Jack Shorey Interview
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Local 653 Union Hall
Pontiac, Michigan
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DC: Usually I just start out asking really simple questions, like where were you born? So where were you born?

JS: I was born in Flint, Michigan.

DC: In Flint, OK. If you don't mind me asking, when was that?

JS: February 28, 1926.

DC: OK. How about your parents? Where were they from?

JS: They were born in Canada and they migrated here. I don't know when, but my Dad worked at Buick for quite awhile until he had a stroke. Then my Mother grew up in Bay City. I don't know where my Dad grew up. I never did find that out. Found out just recently he was born in Canada. I thought he was born in Bay City, but that was . . .

DC: So he was born in Canada, but you're not quite sure how old he was when he moved to wherever.

JS: No. No one knows.

DC: But your Mother was born in Bay City? Or was she born in Canada?

JS: Chatham. In Canada. Because she didn't have a Social Security number, and when she turned sixty-five she wouldn't go down there because she thought she would be deported. I said, "Mom, you had seven kids. They're not gonna deport you." And at that time I thought my Dad was born here, and she never told me any different. So I dragged her down there one day, to Chatham. All the materials—all sent to Toronto after ten years. So I remembered my grandmother was Catholic. So I went to Catholic church and they found her baptismal certificate. And they used that for her birth certificate, to get her Social Security.

DC: She got that, then.

JS: Yeah.

DC: Do you know where in Canada your Dad was born?

JS: I have no idea. Up until two years ago, I thought he was born in Bay City. My sisters are all gone, but the last one, she's sick right now. I just got a call. She's five years older than me and she's not in very good shape. I'm just waiting for a call because they're up at Torch Lake [in northern Michigan] and I gotta—I'll probably go up next week and see her. But she's kind of just stabilized now. They lost her on the helicopter going to the hospital. It's her third ride to the hospital in the helicopter. They lost her and brought her back. She's tougher than hell, I guess.

DC: I guess so! So they thought that she was dead.

JS: Yeah. Yeah. She's got—and that's my last relative, my family.

DC: We'll talk in a few minutes more about when you were growing up together, but somehow or other, you were born in Flint . . .

JS: In Flint, yeah.

DC: But it sounds like you're not quite sure how your parents got to Flint. Did they meet in Flint or somewhere else? Do you know?

JS: No, I think they—I think they met in Bay City. But no one knows but Norma, and she isn't all with it anymore. I should've found this out years ago but I didn't think it was that important. So I never did find it out.

DC: I know how that goes. Yeah. But when you were born, you said your Father was working at Buick?

JS: Yeah. He worked at Buick for a long time.

DC: How old were you when he had his stroke?

JS: Well, I was—I was still in high school. Probably, what, sixteen, somewhere in there. And he had a farm—he raised chickens and turkeys and pigs, because we lost our house in Flint—the Depression. And so he decided to go out where he could at least grow some food to live on if something happened again. That was his theory, I guess.

DC: And where was this? Where did you go?

JS: In Davison—north of Davison we had a farm. And he—so he was—he could do anything. He made a tractor out of a truck. And he done—he could do anything, you know. But he had that stroke and he really—the left side was half paralyzed.

DC: That was when you were in high school?

JS: Yeah.

DC: So what do you remember about growing up in Flint before you moved out to Davison?

JS: Oh, I remember going to Homedale School there, and I had pneumonia in the second grade and I missed a lot of school. I had—I remember the doctor coming to the house and put a mustard plaster on me. And I still remember tearing that thing off. It hurt like hell when he pulled that off. Come back a few days later from pneumonia—bright red mark all the way around me. And then I remember running across the lawn in summer. It seemed like summer's a long time, and playing with the kids and played ball in the alley across the road. Things like that, you know. But I had five sisters and they really—I was a blue baby. I had my cord around my neck and I damn near didn't make it. And my sisters were really good to me. All my sisters were good to me.

DC: Where were you in the order of . . .

JS: I'm the youngest one.

DC: You're the youngest—five sisters.

JS: Yeah. So I was the baby. So they took good care of me, because I never had a fight with any of them.

DC: How old was your oldest?

JS: Let's see—Lee was, oh God, this is hard to figure out. Norma, the youngest one, she's the one that's sick now. She's five years older. My brother was ten years older, and then when you get in the other four girls, it's—it's confusing.

DC: OK, but considerably older than you, anyway.

JS: Oh yeah. Yeah. because my Mother was forty-two when I was born. I damn near didn't make it at all, you know. I don't think they wanted me after having six of them. [laughs]

DC: So you had five sisters and one brother, too?

JS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. Wow. So you were the youngest. You came along in '26.

JS: Yeah.

DC: What was your Mother doing in those years?

JS: Raising the kids. I don't think she ever worked. Dad went to work every day. He worked in the foundry somewhere over at Buick. I remember he wore long underwear in the summer, and I says, "How come you wear that?" He says, "For insulation. It gets so hot you can't stand it." And the insulation—the sweat, you know, keeps you cooler than if you

had your bare skin.

DC: Did he say anything more about his job in the foundry?

JS: No, he never talked much about it. Just that it was a—he never complained. He just said it was hot down there. Never complained about anything.

DC: You would've been very, very young—really the Depression started in '29, you were really young.

JS: Yeah.

DC: Let's see, do you remember when it was that you moved to that farm when he lost his job?

JS: Yeah, I was in the—I just finished—I was in the fifth grade. And my sister was in eleventh grade. She's five years younger—*older* than me. And I remember that—she thought she went to eleventh grade out there, but I think she just went to the twelfth and graduated from Davison. Because in the fifth grade I used to ride in in the morning with my Dad, and stay at my sister's house. The house we had was a huge house and had an apartment on one side of it, built right in the house. He dropped me off there and would go to work. Then I'd go to school and he'd pick me up at night. I finished out the fifth grade and I started sixth grade in Davison. That's how I worked that. But I think Norma done that, but I can't remember. She said she was there in eleventh grade. Maybe she was part of it. I don't know. But she graduated from the school in Davison where I did.

DC: Again, you would've been very young, but do you know if your father was involved at all in the big sit-down strike here in Flint?

JS: Yeah. Oh God, yeah. He had a club that long with a—lead in the middle of it. And he was on the inside. And there was—used hoses and knocked guys off the fence—fire hoses. I said, "Dad, you ever hit anybody with that club?" He said, "No, just on the finger. I never hit anybody on the head with that. It could kill them." He hit them on the finger if they tried to crawl over the fence.

DC: So which plant was he in?

JS: He was at Buick, where the heat-treating foundry was. I don't remember—I worked in Plant 6, where the final assembly was when I got out of the service, for three months. And I walked out of there and never went back. I went home at Christmas. I hated it there, so I wouldn't go back.

DC: We're gonna talk more about that pretty soon. I'm gonna try to stay in the '30s for a second since that's where we are. But I'll make a note that I want to make sure we talk about that again. So did your Father ever talk about the union?

JS: No—he did a little bit. I know he got union buttons because I made a hat, a felt hat, and I

put union buttons all over it. Wore it around. That's after I moved to Davison. So that would be in '38, '39. And this lady give me hell. She said, "What do you got them on there for?" You know, she was against the union. I remember her saying that to me. I said, "What's the matter with you? Leave me alone!" You know, I thought it was pretty neat. I had a felt hat with buttons all over it, you know? And so he did—I know he had to be in the union to get all them pins, you know. But he never talked much about it. He just—he didn't talk to me much about anything like that.

DC: OK. Well, you were pretty young.

JS: Yeah. I guess I wouldn't—didn't think I'd understand.

DC: You might've just answered my next question already, but I'll ask it anyway. I wondered if you could remember your Mother having any opinions about your Dad being in the plant and having the club and all.

JS: She never, never talked about it.

DC: Never talked about it.

JS: Just, he went to work every day and got paid every Friday and—I don't know. They never discussed much with me. And he went to the store like once a week, get the groceries, and I'd go with him. I always remember him grinding coffee at Kroger's. I liked the smell of it. That's why I got coffee on the way in. [laughs] And he put that grinder in. I always was fascinated with that. Put the beans in there and grind them—and Eight O'Clock Coffee, I remember it just like yesterday. And so he'd get most of the groceries. My Mom hardly ever went to the store.

DC: OK. So your Dad was in charge of buying the groceries?

JS: Yeah, he usually bought them all.

DC: Was that true while he was working? Or was that just true when he was laid off?

JS: No, when he was working. When he was laid off, he had a stroke. He couldn't do it. My Mother never drove a car. I tried to teach her to drive once and, God, scared the hell out of me. I said, "Mom, you're not gonna drive." [laughs]

DC: I guess that ties in with today's events, or this week's events for you as well. Shaky driving. Let's see—did your Dad ever go back to the plant, then, after you moved to Davison?

JS: Not after—well, we moved to Davison and I remember he hauled a tractor out there in the back of the—tied it to the car with a chain and my brother-in-law had his car. And I steered the tractor from Flint to Davison. I thought that was really hot stuff. I was about ten years old. 'Man isn't it cool?' But they had it chained right to the bumper, but I had to

keep the wheel behind the car. I'm surprised they let me do that, you know?

DC: I am, too.

JS: I'm sitting there and they were in the front seat, my brother-in-law and my Dad, and he said, "You just stay, keep it right in front." I never done it before in my life. Went clear from—it was ten miles out there. I was traveling about thirty-five miles an hour, thirty miles an hour. The tractor couldn't drive any farther—had the big tires on back for plowing and stuff.

DC: Thirty miles an hour is very fast.

JS: It's pretty fast. I think that's about as fast as they ever went. I thought I was hot stuff sitting up there, steering that thing.

DC: But then, so you went out to the farm and you built the tractor out of the truck and all that . . .

JS: Yeah, he built it before.

DC: Oh, he did, OK.

JS: Yeah, he rented some land out—I remember on Coldwater Road on the corner. He leased some land and had a farm before that. He built the tractor in Flint there before he moved out. And we had one on Belsay Road across from Bentley School. I remember going out there more than the other place and helping harvest the stuff and haul it in with the trailer, and Mom would always can everything. Didn't care what it was, she canned it and put it in the basement, and the basement was full of canned stuff so we always had something to eat.

DC: Was that while your Dad was still working at Buick?

JS: Yeah.

DC: OK. He did the farming then.

JS: And then when the Depression come, why, I guess that must've made him do that because he didn't want to get caught again. But then we lost the house. He got laid off for—I don't know if he got laid off, or he had—he didn't have the stroke in Flint. He had it in Davison, after we moved out there after I was in the sixth grade.

DC: So after the sit-down strike, eventually he got laid off it sounds like.

JS: He must've got off, because they weren't working, because they were having a hell of a battle down there at that time. This was in the '30s, you know. And my brother was working at Fisher Body and he was there three days. And he finally jumped over the fence

and come home. He said, "Hell, I'm not staying there anymore!" He says he couldn't get much to eat, you know, and they were fighting all the time.

DC: Who was fighting?

JS: The union and the people—you know, the pro-union and the anti-union, company.

DC: The workers or the company officials?

JS: Yeah.

DC: Company?

JS: Company and the guards and . . .

DC: Oh, OK. All right. The workers and the guards and all that.

JS: Yeah. They set down—they stayed in there, and they just wanted them to get out, and they didn't want to get out until they got their union.

DC: Right. So was your brother in the sit-down strike, too?

JS: Yeah. Yeah he was. I remember three days, I think it was, and he come home. I says, "What's the matter?" He says, "I can't stand it anymore." He says, "I gotta have something to eat and I'm tired of fighting," you know. He said, "You can get killed down there!"

DC: How old was he?

JS: Oh, he was probably twenty or twenty-one. He was ten years older than me.

DC: All right. That makes sense.

JS: Yeah.

DC: Oh my. So he was involved in the sit-down.

JS: Yeah, so was my Dad. Both of them. I didn't know a lot about it, you know.

DC: Sure, you were very young. So what about going to school? You said you remember Homedale School when you moved out to Davison. [Homedale is apparently now part of the Flint City School District]

JS: Yeah. They're gonna close it next year.

DC: Oh really?

JS: They're gonna close it right up. I thought—I went back, the seventy-fifth anniversary. I just happened to know about it, and I'm driving by there—God it still looked the same. The floors are wood and they still creak when you walk on them, the pipes are still in the hallways going down there. They never changed at all. But they're gonna—I guess they're gonna—well, I know it closes next year. I guess they'll tear it down.

DC: Yeah. What was it like going to school there?

JS: Well, it was pretty neat except I'd come home for lunch. And Mom always sent me out, because I always run down to Hamady's [Hamady Brothers, a local grocery store chain] there and get a can of tomato soup for my lunch. I'd have to run back and then she'd warm it up, and I'd gulp it down, and hear the bell ring. I'd try to make it for the last bell and I hardly ever made it, and the cop was down there. He always seen me coming. He'd stand out there waiting like this, keeping on going. I kind of wanted him a half a block from there.

DC: Did he ever stop you?

JS: No. He held the cars up. He seen me coming.

DC: Oh, he held the cars up. He wasn't holding you up.

JS: Yeah. No, he held the cars up. He seen me coming—he's standing out there. It was a four-way stop, or two-way. And I still remember him standing there, he's say like that, "Come on!" And he'd hold his hand up and I'd go running across the road and across the other one. And I don't know why he done that. Wait till the first bell and then take it—try to beat the second bell. Jump in my seat when just the bell rings.

DC: How about your classmates? Where were they from?

JS: They were in that area. Yeah, right in that area within blocks away, I guess.

DC: Is it your memory that most of them were from Flint or had they moved there from other places?

JS: Yeah. They were mostly from Flint, yeah.

DC: Did their parents also work at Buick?

JS: I really don't know. They didn't talk about that much. I assume some did. Most of them, I'd say, would because Buick was—back in this year—and we were like—Dad used to walk to work. So it'd be like one, two, three—probably about seven, eight blocks away. He had a car, but my brother-in-law borrowed it once and hit a streetcar and burned it up. Knocked the streetcar off the track. And he just got burnt a little bit and cut one eye, and he never tried to pay for it or nothing. Just—Dad always remembered that. Never said he

was sorry or nothing. He just stayed away. Dad finally got another old Buick. Hit that streetcar and caught fire and burnt everything right down. Nothing left of it at all. '27 Buick, and then he got a '28 Buick after that.

DC: OK. Did he go for awhile without a car?

JS: Yeah, but he walked to work and he could walk to the store, so he didn't mind walking.

DC: Yeah. Well that's a hardship.

JS: Yeah. He was tough, boy, I tell you. He used to box and wrestle at the shop there. And he—once he told me never to climb a cherry tree. Out in back we had a cherry tree and an apple tree and plum tree and apple tree. And I'd climb up, you know, and a big branch broke and I fell down to the ground. That night, why, my Mother said, "Dad wants to see you on the front porch." I thought, "Oh, shit." I wanted to stand this far away from him. I didn't want to get in reach of him because he was—he whopped my brother once and knocked him down. I said, "I want no part of that." He never touched me at all. And he said, "I thought I told you to stay out of that tree." And I says, "Well, I know you did but I'm sorry—but I wanted to eat some cherries." And he says, "Well look what happened, what it done. A big limb like that broke down." I propped it up with a clothesline pole and I wired it up, so he wouldn't see it. Well hell, he saw it first thing. [laughs] And I thought—I tried to hide it, you know? But he never touched me. He just told me, he says, "I hope you learned something today because you never do that again or you're gonna get more than what you're getting right now." I was standing about this far away and I just thought—I expected him to off and whack me with. But he never did.

DC: Did he ever hit you for anything else?

JS: Never hit me, no. Mom told me, I was a preemie—I guess they would feel sorry for me because I was so damn skinny. I'd always been skinny. I guess Mom told him never to touch me, because she said, "It might kill him." [laughs] So he never did—never laid a hand on me. And Sundays, I always remember sitting in his lap, reading the funnies to me. Sitting there like that in his lap. I bet he got so damn tired—every Sunday he'd set there and I'd ask all the questions, you know, reading the funnies. Every damn Sunday. And I'd get up and have coffee with him. Mom didn't want me to have coffee, but he'd have a coffee with him. I thought that was really a big deal.

DC: He'd let you have coffee with him.

JS: Yeah. With him on a Sunday morning before anybody was around.

DC: Oh, your Mom was still sleeping.

JS: Yeah. So I'd have a cup of coffee and that was a treat. Mom wouldn't let me have it.

DC: What did your sisters do? They were considerably older than you.

JS: Yeah, they worked—let's see, now my oldest sister, I don't remember her working. I think she worked at AC a little while.

DC: HC?

