

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL COLLECTION
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Sherley Mae White

INTERVIEWER: Beth Ann Koelsch

DATE: May 6, 2010

[Redacted discussion of scrapbook.]

BK: So, all right. And away we go. Let's just make this official here. Start over. Today is the 6 of May, 2010. My name is Beth Ann Koelsch. I'm at the home of Sherley Mae White in Elon, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. And so, you would like it as Sherley Mae White Collection. Okay.

So, let's start with general questions. Where and when were you born?

SW: In Fort Wayne, Indiana, on May the 18, 1923.

BK: And that's where you grew up?

SW: Yes.

BK: Okay. About your—Tell me a little bit about your family and home life.

SW: Oh, gee. Excellent. This is the core of what's going on, I think. My mother was from upper state New York and my father was from Indianapolis. And they—mother was being trained as a concert pianist up there, had a honorary—what am I trying to say—scholarship. She had a scholarship to either New England Conservatory or Curtis [Institute of Music] in Philadelphia. Curtis is still the finest training place that we have. It out—You don't even have to pay to go there. The only way you can get in is by exam and what not. And she was going to do that, but her dad died. So, she had to stay home and help support her mother and her younger sister and got some office skills and that sort of thing and was working in that area.

My dad, in Indianapolis, worked with the—Indianapolis used to be the Detroit of the country. That's where all the first automobiles were built.

BK: Wow. I didn't know that.

SW: He used to test cars on the brickyard for them, as a young kid.

BK: Like test drives?

SW: Yeah, test drives.

BK: Oh, okay.

SW: He used to test drive the cars on the brickyard. And I don't know how he got up into the Syracuse area, but it was because there was—You had to be working in ammunition or something like that, doing some sort of factory work during World War I, as well as World War II, I think. And anyway, he was transferred up there. And they met up there and were finally married up there, and then came back to Fort Wayne at some point, which I don't—I'm not too sure because I wasn't even there at that point. My sister was born in New York State, in that area—Syracuse area somewhere. And then—but I was born four years later down in Fort Wayne.

I wouldn't trade my mother and father for all of the gold, diamonds, status, celebrity, kings, queens of anybody you could suggest. They were the parents of parents. They knew they were the parents and we were the children, my sister and I, and that we each had our own role to play in that sense. But it wasn't a very—It wasn't a confining kind of thing.

My dad was a—became an engineer, and he—My mother was one of the best book reviewers in Fort Wayne. She was in demand around various clubs and things. She belonged to a couple of clubs. And also—but was asked on the edges of that. They were good church people. They went a lot, and we went with them.

BK: What church?

SW: Simpson Methodist Episcopal. I don't know how that got to be that way, but anyway, that's what it was. And they—There were no babysitters, so we had to go. We had to go with them. There was—You can't leave them at home! So we went with them everywhere. And I have done more high school and junior—what would be junior high here, I don't like that idea—but that kind of homework in the cloakrooms of the Shrine [Temple] in Fort Wayne, Indiana, than I can think of because we had to go too. And just because that's the way it was.

They were great lovers of learning, naturally, because they had to get their own education themselves. And they—I shudder every time I hear these people on television, “Oh, it's a snowy day. You don't have to go to school. Isn't that wonderful?” And that whole attitude, and parents groan when their kids are going to be home. And there is that—We've lost that whole concept. Mother used to tell us, “It's your job now. You have to go to school and learn all you can possibly learn. It's terribly important.” And she was very serious—They were very serious about it. I think that whole concept has been lost and it's—we're going to pay for it more ways than one.

It was a—Everything was fine. They—I was born in one part of the town. And they built a new home at the edge of town, the south part of town, and we were there only a few years when the Depression hit. Daddy lost his job, they missed payments, and they lost their home. I've been through this. [chuckles] I've been through this. I was about seven or something like that when this was all happening.

BK: And where was his job? What—

SW: He was with—oh, golly. The Wayne Pump Company, I think it was, in Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne had a big GE [General Electric] plant. It had Magnavox there, the Zollner Pistons. Detroit can't—That was our basketball team. They were the Zollner Pistons before they were the Detroit Pistons or wherever they were playing basketball. And Indiana is more basketball than North Carolina ever thought of being.

BK: Okay. That's pretty basketball then.

