Elwin Brown Interview
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Local 653 Union Hall
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EB: . . . District Commander, past Commander of the post. He's still active in the [American] Legion.

DC: All right. Well I'm sure we'll catch up to that because—along the way, if you talk about your life, we'll figure out what your—about your service record and all that. But I always start out with really basic questions, like where were you born?

EB: I was born in Pontiac.

DC: You were? OK. And if you don't mind me asking, when was that?

EB: December. December 28th of '31.

DC: '31, OK. How long had your family lived in Pontiac?

EB: My immediate family broke up when I was younger, but my Dad stayed in Pontiac all his life.

DC: OK. Well back up a little bit. Your Dad had been in Pontiac all his life, you said?

EB: [nods]

DC: OK.

EB: But not—you know, I can't say all his life because he was born in St. Thomas, Ontario. And he come to Pontiac in 1926. Went to work for Yellow Truck and Bus, which is now known as Truck and Bus. And he worked there a couple of years and then he quit and went to work for the Pontiac Motor division, and he worked there the rest of his life.

DC: OK. So did he move with his family from Ontario?

EB: No, he come over as a single person. Then he married my Mother over here.

DC: Where was she from?

EB: She was from up in the thumb area. Her parents were farmers. Her last name was Harneck and there was a lot of Harnecks up in the thumb area.

DC: Is that H-a-r-n-i-c-k?

EB: H-a-r-n-e-c-k, if I remember right.

DC: H-a-r-n-e-c-k?

EB: Yeah.

DC: OK.

EB: And, as I said, Mother and Dad separated when I was real young. We did live—before they separated, we lived out on Hospital Road, which was a—at that time, was in the country. Because there was very few, there was maybe, I think there was three other houses on the street. Had a neighbor on one side, a neighbor on the corner, and one other one—I can't remember exactly where it was at. But the house that we lived in out there is now on a different street. Because it sat that far back off of Hospital Road that they put a street down the side of it, and put the houses on that street. There's a couple houses in front of it now.

DC: What brought your Mother to Pontiac?

EB: Oh, I really don't know what—she was just come down here from the farm and probably was looking for work. And that's probably what brought her down. I don't know how her and Dad got together or anything about that. But I knew some of her relatives, and they say they separated when I was—I think it was—I was four when they separated. I just can't remember a whole lot of that. I just remember going to the—my grandmother's farm up in—between Forester and McGregor in the thumb [area of Michigan] and staying for two or three years.

DC: Oh, you stayed up there for two or three years.

EB: Yeah, I went up there and spent my first and second grade up there in the old one country schoolhouse.

DC: Was your Mother there, too?

EB: No. I just stayed with my aunt—my aunt and uncle, and two uncles and my grandmother.

DC: OK.

EB: And they took care of us.

DC: OK. And you went through two years of school there, you said, as well?

EB: Yup. I went through—my first two years of school I was at the old country school up there. And then I come and moved down here and I was down here and I went through the Pontiac school system the rest of the time.

DC: OK. So when you moved back down here, who did you stay with?

EB: We stayed with a family on Vinewood who was a relative of my Mother's—it would be a second cousin. And we stayed there ten years.

DC: When you say "we," who was that?

EB: My brother and sister.

DC: OK. So you had two siblings.

EB: I had a brother and a sister. I'm the middle child.

DC: OK. All right. So who's older?

EB: My brother's older, my sister's younger, and then she is already deceased.

DC: Oh, OK.

EB: My Mother and Dad are already deceased, too.

DC: OK. All right. So did all three kids move up into the farm on the thumb then?

EB: Just my brother and sister—or, my brother and myself. My sister stayed down here.

DC: Was she . . .

EB: I can't remember who she lived with. I know who she lived with after we left the Willis's on Vinewood. She stayed with friends of my Dad's who was in the Oddfellow Hall.

DC: OK. So what was it like back in Pontiac on Vinewood?

EB: It was—it was country living. We had gardens out there that I had to take care of. In other words, I was put to work. I knew what work was before I ever went into the plant.

DC: Yeah. Did you work on the farm up in the thumb, too?

EB: Somewhat. What I could do when I was as young as I was. Wasn't a whole lot I could do—I was too young. But I used to have to take care of—carry water to the tractors, go get the cattle, bring them out for milking and stuff like that.

DC: Mm-hmm. So what about down on Vinewood? What kinds of jobs did you have there?

EB: My job was to take care of the garden, which I didn't like to do all the time.

DC: So all the weeding?

EB: All the weeding and hoeing and all that kind of stuff. And we raised a lot of our own vegetables: potatoes included. I was responsible for taking care of most of that.

DC: So in a way you were responsible for feeding the family a lot there.

EB: And we also had chickens and—chickens for a long time, and then we got some hogs. And I took care of the hogs, too. I had one sow out there that was my baby. When they got ready to take her to the—to have her slaughtered, I had to coax her out of the trailer. I called her Pug, because she was a pug nose.

DC: So how many pigs did you have?

EB: How many kids do I have?

DC: How many hogs did you have?

EB: I had—she had—the one litter she had, she had thirteen. And of course I had to see to the birthing and all that. The—Elmer Willis told me what I had to do and I'd take a burlap sack and as they come out—as she give birth, I had to move them around to the other side so they wouldn't get stepped on.

DC: Right, right. Yeah. So how long did you stay there in that . . .

EB: I stayed there approximately a little over ten years.

DC: Oh, OK. So a long time. Yeah.

EB: I was in high school when I left there.

DC: OK. And did—let's see—did your brother and your sister stay there, as well?

EB: No—yeah, my brother and sister stayed there, too, up till the time that we left. And my Dad and Mrs. Willis got into a—I don't know—I don't know if it was a money dispute or what it was. But anyway, we decided—Dad said, "That's enough. I'm leaving." And my brother and I had a room down on Anderson Street for about eight, nine months, and then we moved in with him and his cousin that lived over on First Street. I was on First Street when I got—went to work for Pontiac.

DC: OK. Now when you were living on Vinewood, did you see your Father and Mother much?

EB: I saw my Dad all the time. And my Mother would come down and see us, yes.

DC: Would she come down from the thumb, or where was she?

EB: She come down from—she was living in Port Huron.

DC: Port Huron at the time, OK.

EB: And eventually my sister ended up living with her.

DC: So you would've gone to school, then, while you were living . . .

EB: On Vinewood. I went through the Pontiac School system. I attended Malcolm, which is no longer up here. Then I went to Weaver for a half semester, because it was during the war years they had to make due with what you could. That was right after the war. And then from there I went to Lincoln Junior, from Lincoln Junior to Pontiac High.

DC: OK. So through the Pontiac schools. And what was it like going to the Pontiac schools?

EB: It was—I didn't have no problems. I had some problems with English that I had to take over, and I went to summer school one year to make up a couple credits I needed.

DC: Was that in high school or was that earlier?

EB: High school. I played football when I was in high school, except for my senior year. My senior year I was working, so I decided I'd stay working rather than play football.

DC: When did you start working outside the home, anyway, outside the garden? And the farm?

EB: Oh, first job was in junior high school. I worked in the cafeteria.

DC: At the junior high or what cafeteria?

EB: At the Lincoln Junior High cafeteria. And then I also worked in the Pontiac Central cafeteria.

DC: Was that during school hours?

EB: During school hours. We had a break in there, like for study halls. That's when I worked there.

DC: Were the Willis's farmers, or did they have jobs off the farm?

EB: Well, my Grandmother Harneck, her first husband died and the second time she married, she married a Willis. And my Grandfather Willis was a brother to the gentleman that we stayed with. That's how the acquaintance come about. And my Mother had one natural brother and two—a step-brother and a step-sister, who were my aunts and uncles. And my aunt, Uncle Ernie and aunt I lived with on the farm, and I used to go see my Uncle Cap and Aunt Iva in Port Huron all the time.

DC: OK. Yeah. Were they all farmers or did any of them have other jobs?

EB: They were all farmers originally, but when the siblings come along, my uncle Cap come down and as I recall—we called him Uncle Cap. That wasn't his name. That was—I don't know how he got the name Uncle Cap, but that's the way we always called him. His name was Clarence McPherson. And he come down and got a job as a painter for Edison. You know, at the power plant there in Marysville, and that's where he stayed the rest of his life. And he stayed in Port Huron the rest of his life. And then my—during the Depression years, my Uncle Ernie stayed up on the farm and my Uncle Lee stayed up on the farm and made a go of it on the farm. Until around 1939, my Uncle Lee decided to enlist in the Army and he went in the Army just before World War II, and then my Uncle Ernie decided to come to Port Huron and apply for a job at Miller Brass, and got it. And then that's when the farm was left by everybody.

DC: OK. Yeah. What was the neighborhood like on Vinewood? It sounds like it was in the country, but . . .

EB: It was a typical neighborhood. Everybody knew everybody. I had worked for the—I worked for the neighbor next door, cutting grass and picking raspberries and—it was before the World War II. During World War II, we was right at the end of the street, so there was nobody down beyond us. They had open land and a gentleman by the name of Vince [?] come and rented that land and I worked for him part-time sometimes. Because he—he tilled and worked the land till after the war. And then after the war he subdivided it and made it into houses built for development in there after the war. World War II, that is.

DC: Right. What kind of work did you do on that land for him?

EB: Oh, I just helped him mainly in harvesting. That was all. Like he had a three-man baler. Sometimes I would sit on the side and push the wire through. Because—I don't know if you know anything about that, but the first balers that come out were three man balers, where—you had one man had to drive the tractor, one, two men on the baler pushing wires and tying them.

DC: OK. I did some baling a long time ago, but it was just all automatic at that point. You just had to drive the tractor.

EB: Well, Mr. [?] got that later, because I helped him when I was a junior in high school. I helped him when he was—he had—the city had bought this land up here and they were getting ready to make it ballparks and that, and he more or less prepared it for them. He got the land tilled up and he planted wheat one year and we helped him—I helped him harvest that. And then one year he planted a hay crop in that along with grass and he took the hay off and everything and then the city took it over and made it in a ballpark, which is Jaycee Park now.

DC: Oh, really? OK. You've seen quite a transition.

EB: I've been—during World War II, there was gravel from—Walton was paved, but Joslyn was gravel from Columbia down to Vinewood and out. Then right after World War II, the County paved Joslyn, but they didn't pave—the city didn't pave the rest of Joslyn for quite a few years.