JS: AC. AC spark plugs. But I don't remember, but I think she did. And then Betty, the other sister, I don't think she worked at all. Her husband drove a—he had a city service, gas trucks. Delivering gas and fuel oil. Then he owned a bulk plant, eventually, in Fenton. And he's still alive. He's ninety-two years old.

DC: Really?

JS: Yeah. He said I quit riding the horse. I went to see him awhile back and he said, "I'm kinda worried about my next license. Because I always go down to the lunch counter, the restaurant, and have lunch with the guys." And he said, "If I can't do that, I'm gonna go nuts out here" all by himself. Because his—got a single daughter that never married and she lives with him, but she's working all day, you know. I said, "Well, Ross, just ride your horse," because he's got riding horses. "No, I quit riding them." He already broke the one leg during the war when he was on the sheriff's posse. He was out getting his horse to go to Flint for—they had blackouts during the war. And everything was black. It was blacker than hell—and for some—I think it gets used to doing it. Go out in the pasture, get his horse, and throw a saddle, and he jumped on and ride him into a little creek. The horse went to jump across, he was gonna slide off so he wouldn't have to be on the horse. And he said he broke his leg, both bones in one leg, out there in the field, yelling like hell for someone to come out. So he still had them pinned. He put screws in the bone of his leg, and he always used to show me them screws where he had to tighten it up every two, three months.

DC: The screws went to the outside?

JS: You could see them.

DC: Oh, wow.

JS: So you could just push right in the skin, you could see.

DC: Oh, I see. You could go through the skin . . .

JS: You could feel the screws, and they would take a screwdriver and tighten them up every once in awhile. [laughs] He was tougher than hell, too.

DC: I guess so, wow. That makes my eyes water just to think about it.

JS: Yeah. He says, "I don't know what I'm gonna do if I can't drive." I said, "Well can't you ride your horse?" And he said, "No, I don't ride them anymore."

DC: What was it like living in Davison? When you moved out there out of Flint, what was that like for you?

JS: Oh, that was different because I always wore knickers. And when I moved to Davison where they was wearing long pants, I felt self-conscious about wearing them. But if everybody else wore, them so I guess it's all right. But I didn't know a soul out there. And, at eleven years old I drove the tractor on the farm for plowing, you know, and all that stuff, cultivating. So I could drive. So my Dad let me drive the car to town. He'd ride with me, so I got so I could drive pretty good. Eleven years old. So I went to school—when I started school in sixth grade, I said, "You gonna take me to school?" They said, "No. You know where the school is. Walk up there and go in. Tell them who you are." It was a mile—mile and a half coming from the farm. So I walked to school and didn't know a damn soul there. I hadn't met anybody yet. Walked down there and they signed me up and I still remember that. I always told the kids I walked a mile and a half to school and they never believed me. But I measured it with my car and it's a mile six tenths. [laughs]

DC: So you underestimated.

JS: Yeah.

DC: Well did the kids accept you at the new school?

JS: Yeah. There was—it's funny, you go in there and you're strange because all them had been together. And you make, like, three friends that will confide in you, talk to you. And the rest of them just ignore you, or else—no one used to beat me up or shook me around. So I guess I was accepted then.

DC: Were they mostly farm kids at that point?

JS: Yeah. Majority of them were, yeah. A lot would get dropped off and a lot of them walked to school. They didn't have any buses then. My class was the first class to have a school bus. It was red, white, and blue. And that happened after I got—I got drafted in eleventh grade, because I turned eighteen. Because I had pneumonia and I got behind. And then I had a teacher in eighth grade that I couldn't stand, and him and I went round and round. And so I flunked the whole damn grade. So I had to take it over again. Same teacher again.

DC: Oh, the same teacher?

JS: Yeah. I thought they'd give me another teacher. They give me the damn Mr. Domini [?].

DC: What was the problem between you and him?

JS: He didn't like me and I didn't like him, I guess. And one other guy he used to pick on. He used to grab me here, right in there, and he'd leave—drew blood with his fingernails and it

would be black and blue. And I never told anybody about that—my Mother, Dad, or the principal. And I just took that crap and I didn't let him know it hurt me. And I just stood there and took it. He—this buddy of mine, Leo Pender, he used to get him, too. And one day, why, he went to get a hold of Leo, and Leo said, "Mr. Domini, if you touch me I'm gonna pinch you as hard as I can and I'm going down to talk, tell C.J. Thompson, the superintendent. I'm gonna go home and tell my Mom and Dad what you've been doing." Boy, he just turned white and he turned around and says, "Go to your seat." He never touched us after that.

DC: Neither one of you.

JS: Neither one of us.

DC: But you still failed eighth grade the first time through.

JS: Yeah. I wouldn't do anything, nothing. I was so damn mad at that guy. And Mom never pushed me to get stuff done. I didn't tell her, either. I had to take it over again. That was a bad year for me.

DC: Had your Dad had a stroke by then?

JS: Yeah, he was—yeah, he wasn't doing very good at all. He had four strokes before he—he died while I was in the service. I was down at Camp Livingston when he died. [Camp Livingston, Louisiana—decommissioned in 1945]

DC: OK. But he had already . . .

JS: He was in the chair—well after I left, they got a hospital bed set in the front room. My sisters would help take care of him to help my Mother, because it's kind of a heck of a job doing that all by herself.

DC: So anyways, you got drafted in the eleventh grade?

JS: Yeah. Turned eighteen.

DC: Turned eighteen. That would've been in the middle of the war, I guess.

JS: Yeah. It was in 1944. And I went down to register and I says, "I got another year of high school." And they said, "No you're not. You're gonna be gone in a month." So I went to school and I quit about two weeks before they sent me a notice I'd be leaving. So I had two—I don't know why I done that, but I wasn't gonna finish the grade anyway. I finished—I played football, basketball, and baseball in high school and junior high. But I wasn't gonna—the district tournament started. Well, they stopped the regional and state because of the war. They just had the district playoff, that was it, because of the gas—ationing gas. So anyway, I missed the district tournaments because I was down in Detroit taking the mental and physical for the—I signed up for the Army Air Corps.

DC: OK, the Army Air Corps.

JS: Yeah. My brother was in the Army over there. He was in the Battle of Normandy, you know, invasion. He was in the Battle of the Bulge and all that crap. He sent me a letter, he said, "Don't ever get in the damn Army or Marine. Just stay out of them if you can." And I was scared of water. Because when I was in second grade, why, he threw me in Lake Fenton and I damn near drowned. They had to drag me out and I still remember rolling me over a barrel getting water out of me. He said, "Don't you tell Mom or Dad what happened or I'll beat your butt," you know.

DC: Wow. So you didn't know how to swim at that point.

JS: No, I couldn't swim. I was scared of the water after that. In the seventh grade we used to get our bikes and ride out to where the country club is and jump in the creek naked, bare ass. Swim around, get back, put your clothes on, and go back to school. Lunchtime, we had an hour and fifteen minutes. Until the cart, the horse come along with a wagon—and the farmer's daughter was on that hill, come over where the creek was. And there she was—we was there bare ass and boy we run in the woods and grabbed our clothes and we didn't do that anymore.

DC: Did they tell on you?

JS: No. But I told them guys, "Don't get near me, because I can't swim and I don't want nobody to dunk me. If you dunk me, I'm gonna hit you as hard as I can. I'm gonna do something to you, because I'm scared of the water." So I stayed away from the other guys, because they liked to push you under.

DC: How deep was the creek?

JS: It was over your head on the crick. You make a turn like that, and you could dive in there. But the rest of it was rather shallow. About up to here. But I didn't want them to push me. I just wanted to wade around by myself, see. I was afraid of the water after my brother done that to me.

DC: So that probably ruled out the Marines.

JS: Yeah. Yeah, the Marines and the Navy. No Navy, no shit—you're not getting me on them boats with that ocean around me. And I couldn't fly, either, so I joined the Air Corps. I don't know why I done that, either.

DC: Because you couldn't fly . . .

JS: I'd never been on a plane before. The first plane I ever flew in was a B-17 bomber.

DC: Well tell me about what happened after you went down to Detroit. They had all the tests . .

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JS: Oh yeah. I went down one day for a mental test. I don't know why they done it that way, because if you pass the mental I guess you might pass the physical. If you didn't pass the physical, why take the mental, you know? But they done it the other way around. That's the way the service was, anyway. You can't figure out what they do sometimes.

DC: Well it sounds like you passed both.

JS: I passed both of them, yeah.

DC: And what happened next?

JS: Well then they—a month later I was on a bus going down to Fort Sheridan [Illinois] for induction.

DC: And what was it like at Fort Sheridan?

JS: Well, that was really interesting. I was there for three weekends. The first weekend I went to Chicago and I got lost. I'd never been in a big town before. Never been to Detroit except with my Mother and Dad. I had a hell of a time—I found the USO to find my way back. So I said, "The hell with that." So the next week I went home. Then the next weekend I went home. Only was home just a few hours.

DC: You were allowed to go home?

JS: Yeah, I didn't think I was, but I went anyway.

DC: Oh, OK. So this is part of your training then?

JS: Went Saturday and come back Sunday. I don't think I was supposed to go, but I went anyway.

DC: And no one caught you?

JS: No. They didn't miss me down there. I guess they didn't know what the hell was going on.

DC: Do you want some more coffee?

JS: No, I had enough. That's about my fourth cup.

DC: All right. Well what was the training like?

JS: Well before—OK, I went to, after Fort Sheridan, to Sheppard Field, Texas for basic.

DC: Sheppard Field? [opened in 1941, had 46,000 service personnel by 1945; deactivated in 1946]

JS: Yeah. Near Wichita Falls. [near Oklahoma border, northwest of Dallas-Ft. Worth] Basic was almost two months. And the tech schools were full. The gunnery school and radio school and armament school were full, and they couldn't get us in. So I had to take another basic. I took double basic down in Texas in summer. May, June, July, and August. I thought they was trying to fry me to death down there. God, it was hot. And sand all over, blowing over. Godforsaken place. Wichita Falls—I went to town once or twice but I didn't find nothing there that enticed me, so I stayed at the base and played basketball, went to the movies or something, you know, or bowled or something like that.

DC: Where were your fellow trainees from?

JS: They was from—one, Rochiers [sp?], he was from Peoria, Illinois. I got to know him. And then Jack Taft was from Springfield, Illinois. And another guy from Vermont. [?]. He was a weird guy. He used to come in late at night so we caught a shark out in the bay out there, and put it in his bed at night. [laughing] Six foot shark, sitting in his bed, and he come in that night, set in that damn cold, slimy thing. He started screaming out. But he never made any noise after that. He was real quiet after that when he come in, because he always woke us up. Don't know where he ever went, but he seemed to go out a lot. I don't know how he got off the base or if he even was. But he'd drop his shoes on the floor and make a lot of noise, you know—you weren't supposed to turn the lights on. And we got tired of it so we caught this, about a five-foot shark out there in the gulf there.

DC: Who caught the shark?

JS: Three or four of us went out fishing. And one guy got his toe bit off. Took the big toe right off.

DC: The shark got it?

JS: Yeah. So we caught hell for being out there and doing that.

DC: Did you put it in his bed?

JS: Put it in his bed. [laughs] He didn't talk to us for a week.

DC: OK. So anyways it sounds like it was pretty hot down there.

JS: Yeah.

DC: Was it hard work, too?

JS: Yeah, they—yeah, like seven-mile hikes, you know, with a full field pack and a M-1 rifle and all that. And you had to fire mortar. I hated them damn mortars and grenades—jeez I

didn't like them.

DC: What didn't you like about them?

JS: They'd blow up, you know [laughs]. You get that pin out, you have a five-second fuse on the practice. And the combat, you have a three-second fuse. So when you release that handle, you got three seconds, or five seconds. You know, not too damn long. You can't stand there and talk about. And you just get rid of it. And they tell you how to throw it, you know. You lay on your back—lay on your side, you know, throw it like this. You don't just throw it like that. You gotta be down or they'll be shooting your head off if you get it up too far. We had to throw them through a window like this here, practice getting them in a window in a building. And if you got them all in you got to throw two more. And I said, "Shit, I got them all in. I didn't want to throw any more!" I got hit—they said—there was a pit back there in the back. And there's logs up there and you sit on a bench along there. And when they go off—the guys are throwing over here—you can hear them going through the trees. And they said, "Keep your head down, so in case something hits you in the eye, it'll put your eye out." Well, hell, you can hear them going, ricochet, whining going through. And one of them went right beside me, and went right in the wood between the buddy and I. I thought, "Jesus! That's buried right in the wood! If that would've hit me here, it would've went right through me!"

DC: You're done, yeah.

JS: Yeah. I thought, "That's bullshit—my head down. That's a hell of a lot more than that!" But I guess we survived it and no one got killed.

DC: So did you end up—or what happened when you finished training?

JS: Well, then I, after the second basic I went through, why, I went to air and gunnery school in Tyndall Field in Florida [near Panama City]. And at first, I had a—they had a orientation flight. You go up in a B-17 and get hotter than hell down there. And I—they give you this fleece-lined jackets and pants and everything. Hell, I left them on the runway. And I got up there, shit, at five above zero! Christ, I was freezing my ass off up there! Come down and the instructor said, "Well, you learned a good lesson today, didn't you?" I said, "I sure did! Boy, I didn't know it was that cold up there! Didn't tell me how cold it was up there." Them planes have holes in them, I mean, there's not—they don't have any pressurized cabins then. And the gunners were—the window was just wide open and the gun's sitting on a mount there, you know, on the side way. I had the waist gun and I had the upper gun. The top turret. And there's a lot of noise up there. You can't hear nothing.

DC: Did you have some protection for your ears?

JS: No. My ears are ringing right now. Been ringing ever since. Ring all the time. Twenty-four hours a day. From a, what, fifty-caliber machine gun, one on each side of my head. Heavy earphones on, but they don't stop that kind of noise, you know. And they have intercom throat buttons, right here. And an oxygen mask on. You can't have a microphone

because you usually got a mask on. At above ten thousand feet you had to wear that. Them buttons worked pretty good. There were two of them right here in the strap.

DC: What would they do?

JS: Talk. You just talk and the vibration went right through the intercom. You could talk—on the ship, there's three—there's a command, which is a formation of bombers. Then there's another, just the ship—just wanted to talk within your bomber. Then another that was the base that you're talking to. At least three different positions on.

DC: Wow, so you pick up the vibration.

JS: Yeah, and you could talk just like I'm talking to you. You'd come through the earphones pretty good.

DC: Wow. So what did you think about that training?

JS: Which one?

DC: Flying up in the B-17's.

JS: Well, I was too damn young to know how dangerous it was then. I didn't know anything about that, you know, and I had a couple crash landings.

DC: Were they intentional crash landings?

JS: No, shit, the planes, they're all beat up. You know, they've been all beat up and you use them for training. You're going down the runway—you took off around ninety miles an hour, something like that. And once the pilot says, "We're not gonna make it." And the damn big trees coming closer, and finally decides he's not gonna get up in the air, so they—brakes on and feather props. Turn around, I said, "I want to go home! I don't want to play anymore down here!" Go back and try it again. And next time it went up. I don't know what it was, but there was something wrong the first time. We go right back and try it again. And one time the gas cap come off on the right wing and sucked the gas right out of it. And they said, "Don't cause any sparks at all, because we're gonna blow up if you spark anything." Boy, we was pretty touchy on that one. And another we got up and wasn't even supposed to be in the air. They had a red tag on it and they didn't see the red tag. Supposed to be grounded. So stuff like that, it kept you—some excitement.

DC: So when did you spot the red tag? Where were you when you spotted the red tag?

JS: Up in the air! They called us and said, "Hey, you guys, your plane is a defective plane. You better get your ass down here!"

DC: Were you following the progress of the war during this training?

JS: Oh yeah. Yeah, because my brother was over there, see, and I was watching. And I remember D-Day. June 6th, just like I'm talking to you right now. I was in the barracks there at Sheppard Field and the commander, he was a lieutenant. Major Youngorn [sp?], he was a West Point guy. Tougher than nails, boy, but he was a nice—he's a good officer, you know. But he went right by the rules, hundred percent. He called us and we had formation for roll call in the morning. He had an announcement to make, that they'd invaded Normandy.

DC: How did you feel?

JS: I felt—well I knew it was coming, but I was worried about my brothers. Because he was in the third wave coming in. If he was the first wave he'd a gotten killed. They wiped out the first wave. And if he had been second, he might've not made it. But anyway, he made it in and he was over there quite awhile. Never talked about it.

DC: He never talked about it.

