, I called my mother at home and told her I'd been in on the (seven?) the next morning. Well, low and behold, the next morning, when I got to pull into Kentucky, that was eleven miles from Martin, my sister was on the same train with me. 'Cause my mother had called her, and she was up in Illinois, or something. And she caught the train, and was on the same train with me, and I didn't know it until we got to Portland.

TINKER: Oh!

BUTLER: And she saw it. So I got to meet her and see her.

TINKER: And y'all didn't even know y'all were on the same train?

BUTLER: No, uh uh.

TINKER: How 'bout that.

BUTLER: (Laughs) So, then she rode with me on to Martin and told me, you know, about--well, Mother had already told me about my brother being killed, I guess ... and ... one of my sisters had gotten married. Of course, but they didn't have any ...

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

TINKER: Ok, so you were saying when you got to Martin, there were about 200 people there waiting on you?

BUTLER: About 200 people out there. And some, I never knew, I don't reckon, hardly. But ... there was, I know, somebody said, "Why is this train waiting for so long?" And somebody said, "Well, some soldier boy just coming home." (Laughter) After three and a half years in prison camp.

TINKER: Were you the only one from Martin gettin' off the train at that time?

BUTLER: I was the only one, I guess. I sure was.

TINKER: And 'bout the whole town turned out.

BUTLER: ... But they's all waitin' for me. So ... that's the way it was when I got back home. So then, I stayed there ten days or two weeks, which is what I thought what I was supposed to. And got on a train and went on to Memphis. And when I got on to Memphis, I went out to the hospital out there, and when in there and reported, you know, this captain was sitting at this desk and he said, "Where in the hell have you been?" (Laughter) Says, "You were supposed to be here two weeks ago." (Laughter) I said, "I been home, why?" He said, well, they didn't have the orders fixed up like I thought they did.

TINKER: Oh. So they gave you verbal permission but ...

BUTLER: I was AWOL. (Laughter) But they didn't take it out of my pay.

TINKER: Oh, okay.

BUTLER: But he said, "I guess, if I'd have been in your situation, I'd have done the same thing." So ... that's the way it was. So ... after that, I stayed in the ... hospital there on ... or something. At that time, they were sending all the Air Force boys, if they wanted to go, to Miami Beach, Florida on two weeks vacation with their families or wives or mother and daddies. So I took my mother and daddy and went down there and stayed two weeks.

TINKER: I bet that was a lot of fun.

BUTLER: It was--and they had some girls down there in charge of entertainment, you know and stuff. And we could basically do just about anything we wanted to do and most of us ... so we'd just eat at the hotel and sign a bill. And so that's all there was to it.

TINKER: Did you have any ... when you were at the hospital in Memphis, did they, like, find any permanent effects from the starvation or the malaria or anything?

BUTLER: Well, the only thing that I ever had really permanent was beriberi. And that's

malnutrition. And I'm still bothered with my feet and my legs. Boy, if you've ever had dry beriberi and had them aching feet and all ...

TINKER: Is there something that makes it flare up?

BUTLER: Well, what it is, the doctors said, that the tissue between the bone and the nerves had withered away and left it exposed. And there's no complete cure for, you know, a lot of stuff like that.

TINKER: 'Cause it don't really come back? Okay.

BUTLER: And that's the thing, my problem was malnutrition and stuff like that. But they did get--I didn't say, my arm broke when I was knocked off a truck while in prison camp.

TINKER: Oh, yeah, you forgot about that. (Laughter)

BUTLER: And I didn't know about that, I think for about a month I didn't have to do much work because my arm was broken in the wrist there. But it wasn't a bad break and ...

TINKER: So just had it out the truck and you hit something or ...

BUTLER: No, no I got knocked of the top.

TINKER: Oh, you got knocked off the top.

BUTLER: When I was down in the docks loading some belly tanks for airplanes for the Japanese, that what it was. It ... and knocked me off. I just assumed they'd set me out for a whole day before they'd take me back in, you know.

TINKER: Did you just wrap it up yourself?

BUTLER: No, they took me in to the old building of the prison and they had some doctors in there and they fluoroscoped it and all and said, "Well, it doesn't really need to be set or anything, it's pretty well in place." So they just ... put it in a sling and taped it up and put a splint on it or something. I went around there for a while, didn't have to work. But ...