DC: OK. Do you know what job your Dad had at Pontiac Motor?

EB: My Dad worked in the—during the war years, he worked in the gun plant—machinist of some sort. And also part of the civil defense corps there, because he worked second shift and they had air raid practices and he had to, as well, make sure no lights were shining and all that stuff.

DC: He would've been working at Pontiac Motor when the union came in, I think.

EB: Yes, he was.

DC: Yeah. Did he ever talk about that?

EB: Yes, he was a strong union man. Matter of fact, he was alternate committeeman here for several terms.

DC: OK. Was he involved at all in the organizing campaign when it first got started?

EB: I can't tell you that. I don't know.

DC: Did he ever tell you why he was a strong union man?

EB: Working conditions, mainly.

DC: Mm-hmm. Did he talk about anything specific that he experienced?

EB: No.

DC: No. OK.

EB: But all he told me when I graduated from high school, he says—I was running a one-man print shop, printing being my major in high school. And I was only working maybe a day or two a week over there and I had already graduated. That was fine before I graduated, but they had a sign out to hire over there at Pontiac Motor. And so he said, "Get your ass over there and get yourself . . ."—that's what he told me, exactly. He said, "Get your ass over there and get yourself a job." So I went over and hired in. And I hired in there February 15th of 1951.

DC: OK. What was your job there?

EB: My first job was stacking cardboard in the parts warehouse.

DC: All right.

EB: From there I went to—can't think now. [pause]

DC: How long did you stack the cardboard?

EB: Ninety days. OK. From there I got laid off and I found me a—I found a job in the meantime with a—I know the gentleman that run the gas station that used to be up there—well, it's where the Shell station is now, but it used to be a regular gas station. I believe it was a Sunoco station at the time. And I got a job there.

DC: Pumping gas?

EB: Pumping gas. And working—and I got called back to work and I went to work in what they call car retail.

DC: How long were you laid off?

EB: Eighty-nine days, if I remember right.

DC: Eighty-nine days, OK.

EB: I was off just almost long enough for—everything would've run out—my insurance stuff. In the beginning, your insurance benefits were—your first paycheck of the month they took Metropolitan Insurance out, and then the second paycheck of the month they took Blue Cross Blue Shield, and we didn't have no dental or eye care at that time.

DC: Yeah. What did you think of the job stacking cardboard?

EB: It was all right. Something to do.

DC: Was it mostly young people in there?

EB: Young and middle-aged, married.

DC: And middle-aged married, OK.

EB: A lot of them were married, but I being one of the ones that wasn't—I didn't get married until I come out of the service.

DC: OK. We'll sneak up on that pretty soon here. Was it difficult, stacking the cardboard?

EB: No. Our jobs in car retail were a little difficult because I hadn't learned to drive yet, and that's what I was doing. I was turning cars—I was taking the five gallons of gas out of it, because the way they checked the gas gauges then, they'd fill the tank up, check the gas gauges to see if it says full. If it said "full," that was fine. And then you had to—they'd turn around and I'd park it and I'd have to pull five gallons of gasoline out of it. And then I'd have to turn the car around and park it. And needless to say, I more or less learned to drive in there.

DC: So was it unusual for someone your age not to know how to drive?

EB: Not in my age group.

DC: Not really, OK.

EB: Because driver's education came in later.

DC: OK. So you had to learn how to drive.

EB: My Dad found that out and he says, "Well, you gotta learn how to drive." So we had an old '39 Chevrolet when we lived on First Street. And he says, "OK, go out there and back in and out of the driveway." That's why I—I learned to back in and out of the driveway, to go around the block. I went around the block. Come back, he says, "OK, you're going down. . ."—and I got a car in the meantime—a '48 Nash. And I went down and took my driver's test. As I say, driver's ed wasn't required at the time.

DC: But you still had to take a test.

EB: I did go down and take the test and pass it.

DC: That's good. So let's see. Tell me more about what you did with car retail. Was that all you did, is just drive . . .

EB: Well, that was just a division in the plant. What it was, is where—they don't do it much—I don't think they do it anymore at all, because of the way they have the destination charges. Back then, you bought a car in California and it was assembled at Pontiac Motor—they had a big high shipping charge that you paid on

it to get it to California. And they had this department where you would—you could take delivery of the car at Pontiac. People would just come by train or airplane and come to Pontiac, pick up the car, and go back to the west coast with it. Or wherever it was. And save that destination charge. But they got it now right to the point where everything is one—one price. In other words, the destination charge is a certain amount for a certain area and that's it. But, like in the last car I bought, I think the destination charge was four hundred and some dollars. It was assembled out at Orion! I took delivery of it over in Waterford! So that's a big change in that.

DC: So did a lot of people come into Pontiac and drive their cars home?

EB: A lot of—quite a few people—as I say, it was large enough for a department to run all day there. Get the cars ready. And we—some of them were—they had people come in as far away as Alaska for them. I remember driving a yellow one around there, putting it in line to go. I said, "Where in the world is that sucker going?" And he says—the guy says, "That's going to Alaska for a taxi cab."

DC: Wow. How many people worked in that division?

EB: There was probably, [pause] I'd say thirty or forty of us in that one department. Because as I say, I took the gasoline out and drove it around, then it went on. Another driver put it on the line and it went down and they touched up everything. They had a touch-up man that done all—that made sure everything was right—everything was checked.

DC: This is just before—the final stage before . . .

EB: And then they—most of the time they had the license plate to put on. And there was—the license plate for the state was put on it. And then the car was set outside for the people to pick up.

DC: OK. How did you end up in that job?

EB: By process of seniority. The most seniority there. As you know enough, when you're an hourly regular person in the plant, you—not all plants had it, but Pontiac Motor had a plant-wide seniority system. And if you got laid off from one department and there's somebody else in some other department that had less seniority than you, you bumped them.

DC: OK. So at that point, you really only had, what, about ninety days seniority or something.

EB: I just had a little over ninety days when I got—no, I had—when I left that department, I had, oh, a little over a year.

DC: When you left the cardboard? Or when you left . . .

EB: No, when I left the car retail department.

DC: But I guess I was wondering how you . . .

EB: I got laid off from cardboard, or from parts warehouse. I wasn't stacking cardboard when I left though. I was—I was picking parts, and I worked in the mailing department. I was a checker and a few other things.

DC: At the warehouse.

EB: At the warehouse.

DC: But you'd only been there about ninety days or a little bit more when you got laid off. And so when you got called back, did you get called back specifically to the . . .

EB: I got called back to the car retail.

DC: Oh, you did. OK. All right.

EB: And from car retail department, I was transferred to Plant 9 inspection.

DC: OK. Was that your choice to go there, or . . .

EB: No, it was their choice because of the low seniority, and a low-seniority person happened to be over there.

DC: OK, and so . . .

EB: I was over there.

DC: So what were you—what did that job entail? What did you have to do?

EB: My job there was to inspect pin bearings on the crankshaft.

DC: OK. And what was that like?

EB: It was using a stamp gauge that was the size of the pin and checking the pin bearings all the way around to make sure they weren't out of round or anything, and you marked them up if they were. And the Repair [Department] tried to repair them. Most of the time they did. It was just a little matter of polishing some more.

DC: Was that a hard job to learn?

EB: No. But it—it was a little hard, but not that bad. Because you picked the crankshaft off the conveyors would come through a washer, and you're turned

around and—they picked out a person that was pretty hefty and pretty muscular to do it because the crankshaft, at that time, was heavy, when I was a trainee. And you'd lay it on the bench and lay it on a fixture and then you'd inspect the pin bearings. When you got done with it, you'd pick it up a little bit and roll it down a chute to a guy in back of you, facing you, and he inspected the main bearings.

DC: OK. Did you inspect every single one that came down?

EB: On my shift, yeah.

DC: On your shift, OK. Yeah.

EB: Not every one. I think I was every—I think there was—not every one. I think there was four of us. Every fourth one.

DC: So every one got inspected, but you'd do . . .

EB: They all got inspected, but I'd only—it was the conveyor come around with the cranks on it—I took off every fourth one. If it's not there, they just waited for it to come around.

DC: Sure. How often did you find parts that weren't right?

EB: Well, you'd find several that were a little bit out of round there. As I say, it could be fixed relatively easy. Because you got to remember, the machinery that they were using was mainly from World War II. They was just getting new machinery in.

DC: So who would do the fixing of those?

EB: They had crank repair.

DC: Crank repair, OK.

EB: Then they'd get re-inspected and sent on their way.

DC: OK. Did you have a foreman who inspected you?

EB: Yup. The foreman kept up with you.

DC: Yeah. And how did that go?

EB: Well, I never had any trouble with any supervision. One or two supervision I had trouble with, but not very often.

DC: Not on that job, anyway.

EB: Not on *that* job, no.

DC: Yeah. Was there any pressure to alter your judgment of what was a passable part and what wasn't?

EB: Well, sometimes they'd double-check the gauge for you and find out it was off and we'd redo—recalibrate it, and did all right.

DC: Yeah. So would you say that that was a popular job? You had that job with pretty low seniority. I mean . . .

EB: Well, most of your jobs in there *were* that way. You got broke in on a job—if you happened to have a lot of seniority, you stayed on it. Unless you wanted out. And then you'd ask for—I think we had the 64B—I think that was the right number—for transfer back to the home department, or something like that.

DC: OK. Were the other inspectors young like you, or were they . . .

EB: It varied. From young to married, young and middle-aged. Depending on how long the person's been there.

DC: But if someone with more seniority wanted your job, could they have bumped you out of there?

EB: Not unless there was an opening.

DC: Oh, OK. Only when there's that opening, at that moment.

EB: Yeah. Because when I got drafted—that's where I was at when I got drafted into the service. And when I got my draft notice and went up to talk with them and told them I was drafted and they put me on military leave, when I come *back* in '54, I was still on inspection. That's where you hired back in on the same department you left. And from that I went to work on pistons. Piston inspection. I was weighing pistons.

DC: We'll get up to that in a second, but let me back up a little bit. Did you say that you were living with your brother in an apartment at that point in time?

EB: My brother and I had a *room*.

DC: Had a room, OK.

EB: And we would see Dad every night and have our meal. Then we'd go to our room, because my brother had a car at the time. He was out of high school already and was working for the county.

