

ARMY TOWN – ORAL HISTORIES¹

INTERVIEWEE: Edmund R. Wynn

INTERVIEWER: J. Stephen Catlett

DATE: July 16, 1993

[Begin Interview]

JSC: [July 16] Nineteen-Ninety Three. The following is an oral history interview with Mr. E.R.—Ed [EDD] Wynn, Sr., of 2511 Fontaine Road, who was a soldier at ORD [Overseas Replacement Depot], BTC [Basic Training Center] in Greensboro during World War II.

[Recording Paused]

JSC: Oh now, this is wonderful. Golly. Now was this, like, stamped on this Christmas card, or—

EW: No, no, it was printed.

JSC: Printed.

EW: That was the original artwork.

JSC: Now who—how did you come by this?

EW: I made it!

JSC: Oh, you did this!

EW: [chuckles]

JSC: My goodness. I'll be. Now, tell me again what—what you did and how you—did you—you didn't do your basic training there, did you?

¹ This recording was conducted by J. Stephen Catlett, Archivist at the Greensboro Historical Museum, as part of the research for the [Army Town: Greensboro 1943-1946](#) exhibit that was held at the Greensboro Historical Museum from November 1993 until November 1995. Excerpts from this recording were played in the *Army Town* exhibit, as well as in the current (2014) *Voices of a City: Greensboro North Carolina*.

EW: Oh, no. In fact, I never took basic training, as such. When I got in the army, I enlisted in New York City, and I went to Camp Upton out on Long Island, and I spent three days there. And then they shipped us to Seymour Johnson Field, and the cute part about that was Seymour Johnson Field was opening up its' hospital, and about two hundred of us showed up down there, and the next morning they got us all out there in the open area, and the master sergeant in charge said, "Well, you all know your jobs, report to your places, and let's get this hospital running."

And I remember Eddie St. Pierre raised his hand and said "Uh, Sarg, I don't know about you, but four days ago I was serving up hot dogs [laughs] for Nedick's in New York!"

Well, they got their heads together and everything else. What they did was break us down; a hundred trained in the morning and a hundred trained in the afternoon, and we ran the hospital and learned two jobs at the same time. Oh, we just a goof up.

JSC: Yes.

EW: And so, when I came up here I had never really been through basic training at all, in the sense of what it was up here. The—They stayed out here, I think, about six weeks, and at the end of six weeks they got shipped on to advanced type of air force training, if they qualified as gunners, or pilots who came from there, and everything. They ran psych—medical and psychological testing out there, and from there they went to gunnery schools, and mechanics schools—sit down; take a load off your feet.

EW: So, that's—

JSC: Now, when—when was it that you came—

EW: Alright, let me see. You know, Doris ought to be here because she knows so much more about that stuff. [papers rustling] When did I come? I'm looking to see if I've got that worked out.

JSC: Is this the newsletter for the hospital?

EW: Yeah.

JSC: I haven't seen this at all.

EW: I went in the army in '42. That's the only copy of that thing I've got. And I didn't do the cartoon work. This one fellow that was working with me did it. I was down there—let's see, I was looking at my discharge, and I thought that thing was in here. Now what in the world did I do with it? I was down there nine months; eight or nine months, and we got shipped up here to Greensboro.

JSC: Was it in '43, then, you think?

EW: Yeah, probably earlier than '43. We was still building the cans.

JSC: That's what I was going to ask you. What was the state of the— What would be your impressions, if you're describing to someone, what the camp was like—you know, when you first came?

EW: Oh, it was mud fields, mud streets. We finally got gravel and then finally got paved. The place was swarming with carpenters. The post engineers was building more of it every day. There was hammering and banging. I remember I got put to work early on the front of some buildings doing some—just general pick up and clean up type work and got hot, and I hung my jacket up on a nail that was on a front of a building, and a guy come along—some civilian with a spray gun, and just sprayed jacket, building and everything else. [chuckles] He didn't move the jacket; just painted my jacket; OD'd [olive drab]; because it was OD to start off with because it was ruined, you know, and I get another jacket.

But that was the way they worked. Boy, that thing went up in a hurry. Just fast, fast, fast. I saw that one time down at one end of the hospital where they were adding on more barracks on, when the guys woke up in the barrack in the medical center, there was carpenters sitting up on the top of the roof with—ready to put the shingles and stuff on. When the last guy got up they told him it was alright to start hammering. They probably got up there about six, seven o'clock in the morning, and of course the hospital worked on three shifts. You know, the hospital was one of the early things that was finished. But the barracks connected with the hospital was down the road, you know. It didn't make any difference—

JSC: Now, what was the connection—who stayed in the barracks; person—personnel?

EW: Medical personnel; enlisted medical personnel. There was officer buildings and nurses buildings up there, too, where they stayed.

JSC: My information says that the hospital was a—a very large hospital. I think it was more like a regional—

EW: Yeah, it was, and I've got that number of that thing here someplace and I'll try and find it for you; it had phone numbers in it. Like 1062 field base hospitals; something like that. Yes, it was either thirty or thirty-six wards, and each ward probably had thirty, forty beds. And it covered a pretty big area. Have you ever seen the aerials of —

JSC: Yes. Fact, I brought—I did bring one. Okay, so here's the warehouse area—

EW: Alright, the hospital's right here.

JSC: Yes.