TINKER: But it really hadn't bothered you since?

BUTLER: No, no. But I did get, I think, ten percent disability on it for a long, long time. And ... finally, I got another ten percent on something and finally ... so, all my working days since, I took ten percent for years and years until 'bout the time I retired, they came out with a protocol. All veterans that were prisoner of war that suffered for different things, you know, they were eligible for service to make disability--money. And after

about the years, I don't know, I've done been retired for about five, my second wife ... kept telling me, said, "Bill, you oughta be keeping after the DA," said, "you need to get one hundred percent." So, finally, after so long, I finally got a hundred percent, they said, disability ... But, you know what kinda T'd me off one day. When I was in the hospital in Memphis when they brought me up to date and paid me off my lost back pay and stuff ... They'd already giving me a little partial pay and I went in to get my final pay. Well, they had civilians working there ... and my check was, I guess, for three and a half years, something around 3,000 dollars. They paid me on buck sergeant's pay, back then. And they give me one (advanced grade?) which is back, I was a staff sergeant when I was discharged. And they paid me in back pay. And they had a partial pay that I got on Bataan. And I told the guy, I said, "I never knew no partial pay in Bataan." And he said, "Well, what's twenty dollars on 3000?" And that made me so mad, I just about ready (club?) him. And he said, "Well go around and talk to the captain." I went around there and he said, "What's your problem?" (Laughter) I said, "Well, I didn't get that partial pay there in Bataan." He said, "Give me that paper." He signed it, says, "You carry it back to him now, give it to him." And I did. (Laughter) ... I reckon he thought I had life (alright?) ... but it wasn't the truth.

TINKER: I guess word wasn't out yet about what happened.

BUTLER: That's right, so ... that's kinda the story of my life.

TINKER: So, after ... your trip to Miami Beach, did you, when did you separate from the military?

BUTLER: Oh, it was ... in June of ... '46. And then I went back and finished school and graduated here in '47. I liked it her in school, too. I graduated in 1947.

TINKER: You did?

BUTLER: Mm hmm.

TINKER: And what was your major?

BUTLER: Agronomy. I started working for the Agriculture Extension Service in ... Benton County. And that's where I met my first wife.

TINKER: What were you doing there, working?

BUTLER: I was working with the, uh--actually TVA was paying my salary. Back in those days, TVA was taking these counties, you know, that TVA operated then and giving these farmers fertilizers, you know, to use, you know, to build up their land, you know, anything that was worth doing, you know and stuff like that. And my job was interviewing some farmers and talking into using more fertilizer and lime and stuff on their crop land ...

TINKER: Oh, okay. And you used your G.I. Bill when you came back to finish?

BUTLER: Yeah ... I did come back here to finish. And I was able to drive a little car, then. (Laughs) Before that I--'course, when my story started out, I wasn't even able to do nothing but thumb a ride from here to the farm.

TINKER: Well, what was it like after having that kind of experience to be back on campus? Where you before, now your a complete--did you feel like you were a different person?

BUTLER: Well, I reckon so. I was a little bit more mature. And I made a little better grades 'cause I didn't have to study and work as hard as I did when I was ... in the starting of my story. 'Course ... on the beginning of my story ... as I was told the professor, I had twenty dollars when I come up here. I registered on ten, and I bought a meal ticket for five, got a room for five dollars a month, and started working for twenty cents an hour.

TINKER: Did you live on campus after--when you came back?

BUTLER: When I came back? No, I never did live on campus. I had a house up with a room, a house on--above Henley [St.] up there. Some lady up there fed us dinner at night, one or two meals, I believe it was, or maybe it was breakfast and night or something. Two meals a day and a room for fifty dollars a month.

TINKER: Did everybody on campus know you were a veteran? I mean, could you spot the veterans ...

BUTLER: ... Most of 'em, 'cause there were so many veterans back then that (I could see?) ... And then I went ahead and graduated in '47, went to work for the Agriculture ...

TINKER: And then you met your wife when you were on your job ... in Benton County?

BUTLER: Yeah, she lost her job, then. Well, when she married, back then, they wouldn't hire married girls. She lost her job. But after that, they started, you know, working them ...

TINKER: How long did you work there?

BUTLER: Only a year 'till I went with Pet Milk Company, and stayed with them twenty years. Come back, and that's when they ... hired me back ... after being gone for twenty years.