JS: No. He said—one time he said—he got bronze star medal, you know? I said, "What did you get that for?" He would never tell me before, so finally he says—well, they were over there in the Battle of the Bulge and the colonel got killed and he had the papers on him for their progress, you know, the plans for the battle. Battle plans. And he said, "They sent me out with a Jeep to get him. They said they don't care—you find him or bring him back. But we want the papers that he's got on him. We don't want his body." So my brother went out at night for the Jeep, and they was firing at him. They knocked his windshield out and they hit his thumb. And he finally found the guy where he's supposed to be. He didn't have any head. He'd been decapitated. He was a colonel and he found him stiffer than hell. Put him in the back of the Jeep. Took off and he hit a shell hole, like that, and bounced and the guy fell off the back. So he had to go back and get him again. They was shooting at him all this time. It was dark. He couldn't see. No lights on. And got him back, and he says that's what he got the bronze star for. Bronze medal.

DC: So he got the papers?

JS: Yeah. But he wouldn't tell me till I ask him what it was, you know? Because I had—I didn't have nothing like that. I just had overseas conduct and American campaign, Asian camp . . .

DC: So you did go overseas then?

JS: Yeah.

DC: OK. When did you go overseas?

JS: I went over—they sent me in— I got out of gunnery school. Well I had scarlet fever while I was there. No, not in gunnery school, it was radio school I had scarlet fever and I was in quarantine for, oh hell, two weeks. In the ward—I couldn't get out.

DC: Now where was this radio school?

JS: Scott Field, Illinois. [25 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri]

DC: OK. And you went there after the gunnery school?

JS: Yeah, after Tyndall Field, yeah. And at that gunnery school, we used to come right in low on the beach there and strafe it. Cut pine trees right in half with them fifty calibers. Just chew them right off. They were wicked, you know. And then top turrets you had two of them, you know, and in vice you only had one. But that was amazing what they could do with them things. There was nobody living down there then or they probably would've been killed, of course. But that was a—you know you're out over the gulf—I think we were over Cuba once—didn't know where the hell we were half the time. We were out all day a lot of the times, or a long time it seemed like. In formation and firing at skeet targets, pulling these—it would be on the B-26. Your bullets were—had wax, or crayon on the end of them. Different colors. You were assigned a certain color. Then you're on the range on the ground shooting them. And I set a record on one range for getting it in the target. They had a Jeep go around in a circle and they had paint up on both sides and there was a target on top of the Jeep. Nobody in it—it was on a track. You just go around at five hundred yards or a thousand yards. And I got most of them in the target for anybody ever did on that range. I thought, "Oh, shit. I'm gonna be gone tomorrow, over to combat. I should've never done that." Because my brother told me to be careful, because if you're too good they'll put you right in. Because he was an expert and a sharpshooter and throwing the grenade and all that stuff, you know. And so I was just a marksman. I never got expert at anything. But I did on that one in that case.

DC: Did you enjoy that?

JS: The shooting was neat. Actually, it started out with trap shooting first. They had a regular trap shoot—like you have this circle and you fire, you know, and have your shotgun and fire it. It was kind of—you liked it, except it kicked the hell out of you, them twelve gauge shotguns, you know. I was kind of skinny. I didn't have much meat on me. And I guess I could hit them pretty good. And then you had a turret mounted on a fork, about this high. And they had a pie house over there. From here to the road, I guess—quite a ways. And they'd shoot them clay pigeons at different angles. And you had an earphone on and they tell you which time your turn was to shoot. They had a shotgun mounted in the turret, where a fifty caliber would be. And that was kind of neat, shooting them. And you had shells that high underneath you by the end of the day. And you're burnt from sunburn, powder burn, your face is all burned afterwards. We're out in the damn sun there and firing away at them damn things all day long out there. Shit, no damn break or nothing. They just keep you going. And I got pretty good at it. I got so if two birds come out at once, I could get them both in one shot after awhile.

DC: Really?

JS: Because you shot so damn many times, you're bound to get better. [laughs] If you're not, you're just pretty damn *dumb* or something, or you know, uncoordinated. But it was kind of interesting. And they had a—like a pickup truck—they'd drive around the track and you . . .

DC: It's getting kind of loud out there. I'm gonna close the door. That's OK.

JS: You had a track that you go around. And they have a driver and then they have an instructor and the gunners on the rail. They had a shotgun mounted in the adapter. And these pigeons would come out of the ground and out of the trees—they had them all over. You didn't know where they was coming out, but you had to be ready. And that was kind of neat. Blast them things out of the—before they hit you, before they got too close. Done a lot of that before we even fired a fifty caliber. And thirty caliber. But it was really interesting. And then the—then when you got the—then the other one was you pulled a sleeve target up in the air with a B-26 and they . . .

DC: A sleeve target you said?

JS: Yeah, it was about—it was probably about six to eight feet by three feet wide. They had a B-26 bomber and I don't know how far it was out there, but you had a certain number to call when you returned the fire so they knew when you was firing at it. Then after they're all done they just released it and it'd fall down on the base down there. Go and get it and you could see how many times you hit it. And the same with the one on the Jeep going around. You could only get it going this way, and then once you hit the Jeep—you shoot that damn target, not the Jeep, because they got really pissed.

DC: The target's on the Jeep or up above it?

JS: It's right above it. Yeah. Just going around in a circle at a certain speed, you know. It's on a track. Nobody's driving it, it just keeps going around.

DC: You wouldn't want to drive it.

JS: Oh, shit no! [laughs] No. But you get pretty good after you fire so many rounds, you know. So then I went to radio school after that.

DC: So why did you go to radio school?

JS: I don't know. I guess they didn't need me then or something, you know, because they wanted some radio people and they had the guys for armament and some guys for mechanic school. Because when you're on a plane you had to learn other things, you know, in case—like the bombardier, he had to know how to fire a fifty caliber. Cadets had to fire all them positions, too—that were in cadets. We had cadets down there at gunnery school that were gonna be pilots later on, or bombardiers or navigators. But they had to learn what they were doing in case the gunner got killed. Which is—we lost thirty thousand guys over in Europe in the war, in the Air Corps. Thirty thousand guys. So you had to learn,

you know—if you're up there and they're shooting at you, you want to be able to shoot back. You know, if your guy is killed you gotta jump in there and do it. So they had to learn that, and the guys were really pushing them, the cadets, because they had more to do than we did, because they had to learn the flying and all that crap, too.

DC: So you were learning how to work the radio system on the plane?

JS: Yeah. And it's also why I learned to type. And I learned the Morse code. I got that down and I says, "Hell, I done the typing in high school," and so I didn't do bad at that. I don't know why I had to learn how to type. I guess if you're on the ground you can type faster than you can write the code, write it out. And I learned the Morse code and all of that. So then I got scarlet fever.

DC: So that's where you had scarlet fever.

JS: Jesus, sicker than a dog. Went to a party one night—went to the USO and the guy named O'Reilly [sp?], my buddy, him and I signed up for party and these two girls picked us up. They had two Navy guys and two Army guys and us two. Six of us. Took us in the streetcar to a party. And they had food and they had music, you know, and I walked in there and I see this girl. God, she's beautiful. O'Reilly says, "What the hell you telling me for? Go talk to her!" You know, them Navy guys go right up there. So I went over and talked to her, and she was a school teacher—twenty-two years old. I was eighteen. But there were no guys to go with. They was all gone . . .

End of Tape I, Side A

Begin Tape I, Side B

JS: So we got along good and I thought, "Boy this is great," so—and it was in St. Louis, which was—you take a bus from the base to Belleville, and then you have to take another bus to St. Louis to get there. But anyway, we had some stuff to eat, had a nice dinner and everything, and I got sicker than hell.

DC: That night.

JS: Right there. Just like that. My throat got sore and I got hot and I felt woozier than hell. "O'Reilly," I said, "I don't feel really good." He said, "What?!" He says, "I'm having a good time! You better shape up!" I said, "I couldn't help it." So he took me back to the base. Get in there, and I just fell on the—took my shoes off and laid in the bunk there, and they come around in the morning and reveille: "Get your ass up and go to school!" Said, "I can't go, I'm sick." Rapped me on the feet a couple times and they said, "Are you sure you're sick?" I said, "Yeah." "OK. Be out there for sick call, 8:00." So they took me over to the dispensary and said, "You got scarlet fever." They just put me in an ambulance, took me over to the hospital. And boy, I was sick. I had a fever. I tore my bed

sheets all to hell one night, just fighting it, two guys holding me down. I had a hell of a thing—and when my fever broke, I got better after that.

DC: How long did that take?

JS: I was in there—two to three weeks. Two weeks for sure and then—this girl used to come around with thing around here selling cigarettes and candy and stuff. I tried to get her to take it off so I could see what she looked like. She had pretty eyes. "I can't do that. I'll get fired!" So we kept razzing her to take it off but she never would take it off. And that was the only highlight we had in the damn ward there. Couldn't leave. Couldn't go anywhere. Brought the food in to us and everything.

DC: Were the rest of the people sick with scarlet fever, as well?

JS: Yeah. They put me in the wrong ward first. I'm laying there and I was just feeling like crap, and the guy's sitting there with a busted hip or something in a cast. The guy—mostly string up on these—these legs in these things with the pulleys on them and all that. This guy looked to me and he says, "What's the matter with you?" I said, "I'm sick." He says—then he started yelling for the doctor [Early?]. "Get that guy outta here! Look at him, he's turning red!" Then I started getting a rash all over me. They got me in the wrong ward. Boy, they come in there, whipped me down the hall in a hurry.

DC: You could spread it all around to all those guys.

JS: Yeah. You know, we used to blow up condoms and send them over to the WAC area for excitement. You could hear them yelling over there, all the girls yelling. Blow them things up and the wind just flicked them right over there. The only entertainment we had, you know? No damn movies or nothing. You go nuts in the isolation, you know? So that was our fun thing, I guess.

DC: So then you got better. What happened after that?

JS: Then they—that's when they had the Battle of the Bulge. And the list up on the board, you're being transferred to the infantry. You're gonna get some training and fly over to the front lines.

DC: So now it was getting to be crunch time.

JS: Shit yeah! I thought, I said, "I know this is getting worse. I don't want to play anymore. I want to go home." So they had a list up, my name was on it. So a couple days later I was on a train going down to Camp Livingston. And they give you six weeks training, you get in a plane, they take you over to the front lines. I had a relapse.

DC: Oh, the scarlet fever?

JS: Yeah. I got—I remember that day real well because I got hit in the head with a mortar that

didn't blow up. I was shooting mortars and this guy dropped it and it went down. I was just bending over to get down position—it clipped my helmet. Jesus, I thought—that scared the shit out of me!

DC: No kidding, yeah.

JS: Went out and had these targets way out there—you had to measure these increments of powder to how far it was gonna go and everything. And we had to learn that, and after that threw more grenades, too. Lot of grenades there. And then—I forget what else. Oh, bayonet. Oh Jesus, I hate that bayonet practice. You know, with a bayonet trying to stab a guy, you know, and then shit like that. That was a—well anyway, I collapsed and shit, I couldn't even get up. Come out and pulled me out—in the hospital, I went. I was in there three weeks. And that saved my life because all the guys I left was gone over there. And half of them were killed over there and the other half are back in [New York?] hospital in a month.

DC: Oh really?

JS: Yeah.

DC: So they put them right on the front lines?

JS: Yeah, right in there to fill up the holes. And they just like—just like cannon fodder, you know.

DC: Where was this Camp Livingston?

JS: Alexandria, Louisiana. We called it *Lousy*-ana, because we hated it down there.

DC: Why did you hate it?

JS: Oh it was swampy and damp and hot, you know. Not hot, but muggy like. And they had a flood down there when we was down there. And the damn water—made people moved out of their house. When they have a flood they move out and come back later, and the next time they have a flood they move out again. Crazier than hell! And the water was, like, red, reddish color, from the clay. Wasn't clear water. It was like reddish, muddy color and stuff. I felt sorry for them people down there that go through that crap. But I guess they must like it, because they didn't go very far. There's a river that overflowed almost every year, once a year.

DC: So anyways, you didn't go over to the Battle of the Bulge, but it sounds like you did head over to the Pacific. Is that right?

JS: Yeah. Yeah, when I got out, then they—well then my Father died.

DC: Oh, OK.

JS: So the sergeant—I was out—that was the day I was firing mortars. And I still remember that because I was out of uniform. I had a olive drab on the bottom and the khaki in front because I screwed up my shirt. And I was out of uniform, but I went on anyway. And they didn't—they was gonna give me time at night to clean the rifles for doing that. But they come out and I heard a guy yelling my name, so I went over there and he says, "I want to see you in headquarters." I got thinking, "What the hell did I do now?" you know? Screwed up somewhere, you know? And I didn't think about my Dad. And I went in there. I remember he stopped and I went out and went to the bathroom. Walked over to headquarters, and went in—and the first sergeant's tougher than hell. I couldn't believe it. He put his arm around me and said, "Come in, I want to talk to you." And I thought, "Jesus, this guy—what's the matter with this guy? Is he gonna chew my ass out?" I had to clean the rifles out till midnight there a couple times because I had a dirty rifle and I had to stay and clean them—a whole bunch of them, you know. It's like making sure I do it right next time. And I don't know where they got them other rifles, but they had some more. And until midnight, and then you get up at 5:00 in the morning and go out training. Yeah, he said, "Well, your Father passed away." And he says, "I got your tickets and train and the pass all set. Go over and pack your stuff and get in the bus and there's the train ticket and everything." Nice guy! I thought, "Geez, this guy really changed," you know. I thought he was a mean son of a bitch, you know? But he was really good. So I go over—I was pretty upset then. I knew my Dad was really sick. He had about four strokes. So I went out to stay and wait for the bus. I got in the bus and there was some other guys going to town. By that time, it was later in the afternoon. And I went in the back and sat down, and the bus driver told me, he says, "You can't sit there." I said, "Why?" He said, "That's for colored only." There was three black girls sitting back there. And I says, "Why not?" and he says, "You can't sit there." I said, "No more seats!" And he said, "Then you have to stand up." I says, "No shit!" And them three colored girls looking at me like—and then all the guys up front, finally they turned around and looked at me like, "Get your ass up here! We want to go to town!" And I wasn't in a very good mood anyway, after my Father died. And I said, "What the hell difference does it make where I sit?" "I'm not gonna move this bus until you get up." He would not run that—he wouldn't move the bus until I stood up.

DC: Was that the first encounter you had with the . . .

JS: Yeah. And so I stood up all the way into town. Only guy standing up in the whole damn bus. There's ten seats back there, at least. Reverse discrimination. I couldn't believe it, because I never experienced anything like that before. So, then the fountains down there, there's white fountains and colored fountains. White bathrooms and colored bathrooms.

DC: What did you think about that?

JS: I was surprised. I didn't know they done that down there, you know. I wasn't used to it. Up here in Flint there, we didn't do that.

DC: Did they have that on the base, as well?

JS: Never seen colored guys on the base. They were in a different place. At Camp Livingston I could see them, but we never lived near them. The barracks—they had their own area where they lived. Always had a white lieutenant and a black sergeant on their platoons.

DC: In the black platoons?

JS: Yeah.

DC: Did you ever train with any blacks?

JS: No, never. That's the only time I saw them. Never saw one in radio school, never saw one in Alaska, never saw one in . . .

DC: How about in Texas when you were down there?

JS: Didn't see any there, either. It was all segregated. Only time I seen them was at Camp Livingston. I could see them at a distance, you know. But we never were near them in the barracks or anything. When I got out of the hospital, I had—they had A, B, C, and D platoons. If you're in D platoon, you're pretty sick yet. But you were able to get out of the hospital. Then they grade you up as you get stronger. You had to do calisthenics and close-order drill and stuff to get stronger. Otherwise, you're so damn—I couldn't even lift a chair after that second time around. And so I was on KP. You only get it for six hours because they don't want you to get too tired. And this black guy was on—the only black guy I ever seen. And he's a tough looking egg. He had cuts. He'd been in fights, you know, and he carried a knife. I knew he had a knife on him. He called me junior. He said, "Junior, you ever get in trouble, just let me know. I'll take care of him," you know. I said, "Whoa, my buddy!" [laughs] For some reason he liked me. I don't know why. And I was impressed. That's the only black guy I ever seen. It was just segregated. But on KP, why, there was—they were with us.

DC: But you went back to Davison, then, for your Father's funeral?

JS: Yeah. Went back on the train.

DC: I'm assuming your brother wasn't there.

JS: No, he was over in Germany. They're not gonna let him go.

DC: What were your sisters doing during the war?

JS: Well, I think my oldest sister worked at AC for awhile. And then Ellen, my other sister, she worked at a clothing store in downtown Flint. I remember Bush's and Lerner's store. I remember her saying that. Ladies' stores, she worked there. And then Betty—I don't know. I don't think Betty ever worked. I think she stayed to take care of the kids.

DC: She had kids, OK.