EW: Alright, you can count those, but—well, some of those buildings are—the hospital starts right there, and the—this row back here is barracks for the enlisted personnel. And it was all connected by wood ramps that were off the ground about three feet. There was a Circle Drive right up here. This is now A&T's [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University] football stadium right here; right in here. No, excuse me, over here. I'm turned around. This is Circle Drive. That's the administration building for the hospital. Now, down here is headquarters circle, and that's where buildings T1, T2, T3,

T4; they were all in there. That's where my wife worked; she worked in T2. And then from there that's the thirty—now these are still standing. There's thirty warehouses down there. Believe it's thirty, you can count them. And if you go out there and walk around those buildings you can see the original stuff under two or three layers where some truckers come along and they clipped the corner off the building.

JSC: Yes.

EW: And you can see it's got, like, aluminum siding on it, and an asbestos siding, and then that rough—oh, it was almost like particle board was the original covering. You can see places where there's two and three different—

JSC: So was the—then was the construction of the warehouse buildings about the same as the barracks?

EW: Yes. Except some of these down here were refrigerated, and that's why they became rather valuable property.

JSC: Yes.

EW: You had to keep enough food, you know, for this whole community, and every one of them's on a railroad siding. It's funny, but that is the best thing that remains. We found six—I think it was six buildings that are still standing out there. And most of them are big buildings; we couldn't find a barrack anyplace. A lot of the barracks, per se, were moved off and sold as homes.

JSC: I did find some advertisements in the Greensboro Daily News—

EW: Is that right?

JSC: —in '47, May or June of. And so, they were selling twenty foot by a hundred foot barracks for, like, three hundred dollars; something like that, and then a lot of other equipment, and so forth.

EW: Alright. Right here—After I got out of the army, that's the fire station right there that I worked at; became a federal fireman. Then finally went to the airport and worked on a crash truck out there. See, that airport was federal too; entirely. So, there was federal fireman out there. Everybody out there was a federal employee back in those days.

JSC: Let's—Let me look through a little bit more of your stuff and see—

EW: Yeah, alright.

JSC: [unclear]

EW: Here's a page out of a convalescent training. Now, that's me.

JSC: Oh.

EW: And this is fellows who had broken arms, and injured hands, and shot up in different ways, and by getting them to make these, like, big nets, it made them use bobbins and spools, and stuff like this, and made them work. And they—we had fun doing it, too. You know, that wasn't the idea; it was to keep them occupied.

This is physical training going on in the place. Here they're making model airplanes. There's Milt[?] Flaster[?] in the shop.

JSC: I've got a glossy print of that one.

EW: You have?

JSC: Yeah, I think maybe Louie or Jerry—

EW: Louie—Louie's the photographer of the bunch. That's Milt Flaster[?]. He ran—He was my boss; he was a sergeant. Milt ran the woodworking shop. Well, he was over the arts and crafts and then finally I got put in charge of the craft end; this kind of stuff; this kind of stuff; the model planes—

JSC: So, let's go back a second. You—When you first came to—now, do you remember it as BTC?

EW: Oh, yeah.

JSC: Okay, so that means you came in either '43 or early '44.

EW: Yes.

JSC: Alright, because it changed everything.

EW: I came when it was being built.

JSC: Okay, so it was '43.

EW: Yeah.

JSC: What was your first job, and then what else? Sort of take me through what you remember and what you did.

EW: When I first got there and was assigned to person—the convalescent training unit, and soon—they soon found out that I could do artwork and lettering and stuff like that. And after I'd been there and set up part of these programs, apparently they were in desperate need of some sign painters, and they came to me and asked me could I paint signs, and I said, "Sure, if you get me the brushes I'll paint them." And they didn't have any idea about what sign brushes would even look like.

So, we went downtown, bought a whole bunch of brushes, and they took me down to post engineers, and I met a man name Graham Todd who was by himself in there running the post engineers sign shop. And for about the next two months, I did nothing, basically, except make signs, and I would say I made half of those T1 and T2 and T3—see, until they got some people going. Munsey[?] Millaway[?], the man that I was

looking for last Monday in Mayodan; we were going through Mayodan. And Munsey[?] cut up every one of them boards, and painted every one of them white, and then he'd bring them in for Graham Todd and I to letter. And there isn't a trace of Millaways[?] in Mayodan. Now, I didn't go through records, you know what I mean; like deaths, and stuff like that.

JSC: Right.

EW: Munsey must've been about fifty, fifty-five, at that time, and I doubt he's alive, but I thought maybe there was some family, you know?

JSC: Yes.

EW: But every now and then Munsey, he always—always wore a white shirt and he always had on bib overalls; never saw him wear anything else besides that combination; starched white shirt with overalls. And every now and then he'd just bring me in a cup of coffee, or a coke, or bring it to Graham, and he'd say, "Didn't want you boys to run out" and he'd use one of those white painted boards and deliver us a coke, or a cup of coffee, or something like that, and Lord, we had them boards standing all over the place; there were hundreds of them.

JSC: So, was that a—basically your full-time job for a while?

EW: For about ten months until I got that thing lettered, and then went back up—worked back in this unit again.

JSC: What were the types of things you were doing in the unit; could you give me a little bit more specifics?

EW: In here, for guys who were bed-ridden, you can see them; they were building model airplanes. We taught them how to make jewelry. We did copper spinning when we later on got them into the shop. In fact, there's a whole set of bowls that I spun back in 1943, somewhere in there.