TINKER: Oh really?

BUTLER: But see, I knew Dr. Bishop maybe--did you ever know Dr. Bishop?

TINKER: Uh uh.

BUTLER: He used to be over at the Ag. College, professor and all. I knew him, we were classmates in school. So ...

TINKER: So, you worked for Pet Milk Company for twenty years ... Did you stay in Benton County to do that, or did you--where did you move?

BUTLER: I moved to Martin ... and from Martin, I went to Paris, Tennessee. Paris, Tennessee, I went to Mayfield, Kentucky. And that's where they terminated me because they kept closing plants and stations. And that's when i was without a job. Forty-six years old ... without a job. And extension hired me back. And the professor, or the guy over us, when he brought me to Savannah, Tennessee, he told an ag. customer, he said, "Bill, he never did," he said, "he first hired in with us, but he never did stop working for us. And so we just want to put him right back on the payroll." (Laughter) He had a way of explaining it.

TINKER: So, when you ... came back, did you talk about the camp, or your experiences or did you ...

BUTLER: You mean, since then?

TINKER: Well, I mean like, when you first came back ... did you tell people, "Yes, I was a POW" ...

BUTLER: Oh yeah, because they kept asking me, you know. And ... clubs and churches kept invited me to come talk to them, see, about my friend. And I've been doing it ever since.

TINKER: So, you ... were never one of those that just held it all in for decades and then ...

BUTLER: I didn't hold it in. Kept telling someone about it. 'Lot of 'em, you know, never talk about it because, you know, just didn't want to. But, me, I'm still talking about it. And will be ...

TINKER: Do you think that's helped you, all these years?

BUTLER: I think it had, mm hmm. I know, in one of these interviews I had, a little tape I did for Andersonville Prison. One of the questions down there was, "Did you ... really learn anything that might be helpful to you in further life," or something. I think about the last statement I think I made about it, I said, "Well, I'll tell you. I seen it awful rough. And if it ever gets rougher than what I've already seen it, I can always say, 'I've seen it rougher.'"

TINKER: That's true.

BUTLER: (That's what I took away with?).

TINKER: That's true ... What about your family, did they ...

BUTLER: You mean, while I was gone, or when I got back, or now?

TINKER: ... I was just thinking about when you got back ... did it upset your mother a lot, I mean ...

BUTLER: Oh, of course she was glad to see me back. But my daddy and my mother, of course they died when they were young and ...

TINKER: How old were they?

BUTLER: They were in their sixties, I think sixty, sixty-one when they died. My daddy-- well, my mother died, and I think she had leukemia or something. Back then, they didn't know what it was ... blood disease, they said. And my daddy, he ... had it pretty rough in there, so he finally killed himself ...

TINKER: I guess that upset 'ya.

BUTLER: ... Yeah. Because he'd lost my older brother, see, he got killed. And I's missing in action, too, for three and a half years and ... so ... things had upset him so much that he kinda give up and quit.

TINKER: Jason, do you got anything?

JUNG: ... Yeah, I guess, kinda going back to you to you coming back and doing school work right after the war ... I don't want to back up too much, but I'm curious about what your thoughts were about going back to school. Was it pretty natural for you to ... actually go back to school after the war or ...

BUTLER: Well, when I got back home, everybody's trying telling me what to do. (Laughter) ... If you will be so and so's campaign manager, you can be postmaster of Martin. 'Cause then, in your district certain people were the ones that were responsible for the postmaster in all these counties. I said, "No, I'm not interested. I'm going back to school right now." [They said,] "Well you don't need to go to school, we'll elect you anyway." (Laughter) And stuff like that, and maybe another time when some election for office come up. [They] said, "Well, if you'll do this, we'll elect 'ya." ... But, I just never did.

TINKER: 'Cause you were a big war hero and everybody wanted you to ...

BUTLER: I reckon that's right ... but you know I always told 'em, I says, "I wasn't a hero, I was just a survivor." ... The hero was like the guy in that book, there, that I was

showing you. Picked up a picture of the (guys in Memphis?). It was the 106th Rangers that went in behind the lines and liberated that prison camp. It was all volunteer. And they had to make sure to this guy that was kinda in charge that you would give your life to save the life of one of them boys that had been in that prison camp there for three something years. And that was what they were supposed to do. And so they did it.