DC: He was working for the county, OK. So were you still in high school when you were working at Pontiac Motor?

EB: Nope.

DC: No, OK. Yeah.

EB: It was after I come out of high school. I graduated in January, that's the reason, you know, for the February date.

DC: OK, I see.

EB: I graduated the 26th of January of '51 and went into the plant in February of '51.

DC: Yeah. Right, you said you started in February, so I thought that might be while school was still on.

EB: Nope. That's when they had a middle graduating class in the winter. It was *cold* the day I graduated. [laughs]

DC: So your brother was working for the county and you shared a room with him. And then when did you get drafted?

EB: July 23rd of 1952.

DC: OK. So right in the middle of the Korean War. And what branch of the service was that?

EB: Army.

DC: The Army. And where did they send you?

EB: My original destination was—I took sixteen weeks of heavy weapons infantry basic at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky, in the 101st Airborne Division.

DC: Oh, OK. What was that like?

EB: Tough. But not demanding. Nothing I couldn't handle. Some guys didn't like it too well.

DC: What made it so tough?

EB: It was the *Airborne Division*, that's what!

DC: But I mean, for those who haven't been in the Airborne Division. . .

EB: What is an Airborne Division—[?] they called it.

DC: Well, describe it for me. . .

EB: Sometimes they'd make you get out of bed and go do running early in the morning, other than normal. When you're called out of ranks, you better—when you get in ranks, you better be standing tall and not fooling around. Stuff like that.

DC: OK. And so what exactly did you learn to do there?

EB: Heavy weapons, infantry heavy weapons. I learned to fire everything from a forty-five caliber pistol up to a 4-2 point mortar, which included the seventy-five recoilless rifle, fifty caliber machine gun, thirty—thirty caliber machine gun, water-cooled, air-cooled, M-1 rifle, BAR, and for the carbine, how to throw hand grenades.

DC: Had you had any experience even with—just as simple as hunting, or anything like that before?

EB: I had hunted.

DC: Yeah.

EB: So I knew what a rifle was.

DC: What kind of hunting had you done?

EB: I deer hunted.

DC: Uh-huh. With relatives, or . . .

EB: With my brother.

DC: With your brother, OK. OK. So you were at Camp Breckenridge for . . .

EB: Six months.

DC: For six months. And then where did you go?

EB: From there I went to Korea.

DC: You did go to Korea, OK. Yeah.

EB: I was in Korea for a year and three months. I come back from Korea when my time was up and I was mustered out.

DC: Well tell me what it was like in Korea.

EB: Korea is cold in the winter time, wet in the spring, and hot in the summer. [pauses] I hit Korea March the 4th of '53. I was standing on, sitting on what they call a blocking position when the armistice was signed. And was scheduled to fill a gap before the armistice was signed, the company was I was in. I was made a assistant squad leader when I come back from NCO school. I went to NCO school over there.

DC: Over there, OK.

EB: And I also had a leadership college with the hundred and first before I went over, but they decided to send me to NCO school over there, so I went, too. Because that gets you out of combat zone, but you still get your four points.

DC: OK. The four points meaning what now?

EB: Per month.

DC: OK. Yeah.

EB: Used to have a point system.

DC: For mustering out and all?

EB: No, for time in Korea.

DC: Time, OK.

EB: Four points a year. If you was in a combat zone, you got four points--you could get home in less than a year's time. But I—they dropped the points system after the truce was signed, so it didn't do me any good.

DC: OK. So did you choose to go to NCO school, or did they choose for you?

EB: They choose—they chose me to go.

DC: OK. And on what basis did they choose you? What did they see in you?

EB: Leadership.

DC: Uh-huh. OK. Had you been a leader all along?

EB: Well, I was in Boy Scouts. I went through the ranks in Boy Scouts. Patrol leader, assistant patrol leader, stuff like that.

DC: Mm-hmm. How about in sports?

EB: In sports, I kept the spirit up, yeah. I'd win the captain or the [?]. Yeah, I kept the guys going when they got down.

DC: When you left Camp Breckenridge for Korea, what specific role did you have? What did you settle in on?

EB: I was just assigned to an infantry company in Korea; [?] company, the sixty-first infantry division. Part of the third infantry division. So you know where both my units are right now.

DC: Oh, are they overseas now?

EB: They're both in Iraq right now. The hundred and first and the third infantry division, both in Korea. But the sixty-fifth at that time was an attack punitive third division because it was a ROTC team, meaning a [?] combat team. It was out of Puerto Rico. And while they—when they first got to Korea, they got—they had a lot of casualties and stuff, so they decided to reorganize it into a mixed unit. And that's when I joined it. And so that's the reason if you look at the third infantry right now, you won't find the sixty-fifth regiment in it. Because it went back to Puerto Rico, as the sixty-fifth regimental combat team.

DC: So they split back out again?

EB: They split back out when they sent them home.

DC: OK. They just merged them for the time being.

EB: Just was merged for the time they were in Korea.

DC: Yeah.

EB: [?] the third infantry division had left, had already left one regiment here in the States when they went over.

DC: So if you look at the time line, by the time you got to Korea the war was kind of winding down, but what was your experience there?

EB: I was in combat.

DC: You were, OK.

EB: I was a BAR man.

DC: A BR you said?

EB: BAR.

DC: OK, what is that?

EB: Browning Automatic Rifle.

DC: OK. And tell me what that means.

EB: That means that you're a—they shoot at you. Because that weapon will put out quite a—I think about five hundred rounds a minute, if you want to fire it that fast. I did do that one time. I had to re[?] my barrel, I got it so hot.

DC: You re—what now?

EB: I re[?] it.

DC: Oh.

EB: The weapon had been used so much that it was—I had to keep rubbing dirt on it to keep it from shining.

DC: Oh, I see.

EB: I went out on patrol one day as a support group, and the support group got in trouble. So we would give them support. And let's say I put thirteen—I put about twenty-four, twenty rounds [?] weapon inside of ten minutes.

DC: That sounds pretty intense.

EB: It was. That was the biggest fighting I got into. Shortly after that, I was sent to NCO school. And the unit that I was assigned to, [?] sixty-fifth, got into some big battles.

DC: After you went to NCO school?

EB: Yup. But I was—you've heard, I don't know if you know any Korean War history or not. You've probably heard of Outpost Harry?

DC: By name. Yeah, I don't know much of what happened.

EB: OK. Outpost Harry was right beside where we was on the main line. When we moved up to the main line, about thirty days after I got there, we was in a—as I say, it was in that reorganization process, and we reorganized and took some training. And they moved us up. And the main line of resistance was here, and Outpost Harry was there. And I went out, I went out on patrol over Outpost Harry, and the thing I remember most was I had my head a little too high in the trenches. They said—they guys that were in the Outpost Harry said, "Get your head down there! There's a sniper out there!" Well, I got my head down. No sooner I got my head down, *ding*!

DC: Really. Wow.

EB: That's one of the things I really remember about Korea.

DC: I'll bet!

EB: And that the truce was signed and I didn't have to go on that [?] the night before. I was glad of that, too. But the [?] longest time I . . .

[Knocking on door]

DC: Oh. There's a gentleman knocking on the door, but I think they've got it covered. I'm sorry to interrupt; go ahead.

EB: The—about the most miserable time I spent over there probably was the forty-eight hour truce period.

DC: Why was that?

EB: Because we was sent up to relieve a third ROK division, which is a Korean division, and all we had to do was sit there and make sure nothing happened. And you just sit there in the fox hole or in the bunkers. That's all you done for forty-eight hours. And [?] patrol, or pulled guard duty. You talk about a miserable forty-eight hours; I didn't think it'd ever end! [laughs]

DC: What were the fox holes like?

EB: Well, we had bunkers. As I say, it was—we didn't have too many fox holes left because it was a—when you have a main line of resistance, you have bunkers. I slept in bunkers. We had a bunker we slept in and then we had a bunker that we--our position was, and that's how that worked.

DC: So you just had to stay in that bunker for forty-eight hours.

EB: Yeah. But I guess the only thing, only consolation I had was while I was there, they found the APO, which is your mail. And they had lost it when the company was at NCO school and I was in NCO school. They lost it when the company got hit real hard and they had to pull back out and everything. They lost everything. Didn't make connections, and I finally caught up with them. They brought me a stack of mail about yay high.

DC: Is that right? Wow.

EB: It passed the time away for me.

DC: So who all was writing you letters?

EB: My mother wrote me. At the time my fiancé, which is now my wife forty-eight years.

DC: Congratulations.

EB: Forty-nine years. And the people from both the churches—my wife's church and the church I went to here. Of course my Dad and Stepmother. Everybody wrote me. And the kids I run around with at, here in Pontiac before I went in. They all of them tried to write me. Now, my wife used to write me two and three times a week, my mother used to write me at least once, my dad and stepmother kept up with me pretty good. I even got letters from the pastor of my wife's church, who married us.

DC: So you had already met your future wife when you left for Korea.

EB: I met her when I was in Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky.

DC: Oh, at Camp Breckenridge, OK.

EB: I was on weekend leave and I went to a couple's house by the name of J.C. Kelley and his wife, which was . . .

DC: Was that down there, or was that up here?

EB: That was down in Evansville, Indiana.

DC: Evansville, OK.

EB: And they lived—it was between church services, Because I went to church at the church that my wife went to at that time, and they introduced me to my wife, who lived just down the street from where they lived.

DC: OK. Now, I'm a little bit confused—where you lived when you were down—in camp or were you living . . .

EB: That was when I was on leave.

DC: When you were on leave, OK.

EB: We had weekend leave and we could go anyplace we wanted to within a ninety mile radius.

DC: So Evansville is where you chose to go.

EB: Evansville was my destination, and I'd stay in the Y.

DC: I see. OK, all right. I gotcha.

EB: Or a hotel. I got so I stayed in the Y all the time Because it only cost you two or three bucks for a stay in the Y. You'd stay overnight; you'd come in on a Saturday afternoon, stay overnight on Saturday, and then Sunday I'd go—I went to church over there with my—as I say, where my wife was going. Because it was happening—the church that was right downtown Evansville at the time. Got acquainted with the Kelleys, and it's because they done that with a lot of servicemen. And then it went from there.

DC: All right. So your fiancée-where was your fiancée living when you were in Korea?

EB: She was living with her folks in Evansville, Indiana.