JSC: No kidding.

EW: Yeah. They were made up with lays; we made the patterns. The first thing you do is get the basic shape. The basic shape was cut out of maple; around the piece of maple on the lathe, and you just took it and scooped it.

JSC: Yes.

EW: And then you took a flat sheet that was cut round, and you put it in there, and put the thing on it and you spun it. Actually, it'd be spun this way because you'd work this way. And you had metal spinning tools. We made those ourselves; you couldn't buy them; it's an old craft. And we spun those, and then you used a tool that would shape. And in here was a wheel. Are you following me? This is a round wheel.

JSC: Yes.

EW: See the shape on the end; a shape here? And had a long handle, and with that thing spinning, you'd put that round wheel and put it on the edge and press, and you'd put your beat on. I engraved those myself.

JSC: Yes. Now, who would be doing this? I mean, was this ther a—

EW: Patients, yeah.

JSC: —therapeutic? These obviously weren't bed-ridden patients.

EW: Yes, they're all bed-ridden.

JSC: How did they do it at their beds; did they?

EW: No, this is when we could get them out of bed, and get them into the metal shops and the woodworking shops, and stuff that we had. We had two buildings that were part of the hospital, to where they had woodworking, crafts. I had a final wound up with about eight WACs [Women's Army Corp] that worked for me, teaching them how to paint; oil paint, watercolors, all these kind of things—anything to do to keep them busy, because some of those guys were with us two years.

JSC: Now, what type of—are we talking physical or psychological injuries?

EW: Oh yes, both. We had a mental and psychological ward; I think it was Ward Thirty-Six that was mostly mental.

JSC: This just, to me, sounds a more elaborate thing than just putting together little [unclear].

EW: Well, let me see. What the hell else is here? I've always enjoyed woodworking.

JSC: Yes.

EW: And an offshoot of woodworking is metal spinning. So, the guys just ate this thing up.

JSC: Is this just something you—an idea you came up with?

EW: Oh no, this is Milt[?] Flaster's[?] idea. Milt had the idea about doing the metal spinning.

JSC: Tell me this. I mean, how—where would you get the metal? Was this —

EW: You know, I knew you were going to ask that. There was a company here, and this was what was so great about this whole area, and you can't be thankful enough for the people and the companies, and everything else. Names like Behr Manning jumps up in my mind. Behr Manning, on one of the trips we made over to High Point, told us, "We don't care if our entire production goes to you on sandpaper, we'll make excuses to the furniture industry. You guys come first." Free; all that we wanted.

Lumberyards—Dockery [Lumber and Hardware Company] downtown told us, "Come—Just prepare us an order and we'll fix you up with the wood for the guys."

To show you how extensive, we had one man crashed in an airplane somewhere the other side of Guilford College and badly hurt; air force; young; I'd say twenty-three, twenty-four. He was with us for probably fifteen, eighteen months in the hospital. Carried him in the stretcher; he couldn't even move when we—he came to the hospital. Over a period of time he became ambulatory, and his one desire was to drive his Ford Woodie station wagon again; to get well enough to drive. During the time that he was there with us, he worked exclusively on that Ford Woodie station wagon. We supplied him maple and mahogany, and he re-cut every piece of that Woodie station wagon, and when he went out the gate when we last saw him, he had to equivalent of a brand-new station wagon.

JSC: Now, where was he from? He lived in this area?

EW: Have no idea.

JSC: How did the—How did his Woodie get down here?

EW: I don't know; I don't know how the car got down here.

JSC: That's wild.

EW: But the Honduras mahogany came from a place over in High Point, most of our [unclear]—all of the furniture industry over there pitched in. Some people even gave us machines. Some gave wood-turning machines and planers; things that you just couldn't hardly find, you know, back during war days. They helped us out and got all this stuff.

And we had empty buildings when we sawed off. Now some of it came by the army/air force, but a lot of it was just simply donations that people drive up in a pick-up truck or a big dump truck, and there was some more stuff for us. I guess we had five or six wood lathes out there in that shop; we had two planers.

I don't know whether you know what a planer is. You put the wood in and go—We had planers that were about that wide; they were commercial grade things. We could do just about anything with woodworking that we want, and we turned out some of the most beautiful furnishings the guys shipped[?] home[?]. We didn't care what they made as long as they stayed busy. And we showed them how to use their hands, and we tried to encourage them to do projects. If they were hurting in the arms and backs like the woodworking; you know, the turning; making wood bowls. I don't think I've got any wood bowls around here.

JSC: Do you know—Was this an approved method of therapy that the army was—or air force was using?

EW: [coughs] No, I can't tell you that.

JSC: Okay. But you never had any complaints like—or did you? Did you have patients who you thought maybe were staying there because they don't want to go on?

EW: No.

JSC: That wasn't your job to decide that, though, right?

EW: The biggest thing we had the problem was they were so down in the dumps and everything else; being hurt, or sent over from overseas; we got people from overseas too. A lot of them had lost their willpower to live, and getting them with a bunch of guys and showing them that they were people and they could be productive again—and it started off with exercises in bed, and things like this, and finally you got them up and finally got them into the shops, and the arts/crafts stuff, things like this. And it was a good feeling with us, because we saw the guys from start to finish, you know, and finally when they walked out the door they were in lot better shape than when we got them. And a lot of them took—I bet you there are things like this all over the United States.