JS: Yeah. And then Norma and [Babe?], the other one, I don't know if she worked or not, either.

DC: I trust they were there.

JS: They were—they had kids when they were real young. And they all quit school and got married.

DC: OK. They quit high school and got married.

JS: Yeah. And my brother, when he—he did, too.

DC: Did he quit to get married or did he quit to go in the service or what?

JS: No, he . . .

DC: He was older than you.

JS: He was older. I can't remember what happened there—I don't think—he went to Flint Central, and I don't think he graduated. And the other four girls didn't, but Norma did. The youngest one graduated from Davison. And so did I. But I didn't get my diploma till I got home, after I got out of the service. I was twenty years old. I had a year and two years and a half or something like that.

DC: You finished it up then?

JS: Well, I had the chance to take a test down at Mott, or down at junior college. And it was—you go six hours one day and four hours the next day, and it covered five different subjects. Two hours on each one. I remember one test I passed by two points. And you couldn't study for it, and you couldn't take it over. One shot, and I just made it. The other ones I done all right, but that one I had a timing on it. But anyway, I did—I got it. So a week or two later, why, I got—we didn't have a telephone out on the farm at all. Never had a telephone—I got a letter from the superintendent, "Could you come on down to the school and get your diploma?" So I went down there, I walked in his office, and C.J. Thompson there, he's a tough old boy, you know. "Here's your diploma." "Thanks." "Congratulations." "Thanks a lot." Took it, walked out, that was it. My graduation: that was it! About two minutes, that was it. [laughs]

DC: No long speeches or anything.

JS: Yeah. I always kid about my senior trip was that trip going to Alaska on that damn boat, they're shooting torpedoes at us. That was my senior trip.

DC: All right, you gotta tell me about that.

JS: And then my class went to Chicago on the Boblo boat and then back up to Detroit. And I remember they told me two guys got lost in Chicago and they had to find their way home. [laughs] Guys from Davison get out of town, they get lost!

DC: That was the class you would've been in if you'd been in Davison.

JS: Yeah, if I would've been in. Yeah. My diploma reads '46, but I actually was in '44, but I got put back, so I'm '45 in my official class, I guess. But I knew all the kids on both ends of it, anyway. Played ball with all of them, you know—played football, basketball, and baseball.

DC: How did your Mother get by caring for your sick Father and then when he died—how did she get by?

JS: She just—I don't know how she done that. It just amazes me when I think about it, because there was not much income there at all. Seem like I remember the payments on the farm was thirty-five dollars a month—at that time, you know, was about right, I guess. I still remember that figure. But my sisters helped out a lot with my mother. They were there a lot with her and got her through that. Because that two years I was gone, or two and a half years I was gone. And my brother was gone. Then my youngest daughter [means sister] married a guy a year older than her and went to school with him. And he was in the Navy and he went to Maryland where his ship was getting fitted to go overseas. And she went over there and stayed. She was with him for quite awhile.

DC: So there was no one left at home.

JS: No, and then—so the other girls would come over and make sure Mom had groceries, because Mom couldn't drive and there's no stores out there in the country. So they always made sure she was—no telephone to talk to her, so they always come out. They always made a plan that they could be there and help her if she needed anything. But she could—Mom could do about anything. I don't know how. I don't know how she done it. When I went home from Scott Field, I had never been home yet. And I went home Christmas, New Year's. I wasn't supposed to go more than a hundred miles from the base and that was six hundred miles. So bullshit, I'm going home! So I got a ride with a guy that had a car at the base. He lived in Indianapolis. So it was four of us. We rode with him over there and then I got a train up to Flint. Then I took a taxi out and then hitchhiked out to Davison. I was home twelve hours, then I had to go back. I done that Christmas and New Year's. Both weekends I done that because I wanted to get home. And Dad couldn't talk. He recognized me but he couldn't say anything.

DC: So you saw him before he died.

JS: Yeah. He died about the same time President Roosevelt died. Almost the same—it was the same month. April, I think it was. He was—so he—yeah—he recognized me but he couldn't say anything. I come home two times there. But I don't know what else I was

gonna do anyway, you know? I didn't want to stay on the base that long. We used to have guys come around, or girls, too, with the USO for performances. And most of the time, like in Texas, it was hotter than hell and I never went to them. I would go over to the gym, play basketball or something like that, you know. But you couldn't hardly get in the place anyway. There were too many guys there. So I thought, "Well, I'm gonna go home, you know, if I can do it without no one knowing about it."

DC: So did you get caught?

JS: No. Never got caught.

DC: So it sounds like you headed off to Alaska shortly after that. Is that right?

JS: Yeah. Yeah, that's when the—yeah, they put me back in the Air Corps again after the—it was after the Battle of the Bulge. It was in [short pause] April or March, something like that. Yeah, so then I had a delayed route. That's after my Dad died. They had an emergency furlough and then it wasn't two weeks later I got transferred and I got a delayed route. So hell, I got to go home twice inside of two months. Took a train out to Fort Ord, California. And then we just—no, that still wasn't it. I wasn't in the Air Corps then. I was still in the Army. They put me in the Army for that deal. You could do that then because it wasn't a separate branch. So I went out there and we had to throw them damn grenades again. Jesus, I never liked those things. I see them blow up, you know. You release that pin—you better get rid of that damn thing and don't drop it, you know, or you're dead! So you had to throw them through a window like you're in a house, you know? You know, laying there and fighting through there, and then they had these damn mortars. Or these—firing these Howitzers over our heads. And they hit the beach there, and then you get up in these damn ships and you climb down this webbing on the side with a full field pack and helmet on and your rifle and all that crap. And on the boat, and then you hit the beach and you had to practice all that stuff, you know. And there were some damn coral snakes out there. And if you got bit you died. I mean, there's nothing—not like a rattlesnake. They showed us one about that long, orange and black. Deadlier than hell. So I had a hold of a concussion grenade with no metal in it. I carried that damn thing, because if I saw one, I'm gonna pull it and toss it on, you know. But I never did—I seen another dead one, but I never seen another live one. But you run through that hills and sand, you know, firing rifles and all that shit and you don't know where them things are.

DC: Yeah, that's scary.

JS: In Texas at Sheppard Field we'd go out—them rattlesnakes lived in the ground, you know. We'd pour water down the holes and they'd come out and we'd take sticks and smack them and kill them. And then we'd take the rattlers off and at night in the barracks we'd rattle them, you know, and some guys, "Rattle that snake!" "I hear a snake rattle!" [laughs]

DC: Oh no. Now you're playing with snakes, you caught a shark—a thing for dangerous animals. So when did you get shipped out, then, because you headed off to Alaska and said that they were shooting at you and stuff.

JS: Yeah, it was—it was—oh hell, we went by train from Fort Ord up into Prince Rupert, Canada. Didn't know where the hell we was gonna go. They had—they issued mosquito netting and warm climate gear. And I bought five T-shirts, white ones. And you can't take them with you where you're going. You don't have nothing white or they'll kill you. I was thinking we were gonna be in Japan, see, in them islands over there. I thought—my brother, when the war ended in Europe, he was on a boat. Went through the Panama Canal and going over there. They thought they were going home. Hell no, they're going over to the Pacific. And that's when they dropped the big bomb.

DC: Yeah. Where were you when they dropped the bomb?

JS: I was in Alaska. But they knew they were gonna drop it, so all our training that we had for invasion, which I went through in Camp Livingston, I'm going through it again in Fort Ord. And all that training was for that. So they said—so I dyed my T-shirts olive, drab, dark green. Then they shipped me—I didn't know where the hell I was going. We got on the train and we're on a troop train, and they said, "Well, you can—you don't have to worry about the right clothing anymore. You can wear them now." I already dyed them dark green. So I wore them anyway. But all around there was khaki or the olive drab, you know. So they couldn't take anything away. And on that train up through Washington up into Canada, we didn't know where we were, for sure. They wouldn't tell us where we were going. And we had to get out and do close-order drill and exercises on the one train stop. And these Canadian girls, they kind of liked us, you know. But the colonel in charge of training, he said, "I don't want you guys messing with those girls. They're nice girls, but we don't want you guys even touching them! So lay off them or else you're gonna be court martialed." So we couldn't even—we could just talk to them, but we couldn't get friendly with them. And they were tougher than hell on us that way. Said, "We wanna keep good relations with these people in Canada, so we don't want you guys screwing it up." We didn't—we're not bad guys, you know? [laughs] But they said, "No, don't mess with them. Say hello and goodbye." That's about all. And they'd watch us do these drills and stuff. So one of them gets a big basket of cherries. So we think, "God, here's fresh fruit!" You know, so the colonel comes through, and he says, "Where the hell did you get them?" I said, "Well, the girls gave them to us." He said—he took them. "You can't have them. They might be poisoned." And I thought, "Shit, they wouldn't do that to us," you know? So a few hours later he comes back, he says, "OK. I had them checked. I took them back, washed them off and checked them. They're OK—you guys can have them now."

DC: OK. You got them back.

JS: Yeah.

DC: So you're up in Alaska when the war ended. What happened then?

JS: Well hell, they had a big—in Anchorage there, they had a lot of activity there—people dancing in the street, women throwing bras out the upper windows and everything, you know, all that stuff. Wild as hell up there. Eskimos going nuts there. They're drinking—

they can't hold their liquor and they get stoned, you know? [laughs]

DC: So what did they do with you then?

JS: Well I was in the headquarter squadron and—oh, at Fort Ord, or Camp Livingston—no, Fort Sheridan. I was on fire detail. From twelve midnight till eight in the morning they had a stove in each end of the barracks. Coal stove. And I had to—I had so many barracks to do. I had to make rounds all night long.

DC: Keep those stoves going.

JS: Keep them going. And you don't wanna wake the guys up because they get pissed. They throw something at you if you wake them up, you know? You guys want heat, you gotta make a little noise here. But I'd be real careful. And I really got homesick because I'd never been away from home before. And I'd sit in the furnace room and lie down and look at my girl's pictures, my high school kids and all that shit, feeling depressed and then made my rounds and eight o'clock you go and get into bed. Well they're cleaning the damn barracks. Slide the bed across, hit the wall, and wham, you know, you're laying there trying to sleep. Then you wash it down, squeak it down, slide you back across. So you're trying to get some sleep, you know. Then they'd go what they're supposed to do then—and then you could sleep a little bit. Then after about—I was there three weeks. I done it for about two weeks. They didn't give a damn if they got you wet or if you hit the wall or nothing. They just slide it across there.

DC: So you can't disturb their sleep but they can disturb yours.

JS: Trying to sleep. Yeah.

DC: So then the war's over. Where did you go then?

JS: I just stayed right there.

DC: Stayed in Anchorage, OK.

JS: It was Elmendorf Field. Big base. It was a—Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Field is right together. They got ground forces and air forces both together. And a lot of bombers there but I never flew—I never flew on a mission, on a bomb mission. Done some strafing, but. . . [Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Field were just outside Anchorage, Alaska.]

DC: Was that in training?

JS: No. Up the Aleutians and out there where the Japanese were.

DC: OK. You did do some of that.

JS: Yeah. But there's nothing—not much—there were some fighter planes, but they were

pretty well beat, you know, by that time. And you're up there and all you see is snow and water, nothing else up there. What the hell they want that place for anyway? But that's all there is.

DC: So you had a few missions?

JS: Yeah, it wasn't really a mission. They just—you go out and strafe a little bit. And then you don't even know what the hell's going on because you can't tell what it is really. But there were some there and they—they were surrendering anyway. It was getting near the end and they were tired of it, too. So Adak [Island, in the Aleutians] has got a runway, it's a mile and a half long. It's the biggest island on the end, and that's where most of the bombers were—land and take off. We had a B-29 come in that was—had been over Tokyo and flying—they were taking it home. And you weren't supposed to take pictures of things, either. I never had a camera until I got to Alaska. You weren't allowed to have them. So I didn't get many pictures. I got some, but I—and then they had this B-29 there and so I got to go through that while I was there in the—at the base. And they had another one in a hangar later on. But most of them were B-24s and B-25s and they were scrapping a lot of them right there. I got pictures of that. Finally they gonna let us take pictures. We had a darkroom in the barracks. And my barracks, you know—windows blacked out. And we developed our own pictures and enlarge them, you know. Big picture like that. And the planes with the engines out of them and the tails cut off for scrapping them, you know, and a whole bunch of them, like a lot of them. Then we had a land rescue team of dogs and they would go out—if a—when a plane had crashed up there, why, they would fly over and they could drop the dogs out in parachutes—sled. And the dogs really liked that shit. [laughs] I don't know why they liked it, but they did. They were also out in the mountains, and they'd go up with the troops. They were on duty twenty-four hours a day, them guys were. Big old huskies, you know, and they—sled—they had tractor tread on them, and they could go quite a bit on that. And sometimes they couldn't—they'd have to bail out to get to it—get the people, the survivors if there were any survivors.

DC: How long did you stay in Anchorage?

JS: I was there—I wonder if I was there about a year. No, about ten months. And then I come home and we had a—yeah, I remember we took off in a snowstorm. We had a C-54 four-engine transport. But I always flew in bombers. I never flew in nothing else. Took off in a snowstorm. Where in the hell? You couldn't see nothing, you know. I thought, "What the hell"—we—get it off the ground before he hit something, you know? So we—and I don't know where we went, but boy we was up in the air all night. And I don't think it'd take that long to go from Anchorage to Seattle, but when we landed the sun was up and I don't know where the hell we went. I don't know what they was doing. I think we got lost or something. I don't know, but it seemed like a long time from the time we took off and landed.

DC: Where did you land?

JS: Boeing Field in Seattle. And you look at a map and it's not that far straight across, so I

don't know where we went. So I'm sitting there, they had—they called them bucket seats. Well all they are is two pieces of pipe with canvas against the wall. And there's a couple belts like that, and that's bucket seats. And just a row on each side of the plan—that's where you sit. Well I got my fur parka on and my flying boots—I got them out. My flying jacket, my summer flying jacket—I got them home. I snuck them home. We weren't supposed to have them. But they have them fur-lined—and my parka, God it was a nice one. I slept on that—lay on the floor and slept on the plane. And we landed at Seattle and we just gassed up and we went and had breakfast at the mess hall. Got right back in the plane, they took right off, went to Great Falls, Montana. And I was there about three days. Then I wrote my Mother a letter and told her I was on my way home. But they got my fur parka there. They saw it and they said, "You can't have that." Bet that guy kept it himself. He didn't turn that thing in. But I had my pants over top of my flying boots, so they didn't see them. And then I can't remember what I did with my winter flying jacket. They didn't want the pants. And I had a summer flying jacket. Matter of fact, I went up ice fishing—I use it, my boots are nice. And I go up ice fishing on Saginaw Bay. And hell, I never get cold with that stuff on. They're really nice. I just wore them out, you know, I don't have them anymore.

DC: So what happened when you got back to Davison?

JS: Yeah, well—I got—we got—let's see, Great Falls. I didn't go to town because I didn't see nothing there. I just wanted to get home, so I just stayed on the base there until we got—then I took a train from Great Falls, Montana to Fort Sheridan. I was right back where I started. Then I took a bus, because I was getting tired of riding trains and flying. So I'll take a bus home. So I sat right beside a girl who went to Davison. I couldn't believe it, you know. She just—"I haven't seen you in two, three years!" She was older than I, a couple years older than me. But she knew my sister, too. So I didn't get to sleep much because her and I was talking quite a bit. So I got home and I went to the bus station to the Post Office in Flint. My sister-in-law worked there. My brother—was my brother-in-law's sister. And he married my sister that's sick up north. And she worked there and she didn't—she knew I was coming home, but that's the first place I went because I had to get off the bus right nearby anyway, two blocks away. So I went over and surprised her, you know. So then I went out—took a taxi out to Dort Highway, and then I hitchhiked to Davison. Got right out there and then walked out to the farm. I was home. When I come home, this was amazing. I come home from Scott Field, Illinois—I hadn't been home in almost a year. And we had a dog, an old white Spitz. They're about that big. We had two of them on the farm and they're just smart. You could talk to them, almost, they were so damn smart. [there is an interruption from someone working outside, knocking on the door].

DC: A buddy of yours? Do you want to leave the door open?

JS: Yeah, what the hell you doing that for?

DC: Coming in with a chain saw. You had this dog, you said.

JS: Yeah, and she—when I come home that night, I walked for about a mile from the light on out to the farm. And Mom knew I was on my way home, so she was sitting up waiting. And it was about, I don't know, one or two in the morning. And that dog knew it was me.

DC: Really? It could tell.