DC: In Evansville. OK, all right. And then had you gone to a child? Had church been a big part of your life?

EB: Church was a—church was drilled into me, from the time I was a kid.

DC: OK. What church was it?

EB: First it was the Presbyterian church, and then the Willises, the family I lived with there on Vinewood, they organized what they call a community church, a non-denominational church. And that's where I went after that. It's a small little church.

DC: OK. How did you like that?

EB: I got used to it. But, as I say, it was just a religious upbringing. When I went in the service, it followed me, and I decided I'd--when I got into Evansville, I'd start looking. . .

End of Tape I, Side A

Begin Tape I, Side B

EB: I ended up dating—going with her sister first.

DC: Oh, really?

EB: And then I turned around and ended up with—her sister got teed and left, and I ended up with her. But I liked her better, anyway. And my wife and sister still don't get along.

DC: Is that right?

EB: Yeah.

DC: Did they get along before, or . . .

EB: They've gotten along, but they've always been at odds here and there.

DC: Hmm. Oh, well. It happens in families. So it sounds like you stayed on in Korea after the . . .

EB: Yeah, I was in there—I left Korea in May of '54.

DC: May of '54. So that was long after the armistice was signed.

EB: Yeah. Right. We went into the—after the forty-eight hour truce period, we was shipped back to an area for bivouac for awhile and we had a memorial service for the guys that were killed during the conflict. And then we was there probably forty-eight to another twenty-four hours after that, and then we got ordered to ship back further. And they shipped us back into the same area that I first went into when I went to Korea to reorganize—the reorganization. And we slept in squad tents then. And when I first got back there, got everything organized, and then they—as I say, I was a squad leader at that time—but the company commander come to us and says, "Now we're going back to basic training." Says, "You're going to be teaching BAR." Because I knew the BAR. And you gotta have lesson plans and all that good stuff. We more or less went through a refresher course in basic training.

DC: Was that just to pass the time, or . . .

EB: No, it's to keep you sharp.

DC: Keep you sharp, OK.

EB: And they also had alerts that the whole company would be called out on. And the trucks would come and pick you up and you'd go. You wouldn't know if it was practice or real on account of the infiltration of North Koreans into the South. We did find some. Not our unit, but some of them did. We did find some infiltrators.

DC: Did you find them before any fighting broke out?

EB: Well, no, this was after the truce was done.

DC: Right. I know, but I mean . . .

EB: They'd try to infiltrate into South Korea to pick up intelligence.

DC: I see, just to get intelligence, not necessarily to—I was thinking about the possibility of violence or something.

EB: Well, they were doing that, too. See, what we was doing—what the US forces were doing, plus what the Korean forces were doing. As you know, there's trouble over there right now. And the 2nd Infantry Division is still in Korea. If I remember right, the 7th is still over there.

DC: So what was it like during that time, after the fighting had stopped?

EB: It was more or less just a bivouac—camping, call it camping, I guess. You camped for quite a few months. [laughs] And slowly they brought in Quonset huts, and we built—had a Quonset hut for a supply depot, or supply room, and a—what in the heck did we call them? It slipped my mind right now. Anyway, where the—orderly room. And then we had another supply—another Quonset hut—a couple of Quonset huts for a mess hall, and we had another Quonset hut—couple Quonset huts for a day room and a mail room.

DC: Did many troops get shipped back to the States?

EB: You only got shipped back to the States if you was ready to rotate.

DC: OK. What did it take to be ready to rotate?

EB: Well, you had to have served there a certain time. They based it on your point system and the amount of time you'd been there, when I first started it. And the 4th—40th Division and the 45th Division, were both National Guard units, like that's been called up here lately [to go to Iraq]. And they rotated them back home. And when they done that, anybody from those two divisions that had time to serve were rotated into the units that stayed. And the other—and we rotated our people into that unit to ship them home. Done it that way. And needless to say, my squad went from a nine-squad rifle squad to a fifteen-squad rifle squad. Fifteen-person rifle squad.

DC: It grew.

EB: It grew, yeah, and I had lots of people in my squad. The company grew quite a bit, too. It was a whole lot—it was a lot over strength, in other words.

DC: Did they all go through that new basic training with you?

EB: They all went through it together. Whatever the company was doing when they come into it, that's what they done.

DC: How did you like teaching the BAR?

EB: Teaching the BAR was fine. I taught it—I taught that and I also taught a class called fire and movement.

DC: Fire and movement?

EB: Yeah. Because in Korea, they changed the way they done it from World War II. They had a two group—had one group would move one way at one time and the other group would—you support it here, and this group moves up. And then this support group supported and then this group moved up, attacking your objective. That's what they call fire and movement. Also taught that.

DC: OK. Were you homesick?

EB: Didn't have time to get homesick.

DC: OK.

EB: Well, I was homesick to a point, but I mean, I didn't get like a lot of the guys do. You know, get down in your mouth and want to go home and all that kind of stuff. Being, coming from a broken home, I was used to it.

DC: On the other hand, you did have a long period of living in the same place over in Vinewood and all.

EB: Mm-hmm.

DC: Yeah.

EB: Well, yeah, I had some good times with that family. I went up north with them, I helped them build a cabin.

DC: Did you stay in touch with them?

EB: We stayed in touch right up to the time that they both passed away. For a matter of fact, I was a pall bearer at both of their funerals.

DC: Mm-hmm. Where was the cabin that they built?

EB: Near Lincoln, Michigan, in Alcona County. [northeastern lower peninsula, near Lake Huron.

DC: Oh, OK. All right.

EB: About—on Grass [?] Lake.

DC: Hmm. I'm not familiar with that lake.

EB: It's—it'd be west of Harrisville. Probably twenty miles. It might not be that far. I don't think it's that far.

DC: That's beautiful country.

EB: Yeah, nice country up there. Yup. It was right next to Huron National Forest.

DC: Mm-hmm. Have a lot of elk up in that area now.

EB: And my brother—my brother at the time I said was working, and he bought a lot right next door to it, and he built a cabin up there. They have since been sold. There was three or four families—the family we lived with for awhile, they bought a piece of property up there and built a cabin, too. There was three of us all in a row there to one another, in a cabin.

DC: Did you go up there in . . .

EB: Went up there in the summer. Went fishing. For a matter of fact, when we built the cabin, one of the preacher friends of Elmer and Mary, uh, May, come over to see us. And I went out—and Elmer—had helped Elmer build two flat-bottom wood boats. And he took one of them up there, put it on the lake. The preacher and I rode out in the center and went fishing and he'd pull up two fish at a time. He had two hooks, and they'd—we had a lot of blue gill, and sunfish. Nemon Stemon [sp?], we called him, the preacher guy.

DC: Nemon Stemon. Did you build that cabin after you had moved out?

EB: No, I was still living with them.

DC: You were still living with them at the time. So . . .

EB: I was . . .

DC: Was it after the war?

EB: Oh yeah, it was all after—this all happened after the war. [pause] But it's really not that far after the war.

DC: No, it'd have to be pretty . . .

EB: In the early—late '40s, early '50s.

DC: Mm-hmm. Well you said you came back from Korea in May of '54? Is that right?

EB: Yeah.

DC: OK. Were you discharged from the service then, or did you just come back stateside?

EB: You don't get discharged—you get separated.

DC: Separated, all right.

EB: That's a DD214.

DC: I don't know the terminology, so you have to educate me.

EB: OK, a DD214 is what you receive and you have—you had two choices: you had to—you can go four years active reserve, or eight years inactive reserve whichever you want. You choose. I chose the eight years. Last unit I was assigned to was in St. Louis, Missouri, before my discharge became effective. After the eight years, if you want to apply for a discharge, you can. So that's when your obligation is through.

DC: OK. Why did you choose the eight-year inactive?

EB: At that time, I was disgusted with the service. I was thinking about re-enlisting, then I had a bad experience in Korea with a captain.

DC: Hmm. What was that? What happened?

EB: Well, he was—he was just on me, that's all. Because another person in that unit, I got his rank instead of him. It's as simple as that. I don't need to go into any more detail.

DC: Just jealousy, do you think? Or what?

EB: Well, he was jealous. And he was a brownnoser. And he brown—his captain was one that could be brownnosed. And up to that point, there was—the company commander couldn't be brownnosed. Your rank was dealt—it was issued strictly on merit. Not on brownnosing. That's what happened.

DC: So you got disgusted with the military?

EB: I got a little bit disgusted with the military and I said, "Well, I'm just going to get out and get my eight—do the eight years of reserve time and that'll be it."

DC: What obligation did you owe them, then, with eight-year inactive service?

EB: They kept in touch with you. You had to fill out a form every year and tell them what you was doing and where you was and every—they just kept track of you.

DC: And would they have the right to call you up if necessary?

EB: If necessary, they could. That never happened with me.

DC: Yeah. OK. So where did you go when you came back to the States?

EB: I come back to the States, and I got out the first day of June. Went and bought me a new car.

DC: Were you back in Pontiac at that point?

EB: I had come back to Pontiac at that time. And my Dad and I went out and I bought a new '54 Chevrolet car. And I took some time off, and I went down to Evansville. I met up with the wife again, and we got married the 18th day of June.

DC: Is that right? Wow.

EB: And then we come back up here on the honeymoon and she decided that she wanted to live in Evansville. I said, "That's fine, I'll go down there and try to find a job." I went down there and tried to find a job and couldn't. I had ninety days to hire back in on my old job and hold my seniority.

DC: OK. So you had a ninety-day window.

EB: Had the ninety day window. I hired in on the eighty-fifth day. I come back up here. She come back up with me. And unbeknownst to me, she was pregnant at the time. Well, unbeknownst to us, I should say. And we—I got laid off.

DC: Let's back up for a second. What kinds of job possibilities did you find in Evansville? Was there anything at all?

EB: I looked into the printing end of it. I checked with a couple—they had a couple big printing plants in Evansville. My father-in-law got me into them, in for interviews with them, but they weren't hiring.

DC: They weren't hiring, OK. Because you said you had run a print shop back in Pontiac, right?

EB: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. Was that on your own or was that someone else's shop?

EB: Somebody else owned it. I just run it.

DC: OK. But it sounds like you had some interest in that.

EB: Oh, yeah.

DC: Yeah.