JSC: Now, let me ask you a question. If we—

EW: Yes, I'll loan you one.

JSC: Maybe a small one if need be, or a big—I don't know, we may have to redesign. I don't need to take it now, but I hope to see if we redesign this area. I told you we are going to have an area where the headline will be "Reminiscences," and you go up and you'll be hearing oral history commentary. I already have some stuff chosen, but I may have to redesign it based on some of these interviews and what I might find.

EW: Okay, I don't have any of these nets. These nets was—Now, those actually were camouflage nets and we sent them overseas, unless some—tobacco farmers and people who grew cucumbers and stuff, they were crazy about these things.

JSC: Oh, really?

EW: They'd put a stake here, and a stake there, you know, and stretch these things between them, and we were forever—and we never sold anything. Since ninety percent of this stuff—like, all this stuff here came out of cotton mills and things that supplied all of the string for us. And when somebody wanted one or something, we'd take them to, like, the Carolina Theater and put on an exhibit; what was going on. The people that wanted some, we'd give it to them because we had no way of handling money. You know what I mean?

JSC: It's complicated. It just complicates things.

EW: Yeah. We couldn't sell this stuff. But you can see they were doing the physical work in the wards. That's what the old army beds looked like in the wards. And there's one of the lathes; [unclear] turning out some wood legs. We'd start off with square blocks of wood, chuck them in, and turn them any shape we wanted to.

JSC: So, you went—then after—making signs, you went back to this. Did this occupy most of your time the rest of the—

EW: The rest of the time I was there. Now, of course, we had fun doing things. Milt Flaster[?]
—I can't think of his name—he had a doctorate in one of the fields that we were working on; he never made more than corporal. There's the man who made that picture, and I can't think of this name. That's me; that's Milt Flaster[?]; I can't think of

his name. None of these—You know, you do things stupidly back in those days, you weren't thinking about names.

JSC: Oh yeah.

EW: That was the starting crew of the convalescence training hospital. Let see, we had started off with two WACs. And see, there's the fellow with the doctor's degree. See, corporal. That's me; Milt Flaster[?]. I'll think of his name in a minute. He was a warrant officer. He was in charge of the arts and crafts, and the woodworking stuff. And Harry Webb was a commanding officer; he was a captain. He was lieutenant when we first started off. He made captain. He was over the unit entirely.

JSC: Are these WAC, here?

EW: Yeah. And he was a photographer; he made—

JSC: Yes.

EW: —most of the prints you see here. We had a photo shop, too. They taught photography, and cameras. This isn't a—This comes later on. That's my hat. [chuckles]

JSC: Is that Bob Hope in Greensboro, later?

EW: Yeah. And that right there is the baseball stadium.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JSC: Oh, that's a nice [unclear]. Do you remember what he was here for?

EW: No, I don't really remember. I was a policeman, so it had to be after '49. And it was pouring rain, and he kept putting his hands up on top of his head so I threw him my hat and he put it on.

JSC: That's a good photograph.

EW: This was simply newsletter material for writing letters home, and inside showed things going on with training; people and the parents, you know, at home; wives and kids and stuff, to see what kind of a unit the [unclear] was in.

JSC: I might want to borrow one of these. I haven't seen this one either. This is great.

EW: Talk about a golden oldie.

JSC: Wait, why was she—were you underage? I mean, what—why's she giving her consent?

EW: I don't really remember, but I guess she had to, because I was enlisting; I wasn't grabbed.

JSC: Right. One says, “Aged twenty”; you weren’t underage. Isn’t that something?

EW: [chuckles]

EW: That’s so tragic.

EW: Yeah. I was from Rockaway Beach out on Long Island.

JSC: What did you—What was your impression of Greensboro?

EW: Oh, I liked it.

JSC: From the very beginning?

EW: Yeah.

JSC: Do you remember when you—Did you get in in the middle of the day, or at night, or do you have any memory of when you first—

EW: I had been here before.

JSC: Oh.

EW: See, I was stationed down at Seymour Johnson [Air Force Base], which is Goldsboro.

JSC: Yes.

EW: And in that eight or nine months we’d get in a car—somebody had a car, and we’d make a trip and spend a weekend in Greensboro, and find out there was a USO [United Service Organization] and dances and stuff like that.

[Discussion about hummingbirds redacted]

JSC: [unclear] impressions of Greensboro?

EW: Liked it; right from the start. Thought it was good people, nice people. Goldsboro was sort of distant. The people liked you if they were working out on the base. But there was a big farm area around there that really had nothing to do with the camp. People didn’t want to date the soldiers, you know, and up here it was a different atmosphere altogether. People pitched in and started organizations, and started things for fellows; had places downtown; USO clubs sprung up. Things were going on in the camp all the time; right from the start; citizens. And most time the bus drivers—and I know they weren’t supposed to do it—they wouldn’t take a token from you; you just rode free. You wanted to go downtown you just got on the bus, and they used to have—somewhere around here I’ve got some of those damn things; little things smaller than a dime; they were the bus tokens for Duke Power. And you’d go to put it in and the guy put his hand over the meter; they wouldn’t let you put it in. It was just a good feeling. And when—

JSC: How—I've had several people come in, and it's logical that there would be a difference given the situation of this base in comparison to a lot of others, being right within the city.