TINKER: ... Did you join any of the veteran's organizations right after ...

BUTLER: (Lot's of 'em?).

TINKER: ... But, when did you join them? Did you wait a while?

BUTLER: Immediatly after I got back, I joined the American Legion ... Been a member of it ever since. And then, I joined the Disabled Veterans. And then, I belonged to the ... (Veteran's of Foreign War?). Then, I belonged to the Prisoners of War, life member. Then I got life member at the (Defender of Bataan-Corregidor?). So ...

TINKER: ... Do you go to ... annual meetings and reunions and stuff?

BUTLER: ... I do some of them. Now for years, we went flying down to (Raleigh, North Carolina?). There's a guy over there that I've been back to the Philippines with, I went twice. And the first time I went back. I carried my camera and tapes. And I interviewed a lot of people on the trip. And I've got tapes and pictures ... when I went back to the Philippines. And there were times I'd come back ... after twenty years. And he'd say, "Bring your pictures and stuff, show us your film." (Laughter) And I made--well, the first time over there, I made forty something rolls, I guess, of film. And I made slides mostly. And I made twenty, thirty something tapes out of a tape recorder that I interviewed different ones. And, well, (General Hicks?), he went back with us. And he was in charge of--one time, I twisted that (bomber?) and he flew out and he wasn't captured. He wasn't hit and made general during the war. And a another general, in fact I believe--the nurses and all. So, I got pictures and tapes ...

TINKER: Well, those two trips you just took back to the Philippines, did you just do those on your own?

BUTLER: Yes, on my own.

TINKER: So on your own you just decided ...

BUTLER: There was a guy ...

TINKER: What prompted you to ... do it the first time?

BUTLER: Well, I read about it in a magazine. See, one of those magazines was started in Albaquerque, New Mexico. Beause there were so many in that National Guard outfit there, they started what they call the ... Bataan somthing.

TINKER: ... I think ... I have seen that organization's stuff, yeah.

BUTLER: ... Yeah, that's the Bataan-Corregidor, that's that right there.

TINKER: ... So you just read about it and it gave you the idea to go back on your own?

BUTLER: Yeah ... but ... when I went back to the Philippines, (Wayne Caringer?), over at (Fontana?) was one I got to know and he was ... over there too when he told me. He says, "Bill, they started years ago." And this coming fall, I think the thirty-ninth time, but could be the last time they'll be meeting at (Fontana?) there in (North Atlanta?). But I haven't been over now in four or five years. 'Cause my last wife came down with alzhyzers.

TINKER: Oh, I'm sorry.

BUTLER: And of course she died about a year ago--well, a year ago the 14th of this month. She died. And of course I'm just by myself now. My daughter brought me up here.

TINKER: Does your daughter live by you know, nearby?

BUTLER: Yeah, she's a pharmacist down near Pickwick ... And I got two grandsons. One of 'em's twenty-six and the other one's twenty-four. Neither one of them's married.

TINKER: Is anybody in your family interested in the military. Has anybody joined after you or ...

BUTLER: ... Not really. I've got a brother-in-law he stayed in the military either in the guard or reserve, or something. And he finally got ... retired as a lieutenant colonel. And then he was a mail carrier for a few years. And farmed ... and never did have to go overseas during the war. He'd change from one organization to another and get a degree or something and then he ... ended up flying. But, in his flying career, he never did leave the United States. He was flying from on base to another, carrying troops and stuff.

JUNG: So he just dealt mostly with cargo and ...

BUTLER: Yep. Uh huh.

TINKER: Well, I think we're about wrapped up ... is there one. primary mem--like of your POW experience, like, I wonder if there's one primary memory that's the most vivid? Is there one thing?

BUTLER: One primary memory ...

TINKER: Like something that's--if you first think of it, it's usually the first thing you

think of. Was it the initial being taken prisoner or just the whole ...

BUTLER: Well, I think what it was is what we was expecting was gonna happen to us when we surrendered. Whether they was gonna shoot us or whether we was gonna live. That was the thought you'd have. Now, what they gonna do with us?

TINKER: So that was the most, that was just your ...