EB: Well, during my high school time, I took industrial arts, where you'd have a three-hour course in your junior and senior year of your trade. And mine was printing.

And I helped set up the school newspapers, football programs, basketball programs—I used to do all that.

DC: Wow. OK.

EB: I used to run the Kluge for all the commencement exercises and . . .

DC: What's the Kluge?

EB: Kluge was a press, an old flatbed press that was converted to an automatic.

DC: OK. But you knew how to run it.

EB: Well, they taught—I was taught how to run it. And I was one of the main men to run it in my two years there.

DC: And what kinds of things did the print shop make in Pontiac?

EB: Where—what did I do . . .

DC: Yeah, what . . .

EB: That print shop I run?

DC: Yeah. What kinds of things did you print?

EB: We printed information cards for the fire department, stuff like that. Stationery—because they didn't have computers. Naturally, if you wanted stationery, you had to have it printed—envelopes and stuff like that.

DC: Yeah. So it sounds like you looked into some printing plants in Evansville, but they weren't hiring.

EB: Right.

DC: It was a tough time in 1954.

EB: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah. Were there any other opportunities in Evansville?

EB: I had an opportunity to go to work for Halliburton. And that took place after I—before I got laid off and my wife and I went back to Evansville.

DC: Is this the same Halliburton that's around today?

EB: Yes. It's the same Halliburton that's around today. And my wife and I, she wanted me to take that job. I said, "OK. We'll go to the interview." I got a—my Dad, my Father-in-law called me and said, "You got a interview with Halliburton," because they had a unit at Mount Pleasant at the time. That's when the oil excursions were going great up there.

DC: In Michigan. In Mount Pleasant.

EB: Yeah. Mount Pleasant, Michigan. So I took a day off from work and I told my Dad, I said, "What am I going to do?" He says, "Well, you just take a day off from work. Go do it." So my wife and I went up and had an interview with the guy. She knew I'd be moving around a lot because when you're assigned to a unit, you could be assigned to Mount Pleasant while things were going good there, and then you would be—you could be moved anyplace. Your truck would do it. You had to take the truck with you. What they call—it was an oil cementing—oil well cementing company is what it was. In other words, they poured cement down around the oil well after it was drilled. So you pull the rod back up. After she got done with the interview with the supervisor up there at Mount Pleasant, we decided we didn't want it.

DC: OK. Was it because you'd have to move around from job to job?

EB: Move around and conditions and that, and what—the way she'd be left—so we gave that up and I come back and went to work. And I got laid off.

DC: How long had you worked back at Pontiac Motor before you got laid off?

EB: I wasn't there too long. It went down for a model change.

DC: Would this be in the summer of '54 still?

EB: That would be the summer of '54. They were down for model change, and I got laid off. And at that time, they didn't do it like they do now. And I come—I got called back in the fall of '55 [he meant '54] to the new engine plant in Plant 9.

DC: So you were laid off a long time, it sounds like.

EB: I was out for part of the summer, yeah. And I picked up odd jobs in Evansville while I was down there.

DC: OK. So you went back to Evansville while you were laid off at Pontiac Motors?

EB: Yeah. We decided to move back in. Moved back in with her folks and stayed there. And she decided to stay there when I come back and went to work, and I stayed with my Dad and Stepmother.

DC: OK. Now I'm losing track a little bit of the time here. Would that have been—did she stay down in Evansville when you went back like on day eighty-five to reclaim your job, or did she stay down . . .

EB: No she come with me at first.

DC: She came with you at that time. OK, but when you got laid off and went back to Evansville . . .

EB: Because we only worked—I think I only worked about a little over a month before I got laid off.

DC: OK. All right.

EB: Well, we picked—of course, we didn't have that much. We just packed everything back up in the car and moved back down.

DC: But then did you get recalled in the fall of '54 or the fall of '55? When you said fall of '55, that would mean you got laid off for like a year or so.

EB: No, we got—I got called back in the fall of '54 on the '55 model.

DC: On the '55 model, gotcha—yeah, yeah, yeah.

EB: Yeah. That's where I made the mistake.

DC: OK. Yeah. I was just—at first it sounded like you were laid off for a year.

EB: No. Just part of the summer is all.

DC: So your wife was pregnant and she went down to Evansville and then you got recalled in the fall of '54. And then you told me what job you got recalled to, but now I can't remember.

EB: I got recalled in '50—oh, I went to small parts in department 970. The new engine plant.

DC: The new engine plant. It was in Plant 9, did you say?

EB: Yeah, Plant 9.

DC: Plant 9. OK. Had you been in the retail . . .

EB: No, that was after I come home—I was in the . . .

DC: When you first came back and reclaimed your job on day eighty-five, what job did you get?

EB: I went back to—right to inspection.

DC: Inspection, that's right, inspection. OK. I'm losing track of where you were. Inspection, OK. And then you got laid off very shortly after that, and then you got recalled to the small parts plant, OK.

EB: Small parts *department*.

DC: Small parts *department* at Plant 9. Small engine. So what was that job like?

EB: It was machining synchromesh fly wheels. I run four different lathes.

DC: Was that hard to learn how to do?

EB: No.

DC: No, OK.

EB: I changed all my own tools.

DC: This sounds quite different from your other jobs though.

EB: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah. Did you like it?

EB: Oh it was fine. I learned to run the whole—I could run the whole line. I could run the drill press, I could run the balancer, I could run from one end to the other if I had to. There was two of us that run it.

DC: How long did it take you to learn how to do all that?

EB: I probably had it down pat in a couple weeks.

DC: Really, wow. OK. How did it compare to your other jobs?

EB: Compared to inspection, it was a lot different because it's machining.

DC: Mm-hmm. Did you like it better or worse?

EB: About the same.

DC: OK. So did your wife move back to Pontiac then?

EB: She come back to Pontiac in the [pauses]—in the first part of 1950, 1955, after Christmas. The first new year, '55, we rented an apartment. And my daughter

was born in May of that year. [pauses] My one and only daughter. My one and only kid we've ever had.

DC: OK. One child. What did your wife think of Pontiac at that point?

EB: Well, she was a little disgusted with it, but she got used to it. And now you can't take her away from Pontiac.

DC: OK. So it was a little hard to get used to.

EB: Mm-hmm. Well, she didn't have no *relatives* up here. No friends.

DC: Did you guys go back to—did you go back to Evansville very often?

EB: When we first got married, we used to go back every year during model change. But after I got on the trades, then things changed.

DC: OK. So there's still more to the story here. Let's see. How was your employment situation on small parts in Plant 9?

EB: Well, we got—things slowed down in the middle of '56 and I got transferred to Plant 5.

DC: What was happening in Plant 5?

EB: It was, that was rear end assem—gear and pinion. And it was going great because we was building rear ends for Oldsmobile *and* Pontiac and Oldsmobile, if you remember at that time, they were selling good. And so I run the hob in department 561 at that time.

DC: The hob, you said?

EB: Yeah, the hob. The spline on the pinion.

DC: OK. Did you ever think of getting a job outside Pontiac Motor at any point in those years? You were getting moved around a lot and finding times were getting slow and . . .

EB: When it comes down to it, I thought about it, yeah.

DC: Yeah? What did you think about doing?

EB: Thought about being a policeman. Some job in government. But I never did do it. I kept with Pontiac. The most—about the only time that I've really had a super hard time was probably in 19-—this was when I was still on hourly—In 1958 I got laid off and I was off—and I had put a paragraph eight in to go back to the warehouse, and I was in the warehouse when I got laid off. It was the eight

months, from March of '58 till November of '58. That's the longest period of time I was off.

DC: 1958, OK. And what did you do during those months?

EB: Looked for a job, but didn't have any. I say—I ended up, probably in August, I finally—the preacher's son asked me to—at the church we was going to at the time—said, "Why don't you go caddying with me?" And I caddied all summer. I caddied right up until the snow fell. And I said, "Man, I don't know what I'm going to do now." Because there's no cad—not—nobody's going to be playing golf. That's when I got called back to work. Right in the nick of time.

DC: So you caddied throughout that period.

EB: I caddied from August right up till the time I went back to work in November, but as I say . . .

DC: There were a few months before then when . . .

EB: I did. But that give me a little leeway with my unemployment SUB pay, though.

DC: Did your wife find a job at that point?

EB: Nope.

DC: OK. Did she ever work outside the home?

EB: She has worked outside the home, yeah, but not then.

DC: Not then. OK.

EB: After the daughter got older.

DC: Oh, after she was older, OK. So where were you living at that point in time?

EB: We was renting apartments.

DC: Did that get tight?

EB: Well, yeah, it got tight, too. But what happened then, I had to move one time because my daughter was making too much noise for the—but I was renting from a friend and he asked me to move and I moved. Three times in '58.

DC: Three times in '58, wow.

EB: And the third time I moved, I moved into a place over on James Street, and the gentleman said there, he says, "Well I'm getting ready to retire." And laid it on the

line. I said, "OK. I'll cross that line when I get to it." When it come to the line, he says, "Well, I can't sell the house." Real estate wasn't moving at all. He said, "But I'm retiring and I want to do—go visit my . . ."—him and her had both been married for the second time—both their spouses had died. And he said, "Can you take care of the—if you move downstairs and pay me so much a month, will you take care of the downstairs for me, till I come back?" I said, "Yeah." I done that. They come back, they still couldn't sell it. And I says, "Well, I got a piece of property I've got paid for out in—thirty acres." I said, "If you want to take that as a down payment, I'll buy the house." And that's what I did. And then we lived there almost twenty-five years. And I went through and redone the house with an income home. I had two rooms and a bath I rented out and then three rooms and bath I rented out. And then I took over the whole downstairs for myself and when I—shortly after I went on the trades. And I had three rooms and a bath I rented out.

DC: So that was a fortunate situation. Yeah.

EB: Yup. And that's the one thing that saved me during the strike of 1970. I had income from the houses, plus my strike benefits.

DC: Yeah. So it came in handy later on. During the 1950s, did you ever have any need to use a committeeman or use the union in any of your jobs?

EB: During the '50s [thinking]—not the '50s, no. '60s, yes.

DC: Not the '50s, OK. Were you a union member during the '50s?

EB: You *was* a union member. Yeah, at that time when you hired in—in '51 when I hired in, you was told that you had to join the union. They'd give you ninety days to do it. If you forgot, they'd call you in the office—the management would call you in the office and say, "Well, you gotta go join the union. You gotta go across the street and join the union today or you're done!" So you'd go over and join. That's—they were getting into a closed-shop situation then.