JS: Her tail was wagging, didn't bark at all. She went right to the door. So normally she'd be jumping up, trying to look out the window. Because if anybody come near the house, she was right after them. And she knew it was me just by—that's the way she acted. She never barked once, but her tail was going like that right by the door. After about ten months, you know. So it's surprising what they can, I mean, you know, remember. They just don't forget.

DC: So what did you do when you got back to Davison?

JS: Oh God, I tried to get reacquainted with some, you know, some people I went to school with. I didn't see all my sisters because they were—a couple in Detroit. A few in Detroit. And then I was only home—well, I got discharged. They—I got to see them—we didn't have a reunion or nothing like that, but eventually I got to see them all, you know. My brother was already home. He got home.

DC: He got home before you?

JS: Yeah. Well he was in four years, so he should. Yeah, so he got home before I did.

DC: So what did the two of you do then? I mean what did you—you got home . . .

JS: Well he was—I took a month off. I didn't do nothing. I just went off and raised hell and my buddies, you know, they was getting out. Just got reacquainted. I didn't have a—I couldn't get a car for a year. Even a used car. So I had to depend on other people. And these girls that I went out with, they had to drive and get their Dad's car to go out. Because my old '31 Chevy was dead. Matter of fact—hell, it wasn't even there. They scrapped it. They had a '31 Chevy and then my brother had a '36 Olds. And that was gone, too.

DC: So you had no car.

JS: No. I went for a whole year and I just had to ride my bike or—you just couldn't buy one.

DC: So you took a month off just to kind of . . .

JS: Yeah, and then I finally went to work for a plumber there that my brother worked for. I worked for him for that summer. Then I worked—I went to—down to Buick. I worked there from October till Christmas. Then I went home and never went back. I worked on the line on the body drop and geez, I hated that job.

DC: Tell me about it.

JS: Go in there—first of all, the guy—the body come down from the third floor to the second floor like that. And I was underneath there, and the frame is. And you guide the body down with these big drifts, you know. You put the body mounts on everything, then you have the—they dropped the body down, and you put the bolts in. You know, you got an air wrench and tighten it up. And then by that time, the next one's coming down. I thought, "Here's a guy up there been doing this for years. I'll be damned if I'm gonna be doing this for year after year. Bullshit on that." So when I went home Christmas, I just never went back. And I didn't do nothing for about two more months. I had a hell of a time drawing unemployment. Oh, we only had 52-20 club. Twenty bucks a week for fifty-two weeks, that's all I had coming. That's what they called it. And this guy out there at Lapeer—I went down to Flint, but the line was so long there I got tired. So I transferred to Lapeer. I had a hell of a time getting over there for employment interview, you know. You had to go over once a week to get your twenty bucks. And I had to hitchhike over to get it. And finally he says, "Why don't you go to school?" He said, "Hell, you're not getting a job. I get you a job and you can't get to it because you haven't got a car." So I went to junior college. And I got a ride—when I worked at Buick I got a ride with a guy that worked there from Davison, so that was no problem. Except I hated to go in Monday morning, but I made most of them. But some I . . .

DC: Some you didn't make.

JS: Jesus, that was terrible. I didn't have my heart in it at all. And I went to [pauses]—see, I worked in plumbing and heating for that summer. Then I got laid off.

DC: From the plumbing and heating job?

JS: Yeah. My brother didn't because he had been there longer than I had.

DC: Right. How big was that company?

JS: Just the owner and his son and me and my brother. A small company in Davison. And so I put in a lot of furnaces and heating units and didn't have air conditioning much in them days. Mostly just converting from coal furnaces to gas and oil. Done a lot of that. You put them fire bricks in there for that burner there and you open the door and you get in there and you got the stuff and you're putting the mortar up, fire bricks in there. And then your jacket moves up on you. Shit, you can't get out! So it's kind of—if you got claustrophobia, you don't want to do that, because then you gotta have somebody slide your jacket. It gets wrinkled up. You can't get out.

DC: Wedges you in there.

JS: Yeah. So that's kind of touchy. My brother's bigger than I was, so he didn't like it, either.

DC: So OK, we're jumping back just for a second though. You mentioned that the body job

that you quit at Christmas was not to your liking. But what about it was it that you didn't like the most?

JS: Well, it's just repetition of the same thing over and over. Then I smashed my toe. I dropped the, that air wrench fell on my toe and smashed it. They had to stop the line and get me out of the pit there and then they took me to the hospital. And they had to drill a hole in my nail to let the blood out of it. And I go hobbling back and the boss is a real nice guy, you know, nice guy. I was gonna go home, he says, "No, no. You can't go home." He says, "That looks bad if you have an injury on the job and you get time off for it." He said, "I want you to stay here. I'll get you a job—you can sit down." So I had to set up these, the stock for the body thing. All this stuff set up for going in the car. So I done that for about two weeks. He come around and he says, "How you doing?" I said, "Oh, I think I'm pretty close to getting back there. I can walk on it a little better now. It doesn't hurt as much." It hurt like hell. And so your big toe, you know, is more important than I thought it was. So finally I told him, "Yeah, I can handle it." So I went back down there and the went out for Christmas—I just didn't go back.

DC: So the repetition and then the injury as well . . .

JS: I wanted something else, you know, I didn't want to do that.

DC: Was it hard physically?

JS: What?

DC: Was it hard physically?

JS: No, just the, you know, the same thing over and over all the time. And then the air wrench you put up there and crank it up. And they'd want you to move it a half a turn after it stops running. I couldn't understand why I couldn't adjust it so when it stops, it has the torque on it, you know. But that's what they wanted, so—and I don't know, I just, I thought, "I can't, I don't want to do this." You know, so I went home and then I didn't have a job for about two months. I don't know how—I must've sold used batteries or junk or something to get money to go out on. I thought, "Hell with that."

DC: Yeah. So then you worked for the plumbing and heating for awhile.

JS: The plumbing, yeah.

DC: You got laid off. Do you remember when it was you got laid off?

JS: It was in the—starting to get—it was in the fall. For some reason people didn't put many furnaces in after the fall. They liked to do it, you know, spring or summer mostly. Because my brother was still working—well the other guy, Don, the owner's son, went to college. He went up to Michigan State. Well I used to up there weekends and party. And I went—when I was going to junior college up in Flint, I'd go up there and party with my buddy up

there. I had three buddies up there at State. Go up there Friday and come back Sunday night.

DC: Is that why it was tough to go to work on Mondays?

JS: Yeah. But I made it. What they done, they had a activity card. And always somebody was going home. So I'd borrow their card for to go to the cafeteria and any ball games or anything like that, see. So hell, it didn't cost me nothing. I didn't have much money anyway.

DC: You could just get there you'd be all set.

JS: So I'd get there and get a—some guy going home, I'd just borrow their card and I'd use that for all the activity. And call these girls up, make a date. Never seen them before. And hell, they were ready to go. Because they didn't—there wasn't too many guys that had any—couldn't go anywhere. And it was a good deal there. I spent a lot of weekends up there at Michigan State. Mom went, "What are you doing up there?" "Oh, just go out to ball games. Go out and have a beer with the girls or just go out and eat," or something like that. But never had a bad one all the time I was there. Called on sorority houses and talked to the house mother. "OK, what's up?" I said, "Well, we're gonna go to the show." "How tall are you and what do you look like?" and all that. She said, "OK, I'll have a date for you." Hang up, you go there, tell her who you are, and never had a bad one. Really nice girls and they just want to go out and have a hamburger or a beer, you know. They were pretty well restricted, too, for money.

DC: All right, so you did this, and is this while you were going to junior college?

JS: Yeah, I started then because I felt in the college mode then. I thought, "Well hell, I'll go up there weekends." And I didn't have a job and I got a car. I got a '41 Chevy finally— had been traded in twice.

DC: So how long were you laid off? Or what did you do after . . .

JS: From Buick?

DC: Well, I guess—you got laid off from the plumbing and heating job and you went to junior college, and then what happened next?

JS: Oh hell, I sold vacuum cleaners door-to-door. Going to the door, that was a pain in the ass. These goddamn women, they either didn't want one or they'd keep you there for hours and not buy it, you know. One black lady, she was a maid. I'll never forget this. Electrolux vacuum cleaners. My Mother bought one from me. She felt sorry for me so she bought one. Because I wasn't selling too many of them. And this black woman, was a maid—I told her who I was and she said, "Well come on in!" You know, come in there and so I demonstrated how it worked and how to do drapes and everything. And she's sitting there watching me, you know, and I said, "Well, what do you think?" She said, "That's pretty

nice. We got one just like it." [laughs] I said, "You have?" She said, "Yeah." Says, "OK." She just wanted to be entertained, you know?

DC: So how long did you sell these vacuum cleaners?

JS: Oh hell, three or four months, I guess. I wasn't doing very good at it. So I'd pound on doors. It's tough if you don't have leads, you know. Just one door to another and if you don't have a lead of some kind, you're gonna get a lot of doors slammed in your face.

DC: Where did you go when you were selling?

JS: In Flint area, yeah. Some in Davison. But that didn't work out very good. And then I drove a—when I went to college there at JC, went there and then I—that summer after I got out, I drove a truck for hauling lime. Spread it on the fields and farms. And—up to Bayport, way up in the thumb. We loaded seven ton of lime. Come down in Lapeer and Genesee counties and go out in the field with that truck and spread that stuff with that thing on the back, you know. And sometimes I'd get stuck and then I'd get the farmer's daughter to come out—I met a lot of farmer's daughters. And farmer's daughter would come out and pull me out with a tractor, you see? And so that wasn't too bad that way. [laughs]

DC: Were you doing this on your own or were you working for a company?

JS: No, for—my insurance man owned a truck and he hired me to drive it. Yeah.

DC: And did he get the farmers . . .

JS: Yeah, it was all set up. And they paid me right there, too. And I collected the money and signed the thing that I was paid in full. And then I'd head up to Bayport, get another load, and come back. And I could just barely get two trips a day, because that's a pretty long run up there. And then by the time you got stuck, you were up the creek. You couldn't go another time so sometimes you only got one a day.

DC: The muddy fields would get you.

JS: Yeah. So somehow it neutralizes the soil for the soil was sour. The state checked it for them, you know. They could tell what needed it and this lime would neutralize it, and that's what it was doing.

DC: So how long did you do that job?

JS: All summer that one summer. I told the guy that took my place, I said, "Now when you drive that truck, you got a load on—both hands of the wheel because the front wheels grab. If you don't have a hold of the steering wheel, it's gonna pull you off the road." Week after that he flipped it over because he didn't hold the wheel tight, you know. And I told him, I said, "When you put the brakes on, have a hold of that wheel because it wants to go

either way, whichever wheel's gonna take hold. It's gonna pull." Flipped it over right outside of town. He didn't get hurt but . . .

DC: He could've.

JS: He could've, yeah. And I told him, I said, "Don't. . ." And he didn't listen to me very good, I guess. Didn't believe it or what.

DC: Didn't believe it, yeah. So what did you do after that job, then? You worked all summer on the lime.

JS: Oh God, then I . . .

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

JS: . . . Dow Plating. It wasn't Dow Chemical. The guy's name was Dow. And plates—plates and sheet metal parts that weren't painted—they were coated with this plating so they wouldn't rust, like hood latches and stuff. And Lapeer Stamping made them and then we plated them and they'd haul them back and forth. Then they'd ship them out to Pontiac, Buick, and all them.

DC: OK. So it was a supplier.

JS: Yeah, supplier. Done that for a summer.

DC: How did you like that job?

JS: It was OK. I liked being outside, you know, and it was OK. But then I slacked off and the guy—I got laid off, I guess. I don't know what happened.

DC: So the plating job was outside?

JS: No, it was in a building. You plate it and electric current's going through that and you had to be careful, you know. And you pull them out and hang them till they dry, then you put them in the truck and take them over to Lapeer and you get a big old truck load of these . . .

DC: So you worked on the inside, then?

JS: Yeah, and I drove the truck over there.

DC: You drove the truck out as well. OK, I see.

JS: Yeah. I liked being outside.

DC: So the driving the truck would get you outside. Gotcha. Was that job tricky?

JS: No, you just—you had to know what you're doing because that shorted out, that electric juice going through them things to zap the zinc on, or whatever it was. And it was liquid in tanks, big wood tanks. And you'd hang it up there and you didn't want to hit the metals, [laughs] so you gotta be careful. But they wore rubber gloves, because you can't touch that stuff. Then you hang it over here to dry it, then you load them in boxes and they take them over to the plant. Or take them out for delivery. You gotta take them back to the plant and then they shipped them to the supplier, to the factories. But they stamped them out there, and there was just grease and oil on that stuff—clean everything off and plated them. I guess they do a lot of that kind of stuff, you know, these small places, businesses.

DC: And how did you get that job?

JS: Well I just happened—a buddy of mine, he ended up being my dentist. He was going to school and he got that job during the summer part-time. And he told me about it. I went up there, and they hired me. And then a couple years later he was out of dental school and he was my dentist for ten years, you know. We always kid about that job, you know. Made some money on it, you know, the jobs.

DC: The money was OK?

JS: Yeah, it was what everybody was paying, you know. They didn't push you any, you know, they was—as long as you do it, they didn't care. Nobody on your butt all the time.

DC: Were you living at home then?

JS: Yeah. Yeah, my Father was gone and my Mother—I lived with my Mother and my brother and his wife. He got married.

DC: They were all in the house?

JS: Yeah, and then we sold the farm and then moved into town.

DC: OK. When was that? When did you move into town?

JS: 1950.

DC: OK. And what were you doing at that time?

JS: Let's see, that's after I went to college for a year and that's after I had these other jobs. Then I started working at a dealership. My brother-in-law owned a Pontiac-Buick dealership. And I worked there for, uh, probably twelve years altogether, but I started as a—just doing everything. And then I was a mechanic, and then I—they sent me to school.

You know, GM, Pontiac, and Buick had these schools in Detroit and all over. You have to keep going to school for whatever they want you to, you know, so you know what you're doing. So I got so I was doing OK. And my brother was a service manager then. And then that's when he had a heart attack and died.

DC: He did, right then?

JS: Yeah. Thirty-eight years old. And I lived with him, you know, in the same house. And my sister-in-law yelled to me downstairs, "Come on down, there's something wrong with . . ." His name was Harvey, but he got everybody to call him Buster. "There's something wrong with Buster!" Went down there and he didn't even recognize me. He's just sitting in the bed just staring ahead, and he couldn't talk. So I—we didn't have a telephone, so I jumped in the car, went down and got Dr. Delzingo [sp?] out of bed—in the main street in Davison. He come right over, because he knew Buster. He used to come to the dealership and take a nap in a car for about—he said, "Don't tell anybody I'm here! Just let me get an hour's sleep. I've been up all night." You know, so he crawled in a car in the back there. Then we had to go wake him up to get going again, you know. Because he's dead tired on his feet, you know. And so he said, "I'll be right over." So he was over—in about ten minutes he was there. He says, "Buster, I think you're having a heart attack. I gotta send you to the City Hospital." By this time, my brother's gotten from the bed to the sofa. And he didn't want to go to the hospital. But he went. And I went out there—took him in an ambulance, and then I went out. And that was two, three in the morning and I stayed there till—about twelve hours. And he was in the oxygen tent and he was in a lot of pain. Boy, they said he was fighting, tore the tent down a couple times. He was in a lot of pain. Then they got him calmed down and I thought, "Well, maybe he's gonna be all right." So they tried to get me to go home because I was up all night. Went home and I stayed at my sister and brother-in-law's on Main Street. And then I woke up and I heard my mother crying downstairs. I knew what it was right then. And he died. So anyway, we worked together—plumbing and heating, and at the dealership, you know, we were close that way. And we went out a couple times before he was married. But that was it—but we got along good, you know. And so he—I don't know, he—and then, oh, I got that—when I went back—I didn't go to work for about four days. I just couldn't do it. So I finally told my brother-in-law, I said, "Well, I'm gonna come back." He said, "Are you OK?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm OK now." So I come back and they give me his job—service manager. Shit, I didn't want that damn job!

DC: Why didn't you want that job?

JS: Well, because he had a heart attack. People come in the store, they're bitching all the time, you know? And I thought, "Shit." So anyway, I took it. And I developed an ulcer. I was parts and service manager. I'd worked there for a few years before—I knew that was going on. Done that for awhile and then I got that damn ulcer and then they hired someone else. And then I went and sold cars up in the used car lot. Done that for one summer.

DC: So it sounds like you found the service manager job pretty stressful. Is that right?