EW: It was in the city, yeah.

JSC: Do you think it was that, as well as the—just the population, or do you think it made for a closer feeling for the population? I don't know if I can express my—

EW: Well, you know the camp was basically over on—let's say off East Market Street, and out as far as—out Bessemer to about English Street. So, you're talking about working people area, both black and white. When we go up with—I still believe its Garland[?] Street, and I can't find any reference of it ever being Garland Street; I think it's now Daniel Street—was the back gate from the hospital up to East Market. Do you know in all the three years I was there, I never heard of a moment's struggle between any blacks and white soldiers, or anything else that would walk those streets up there? Different cry from what you see today, you know?

JSC: Yes.

EW: You could stop in any house on that street, ask to use the phone, if they had a phone; a lot of them didn't. Those houses down there, they were—some of them were in pretty bad shape; pretty bad shape. But they were decent people. In fact, some of the guys that I worked with used to go and have Sunday dinner right on that street with people who lived there; they used to invite them over for Sunday dinner; one white guy sitting at a black table.

JSC: I haven't heard that. That's interesting.

EW: The people just got along. I think they did better then than they do it now. [chuckles]

JSC: Yes.

[Comments about smoke redacted]

JSC: Well, that's basically what I've heard from most people; and then the research—I mean, you don't see too much evidence of bad relations. I talked to a Marvin Richardson the other day, he was an MP [military police]; he lives here in town.

EW: Oh.

JSC: I have his address at home; I forget where—He came to the museum. He was from Virginia and came down here, but he spent most of his time at the main gate—

EW: Okay.

JSC: —and he was saying that basically the relationships were great; they didn't—they didn't really have a lot of problems; you know, just a difference in the soldiers, interestingly, from BTC. Of course, he said the people here—they weren't here as long, they didn't have as many passes or leaves, and they didn't have as much money. He said the ORD soldiers, particularly some of the ones that came back, were a little bit rougher or rowdy, he thought.

EW: You see, ORD, you got it going the wrong way. Towards the end we became a discharge place. But you wanted to see the attitude change when we changed from BTC-10 and became an overseas replacement depot. Now, that meant that your butt was gone; that you were going overseas.

Now, everything worked fine because a lot of these guys had already received training, were airplane mechanics, pilots, you name it, and they were going over air force. Then came the Battle of the Bulge, and we started getting our tail whipped. The biggest need was infantry, not air force mechanics, and so some of us started riding troop trains with them. They were shipping them out so fast that they'd ask, "Do you want to take a trip?" and I went to Denver; I went to Oklahoma.

JSC: Now, what were you doing on the train?

EW: We were guards on the trains. When we got into the Chicago stockyard area, I guess we must've had five, seven hundred on board that train, and I'll bet you we lost a hundred and fifty, two hundred in that stockyard. Word got out that they were going to Denver, Colorado to Camp Buckley to become trained in infantry. They'd already been through air—

JSC: Now, these were air force?

EW: [unclear]

JSC: I didn't know that.

EW: And boy, you talk about AWOL's jumping up, on the base and everything else. The guys weren't—they were just disgusted with the fact that they'd already been in the army, let's say, two years; or air force. Now, I'm sure that—and I had nothing to do with it, I'd only heard, that a lot of times they'd single out troublemakers and stuff like this, and guys that didn't want to work, that didn't want to get along. Next thing you know, when they were making up a cadre of another hundred and fifty, or two hundred going out to some army base, that's who went. Instead of going overseas as air force they got—

JSC: Now, were they—were they getting training again before—

EW: I guess. All on my part was I rode about two or three troop trains.

JSC: What—Tell me some of the things that were available in the days. I mean, what—

EW: Everything.

JSC: What's your meaning of—

EW: There was theaters, there was live entertainment scheduled for—oh, just about two or three times a week they had bands; there was NCO [non-commissioned officer] clubs; there was officer's clubs; there was dances. I think you've seen the picture of the inside of the NCO club.

JSC: Yes.

EW: Did Felicia show you that big piece of artwork? I have no idea what ever happened to that but that was a beautiful thing. And I have no idea who painted it, but every time I saw it I'd stand there and look at it. Beautiful piece of work; done in oil paints. They had officers' wives meetings. They had—like, the Greensboro Garden Club, or some club like that, would invite the officers' wives out, and they'd have programs on the base. There was continual dances. You could be down and there was always a band, seem to be playing or records, and there were dances just about every night at the NCO club, and the officer's clubs, and stuff like that.

I wish I could think of—what the heck was that? In the NCO club for a long period of time there was no whiskey allowed. You could drink beer, but you couldn't have whiskey. Everybody was sneaking the whiskey in. A photographer came around and a whole bunch of us were sitting at this table, and we told him, "Make sure that you don't show any pictures of the whiskey."

So he said, "Put them on the floor" and we did put them on the floor, and geez, you can read the bottle. You can read it; it says, "Rum". [laughs] He backed off far enough, you know, to get the whole bunch of us, and Doris and I are sitting there, and right at our feet is a bottle of rum. That picture I think is down there in another album. I hadn't thought about that album. There's some—I bet you there's some more pictures in that thing you may be interested; we'll look at them. I don't know how much time you've got.

JSC: Oh, I've got plenty of time today.