DC: Moving in that direction, yeah. But it sounds like you didn't have any situations come up in the '50s.

EB: No, I didn't need them for anything at that point. But I did go over and join with it. I'd just forgotten. My Dad told me, he said, "You join the union." But I forgot about it.

DC: Yeah, well you were young.

EB: They were taking union dues out of me anyways. [laughs]

DC: Sure. So let's see, when you got called back in November, you said of '58, was it?

EB: Yeah.

DC: What job did you get then?

EB: I went and worked on the assembly line and I had a paragraph eight in to go . . .

DC: Is that a transfer request?

EB: That's a transfer request to your home department.

DC: OK, to your home department. OK. Anyways, you were on the assembly line?

EB: I was working on the assembly line and then I went back to the parts warehouse. That was bef—and that's where I got laid off from.

DC: Let's see. You got laid off from there at what point?

EB: In March of '58 I got laid off from parts warehouse.

DC: From parts, OK. So anyways, you were on the . . .

EB: Then in November of '88 [meant '58] I got called back to work in the assembly department.

DC: OK. And what did you do in assembly at that point?

EB: I was putting manifolds on. Exhaust manifolds.

DC: OK. And what was that work like?

EB: Hard. For me, because of the way they come down the line.

DC: Explain it to me so I can understand it better.

EB: Well you had to put the exhaust manifold on and run two bolts and then start the rest of them, and tighten them up with an air wrench. And it was—happened to be that the engine come by me at an angle that hurt your—made my back sore. But I worked there for awhile and I went back to plant—to the parts warehouse. I paragraphed eight, worked there for awhile. I got—things slowed down again, then I got transferred to, back to Plant 9 in Department 968.

DC: OK. What was happening there?

EB: That's medium parts.

DC: Medium parts. OK.

EB: That was intake exhaust manifolds . . .

DC: So building the parts that you had to put on the car in assembly.

EB: On the car. Engine plant—that's all engine plant. And when I went to the engine plant, they put me on a machine running left-hand exhaust manifolds. And I run that machine for better than a year.

DC: Mm-hmm. How was that?

EB: Boring.

DC: Yeah? What made it boring?

EB: Because it was just repeat—repeat things. But they found out I could do a lot of things so they pulled me off that machine and put me on other machines a lot of times.

DC: OK. So you got a little bit of . . .

EB: Because I could build up a bank on that machine. That machine would cut a lot more parts than we needed, and so they'd bank them and then they'd say, "OK." When somebody's off, they'd pull me off and put me on something else. Put me on the right-hand side for awhile sometimes, and sometimes I'd be on the intake manifold, on different occasions. I learned them all.

DC: So you were on that for . . .

EB: That was a little over a year, and then I went to job set.

DC: To—I'm sorry?

EB: A job setter.

DC: Job setter, OK. Yeah.

EB: That's—you take care of the line that you're assigned to.

DC: OK. You just make sure everything's in position? Or what all would the job setter do?

EB: And at that time I was job setting—the flywheel department had moved into the 968 department, and I job set on the flywheel job.

DC: And what exactly did you have to do to job set?

EB: You was responsible for tools—getting the tools to the people that change—like on the lathes there, some of the inner—some of the tools they changed, and some of

them you changed. You had inserts. The inserts *they* changed, and if the whole block had to be changed, then you had to do it.

DC: OK. So you had to get all the . . .

EB: Plus I had a drill press I had to change over. I had the balancers I had to take care of.

DC: So you had to know a lot about a lot of different machines.

EB: Oh yeah. That's how I got on trades . . .

DC: Is it? OK.

EB: . . . working on stuff like that.

DC: So how long did you work as a job setter?

EB: I worked as a job setter from '62 through the time I went on the trades in '63.

DC: '63, OK. And so how exactly did you get into the trades?

EB: I got into the trades by—they were advertising for employees in training for machine repair. And I had signed up one time earlier and didn't get called. And this time I signed up and I had a friend of mine at the church I went to at the time that was a foreman in the frame plant. He says, "You sign up, I'll see you get in." And he did. And I went into the—it was welder repair first, then they combined the trades, machine repair. And I was on the trades for the rest of my time.

DC: Was it that usual to enter the trades at that point in your career?

EB: Not then because things—they needed the people.

DC: They needed them, OK. All right.

EB: And as I say, I was an employee in training and it was actually a step up for me because when an employee in training went on the trades, he usually went on as a dime an hour over what he was making. Which a lot of it was just a lot of production people. Then you get raises—what they call merit raises. But I went on a dime over what I was making, which I was already making fifteen cents an hour more than production. So I went on—actually I probably went on a quarter an hour more than what most of the people went on that. So I went on skilled—as a welder repair.

DC: Welder repair, OK.

EB: And I worked in the frame plant three and a half years.

DC: Was that as an employee in training?

EB: Employee in training all that time.

DC: Now was that a part of entering the trades, being an employee in training?

EB: Yeah.

DC: So did everybody . . .

EB: Instead of an apprenticeship.

DC: Instead of an apprenticeship, OK.

EB: Serving apprenticeship is a little bit different. It takes you eight years to get your card on the EIT program, and only—when you come out of the trade school, you have a card.

DC: OK. So you had—did you get your card then, eventually?

EB: Well I eventually got my card, yeah.

DC: Eight years?

EB: Eight years, I had my card.

DC: Wow. That's a . . .

EB: I still got it on me.

DC: Do you? Can I see it?

EB: Yeah. Sure.

DC: Eight years of effort, my goodness.

EB: If I remember where I put it. Let's see. I know where it's at—it's over on this side. I think. Nope, not that side—the other side.

DC: There it is. Wow. So you got your actual journeyman card then.

EB: That's a journeyman's card.

DC: It sure is.

EB: Issued by the International.

DC: Uh huh. Wow.

EB: A lot of us got our journeyman's card, and we didn't really need it. But a lot of us got it when things were slowing up. We decided we better get our journeyman card in case we had to go someplace else to get a job. Because you could show that and get a job.

DC: So you were thinking about that even at the time you got the card, that you might need to go elsewhere?

EB: Yup. Never did have to use it because, as I say, I worked for Pontiac all my life--forty years and three months.

DC: It sounds like it was up and down, at least early on, with all the layoffs and shifting around.

EB: Yeah, well, I had some ups and downs when I was on hourly, but once I got on the trades, I never had any ups and downs anymore. More *ups* than downs. We didn't have—we had some off time in one year, '76, I think it was, where we was down a week every month. We'd work three and down one, work three and down one. But I mean, as far as being terminated, no.

DC: So your employment became much more secure, it sounds like.

EB: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah. From '65 onward. Let's see. I'm thinking back to the '50s when you were in the service, then you had a job, then you were laid off and all this. Was it hard to make ends meet in the '50s?

EB: Yes.

DC: Yeah?

EB: We lived from paycheck to paycheck. I can remember the apartment we lived on Huron Street. I can remember I wondered if I was going to have enough gas to make it to payday. But shortly after I went on the trades, we started to quit living paycheck to paycheck. [laughs] My wife did go to work. She went to work in '67, so I was on the trades for awhile then. And we started building a reserve and then she decided she wanted a little break, so she quit. And then in the '80s, when the daughter was first out of college, first got married, she went to work again.

DC: What did your wife do in the '60s when she went to work?

EB: In the '60s when she went to work, she worked in a restaurant, as a hostess.

DC: What restaurant was it?

EB: It is no longer there. It was called Monahan's.

DC: Monahan's, OK.

EB: Then in the '80s she went back to work. She said, "I'm going to go back to work." I said, "Fine." And she worked for Crowley's then.

DC: Crowley's?

EB: Crowley Miller, which is gone now. She worked down at Tel-Twelve [shopping center at Telegraph and Twelve Mile Rd.].

DC: OK. So you said that economically, times were tough in the '50s and then things settled down a bit in the '60s. Was your family ever able to go on any vacations or did you . . .

EB: Oh yeah, we, as I said, when I went—due to the fact that I got a good vacation check, when we went down for model change we went down to her wife's—my wife's folks', pretty near every year. And then we started—let's say in the '60s, we started going different places. '65 we went to Hawaii.

DC: Really? Wow.

EB: Because my wife's brother was stationed at Pearl Harbor. And she had a bet on him, with him, because the whole family got together that summer and I stayed up here and worked. She says—Kenneth says to her, "I bet you won't come see me while I'm in Hawaii." I said, "Well, I borrowed a little bit of money." And I did go in debt for that, but I did go. Wife and I went, and my daughter stayed with her aunt that was living here in the town at the time because she just had a new baby and didn't want to go. So we went to Hawaii in '65. And we went to D.C. a couple, three—we've been to D.C. three times between the '60s and the '70s. Went to Virginia Beach, Florida—one year to Florida. We had a—wife had a girlfriend that was a sister to our pastor of the church down along right over here, and we went to Florida one year, and stayed with her. And then we went to Florida every two years after that until—we haven't been in a couple years. She had some health problems, and I had some health problems, so we didn't go. We went—two years in a row, after my daughter was separated from her husband, they had a time-share down there. And we went down to her time share one year with her and the two grandkids. And the next year her and I went down. But we didn't go down the last two years—we haven't been down. The wife's chomping, wanting to go down. I don't blame her.

DC: It sounds like you did a lot of traveling. What other kinds of things did you like to do as a family back in the '50s and '60s?

EB: Traveling was the main one. We used to do a lot of—in the early ‘50s there, we used to do a lot of—we used to go to Port Huron a lot to see my Mother and we used to go with my aunts and uncles out to the state parks and have picnics. And my uncle had a boat and we used to go boat riding.

DC: That sounds like fun.

EB: Yeah. And then my baby sister-in-law used to come up and stay with us during the summer when she was in high school.

DC: How did that work out?

EB: It was fun. A little crowded, because we was just in an apartment, but she wanted to come up, so she did. Her brother come up on his leave. The younger brother come visit us on his leave when we was in the apartment, too.

DC: You mentioned that you didn’t need to use the committeeman at all in the ‘50s, but you said you did in the ‘60s.

EB: Yeah, well . . .

DC: What happened?

EB: When I was getting ready to go on the trades, my production department didn’t want to release me. I had to call a committeeman to do it.