JS: It *was*, because God, these people bitch all the time. They come in there—I remember one lady come in just before my brother died. They had hydraulic lifters at that time and they were really—you had to use Rotella, Shell Rotella oil or they'd rattle. Because the other oil wasn't designed for this tolerance of a hydraulic lifter. And the Buicks, they'd rattle like hell. We'd just drain the oil, and put Rotella oil in it, and it'd quiet right down. This one lady—she's a pain in the ass anyway, but—come in there and her lifters are clattering away, so my brother said, "OK." So he pulled it in the rack there and changed the oil, put a new oil filter in. Then it quieted right down. Then she started bitching. She says, "I just put a new filter in that." He said, "Does it run quiet now?" She says, "Yeah." But she says, "I just put a new filter in. I don't want to pay for another one." He said, "Well that's what it takes to get that stuff out of there, to start over." And she just bitched like hell and he says, "Lookit, lady. I'll pay for your damn filter if you feel that way about it." So he pulled out his wallet—pulled it out—and then she backed off then. She said, "No, never mind. I'll pay for it." Then she got huffy and then she got in the car and drove out. But he said, "I'll pay for the damn filter if you feel that way about it. But that's what it took to fix your noise in your car, your lifters." She thought we was trying to sell another lif—filter, when it didn't need it. But you had to get all that old oil she was using out to get the Shell Rotella in.

DC: Sure. It holds a lot of oil.

JS: Yeah. But stuff like that, you know—and one guy come in and he had a rear end out in his car. He owned a restaurant in town. And I knew his daughter but he was a pain in the ass, old Freddy. Tore the ass right out of that rear end and we had a hell of a time getting it apart. And he come in, "Geez, haven't you got my car done yet? I gotta have it!" I was the service manager then and I said, "Fred, we're having a hell of a time getting it apart without tearing the whole axle housing apart [coughs] without damaging it." So he pissed and moaned, and he called me back—I'm on the phone. "When are you gonna get my car out?" And I said, "Fred, why don't you get a goddamn wrecker and come in here and hook on, and take it somewhere else." I said, "I'm tired of hearing you bitch about it." I said, "We're doing the best we can," and I shouldn't have told him that because I thought he'd never come bother me again. But I never told my brother-in-law what I told the guy. [laughs]

DC: Right. They probably don't teach you that in customer service training.

JS: No, no. [laughs] They sent me away to school and I was so damn pissed at Fred, I said, "To hell with you! You can haul that damn thing out right now!" And he didn't know what to say then, so he shut up and left me alone. And when I called him a couple days later, whenever, he come in and paid his bill and thanked me and never bitched at all after that.

DC: I forgot to ask you why you sold the farm and moved into Flint.

JS: Well, it was a small farm and we weren't doing anything with it. And the barn was getting old and it was—and my brother got married and they wanted a bigger house. There was

only four rooms. There's a living room, kitchen, bedroom, bedroom. That's all there was. And so it was pretty cozy there with my brother and his wife and me and my mother there. For awhile we slept—when my brother was there before he married, we had two mattresses on the front inside bedroom. At night we'd haul the mattresses on the living room floor and sleep on that. And haul them back in—done that for awhile. There just wasn't enough room, you know, so he got this house in town and I had a bedroom upstairs then. My Mother eventually moved in with my sister on Main Street a few blocks away. But she was getting senile and she couldn't remember. You had to watch her pretty close. She'd get up in the middle of the night and go home, wherever that was. Pretty hard, and then we had to put her in a nursing home. Then she fell and broke her hip and then went right downhill. Didn't last long. She died.

DC: When was that?

JS: Let's see—she was—Mom was—I wasn't married yet. I got married in 1960, so it was probably [pause] late '50s that she died. And my nephew was killed in Vietnam later, and there—so we got my brother, and my mother, and my Dad out there, and then the next lot, next part is my brother-in-law's and his Mother and Dad's is there, and his son that was killed in Vietnam. And he lost a baby that was born, is out there, too. It's kinda, you know—it's two separate family plots but they're right next to each other. [lots of coughing]

DC: What was it like selling used cars?

JS: Oh hell, that was—I was doing pretty good after awhile. I got going and what I done, I'd get a customer and whenever I sold a car I'd have a book and I'd say, "Now, do you have relatives or folks you know, or neighbors that are thinking about a car?" I'd get their phone number and address and I'd go out and see them. I started that and it started working pretty good and I can't remember what happened after that. Oh, I had a chance to come down to Pontiac engineering. My brother-in-law told me about it. He said, "They got a opening down there at Pontiac engineering. I thought I'd tell you about it. So why don't you go down and check it out?" So if I hadn't come down to Pontiac then, I would've been selling cars right up until I retired.

DC: So when was it that you found out about the job at Pontiac engineering?

JS: That was in '59.

DC: '59, OK.

JS: I got married in '60.

DC: OK. So you were selling used cars right up until you went to Pontiac to get the job at Pontiac engineering.

JS: Yeah, because when I was going with my wife, I'd drive a different car all the time because I was testing them and getting ready to put them in the lot. And so I'd take them out and

go see her in Flint.

DC: So who was it that told you about the job at Pontiac engineering?

JS: My brother-in-law that owned—he owned a Pontiac-Buick dealership.

DC: OK. He told you about the job at Pontiac engineering.

JS: Yeah. So I went down and they hired me.

DC: OK. And what was the job they hired you for?

JS: Engineering mechanic.

DC: OK. And tell me about that. What was it like?

JS: Well, first of all, we—that was kind of a [short pause]—well, they'd break you in first, to get you to know your way around. And then after awhile you get to do pretty well anything. I guess even frame changes on a car, or engine changes, or maybe it could be a problem with electrical or whatever. But they had a guy that worked strictly on carburetors, fine tune them. And then they had another guy that done just air conditioning. And then they had two guys doing brakes, alone. But sometimes I'd do them, too. But then we'd get these cars ready for a road test. And you had to—everything had to be torqued and then—like a wheel nut, and you had to put a stripe of red paint on it to make sure it hadn't ever been moved, you know. And it took time to do all this, you know, to get it set up for a road test. And then they'd send it out to Milford and put it on a—they called it a five thousand mile Belgian Block test. Shook the living shit out of the cars—everything shakes. I'd hate to drive that thing. And I drove it when I was out there, but I wouldn't want to be a road test driver on it. Or you might be on a—maybe a short test, you know, maybe just a short test or maybe send it out to Milford, or out to the desert proving grounds. Got a lot of different things. And then there was a engine-building department, which I hated that. I didn't like that at all.

DC: Why didn't you like that?

JS: Same reason I didn't want to work down in Buick—and that damn, putting that damn body on. I hated one spot. I wanted to move around, see. But I didn't have that very much. I done a little bit of everything for awhile.

DC: Is that how you were learning the various jobs?

JS: Yeah. And you learn your way around and so on. Then I got in the chassis development and I must have done that for about twenty years.

DC: Chassis development, OK.

JS: Yeah, that was—I liked that because I got to take it out and road test it a lot. And then I could pretty well do what I wanted as long as I got the job done, and they didn't bother me too much.

DC: What else did that job involve besides road testing?

JS: Well, OK, we went out—I went to Pike's Peak for a brake test. That's a good place to test brakes because you make damn sure they work, because the guardrail's that thick going down. And, well, Pike's Peak and then we went down to—down South for a—we took a Firebird and a Grand Prix down there. We was testing the riding and handling. But we had to get warm weather, because you can't do it in cold weather. And we got to where it was seventy degrees in Mississippi—Jackson, Mississippi. So we rented a gas station. My boss—and we had a Bonneville wagon and we had a trailer full of our equipment and tools, just loaded. Had a hell of a load in that thing. And we had a Trans Am and a Grand Prix. That's the two cars we were working on. And it was myself and—let's see, I wasn't an engineer. I was an engineer mechanic. So the two engineers and the three of us drove down, three cars. And I remember [name of one of the men?], says, "I hope none of us gets sick, because we don't got no extra drivers going up."

DC: How did you get chosen to go down there and on these other road tests?

JS: Well, I worked for the chassis group and they wanted me to go because we were doing chassis development.

DC: But were there others who wanted to do this as well?

JS: Yeah. Probably.

DC: How did you get chosen?

JS: Because I was familiar with it. I knew what to do and how to handle it. Like the guy from Delco—two guys from Delco, engineers, they'd come up here for a week and go back to Dayton every weekend. And I told them, I says, "Shit, I'm gonna watch you valve those shocks every time—all the shocks you're taking apart and valving them—different rides. And I know how to do that now." I says, "You guys can stay home and I'll do it and you won't even have to come to work!" "Bullshit! You're not gonna do that, because I won't have a job if you do that!" [laughs] So I was just kidding. Both of them were nice guys and everything. I was just razzing them. I says, "Shit, I know what you're doing now. I've been watching that, so I can do that just as well as you can." They said, "Oh, the hell you can!" you know. "Forget that. We're just gonna do the ride," and then I have to do the mechanic work and make sure it's done right, you know. And every car that got built up for road test, I drove it first. No one else drove that till I drove it. Because I didn't want someone to get killed for my mistake. I'll make sure that car is safe, you know.

DC: How long did it take you to develop enough experience and expertise to be able to do that?

JS: Oh, I'd say if you worked in a general area doing engine room or—you didn't get in engine build-up unless you stayed there, and then you really got onto it. I done that for awhile. I hated it. Geez, I hated it. Like I was strapped to that damn engine, you know. And I wasn't—I don't like that kind of—I like to get out and do things, you know. So I guess about, by the time you get your way, it probably takes six months—because I was already mechanically inclined, you know, and I'd been to school for the dealership.

DC: Did that help, your experience at the dealership?

JS: Oh yeah. Brake school, transmission school, and all that crap. And it helped, you know—it give you a good background. You don't forget everything, you know, you remember most of it. It does help. I always feel when you go to school, you're gonna learn something. Even if you don't like it, you're gonna learn something. No matter where you go, for a week or two months or whatever. And I always felt that way. So I tried to learn—every school I went to I'd learn as much as I could.

DC: Did that experience help you get the job in the first place do you think?

JS: Yeah. Yeah, because that was my background. See, you had to have ten years seniority.

DC: Oh, ten years seniority! So they gave you seniority for that work.

JS: And I worked in the dealership that long. And they were picking these guys out of the dealerships and the dealers were getting mad because they were losing all their good men. And I was one of them, see. And the guy I rode with—Ortonville, I'm gonna see him tomorrow. We're coming right here tomorrow for . . .

DC: For the lunch?

JS: Yeah, senior, the retirees. Tomorrow. And he lives in Ortonville and he worked at Chevrolet dealership. They plucked him right out of the dealership, see.

DC: Maybe you could convince him to talk to me, as well.

JS: [laughs]

DC: So did you ever consider going back to the dealership? You know, once you got the job at Pontiac Engineering, did you ever think about going back to the dealership?

JS: I thought about it. But I wouldn't go back only in sales—selling cars.

DC: Why?

JS: Because I had enough mechanical work. I was ready to try some—I did sell cars for awhile and I thought I'd rather do that. It's a little bit easier, you know.

DC: Which was easier?

JS: Selling the cars. I mean physically, you know. And I've had some injuries. You know, I've done some stupid things in my day.

DC: In the shop or outside the shop?

JS: Oh shit—when I was in Alaska. You ever ski?

DC: Yeah.

JS: Well, I'd never been on skis before and we went up to the—we had a ski run up in the mountains. Fourteen miles up that damn place. The first time I went up, my two buddies didn't want to go up. So, I've been on a couple barrel staves on the farm or something like that, but nothing like—so we got on, and there was three girls—this is funnier than hell. Two girls rode in a cab with a driver and then one had to get in the back. Well, it was full of guys so she sat in my lap. Well I hadn't had a girl—in Alaska, not many girls out there. So I had a hold of a girl here. Ride all the way up there, my damn legs went to sleep! And I went to get off the truck, I fell off the truck. My buddy said, "What the hell's the matter with you?" And I got up, and I fell down again! "Jesus, I can't feel my legs!" I had that nice babe on my—I'm hanging onto her and my damn leg went to sleep, and didn't even know! So I finally got them moving so I could walk and she was laughing like hell. I says, "Well you have a hell of a . . ." What did I tell her? [pauses] "You give me a"—"The way you affect me," I said, "I don't know if I can handle it or not!" So we went up. So we put the skis on and there's a big rope going way up to the plateau. There's a cheap motor there in the house there running that thing. So you put this—I never done this before—you put this rope, the ski poles over my arm, over this arm. Then you put your arm over the rope like that and hang on. So I hung on. "That's not so bad." Up, up I go, way the hell up there. And I get up there and I says, "Holy Christ! It's a long ways down! There's pine trees down there!" So I thought, "Well hell, if they can do it, I can do it," you know. I jammed on them skis and down I go. All guts and no brains, you know. Well I must've been doing fifty miles an hour. I thought, "Shit, this is easy." But I got to thinking, "I gotta do something before I hit them damn trees!" So I was gonna set down between the skis and just drag along. Well my skis crossed. Then I flip over and land on my head and I dug a furrow about as long as that desk and I laid there till the snow turned white again. You know, laying there till everything's all right. I still had my poles on and everything. Skis are still on—they never come off. And so I had a ways to go. So I thought, "I'm not gonna do this. This isn't as much fun as I thought it was." So I'd go down on an angle like this here and then I'd fall into the mountainside and then I'd go down a little farther. I lost my balance and I fell down, and when I went like that and went in the snow, and went in up there and I rolled over and dislocated my shoulder. I'm laying on my back, my shoulder dislocated, my skis are still on and crossed, yelling like hell and finally some guys come out and got me and my arm was sticking right straight out behind me. And I said, "Oh it's starting to hurt." Well he put a foot in my side and yanked on it. Popped back in and I damn near passed out. And I've had it dislocated probably fifteen times since then.

DC: Oh, so it's been vulnerable.

JS: Yeah, so this mechanical work, I have to be very careful. Even when I'm doing plumbing and heating, some of them damn boilers that weighed two or three hundred pounds and we had to take them downstairs. And it's pretty hard when you got something that's not right.

DC: Yeah. So did that ever make you think of getting out of chassis development?

JS: Well, I could handle it pretty good. I was real careful and all that. And I also played—well I played softball and basketball after I was out, too. But when I played—I always played third base right through junior high and high school in baseball. Well I could do it good, but after that if I went for a line drive it'd pop my shoulder right out. You know, when you're playing third base and you go for it, and it would pop that sucker right out and then it hurt like hell for awhile. And then that electric drill shorted out on me in the move from the farm. And my feet were wet, and it shorted out, and I dislocated my shoulder, it shocked me so damn much. Shit, damn bolt hit me like *wham* and damn thing must've shorted out and it just popped—my shoulder popped out. So I had to get it back in. So it's not in very good shape.

DC: Yeah, I was gonna say that would be a problem forever. When you played baseball and stuff, was that for a company team? Or who did you play for?

JS: Well I played—well I started in softball in high school and then baseball in—no, softball in junior high and then baseball in the freshman, sophomore, and then I got drafted in eleventh grade so I never played it. But I played football in high school and basketball in junior high and high school. Then after I got out I played on the YMCA team. And then while in the service I played—in Alaska, I played in two basketball teams. We had one Air Force team we called the Drunkards and the other one we called it—no, Air Force was the High Flyers and the other was a mix between the ground forces and the air force, and that was the Drunkards. I was on that team, and then ground forces had another team. So we played teams in Anchorage, and different teams we played against. And we had—there were some pros playing, there were some college guys playing. They were pretty good players there.

DC: Because they were in the service up there?

JS: Yeah. They were in the service. So there was pretty good guys playing there, you know. So you had pretty good competition, but it was fun. I enjoyed it. It was fun. And then when I got home I played down at the YMCA. I played on a team down there for, well, till I got injured again. I had a truck fall on me. I was changing the tire for a lady and the truck . . .

DC: Was that when you were in the service department?

JS: No, this was after I retired.

DC: Oh, after you *retired*, OK.

JS: But anyway, I was telling about it—I was underneath it trying to change the damn tire, and that damn thing slipped off the jack. I had a third degree separation, my shoulder. So I wasn't in very good shape for mechanical stuff, you know. So had to be careful.

DC: What was your wife doing when you got married?

JS: She was a registered nurse. I met her in a bowling alley. I used to run out with a bunch of girls and guys, you know, that knew each other from Davison and Flint. And I just looked at the girls' bowling league and she was on the team. And so I got acquainted with her. We had four kids. Now we're not together anymore. Been ten, twelve years been separated.

DC: Did she stay on as a nurse?

JS: Yeah, she's always done that. She works at the—I see her once a year at Christmas. I would go to the kids' house and I see her and say hi. That's about all. I don't talk to her anymore at all. It's just, I don't know—I don't even see my brother-in-laws anymore. At all. I got along good with them.

DC: When you went in at Pontiac Engineering, was that a union job?

JS: Yeah.

DC: So did you join the union at that point?