EW: Doris, do you know where I got that wood album stuck, the one with the leather hinges? I'll try and look. It may be stuck in the bookcase over there.

JSC: Now, did you—you lived in a barracks, in the hospital area?

EW: Yes, up there.

JSC: For how long?

EW: From the time I finished until the time I got out.

JSC: What was—what was your impressions or memories of barracks life?

EW: It was good. We were permanent party. And there was some in, and some out, changing, but most of us stayed. Like D.C. Moore. I knew D.C. from the time he was a dental technician until we all got out. Now, he moved out after a while and went some place; I don't know where D.C. went, but—I thought maybe she'd found the book. But that photo album is made out of Honduras mahogany; the covers of it. I hand lettered it. And that

mahogany came out of the—they built Fairchild gliders in Burlington, and we got called and went down there and helped clear out the place, and we came back with—I couldn't begin to tell you; forty, fifty truckloads of plywood that was used in those airplanes, and we used them for crash for the next couple of years. They gave up the project then. It was Fairchild Aircraft [Manufacturing Company].

JSC: Did the lack of privacy in the barracks bother you?

EW: No. The showers were about as big as this room here; and there was some type of a water-proof material on the walls and the shower heads like every three feet, and a center duckboard, and you stepped off and got on to another duckboard. You know what a duckboard is?

JSC: Yes.

EW: Wood raised up maybe on two by fours or something like that. And you took a shower [unclear]; it might've been ten guys in there at one time taking a shower, and it never bothered any of us. And it's funny, there was always a feeling that one of the bunch was what they call gay now; back then they used to call them queers.

JSC: Yes.

EW: You know?

JSC: Yes.

EW: Never ran [unclear]. Big, hefty sort of a guy, and we always—Never dated, never saw a girl, always by himself, and his action and demeanor and stuff like that. I mean, we just felt that he worked, did his job every day, and nobody ever gave him a minutes trouble. Course I guess that would go along with what [President William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton] Clinton's saying now; you do your job, and I don't know whether they're going to sign that policy or not, but you don't tell us; we don't want to know type of thing. You know, as long as you—so that—whatever that guy was, he was pretty much an example. I guess in an outfit like ours it worked. But you know, I can't ever remember anybody even being arrested by the MP's or anything else. But, we had Permanent Party passes, and I don't have mine. I may have had it for years, but I don't know where it is now. You could come and go on the base any time you wanted.

JSC: Really?

EW: Yes.

JSC: Boy, that was a—that was nice.

EW: Yeah. You put in eight, nine hours a day or whatever you needed to do to do your job. Like Milt Flaster[?]; he had an apartment downtown. He got his wife to come down from Brooklyn, and they lived in an apartment. I don't know whether he got additional subsistence for that or not, but for years—for a long time he lived in the barracks with us, and then finally he moved off the base. I guess they liberalized it over a period of time,

and more of the Permanent Party moved off base. A lot of the officers lived off base because they made more money than we did.

JSC: What's the highest rank you had?

EW: Corporal.

JSC: Corporal.

EW: I think I made fifty dollars a month, was the top that I—

JSC: What are your memories of athletics or sports or condition—I mean, what was there?

EW: They had football team, they have baseball teams, they had—see there was—even though it was one camp, there was little sections here, like the hospital. There was post engineers; there was administration; there was all the different air groups all around the base. They all played basketball; they all played baseball; they had intramural type of things that went on between all that stuff. There was a lot of competition but it was always pretty friendly, and most of it wound up with beer parties at the end of the ball games.

JSC: When you—Explain to me when you say “air groups” on base. Now—

EW: Those were, like, training groups in BTC towns.

JSC: They only existed there at the base?

EW: Right.

JSC: Now, does that—does that or does that not mean that the men that are training, they wouldn't necessarily go elsewhere as a group?

EW: No, they were taken, like—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JSC: This is sort of just an administrative—

EW: That was a way of controlling them.

JSC: Okay.

EW: You know, there was sergeant trainees, and stuff like this in the group with them, and if the course—the basic training course was like six weeks—that's sergeant corporals and stuff—they had that air group for that six weeks, and then when they left, maybe two or three days would go by and they'd have another group and they'd start all over again.

JSC: So, when—when you see about reunions of groups or so, these are—that's generally men that have been put into a fighting group or something—

EW: Yeah.

JSC: —and that's where you really had the memories—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

EW: Right.

JSC: —and the closeness, and so they keep in contact over the years. Our public relations was asking me, and I told her I didn't really think it was that type of a—

EW: No, I think if there's anything, [unclear]—

JSC: Permanent Party?

EW: Permanent Party and the offices.

JSC: Now, did the Permanent Party have a designation?

EW: Just Permanent Party.

JSC: Right. What type of patches—or was there an ORD patch or is it just—

EW: No.

JSC: No.

EW: Just an air force.

JSC: General air force insignia.

EW: Of course, we wore army uniforms.

JSC: Army uniforms.

EW: There was no blue back in those days.

JSC: Right.

EW: Everything was khaki.

JSC: What about the—someone—a question came up yesterday about the WACs. And the information I have is that the—there were—there was something called the Air WACs; they had to go through the same basic training as the regular WACs.

EW: The ones we had had gone through basic training.

JSC: Would they have worn, as far as you know, the same type of uniform as a regular WAC?

EW: [unclear] skirt.