DC: So did they have the right to hold you back?

EB: They had the right to hold you back a certain amount of time.

DC: OK.

EB: But as I said, the gentleman that got me in there, told me—he called me and told me that I was coming. But they didn’t want to release me. Other than that, that’s—that was the one time I had the committeeman.

DC: And how did that come out?

EB: Well, when they found out that I was going, they had to release me.

DC: So it seems unusual that they would throw up that kind of a roadblock.

EB: Well, no, it was because I knew all the jobs.

DC: Oh, they wanted you, OK.

EB: I knew all the jobs in the department. And the person that was taking my job, they didn't want.

DC: OK. So in other words, you had some skills that they really needed in that department.

EB: Mm-hmm.

DC: Ah. OK. So you were hard to replace. Did you have any misgivings about leaving the department?

EB: No.

DC: And why was that?

EB: Because I was ready to move on. I knew it was a move up.

DC: How did you like the EIT program?

EB: It was fine, because I done a lot—the group EITs I went on with, we decided that we needed more training and we took our—we didn't have to, but we took it all on our own.

DC: How so? How did you get more training?

EB: We went to sixteen weeks of hydraulics school over at the plant there and eight weeks of pneumatics, all taught by GMI. And then we got done with the hydraulics course—we found out that Oakland University, which was just starting up at the time, was teaching a course on advanced hydraulics, and that the plant *would* pay us if we went—just pay for the course, not pay us. And so a group of us decided to go out there and do it on a Saturday morning, and we did.

DC: So you had a lot of initiative.

EB: Yeah, we had the initiative to get our training, yeah.

DC: Was there any tension at all between the people who had gone through the apprenticeship and the EIT people?

EB: A little bit. Not too much.

DC: So when you say "a little bit," what does that mean?

EB: Some of the apprentices thought they were smarter than you was, was all.

DC: OK.

EB: But they're not. They weren't. Especially—the guy—most of your apprentices used to go into the machine area, machining area, where they didn't come down on the floor a lot.

DC: So did you spend most of your time on the floor?

EB: I was a floor man all the time I was there. I never had to go to the machines.

DC: OK. And so tell me more about what you did. What kinds of things did you learn how to do? What did you like about it? What didn't you like?

EB: Oh, I liked it all. We repaired anything mechanically or hydraulically. I used to get in trouble a little bit on the lines of demarcation, but other than that.

DC: What would that trouble be?

EB: Between pipe fitters and me.

DC: Oh, OK. All right. They wanted you to stay out of their territory?

EB: Yeah. Right.

DC: Did it ever amount to anything?

EB: Well, I don't know. I guess you could say it did and didn't. Who knows?

DC: OK. Yeah.

EB: Towards the end there when they put the double V-line in, they sent us down to Wilson [Foundry] and sent us over to Bendix [another parts supplier] to examine the lines and make sure it was what we wanted, and offer them any suggestions.

DC: Did you feel like you had a lot of input then?

EB: Oh yeah. We had a lot of input on both of them lines.

DC: What was the best thing about, you know, getting your journeyman card and stuff?

EB: Best thing about it? Money and security. Because once you got it—unless things went kaput all over you, you had security in the job. You was working a lot when nobody else was.

DC: What would you be doing when no one else was working? [big cough]

EB: Repairing things.

DC: Repairing things. OK. Yeah, yeah. OK, so yeah, that's something that you didn't really experience in the '50s, the security. Did you get a big bump in pay when you finally got your journeyman card?

EB: I got my last—well I was within a dime of journeyman's pay when I got it, so I got the last dime. The merit raises went up in steps—a dime—ten cents at a time.

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

EB: Some of them were as high as thirty cents, depending on their ability. Some of the guys that got on the—as the EITs—by knowing somebody and they didn't work that hard on it. They done what they had to and that was it.

DC: I guess you'd find that everywhere.

EB: Yeah.

DC: Did you—I'm trying to think—during the '50s, even during the '60s, did you pay much attention at all to what the national committee was doing?

EB: No.

DC: No, OK. Yeah.

EB: I paid attention to the local scene and that was it.

DC: The local scene. And what kinds of issues came up at the local scene that were of interest to you?

EB: Well, not in the '60s, but in the '70s that busing deal was—come to my attention. Because as I say, at that time I lived close to the railroad tracks. And when they bombed the buses over here on Saginaw and Montcalm, I thought we had another train wreck. But it was the buses. And then they had a train wreck right, I think, a day or two after that.

DC: They did have a train wreck, OK. So it was getting pretty confusing at that point. So you paid attention to local issues. Certainly the busing was a big one in Pontiac. What was it like working in the plants, or in the plant, during the '60s. You had the Civil Rights Movement, you had Vietnam and stuff, which was a lot different from Korea.

EB: Oh yeah, well, it wasn't too bad. They knew I was a veteran. I had a lot of young kids working in—I was working in Plant 5 at the time. That's where the young

seniority was. And I talked to some of the kids that were drafted and told them what to expect when they went over. And I sort of tried to relieve them. And I talked to some of them kids when they come back after two years. I said, "Well, what'd I tell you?" And they says, "You told me right."

DC: Yeah? What did you tell them?

EB: I'd tell them, I said, "You gotta keep your head down and pay attention to what you're doing," because some of them wouldn't do it.

DC: You're talking about when they were in service?

EB: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. OK.

EB: I said, "Get through it and get out."

DC: Did you see—or how did the kids in the '60s compare with the kids your age in the '50s?

EB: The kids in the '50s compared in the '60s, they started to get a little bit more independent and more do what they want to do. Where we was more—our parents more or less told us what we could do and what we couldn't do and if you done it, you paid the consequences. The kids in the '60s were getting to the point that they didn't. And that's been relaxed since then.

DC: Were there a lot of younger kids in the plants in the '60s?

EB: They hired in '76 and they hired right on through—had a slowdown one year and then they hired again. Had a lot of young people come in there '70s and '80s, first part of the '80s. '70s especially. '76, '78, '79, a lot of people hired.

DC: What about in the '60s?

EB: '60s there were some hired, too. They hired a small group in '51 when I hired in. Then in '52 during the Korean War a lot of people were in the plant—they were drafted and they had to replace. '52, '53 seniority was high. '54 it wasn't. '55 wasn't. Then you had to break until—in the '60s they hired a few. If I remember right, it was '62 and '63, they had a group. And then there wasn't no more until '76.

DC: So the big hiring was in the '70s.

EB: They hired in 1976, because when those guys—we come out of the recession in '76, after the gas war, the gas crisis, and I said—the guys hired in there, I said to

them, I said, "I don't think you're going to last ninety days." But they stayed right on.

DC: They did. OK.

EB: Just like I did.

DC: Did you pay any attention to local union politics at all?

EB: To a point, yeah.

DC: What was of concern to you?

EB: Well, I supported who I knew. And I knew quite a few of them.

DC: Mm-hmm. OK. It's a big plant, though. It'd be hard to know everybody.

EB: Oh yeah. I supported the group that they knew. I voted in—I don't think I missed an election, a long time. I even vote during the [?] when I'm retired.

DC: Oh yeah? Retirees have voting privileges?

EB: Well, on certain—not everything, but on certain times—we do for president and that, we do.

DC: You mentioned that the busing—certainly that was a big issue in race relations in Pontiac. What were the race relations like in the plant when you worked there?

EB: They weren't bad, because we were integrated. It didn't make any difference in the plant. But I did see more people going into non—let's say non-secular [meaning segregated?] jobs. Because mainly when the colored come into the plant, they were hired as sanitation, lower end.

DC: Is that when you first started?

EB: When I first started. Now—then they started going into the job setting end and the production end.

DC: When did that start?

EB: In the '60s.

DC: In the '60s, OK.

EB: And into the '70s it was kept progressive. And that—in the—it just kept working that way. I had—in the trades there for awhile, we didn't have that many colored. But now you're pretty well both ways.

DC: Back in the ‘50s when you were jumping around from job to job, did you work with any blacks at that point?

EB: As I say, mainly they were chippers and sweepers.

DC: A chipper? What’s a chipper?

EB: A chipper takes care—takes the chips out of a machine that’s drawn.

DC: OK. The debris.

EB: Drawing the debris that—they had a chute there that come out and they’d have to pull it out and put it in the chip tub. They worked mainly sanitation building—in the labor gang. You didn’t see too many in the fire department. But as far as working with them, I worked with colored people and I didn’t have no trouble. In the trades, when I first went on the trades, I had a [pause] colored guy I worked with and we got along fine. Of course, I was raised in this area, so I was used to colored being in the school with me, and to getting along. Where, if you take a person from down South—now when I met my wife, they hadn’t integrated the schools in Evansville yet, as far as the upper grades go. You had a colored high school, a white—two white high schools, and plus the Catholic schools. And they just integrated that after we got married. That was in the ‘50s.

DC: So what was her impression when she came to Pontiac?

EB: Let’s just say she was—she rode the bus a few times when we first got married to go to the doctor when she was pregnant, and she couldn’t—she didn’t, she said, “Coloreds sat in the back of the bus.” I said, “Yeah, they do here.” But they don’t have to sit in the back of the bus here. I went to Evansville and rode the city bus there when I was going with my wife. And I’d ride out—go from town out to where she lived. I’d ride in the back of the bus—I didn’t think anything of it. But—said that they didn’t do that down there. That’s for the colored. So my wife gets along with them. She has several colored friends now that she worked with at Crowley’s. They still get together. She’s a Southern gal.

DC: Yeah, I had grandparents from southern Illinois, so that’s kind of on line with Evansville, across there.

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DC: So I know that’s Southern.

EB: Well she was—my wife was actually born in Sturgis, Kentucky [southwest of Evansville].

DC: Oh, OK. So when did you get involved with the American Legion?