JS: Yeah, I did then. Because they were pretty strong. They wasn't gonna let me work unless I did. That was OK with me. I would've joined the other one, but I didn't want to stay there. I hated it.

DC: You mean the other one at Buick?

JS: At Buick, yeah. That's why I went to college, because the guy says, after I quit he says—where the unemployment, the 52-20 club, you know. And he says, "Hell, you might as well go to college. You're not getting a job. You don't have a damn car to get there. You might as well go to college if you can get there." I says, "OK." So that's when I went to junior college in Flint. Matter of fact, where I'm living—my niece and her husband, he's a lawyer. And he was at JC at the same time I was.

DC: At the same time. OK.

JS: Yeah. We remember the same guys, people that went there.

DC: Did you ever have any need to use the union or committeeman or anything while you were

on the job?

JS: No, I didn't bother. I never had any trouble with them, you know. I just done my job because—the majority of time I was at Pontiac, twenty years I was in chassis development. And I went on vacation or something and I got—what happened? [pauses] Oh, I had surgery. I had gall bladder surgery. And I had—I had another injury. I had something else. I was off for awhile and then went back and they had somebody else on my job and they put me in something else. And I bitched like hell—I didn't like that. So I didn't go to the union but I went to my boss, the top boss at the head of chassis development. Well he had me on it the next day. I said, "John"—his Dad was a Vice President of GM. John Seaton [sp?]—and I says, "What's this crap letting them jerk me around like that?" And he says, "Hell, I didn't know nothing about it." So he says, "I'll take care of it." So the next day I was back on it. So he went and talked to them and told them that he wanted me to stay on the job there because I was familiar with the program they was in, you know.

DC: So they were gonna move you after your surgery?

JS: Yeah, well they put somebody else on it, gonna leave him there and leave me hanging there somewhere else. And I didn't want to do that. You couldn't beat this job, it was . . .

DC: What did you like best about it?

JS: Well, I worked—I done my job. I liked it. I liked driving and handling, you know, and I don't like engines that well, but I like on the road. And the Pike's Peak trip was really interesting, you know. Especially going down that damn peak.

DC: What was that like?

JS: Going down Pike's Peak testing brakes. And they don't have guardrails on that thing, either. And we made damn sure them things are working before w'd go up. We had thermocouples on every brake shoe for heat. If they get hot, that's when they fade out on you. That's when you lose your brakes. And the rangers are checking brake drums all the time. People that don't know that. And they're checking with the thing, you know, they have go around. But they didn't bother us because we got these gauges on the dash. Every shoe has got a thermocouple into it, so you can tell how hot it's getting. When it gets a certain temperature, we used to cool it off. Because once they go up, you're not gonna stop. You're going over the cliff! [laughs] So it was pretty touchy, you know. And then a trip down South. And then I went on some short trips with the chief engineer and I. We'd go out and we'd want to show them what we're doing. So we'd go out, maybe three cars or four cars, and go out and—hell, I don't know, we might go half the day or maybe all day long and come back. I done a lot of them. And it's interesting doing that.

DC: Are these cars—oh I'm sorry, go ahead.

JS: They are Pontiac Engineering cars, yeah.

DC: Were they models that would go into production in the future?

JS: Yeah, they're—previous, before. This chassis development is when you develop it before it goes into production. First it comes from this design center down at tech center. Like from Infinity, some guy gets a brain storm or something, well let's do this. Then they try it and then we develop it. If it's feasible, then it goes on for a road test. And put it on a road test to see if it's durable to hold up. They have a procedure they go through. I worked on one—this was—we had a car down there that had no steering wheel on it. One knob here—Bonneville—you turn it like that to turn the wheels. That's a funny damn thing to drive because you want to grab a wheel, you know. Well that never—they never developed—we had one, but that was it.

DC: Did you drive one?

JS: I drove it around but it was really weird driving the damn thing. You want to, you want to grab something else, you know. Then we had a Pontiac Grand Prix that a console. Had two wheels like that. The console would pop up like that—you'd get in and out of the car and you'd pull the top down and two wheels with knobs on them like that. So you can drive with one hand like that. Two of the wheels like that.

DC: Two-sided steering wheels. [huge cough]

JS: But they never went into production on that, but they had a lot of stuff like that. And I worked on the windshield washers on the back window of a station wagon. The old pissers, they would squirt it and then the window would go down and wipe the thing dry and go back up. And there was a blade all the way across on the bottom of the window. And it would wipe it down, but some of the water would go inside. They had to try to correct that. But that didn't pass the test, either.

DC: That didn't work out, yeah.

JS: A lot of stuff like that that was interesting like that. And then different type shock absorbers—and it was really—oh yeah, we worked with, like with the chassis development, you work with the machine shop and the pattern shop and the sheet metal guys. These guys all come—they'll be here tomorrow—the guys that we still know each other. And I bring my girlfriend. My wife never comes down here because she wouldn't go anywhere with me. So that's all over with anyway. But anyway, in the Parts Department and then some of the engineers are here. You could get in somehow, invited in as a guest or something. The first—no [pauses] OK—the first Tuesday of the month we go to Lake Orion McDonald's. And there's a bunch of us. We might be anywhere from eight guys to twenty guys.

DC: First Tuesday?

JS: Yeah. We go there for a bullshit session, you know. And just go there and shoot the shit for two or three hours. And the girls are really good. They come around—they pour coffee

and everything. They don't—nobody bothers us and we just go ahead and take—sometimes we bring in Dawn Donuts right in, set them on the table. And they don't say nothing.

DC: What time do you go in there?

JS: Well, some guys get there at 7:30 in the morning, and I drive from Davison, so I don't get here till about—I pick up one guy at Ortonville. Tomorrow I'll pick him up. And then it's like, oh, 8:30. Better be there before nine, because some of them are there at 7:30, you know. And they're on their way to work. Two of the engineers come in there who are working for their sons. They retired and their sons got a business going. They hired their Dad to come to work at engineering. [cough]

DC: Help out.

JS: Yeah, the engineering part of it. [laughs] So they don't really retire. They say, "Well, we gotta go to work. My son's expecting me."

DC: Well when you were in that department, who were you working with?

JS: The chassis engineers.

DC: The chassis engineer?. How many people like in your position were there?

JS: Just me.

DC: Just you, OK. Wow.

JS: Yeah. I was assigned to them. That's what I—I liked that because I knew the guys, I knew what they expected and what they wanted. And I busted my ass to get it done, because I know they have a deadline. Some nights they said, "You think you can you be in here at 7:30 in the morning instead of 8:00," or whatever, "because we got a ride going—we've gotta get this stuff in." And I told my rider, I says, "I gotta come in early because they're expecting me," to get cars set up so the top dogs can jump in and go for their cruise. Done a lot of that stuff.

DC: So how did someone who just jumped in in 1959 get a job like that?

JS: Well, I think the times were, they wanted people. They're doing more development and it's getting more expanded and they needed people with the experience that I had. Hell, I got to work ten years in a dealership and so I'm pretty well acquainted with the Pontiac and Buick. The worst, or two worst jobs I had was they bought seven cars from Italy—an't remember the name of them. Begins with an A—and they were about the size of a medium-size of our car. But they wanted that body weight. And we had them damn things in there, and we took the front end off of them and all the chassis stuff off and put our stuff on it. And it's getting built in Italy, you know—and I can't remember the name of that

damn thing—but anyway, they're all black ones and they're all the same. Had to build that thing up to ride, to represent our car, and nothing doesn't fit, you know. You have to adapt a lot of things. So you have to use a lot of old American know-how to get it to work, to adapt it. And then we had two—well, we come up with our Tempest before we had the Grand Prix and those sized cars. We bought—we had the Dodge and the Plymouth car, a middle-size car. And I still—I wish I took a picture of the thing. Here is the body up and the damn wires hanging out like spaghetti all over. And our parts are laying all over the damn thing, and the prints laying out there. And I'm trying to figure out how to get this damn thing to fit on this body so we can present it, you know, for the boss, for the higher ups. And it's a challenge. And you're working with the machine shop and the guys in the carburetor group, you know, the two or three guys that specialize in that. And you work together on it. That's what's—it's like a teamwork, you know. But you—damn, there's this stuff laying all over hell, and you can't look too bad because the chief engineer's coming down. He don't like that too well, either!

DC: How long would it take to put it all together?

JS: Oh Jesus. It took me—I bet it was two weeks on that one. At least two weeks. And then they sent it out to Milford and they run tests on it and they had to tear it down. I had to go out there to run some other things on the track. I go out there and the guy says, "Hey, Shorey, get over here!" He says, "You built this damn thing off," you know? I says, "I know nothing now. I got another job here. I can't help you." I didn't want to get involved in that damn thing. I hated it, you know.

DC: So what was the problem they were calling you over for?

JS: Well, they had the—when you try to put Chrysler parts and GM parts together like that, you know, the main body to the chassis stuff, it just don't work that well unless you—you have to have the machine shop *make* you parts. And you have these prints—you're going by tenths, you know, you don't by inches or metric system, you use the tenths. For everything that's bigger, where you drill a hole in the frame to fasten the body mounts to and all that crap, you know. But out there they had to do some reworking. Them guys were having a hell of a time with it. I went over and talked to them for awhile about it, but it's—them two things really is hard, I mean. And we had one—the tailpipe and exhaust system was over at Buick and part of it was down at the Tech Center. And I had to find out where in the hell they were and who to call to get the stuff together so I could put it together to get the thing on the road to test it, you know. [laughs]

DC: Sounds like a lot to keep track of.

JS: Yeah, it's not that way all the time, but you run into that on certain projects, you know. Like one we had—I remember the '71 Bonneville, we had trouble with a wheel shake on it. Steering wheel. You go around the corner and you hit something, it would do this. And the engineer and I, Chet, we worked together a lot. So we went out to Milford and we nailed two-by-fours on the track, on the circle—it's in the woods out there. There's a—"Black Lake," they call it—it's all blacktop. They call it Black Lake. And there's a circle

around it like that. And we fastened two-by-fours down. When you hit that thing, turn. So we're—we got bald tires on it, worst condition you could have and all that. And then go around there and that damn thing is just shaking to beat hell when you hits them just right. We were trying to get things—find the problem to stop it. And all at once we blew a tire on the right front. And I'm sitting over there and Chet's driving and we hit that thing, go *wham*! And boy—and it slid for a little bit and he got her back and then ended up on the old blacktop. Then the plant protection guys, they're running over there, "What the hell is going on?!" "Oh, blew a tire." That tire was almost smoking. I couldn't hardly—and I had to change it. We had a spare, but there was just, actually smoke coming from it, it was so hot. And all Chet says, "That never happened before." [laughs] He's just as calm as hell. "That never happened before." So we put the spare on and we kept on doing it again.

DC: So how often would you be out on these test drives?

JS: Oh, you'd be out there for maybe a week at a time. Every day. Out at Milford. But the test drive would be like a day long. You might go to—they had a regular route they would take. Some city or something, then stop and have lunch and then continue back. They had it figured out pretty close. Then you make some minor changes on the road. That's what I was there for, because I was familiar with it. And they didn't want to screw with that. They—with the calculator and all that shit, they didn't know what the hell was going on.

DC: OK, so you'd be there to troubleshoot or solve their problems.

JS: Yeah. Yeah. And help them, you know, when they'd do the—because the union won't let them do a lot of the stuff, you know, so they got to—but you go on a trip, why, it's a different ballgame then because you're out away from the union and everything else. You're working it together. And the engineers are—most of them are right there with you, twisting nuts and bolts and everything, just like, you know, they're—because they know the job, you know. They just—down at engineering they can't do that.

DC: They wouldn't be able to do it there.

JS: No.

DC: What did you think about that?

JS: Well it didn't bother me any because we got a better car out of it, and that's what they were doing. Why get in a bind over something like that as long as they don't violate the union rules? But I considered that an exceptional position.

DC: You mean when you were out on the road?

JS: Out on the road, you know? You can't take a whole damn crew with you, you know. And the engineer isn't going to stand there looking at you—he's got muscles, hands, you know. Some of them are pretty good mechanics.

DC: What about in the shop? Did you think that was a good rule there?

JS: Yeah, they didn't—when I went on that trip down to Jackson, Mississippi, why, this one engineer, he was—I went in there a little bit early. We all were there early because we wanted to get out before anybody else come in, the engineering. And he was changing a tire. And I said, "Geez, you look funny doing that!" And he said, "Yeah, but I can't wait for you and everybody else. Gotta get these damn things outta here before everybody comes in." We wanted to be on the road. So he was changing the tire. I said, "Shit, I didn't know you could do that!" He says, "I can do a lot of things you don't know." But [name?], hell of a nice guy, you know. We get down there—this is funny—we got down to Jackson, Mississippi and Willie Ryan, he's from Delco, he flew in. And then I went down with two of the engineers. We had a Grand Prix and a Firebird and a Bonneville with a big trailer on the back with all our stuff in it. And three of us drove down there. We didn't go on the expressway. We was on country roads, highways. We wanted to ride in [?], we didn't want a flat surface. So anyway, we got some feel of it going down there. So this young kid—we rented a gas station—this young kid, he's, "What are you guys doing out here?" We've got the frame down, changing the body mounts and all that shit, you know, running the car out and come back. And he was really curious and people down there, they never seen that before. So we said, "By the way, where's a good place to eat?" He said, "Go to Penelope's, that's pretty good there. Good food and all that." So that night we went to Penelope's. We found it, darker than hell. It wasn't even open. So we had a couple beers there before we went out and so we drove down the road and saw a place, Mike's Place. So Al says, "Well, hell, let's go in there. They must have hamburgers or something there." We couldn't even get in the parking lot. Had to park by the road and we had to take a leak because we'd been drinking a couple beers, you know. And all at once—we took a leak there—just Willie and Al and I—and one guy, he never drank at all. He wouldn't go out with us. Nice guy, you know, and everything, but he just wasn't that way, you know. But he was a boss and so he said, "You guys go." He said, "I don't do that, you know?" We knew that ahead of time. We started walking to the parking lot, all at once four cars pulled in. Four cops in each one. Got out with a shotgun. Holy shit! We stopped right there! They went in—they raided the place. And if we'd have been inside, we'd have been in jail that night. Everybody inside went to jail that night.

End of Tape II, Side A

Begin Tape II, Side B

JS: So it was stuff like that—it was, you know, makes it interesting. Instead of being bored all the time.

DC: It sounds like that was the highlight of your job, to be able to get out and get around.

JS: Yeah, I like to go out. I don't like to be like here at the desk.

DC: Yeah, I know! I'm keeping you chained up here for . . .

JS: If I had to do it every day, you know—because when I was selling cars I was out a lot in the lot and I'd take them out to the house and pick them up. I would do stuff like that. I just can't sit still. I just—I have to keep going. Even at my age now, I still feel that way. I can have more sex now than I had when I was married, too! So you don't give up anything! As long as I can do it, by God, I'm gonna do it!

DC: Keep moving.

JS: Yeah, keep moving. Because I got arthritis in my back and everything, and I gotta keep fighting it all the time. High blood pressure stabilized pretty good. Had a problem with that.

DC: Yeah. What brings you to the union retiree meetings?

JS: Well, just the camaraderie, you know, and just to get together and have a hell of a good meal. It's catered in and geez, that's good. Well you had . . .

DC: Yeah, I was there once.

JS: I mean they do—it's the same outfit. I never had a bad meal yet. For two bucks you can't beat it, you know. And you get to see the guys you know, at our table, that worked together. And the rest of them, I don't know much of the other ones.

DC: Did you get together with much or interact much with the production workers when you were working on the chassis development?

JS: Not a whole lot, because—you mean like in the plant?

DC: Yeah.

JS: Not too much. Once in awhile, but not too often. But we get—in reliability guys, we were acquainted.

DC: Reliability?

JS: Yeah. We worked with them sometimes.

DC: What did they do?

JS: They checked, just what it said—relia—they checked cars for different things and correct problems, you know, that were cars in production that were recalled.

DC: Once they're in production?

JS: Yeah. And that they were—see how they would correct different problems in the car, you know. They'd assess it, you know, and the engineers and mechanics would all be working on it.

DC: So they'd all be working together?

JS: They would actually ride cars like we did, too. But they called it reliability, so it had to do with the production car. But we were in experimental, too. I mean, pre-production and prototype. We had plastic cars, looked just like a car sitting there, and you'd swear you could get in and drive it. There were nothing in it but just two-by-fours.

DC: When did they start making the plastic cars?

JS: Oh, they started that in the Tech Center. That was years ago.

DC: Were they doing that when you started?

JS: Yeah.

DC: They were, OK.

JS: Yeah, they had a couple sitting right there in the hoist. I thought the damn thing was a real car when I first looked at it. But there's no damn—nothing in it. It's just wood. But the outside looks like a car.