BUTLER: I know there was this one major or somebody, I think he was about half cracked-up anyway, that crashed down on (Marlveles?) runway. Where I was when we surrendered anyway, 'cause I had ordinance and everything. And, I don't know, there were so many of us down there that night, and the Japanese were bringing in big guns and setting 'em behind us and they was gonna fire over our heads to Corregidor. And he was just all cracked-up and said, "Well boys, it looks like we just--tonight's where we'll all go to hell together." He just thought it was going to be the end of us. So that's just ...

JUNG: How long did that last, do think, where didn't know ... how long your next moment would be, whether the Japanese were going to execute you or ...

BUTLER: Well, we never knew from one day to the next because it might take--I don't, I didn't mention this, but they put us ten men escape squads. If one man escaped, they'd shoot the other nine. And they did that three or four times.

TINKER: Really?

BUTLER: Yeah. Mm hmm.

TINKER: And that was on the march and in the camp.

BUTLER: Yeah--well, usually we was work detail ... The first account we had of it, if you're a prisoner of war, you're supposed to try to escape and get back to your outfit ... But ... in the Philippines, the Japanese started paying them Philipinos so many pesos to turn in Americans. You know, who'd escaped and was living or something.

TINKER: Did you hear about anybody that escaped and made it?

BUTLER: Yeah. One guy that I seen at our reunions a lot. He lives in Gulf Shores, Alabama, or whatever it iws down there, Gulf Shores, I believe. He got a glass eye. The Japanese, he didn't surrender the day that the surrender took place, and they caught him later on guerilla warfare or something. And they ... brought him and put him in the old dungeon in the Philippines and beat him up and left him for dead. And I don't know, somebody found him and told him, said, "Son, be still. I'm trying to get the maggots out of your eye." They burned his eye out with a cigarette butt. And he's got a glass eye now. And I still see him.

TINKER: And he got rescu--so he got out of that. So they had just left him ...

BUTLER: Left him for dead, really ... somebody found him down there in that old dungoen. I went down there, in that dungeon one time in the Philippines. Just to check it out.

TINKER: I know about somebody who escaped at the very beginning like that.

BUTLER: You do?

TINKER: His name is David Gause. They called him 'Rocky.'

BUTLER: Oh, I got is book.

TINKER: Have you got that?

BUTLER: Yeah! You got his book?

TINKER: And ... he died later and his son got his diary published.

BUTLER: ... Right, and you know the boy?

TINKER: Yeah, we've had Damon Gause up here several times. To talk about his father and everything.

BUTLER: Oh my goodness, I got hius book,

TINKER: Yeah we're real good friends with him.

BUTLER: He belongs to our outfit, now.

TINKER: Yeah?

BUTLER: Yeah.

TINKER: ... They're trying to get that made into a movie.

BUTLER: Yeah, he ... matter of fact, he ... attends all the 27th Bomb Group meetings. Gives every one of us one of his books.

TINKER: I know. So ... it was Damon Gause Senior and then another--he hooked up somehow another guy had gotten away. I mean, it was just at the initial capture.

BUTLER: Well, there was another guy, and he ended up as governor of Indiana.

TINKER: How did he escape?

BULER: He escaped from Corregidor. And then--I mean, escaped Bataan, went to Corregidor and then he escaped from Corregidor and went back to Bataan. And ... lived with the guerillas and went to (Mindoro?) or (Mindanao?) or someplace and stayed there a year or so. And finally, they turned him in or the Japanese found him. And he convinced them, some way or another that he wasn't a soldier, he was a civilian. Well, they sent him to (Fort Sando Tomas?), with the civilians. Well, he stayed there a while. And finally, they started to send some of the civilians to Singapore. And he went down there and stayed a while. And finally, they had an exchange of some of the prisoners and they saved him and sent him back to the United States. And he wrote a book, or did something and then he ran for governor.

TINKER: Do you remember what his name was?

BUTLER: Then he ran for governor and got elected governor.

TINKER: Do you remember his name?

BUTLER: I've got it at home somewhere. (Laughter)

TINKER: Well, these things you got at home, when we send you the interview for you to look over, you can write it in.

BUTLER: Is that so? Okay.

TINKER: Yeah ... you can write it in.

BUTLER: Well ... that, boy, yeah.

TINKER: Yeah ... well that sounds like a good note to end. This concludes an interview with William Butler. And it's been a pleasure finishing up here for Dr. Piehler.

BUTLER: Yeah, glad to do it.

JUNG: Thank you very much.

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