JSC: Okay. Would they have had insignia?

EW: [unclear]

JSC: The question came up because we want to display a couple of uniforms, and I believe our curator said, "Well, I have—here's a one of a—just a WAC;" she thought it was just an army WAC.

EW: I can't tell if they had one on the girls' [unclear].

JSC: Somewhere I have a photograph.

EW: It's the same basic shirt, and see there's the [unclear].

JSC: They may have had—They probably would've had an air force on their—on their sleeve.

EW: Jacket.

JSC: As opposed to—

EW: See, even the warrant officer, that's all he wore. Now fatigues, we didn't wear anything. In fact, most of them originally was stenciled there; like you get three stripes, it was stenciled on.

JSC: Really?

EW: Yeah. And later on when they got the things going, and there was places you could take and get your dry cleaning done, and everything on the post and so on—pants, alterations, and stuff—through the PX's, everyone started sewing the stripes on the fatigues. But early on, you just—they made decals, and you just rubbed the decal and you had black stripes on a—a fatigue, over the cutoff jacket. There was two types. This looks like the jacket type and then there was the one piece.

JSC: Yes, [unclear] like a jump suit[?]. I've got a couple of photographs of guys in that. One person told me he really though ORD was like a country club.

EW: Oh, it was. You know, the—the idea when I came here—

JSC: ORD I guess as opposed to BTC.

EW: Oh, yeah.

JSC: I think there would've been a difference, don't you?

EW: Well, the Permanent Party enjoyed it both ways.

JSC: Oh, really?

EW: Yeah, because you had a job to do, and it didn't make any difference whether you were Permanent Party in a place. You knew if you were down on the end where the training was done, like BTC 10—you knew as long as you did your job and nobody wanted to get rid of you, you knew that was probably where you were going to stay.

Now, a lot of people didn't like it and a lot of people asked for transfers to go overseas; "I joined up to do the fighting," you know? And they got the transfers. They [unclear] transfers if you wanted to go overseas. Or if you were a qualified gunner, or things like that, and you wanted to get back into a squad—

JSC: Did you ever hear of anybody that wanted to leave this base because they didn't like Greensboro or the base? I mean, that probably wouldn't have been a reason to go, maybe but—

EW: No, it didn't. It very seldom ever surfaced around us. Of course, these guys, the example they—I don't know of any of these that left before the army base closed. We were all discharged out of there.

JSC: So, you actually got your discharge here in Greensboro?

EW: Just stayed.

JSC: Do you have your discharge papers?

EW: Yeah, and I just had that thing.

JSC: Because I was looking for one that was actually—might have Greensboro on it.

EW: I know. Wait a minute. What in the world did I do with it? Believe it or not, I just went over to Winston-Salem about a week ago. There's no longer a VA [Veterans Administration] here, and I never did get the American Theater [Ribbon; renamed the American Campaign Medal] medal that I am entitled to.

JSC: Yes.

EW: They didn't have it when I got out of service. And I just made a VA folder. The medal supposed to be getting sent to me. What in the world did I do with it?

[Portion of recording missing]

EW: [beginning of sentence missing] gymnasium. And they held dances in there just about every night for the patients. They did the social work for them, you know, if they

couldn't write because of casts and things. The girls—the Red Cross workers did the writing for them.

JSC: I might want to borrow this; at least get a copy. Our curator of exhibits is a very good artist; he does all the artwork, and we're—I think he's going to reproduce some of the cartoons we—that are in the ORD newspapers.

EW: Okay.

JSC: He did one that a guy going to—do you remember the one that was called the Invasion of Greensboro?

EW: Yeah, yeah, I hadn't thought about that in years and years.

JSC: In one of the issues of the paper there's a little cartoon that someone did. It's a—a guy is downtown and there is a girl over a—looks like a jewelry counter or something, he's sitting there, he says, "Do you have a campaign medal for the invasion of Greensboro?"

EW: Ah.

JSC: Anyway, Don has taken that—the black and white—and did it large, and we're going to do some of that. Also, you probably didn't do these, but in the processing out, which was a five-day ordeal, or process—I have a booklet that was in the—Colonel Younts's papers, and it takes you through day zero, day one, day two, whatever, of the photographs. They're all great, but it's like a maze, and there are cartoons that were drawn. You don't remember that? They're real neat signs though. The cartoonition[?] go this way, or you'd see the medical doctor and there'd be a picture of a girl, you know, sort of buxom, and he's going to—probably not that one, but he's going to reproduce some of these signs as directional signs in the gallery.

EW: Oh, that's great.

JSC: Yeah. So, you don't think you can find that folder then?

EW: It makes [unclear].

JSC: Yes. Now, here I was noticing, this was done just by the U.S. Government Printing Office.

EW: Yeah.

JSC: These are all ORD related. I mean, here—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

EW: Now, I don't know if we participated, or whether—

JSC: See, I recognize—I have a print of that—

EW: Alright, then—

JSC: —so I think that's out at ORD.

EW: Now, it could very well be that this was the only one that ever put out anything like this, you know. This could've been printed right out there on ORD. See now, that building right there, that's Greensboro.

JSC: Yes.

EW: Because I recognize—this is a jigsaw we had. This was benches and stuff we built for the train. This doesn't ring a bell.

JSC: But you don't remember then if there was another convalescent center? You would think that they would've had other ones.