DC: OK. And what was the point of that?

JS: To—for design, I guess, to see how it would work. And then they get the design and they see if it will work. If they want to present it to the bosses and see if they like it. And they make changes in it. They make them out of clay models first, and then plastic and then go from there. A lot of that goes on, you don't even know. All that work, you don't just have a car drive off the line. There's a hell of a lot before you get to that point. Like we had the transaxle in the Tempest a few years ago. And the transmission is in the back and there's a rope shaft from the engine to the transmission. It's a shaft that big around. The tunnel's only that big because it doesn't take much room. And that shaft would twist. In the '63 Tempest. You put a big V-8 in that thing and that shaft twists like that. Your wheels don't move until after the shaft gets twisted, and then all at once you'll go like hell. Then they'll catch up with it and then they'll stop spinning, then they'll do it again. And we had—I had one with two transmissions in it. Had an automatic and a manual transmission. Had a gear shift on it, but you could put it in any gear you want. Run it automatic, or else you could shift it. It had a clutch in, too. Weirdest damn thing. That chief engineer, Pete Estes—he's gone now—but he liked to take that thing home and he used to drive that thing for some reason. He liked that damn thing. I used to go out on [M-]24, and kicking ass. These young guys out there, they knew it was a car—they knew it wasn't a production car and they'd try to race. I'd kicking ass and burn rubber, you know. And they could feel the thing spin like hell and then it would stop and then start spinning again. They'd pull up to

the light, "What the hell you got in that thing?" I said, "Well, I'd like to tell you, but I can't tell you what it is." And they said, "Yeah, we thought so. But we never seen nothing like that before."

DC: So you'd go out and race those things.

JS: Yeah. Yeah. Not supposed to do that, but—then I got on the expressway once. We had a—I went out with this—he was a—this guy was a carburetor engineer. I got hooked up with him for something and we was trying some things on it. And we had it going down—there's three carburetors on it, in a Pontiac Catalina. And took off down the expressway. And he pushed it down and it stuck in wide-open throttle. [laughs] Goes up to ninety, and then a hundred, and it's going up farther. So he reached down and grabbed the pedal and pulled the pedal right off with his hand. He said, "Shit!!" So he turned the ignition off—he's doing a hundred and thirty when it stopped, slowed up. He pulled over to the side, and I said, "Geez," I said, "do you do that every time you go out or just now when I'm with you?" He said, "Well. . ." And we had to find out what it was. So all the linkage was going over center, locking. You had to be just so it wouldn't go past center. Go past center, it locked, and it wouldn't go back no matter how many springs you got on it. That's what it done—it stuck in wide-open throttle with three carburetors. Geez, that thing was screaming! And the cops don't like that, either. They know we're out there and they frown on that.

DC: What did you think about attention to quality in those years?

JS: Well, John DeLorean was pretty good: zero defects. Zero defects was like—his initials were J.Z.D. So that's where he got the idea: Join Zero Defects.

DC: Was he there when you first got your job?

JS: Yeah, he was an assistant engineer. And I was working on the transaxle then with two German engineers, and I couldn't understand what the hell he's talking about. And John come down there, and I shake my head. I said, "John, I don't know what the hell you're trying . . ." He said, "Well, do the best you can." He says—and I walk away and he shakes his head and he says, "I'll be back down." So he come back down and he—I mean, you got a swing axle back there and you're trying to design how it's gonna work, you know, and getting up in the car. And it's a—if you can't understand everything they're saying, because they're both German—sometimes they talk in German and other times they're talking English, you know. When they talk to me, they talk English, but their English isn't that good. They're good guys, you know, but just the language thing. Then John, he walks away, and he says, "I'll be back later and see how you're doing."

DC: So you say he was really concerned about quality. Was that true of the others, as well? Was that true for others or just for him?

JS: Well, I remember him because he had a program: Join Zero Defects. I mean, there was actually a program by that name. That's why it sticks in my mind. And I like John. That

guy is [pause]—well, one day he come in on a helicopter. Damn advertising guys out there. He jumps out and he says, "Sorry guys. I'm just running a little late today." [laughs] Shit, you never knew what he was gonna do, you know. He was quite a guy. But he was good on that thing there and he—he liked—I don't know—he liked living, you know. He went out to Phoenix once where the desert proving grounds, and he was assistant chief engineer. And Estes was the chief engineer. And Estes sees some golf clubs. He says, "What the hell are them doing out here?" He said, "They're John's." He said, "Put them away! He's not playing golf out here!" [laughs] But John was like that, you know. He'd try anything. But he was a good engineer. I really liked him. Everybody did. And he always said hello to anybody, no matter who they were. Always say, "How are you? How are you?" He didn't care who you were. And everybody liked him. But that Zero Defects kind of stuck for awhile. And I think it was a good thing to get your work so it was perfect, you know, instead of just, ah, so-so, you know, just to get by.

DC: So how long did that program last?

JS: Well, it lasted—had to be a couple of years, anyway. Then he got—after he was General Manager at Pontiac, then he went to General Manager at Chevrolet, and I didn't see him much after that.

DC: What happened to the Zero Defects program then?

JS: It kind of went away then, you know, because it wasn't there. I mean, other guys would probably—I don't know. I guess they just didn't push it as much. And that's my own feeling.

DC: Did the quality stay the same or did it change?

JS: It changed a little bit. But Pontiac, I think, has been pretty good overall for quality. That's why I like working there, you know. I always—I drive Pontiacs. I couldn't drive a Toyota. I'd get sick and throw up if I got of them things. Or a Honda or like that. I just—I can drive a Buick. You know, I've been close to them, too. But Pontiac, I think, does a good job. Their design looks—except for this Aztek. I can't get over that thing. I said, "That's the ugliest thing I've seen Pontiac put out yet!" I wouldn't buy one of them—I couldn't stand to look at it. Don't look like a vehicle to me. Looks like it should be in a field somewhere with a tent over it. I just—they got one at Waldron's [Pontiac dealer] right now—the tent's on the back. Sitting out there in the dealer there in Davison. I went by it yesterday. And a yellow one out there with a—you can get a tent for it. It cost . . .

DC: The tent just comes right off the back of it.

JS: Yeah, it costs another thousand dollars, but it's built right on, right off the back of it. It's a good idea but as far as a car, you know, I've had a lot of station wagons. That's because I had four kids. Then I had two Suburbans, and I liked them. They've got some style, some design. But that Aztek—the Buick, what's that one the Buick has?

DC: A Rendezvous?

JS: Yeah, it looks a little better. Looks like they didn't know whether to put a back window in it or a sunroof in it, you know, it's right there. What the hell's that mean? I mean, things like that—and the guys I worked with in engineering, they wouldn't design something like that. I don't know where that thing come from. But I guess people got them. They like them. They're roomy and they ride all right. I don't know if I'd want to look at one all the time. I wouldn't be happy.

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

JS: No [pauses]. Let's see, you went over training. I've had, you know—they send to these schools for different things that could be—anything on the car, they try to do that.

DC: Is that once you got the job at Pontiac Engineering?

JS: Yeah, and the dealerships, too. They did, too.

DC: They did that. Yeah, you mentioned the dealerships.

JS: And then the engineering, they'd—when Saturn started—and don't put this down.

DC: Do you want me to stop it?

JS: Yeah.

[pause]

JS: But these development cars, changes in suspension and riding, handling is what I was in there most of the time. Because I was with that for at least twenty years out of the thirty—no, twenty-eight years . . .

DC: When did you retire?

JS: '87. My youngest daughter graduated from high school in '86 and then I retired. And then the—overall, you know, it was really—it wasn't boring like some jobs are. I mean, there's different things going on, in my part of it, you know. I couldn't stand to work at the—down at Buick. I couldn't stand that. That three months is all I could take. I got out of there and I said, "Boy, I can't do this."

DC: What shift did you work?

JS: I always worked first. We had a problem with the heads once. They weren't bored out to drain the oil down in. And they put a lot of them out. So reliability was changing the heads. We were changing the heads that, you know had the heads. I go in to work, and "Jesus! What a mess they got!" So they're gonna work around the clock to get all these

changed because they couldn't—the cars had to be done because they couldn't sell them. You know, there's a problem with this block, is apparently what it was. And they had to bore that thing out, pull them back on. And they said, "Why don't you come in at 3:00 tomorrow?" And I says, "Bullshit! I'm not gonna come in at no damn 3:00!" I said, "I'm coming in tomorrow at 7:30, same time."

DC: Yeah? And what did they say?

JS: They said, "Well, we want you to come in then." I said, "Well have a young guy come in there! Hell, I've been here longer than any of them. I'm not gonna come in then! I never have worked second or third shift." I never have, either, and I wouldn't! And so they says, "OK. Come in in the morning."

DC: So what would you do when you got out of work at 3:00?

JS: Oh, what'd I do?

DC: Yeah, what did you do then?

JS: I went home. I didn't go to the bar because I knew guys that done that, and I wouldn't do that. I went over to the [?] Bar one time, had a beer because it was a guy's birthday. Then I went home. But I wasn't going to get into that program. Because I knew guys that would go to the bar, and you go to the bar, and pretty soon you're an alcoholic, or you don't know enough to go home, or you screw up your family life. My family life was OK until the kids graduated from school, then it got—when I retired, then it got—downhill.

DC: Downhill, yeah.

JS: You know, it just—I don't know. I don't know what—I can't explain it because I don't know what the reason. I went to the psychiatrist and group therapy and every—all that shit. I don't know. I don't know if it was my fault or what it was. But anyway, I didn't do any of that before. When I was married, I never went out with anyone. You know, nothing like that. I looked at them, but I never touched them. But after that, we just grew apart, I guess.

DC: What sorts of things did you do as a family with your kids and all?

JS: Oh, we done—we'd go up to Torch Lake where my sister is right now. And I'm gonna go up when I get my car back. I hope to hell they get that thing together so I can. I want to go up and see her because she's not doing very good. And we'd go up there and they lived there. You ever been to Torch Lake?

DC: Yeah, I have.

JS: Yeah. And they're right on the lake, is where they lived. And they was over at Alden first, and then they got a chance to buy this place back in 1970 and then their son got killed in

Vietnam. And then my sister moved from Davis[on]—she went up and she never come back. After that she never come back. She never been back to Davison after he got killed in Vietnam. So the younger son, he works in Spring Hill, Tennessee at Saturn. So does his wife. But he was—took over the dealership for awhile and then they eventually sold it to Waldron. We'd go to—my in-laws had a place at Higgins Lake. And we'd go up there. No, wait a minute. There's Houghton, Higgins—Hubbard Lake. [northeastern lower peninsula]

DC: Hubbard.

JS: Yeah, that's where they had a place. And we'd go up there. My wife being a nurse, she'd get off different days. She had different days off. So her Dad—she would go take the—before I got married I bought a new convertible—Pontiac convertible. I had one before and I wanted another one, so I got it. She said, "I don't like convertibles." "Well, that's what you're gonna drive because that's all you got coming." My wife, she liked it after awhile. So she'd get out like Thursday, have the whole weekend off. So she'd take the convertible and go up north. And I'd go over to her—her Dad worked at Buick and he'd get out and I'd meet him, and we'd drive up together. He always stopped halfway out and he'd get a six-pack of beer and he said, "OK, you drive the rest of the way." He loved his beer, you know. So he'd pop in the right seat and I'd drive the rest of the way up. We done that quite a few times on a Friday night. And then come back Sunday and my wife and I come back together. Done that quite a few times. And then the kids went up there some, too, after they were born, you know. But we never took any real long trips with them. Mainly up north. Our kids were always involved in—three of the girls were in band. John was in the varsity choir. They put on a big show every year and stuff like that. And they were always involved in things, you know. He didn't go too much for sports. He was out for track and hurt his leg on that. And he ended up being the manager the last year because he couldn't run. So we were always busy with the kids, you know.

DC: A lot of musical interest, it sounds like.

JS: Yeah, they—all of them played the piano. I can't even play the damn radio hardly, but they can—we started them out when they—and they all started swimming when they could walk. I mean, when they was like four years old, five years old.

DC: Did you ever learn how to swim?

JS: Oh shit, that's another thing. After that deal up at Lake Fenton, my brother threw me in and his buddy—that's one thing, I wanted nothing to do with the Navy. Well, I went overseas. I had to swim fifty yards. I says, "Hell, I can't swim ten yards!" Lessons after you come in off duty. You're out throwing damn grenades or, you know, all that crap they had us do. Then after that, you get chow, and I got to go to take swimming lessons for ten lessons, every night. And they had good instructors, though. They took me out there and they had a nice pool there in California. It wasn't a heated pool, but it didn't have to be heated out there. I'd go out there and the first thing I did, they wanted you to put your head under water. I says, "OK, I can do that." Then he taught us to put our shirts in the water

and tie the sleeves and make a life raft out of them, you know? You wave them through the air and they're wet and they'll hold air. And tie your pant legs together in knots and then you whip them through the air and then you can—it'll hold you up.

DC: Some buoyancy.

JS: Yeah. They taught us how to do that. But I didn't want to go over my head, see. Well, then you kick off from the pool and go like this here and kick like hell. A black guy kicked out behind me and I kicked him in the head and broke my toe. He said, "Oh, my damn head!"

DC: Oh, I'll bet it hurt.

JS: Oh geez, but my toe's black and blue and it broke one of my toes. So the next day I had to walk out to the rifle range. And I put tape on it. I didn't want to go to the hospital because I already been to the hospital twice and all my buddies were gone, you know. I didn't know anybody. This was a whole new group from different areas. And most of the guys in that group there were sergeants or higher—staff sergeants and tech sergeants. No insignia—all new uniforms. And so the guy in charge, he says, "I got a feeling there's some rank out here. You guys don't tell me, but you guys goof off too good to just, just coming out here from the civilian life." He did know where we come from, and he checked our records. Hell, there was master sergeants and tech sergeants. And I wasn't even a PFC then. I ended up a corporal then, but—it's so funny, though, they just knew how to handle everything, you know. And he knew it. He said, "I can tell you guys aren't green." So they—that's when they changed the uniform. You didn't know if you were going to the Pacific or going up north, so we didn't have any ID on anywhere. Just our dog tags is all we had on.

DC: Did you ever get back in the swimming program?

JS: It was pretty good. Well they did teach me to swim. But you have to go up this tower and it's about thirty feet in the air. And from there it looks longer, deeper. You have a life belt on and they're not soft. They're cork. You have to grab them like this—like that—and you go in feet first. And I looked off that thing and I says, "I'm not jumping off this damn thing!" And the guy behind me, he says, "Nobody goes down the ladder." He says, "Nobody does." And he's standing between me and the ladder. I thought, "I don't know how I'm gonna do this." I wasn't gonna jump off that damn—and shit, that's a long way down there! He said, "You'll be All right." I said, "You say that because you're not jumping!" I said, "Show me!" "No, no, I'm an instructor. You're gonna jump." [big cough] So, he's talking to me and he's getting closer all the time and then he shoved me. And I didn't get a hold of the damn thing and I landed on my back. The damn thing hit my mouth, cut my lip, and give me a bloody nose. It hit me in the face, that cork thing hit so hard. And [???] and he said, "Are you all right?" I said, "Yeah, I'm alive, I guess." Damn cut mouth. I said, "Boy, you'll never get me up that thing again. You can court martial me. I'm not gonna do that again." He said, "Well you already jumped, so you're done."

DC: Once is all you had to do.

JS: He said, "Next time, why, hang onto that thing and it won't cut you up." Hang it right down like that, and then when you hit you can hold it down.

DC: It stays down. That's why you did that.

JS: Yeah.

DC: Now you know.

JS: Now I know. So that was a fun thing.

DC: Well, at least you learned how to swim.

JS: Yeah. I didn't know how to dive, either, or fly, either, but I flew.

DC: You learned how to do that. All right, well I really appreciate you spending time with me. It's been a pleasure to talk with you.

JS: Well did I bore you too much?

DC: Not at all! No way! No. Very interesting.

JS: OK.

DC: It's really interesting to find out . . .

End of Interview

From: http://www.natc-ht.com/Test_Course_Descriptions.htm (March 14, 2006)

Belgian Block

This course is 1,970 feet in length. The course was built based on DFMV measured profiles of the Aberdeen Test Center Belgian Block course. It is made up of naturally undulating terrain covered with basaltic rock. Additional "Belgian Block" courses used to simulate the various cobblestone roads found around the world are also available. The concrete block course provides a random combination of pitch and roll, as well as high frequency, low amplitude vibration. The course is exactly one-half the length of the standard APG Belgian Block course. The course provides high energy inputs to wheeled vehicles and is utilized in certification to MIL-STD-810.