EB: I got involved with the American Legion in the early '80s. I was asked to join the Legion before, but I was—had been involved in model airplanes since 1968—the daughter and I was. And I was active in that and I didn't really pay that much attention to it, then I got a notice from DMS, which is the headquarters in Indianapolis where they wanted me to join. At that time it was only fifteen bucks. My wife got the notice, looked at it, and said, "Why don't you join?" She says, "Uncle Bob belonged to that." And her Uncle Bob was a World War I veteran that got gassed in Germany. He wasn't able to work. So I joined, and joined the DMS. And I had been working in the plant. I was working the Double-V line and one of the gentlemen by the name of Dave Casset [sp?] was working days there, a toolmaker. I'd see him wearing an American Legion cap. I told him, I said, "I just joined the American Legion." He said, "You joined? What Post you joined to?" I said, "225." He said, "I want—you want to transfer?" I said, "Yeah, I guess I could." He done took care of all the paperwork and I transferred to Chief Pontiac Post 377, where I have been commander, and senior vice commander at the present time. And I've also been the district commander of the 18th District.

DC: OK. Now you had kind of a low impression of the military when you left Korea, but something must've changed.

EB: I always liked the military. I just didn't like that one area. At one time.

DC: Yeah. Yeah. I didn't mean the military in general, but I guess what I meant is that you chose your eight-year inactive because you were down on the military because of your experience with that one officer. So it sounds like over time you got over that, anyway.

EB: Mm-hmm.

DC: There you are.

EB: That's my present job now. If there's one you want to keep, keep it.

DC: Oh sure, thank you.

EB: I got another one right here, too. I don't know where they're at right now. I got one from my model club, too.

DC: Well tell me about that. What got you involved with model airplanes?

EB: I would fly radio control. Been in that since 1968. My daughter's been in it—was in it that long. And she's not in it anymore.

DC: What got you interested in that?

EB: They had a mall show. They had some mall shows out at the mall. My daughter and I got interested. I always built—I was in trains, model trains at the time.

DC: How long had you been doing model trains?

EB: I did model trains for about three or four years. HO. And then when my wife got her pinched nerve, I got back into it again because it was something I could do and I didn't have to go to the basement, build up some stuff. And then I got involved in the model club. And, as I say, my daughter was president and I was—her and I were corresponding secretary. And I've been involved in the models. And then when I retired, they asked me to take over the field marshal. And I've been a field marshal since '85 out there.

DC: Where do you do the flying?

EB: Right now—we had two fields for awhile. We used to fly behind the Elks and that property got sold. And now we fly out of Pontiac Lake Recreation Area, off of White Lake Road.

DC: Mm-hmm. What do you like about the model airplanes?

EB: Oh, I'm just an aviation nut. I belong to the Experimental Aircraft Association, also.

DC: What do they do?

EB: Experimental craft association builds—it's for home-builts. And warbirds. They are a group that backs the aviation population in general. Consists of any—we get a lot of airline pilots, a lot of World War II pilots, pilots from all wars, all military branches.

DC: Have you always had an interest in flying?

EB: Oh yeah, I was always interested in flying, ever since I was a kid. When I was a kid and lived down on Vinewood, I used to go out to the old [Allen's?] Airport. I'd ride my bike out there and sit around all Sunday afternoon, hoping for a ride. And I'd get a few, too.

DC: Really? You would.

EB: Yeah, I got—first ride was in a T craft—Taylor Craft.

DC: What was that like?

EB: Fun. I like air flying. I like to fly. I'll fly in anything that's got a set of wings.

DC: Really? OK. So did you ever fly yourself? Did you ever have the controls?

EB: I was saying that's how I got into model aviation, because at the time I was thinking about getting my pilot's, and the cost would—I couldn't see any way I could do it, doing what I was doing. And I got into model aviation, something I could afford. I did take the trick ride in a [Cessna] 150. And I know a lot of pilots that are members of our club, and I—my ex-son-in-law was a pilot, and we flew to Oshkosh in a [Cessna] 172.

DC: So . . .

EB: And my daughter had her license—was up to get her license, before she quit, too. She'd soloed already.

DC: Really?

EB: Yeah.

DC: Wow. So flight runs in your family here.

EB: Yeah. Aviation, model—wife likes to fly, too, but she likes the big ones. [laughs] She wants big ones. She don't like the little ones.

DC: Yeah. Well can you think of questions that I should've been asking you that I haven't?

EB: Not right off the top of my head, no.

DC: OK. It's been really interesting to hear about all these twists and turns in your career and all your interests. It's really neat that you . . .

EB: My model railroading interest comes from my Dad. Because he originally had come over here when the steam engine—locomotive shop in St. Thomas, Ontario—quit working, come over here to work. And he loved trains. He went to Calif—him and my Stepmother went to California by train twice. Because she had a brother that lived out there in Pasadena. That's where my interest in trains come.

DC: Did you ever go back to Canada to visit relatives there?

EB: We used to go to Canada. I went to Canada on my honeymoon to visit my aunt that was still alive. But my Dad and I and my Mother used to go over there all the time, when they were together. We used to go to my uncle. I don't—I've lost contact with my cousins over there lately, but I mean, we used to—I did go over and see my Aunt Mina when I was—when we first got married, and stayed with her one night on our way to Niagara Falls.

DC: OK. Yeah. Because we had talked about your Evansville connections but didn't talk much about that.

EB: Yeah, well my Evansville connections is Uncle Bob. He lived in Kentucky in Clay [near Sturgis, Kentucky, also southwest of Evansville]. All my wife's folks are down there and all mine are up here. Most of them are all passed away now.

DC: What does your daughter do?

EB: My daughter is unemployed right at the present time, but she has a degree in music from Western Michigan. She plays pipe organ for St. Andrews and the Canterbury. Plus she's working part time for Kohl's.

DC: OK. Did she have a long-term interest in music?

EB: She's had an interest in music since she was eight years old. We bought her a piano at eight years old and we still have it. It's still in our living room. And she still plays it.

DC: Did either you or your wife play the piano?

EB: I sang in choir all my life and the wife sang—my wife sang as a—her sisters and her sang together, church music. And they sang on the radio down in Evansville. I sang on the radio up here in Lapeer. That's where the interest for music comes from.

DC: When you say you sang on radio, was that as part of a church service or was that . . .

EB: Yeah, that was a church program.

DC: Church program, yeah. Uh-huh.

EB: Hers was church program, too.

DC: So you've been a member of the church choir, then?

EB: Well, I was—when we'd go to the radio station, I sang solo.

DC: Oh really. OK.

EB: And she sang with her sisters as a trio. She's got two sisters, a younger sister and a middle sister. They sang as a trio.

DC: So music was a big part of your household then.

EB: Yeah.

DC: Yeah.

EB: As I say, Sherry started when she was eight years old. She sang in the church across the street there. She was the junior church pianist for years.

DC: Well that's interesting. And now she's an organist at . . .

EB: She's an organist—she plays organ now at—she performs at funerals, too. She performed at my—one time I can remember, she performed at my neighbor's mother's funeral.

DC: So have you had an interest in baseball all along, as well? I know you're [?] American Legion baseball.

EB: I was interested in baseball, but I could never play baseball. I was no good at it. My brother was a baseball player. We played baseball—in the old community there, we'd build our own baseball field. Put our own backstop up with chicken wire and everything.

DC: I remember those days. Yeah, we did that, too. Was that back when you were kids, though?

EB: Yeah. Had a vacant piece of land across the street and one of the neighbors there had a Ford tractor with a plow on it. We plowed out a spot for the infield, laid it all out.

DC: Did you have a lot of neighbor kids who played?

EB: Oh, we had plenty of kids. We played scrub football in the fall. And I was good at football and my brother didn't like that because I'd tackle him. He'd kick me. Kicked me in the jaw, tried to kick me in the jaw.

DC: Sounds like a brotherly thing to do.

EB: [laughs]

DC: I have two boys and that sounds like what they would do.

EB: That's where I got—that's where my boys are, my two grandkids—my two grandsons are my boys. And one's already an Eagle Scout, and the other one's on his way.

DC: Wow. Were you an Eagle Scout?

EB: Never got that far. Didn't have—as I say, I was bumped around all my life and I didn't get a chance to. But I probably would've if I had got a chance, but I never did. I'm still in Scouting, though. I'm on the—on the board at Chief Pontiac Post 377.

DC: Mm-hmm. You sponsor Scout troops.

EB: We sponsor the troops, yeah.

DC: Mm-hmm. Well good for you. Do you still go out on any campouts or anything?

EB: I went on campouts with my grandson when he was in Troop 1032 downtown. That was before they reactivated the troop at the post. Yeah, I was with him everyplace I went. When he got his Eagle Scout—I don't know if you know the routine or not . . .

DC: You have to have a project. What did he do?

EB: My grandson built a bridge down at the Country Day School. He called me the bridge man because I was in on every project down there. We built five of them down there.

DC: Really? Like across creeks and stuff?

EB: It was across—near 13 Mile and Lahser is the beginning of the Rouge River. And the creek runs down in there around behind the campus. And they use it for cross country track. And they have to have bridges across the creek. So the first one we done, we worked on for another scout called—one of the Riley boys, Evans Riley. The first one we worked on, my grandson and I worked on with him. But other than that—we come back to the house that night and he says, "Grandma, you won't believe what I done today!" I said, "I was building a bridge over the Rouge River."

DC: [laughs] That's good.

EB: Well, he always gives me trouble over that.

DC: That's funny.

EB: Because he was younger than that, he was only—what was he? Thirteen or fourteen, I forget.

DC: That's about when you do it, yeah.

EB: Because I used to run him to—since he moved in with us, it's been six years since they—six or seven years since they moved in with us, when their Mother and Dad separated. I would pick him up from school on a Wednesday night. I would take him to his cello lesson, which he was taking at the time, over in Clawson. And we'd get a bite to eat, and then we'd come back across town on Maple Street to the Methodist Church there, to Scouts. Plus I'd go—always go to his campouts with him.

DC: That's a busy schedule.

EB: Plus I was keeping up my membership job at the post. I work in Bingo.

DC: I'd say retirement's pretty busy for you.

EB: I don't know how I had time to work! My wife says, "You gotta slow down." I think she's ready to.

DC: Maybe she'll take you down to Florida. You can relax down there.

EB: Yeah. Well, she wants to go to Florida. I need to get her out of here. Just gotta find time to do it, is all.

DC: Well I appreciate you finding time to talk with me. I really do. I enjoyed it a lot.

EB: It's been a pleasure.

DC: Yeah, I'll get a tape for you. And sooner or later I'll get this all transcribed, as well. I'll get a copy of that to you, too.

EB: OK.

DC: I've learned a lot. I know it's your life. You're used to the stories. But it's all very interesting to me.

EB: Glad you enjoyed it!

End of Interview