EW: Oh, I'm sure they did. But this picture, I agree with you, I've seen that before and I think this is Greensboro. Now, see this is down on a beach, so—this must've been something was put out by the government for all convalescent training.

JSC: Yes, that's what I was wondering.

EW: But I think this is a Greensboro picture, and I believe that is, and the shop picture with the tools is ours. Now, that was the way—that wasn't Greensboro; we didn't have radiated—well, yeah we did, in some—like the Red Cross building—

JSC: Right.

EW: —had radiators[?].

JSC: My understanding, from—is that the hospital was a—was a little bit better quality construction—

EW: Oh yeah.

JSC: —and I guess it had different codes, and things.

EW: Yeah.

JSC: Other ones were [unclear] operations [unclear] buildings, and this is better [unclear].

EW: Yeah, it'd be one of the buildings.

JSC: You know Fred—is it Fred Williams?

EW: No.

JSC: He's a lawyer that worked for the government, and was responsible for, one, helping to get the land here, and he was put in charge with Bessemer Improvement Company. Oscar Burnett; he worked with him and did [unclear].

EW: I remember that name, yeah.

JSC: Well, if you come across your discharge, I've got one—we've got a section called "Going Home" and it's going to be the last channel in this first gallery that really relates to the maze, and I found a discharge certificate from some—or discharge paper from a guy who's, like, in Reidsville, but he wasn't dis—dis—Does yours actually say Greensboro on it anywhere? See, that would be wonderful if I could have one [unclear].

[Speaking Simultaneously]

EW: It was the base — It was the base hospital number on it.

JSC: Yeah, that would be wonderful to have that one as actual someone here.

EW: Well, when you shut that thing off [unclear]—

JSC: Because a lot of people [unclear]—people that—locally that separate—actually were separated out. Most people I've talked to so far, they went elsewhere to [unclear] when they left.

EW: [unclear]

JSC: Tell me something about—did you—were you involved to any great extent with recreation in Greensboro, on the outside of the base.

EW: You mean, things I did personally?

JSC: Yeah, like what types of things did you do in town, or outside of town. Did you go to any country clubs, or did you go to the park out here? A lot of people did.

EW: Oh yeah; yeah.

JSC: What's your memory of those; of that type of activity—

EW: I remember—

JSC: —sort of leisure time?

EW: See, I started dating Doris, and actually we met on a Glenwood—well, we didn't really meet until we got to the house. But there used to be trolley service here. I took the trolley from ORD, and it was going to Pomona [Drive], so I changed in the uptown area. But the trolley ran from East Market all the way out to Pomona. You know where Pomona—

JSC: Yes.

EW: Okay. And I changed and caught the Glenwood trolley; ran on electric wires. And there was a girl wearing a hat with a feather; thought it was such a pretty hat, nice girl; all dressed up with a good-looking checkered—fine check suit [unclear]. And I looked at her several times, and the main thing I saw was the hat and her face, and it turned out to be Doris. The—She pulled the cord to get off the bus, and it was the same stop I was going to. And I had a date with Gloria Raines [?], and lo and behold, Gloria and Doris were the two best friends. And when I walked down the street I was walking behind her, and she was, I think, a little apprehensive; a soldier's following her. And they lived right there on Glenwood Avenue. And she turned in the walkway, and I turned in the walkway, and we both were up on the porch. And Gloria introduced us. And somewhere down the road after that we dated, and started going together, and we've been married forty-eight years.

JSC: That's something; a great story.

EW: And the hat is still here.

JSC: No!

EW: Yes, sir.

JSC: I got to see that!

EW: Mama! Where's your hat?!

JSC: [chuckles]

EW: It's got to be here. [unclear background conversation] You know, the file folder that the—original army? That's what it's in, and I can't see it in anything.

JSC: Is that kind of like a—that's like a 201 file or—

EW: Yeah, 201. That's what it is.

JSC: Just trying to remember the numbers.

[Discussion between interviewee and wife redacted]

JSC: Well, you got it out when you had to go to Winston, right?

DW: That was last week.

EW: What in the dickens did I do with it when I came back? I had it here because I made some notes about going to Winston[-Salem], and the man's name that we dealt with over there, and he filled out the forms for us. I was entitled to the Good Conduct Medal, the American Theater, and the Victory Medal, and I never got the American Theater. And, I

don't know, I was going through the papers here a while back, and it dawned on me that I wrote to the VA, and the United States Army, wherever they keep them. In St. Louis they had this huge depot out there.

JSC: Yes.

EW: And in 1973 they had a—

JSC: A fire.

EW: A major fire; my records were destroyed.

JSC: Oh.

EW: So, they sent me back all these papers, and down at the bottom they “X-ed” through the box that were applicable to me, and said that, “Your records were destroyed in a fire in 1973 in St. Louis”, and that no record of me exists and therefore they couldn't award any medals.

And then I got to thinking about, “Well, I got the records.” You know, I still had the original discharge.

JSC: Yes.

EW: So finally, about a week ago we drove over to Winston-Salem, went to the VA, and he Xeroxed it, and certified the copy that he kept, and in that same file folder—I didn't know how they were going to work it, so I—before I went over there, I made about a half a dozen copies, of the discharge [unclear] orders and took them with me, in case that they had their own machines and he wanted to say that he made that copy from the original, certified that as—

[Recording stopped]