SW: Oh honey, it was not a free choice. Oh lord. Anyway, yeah, they lost the—I can remember the day that Mother told us. She just sat us on the couch in the living room and said, "Well, Daddy has lost his job. Everything's going to be all right, but we're going to have to find a new home. And while we do that, Uncle Fred down in Indianapolis said he'd be glad to have you keep Aunt Minnie company. And so, we're going to take you down to Indianapolis at the end of the—in the next day or two, and you'll spend probably a week down there with them. And we'll come down there and get you as soon as we have a new house. And it'll probably be just a week or two. We'll find a place."

That's all that was said. And, "Okay," you know. A couple of little kids, what—"Okay," that was fine.

We were never, ever involved in the family financial—I never knew what my dad made. I hadn't the vaguest idea what his salary was. We never talked about it. Mother ran the show, of course, I think most women in those days did. He'd bring his pay envelope

home and his check, and she paid the bills. And we'd go downtown and do those, because all the places had—the gas company and the telephone company, they all had their offices in town.

And Fort Wayne is the size of Winston[-Salem, North Carolina], and it always has been about that size. And it was a great town, really, because it had three—I guess it was three. We had the public school system: North Side, South Side, and Central High Schools. Then we had a complete—and the Purdue [University] and Indiana [University] both had branches of their universities there that we could go to. The other one—the Lutherans had their own batch of schools. They had their own grade schools, and they had a college, Concordia [Senior] College. And the Catholics had their own grade schools and whatnot, and they had their [University of] Saint Francis.

So, it was a completely mixed place in town, and everyone was attached to whatever they were attached to. And we lived on a street, when they finally found a place for us, not too—It was north. It was out of that section of town, which was too bad. But it was close enough that we could go—I could go to the same schools and graduate. But we lived next door to a Catholic family, a Jewish family, and the Lutherans were in the next—See, we played with the kids in the neighborhood, and then we had school chums, and we played with those when we were at school. But the two didn't meet. We had two different lives, you know, in a sense. But our streets were made up like that, of all—Everybody was mixed up. But we didn't play with the people in school much. We didn't have that kind of thing, but I think it was more healthy, probably, socially and so on. Anyway—

BK: So this is about 1930, '31?

SW: Yes, yes, in that area. And I do think that when they pulled out the six—is it sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and made a middle school out of them? That was the biggest mistake that they ever made in their lives. We had kindergarten to eighth, and nine to twelve. For the simple reason: kindergarten up through the fifth grade was on the first floor, and with all that they did and that kind of thing. And when you got to be in the fifth grade, you went upstairs, and you started to go passing from class to class. You didn't have to stay in the same place. And the kids up there knew about the little kids downstairs, and there was a great deal of—You know, they were protective of them. And the little kids looked up to those kids like mad, because they were upstairs and they were going from class to class to get their infor—and they had to stay in the same room and all this other good stuff, you know. It was an entirely different atmosphere.

By the time they got out and went to high school, the kids that came through that, they had been taking care of some of the little kids. They had grown up, because they had had some responsibility. They'd had a responsibility of—Yeah [unclear] and it wasn't always the greatest in the world, but it was a different kind of aspect when they hit high school. They knew that that was the bigger one and they were going to have more responsibility at that point, too. But it was a different gradual training of youth, I think, that makes more sense than what they're doing now and separating out. My goodness, what's going on? [chuckles] It makes me shudder to think.

But anyway, it was an excellent town to grow up in. As I say, my parents were my parents. They had—Mother had a delightful sense of humor, and so did my dad. He was very quiet. And as I say, she ran the place very efficiently. We did things together. Every Saturday noon, when the new movies came into town, we went. Daddy loved the movies and Mother loved the movies. And although he worked at the office Saturday mornings, he'd tear home because we'd get in at one o'clock, it was a dime for each one of us kids, and I think they paid fifteen cents. If you went after 6:00 [p.m.] it was a quarter. So, you know, we—

But those movie places were like palaces. Oh, they were gorgeous places. You know, everybody was quiet, the guys were all dressed up, and there was no eating and all this other stuff. You went downstairs, these swirling staircases, you know, and swirly ones up to the top. And they had maids down there who took care of your needs, and that's where little babies could get their little pants fixed up, you know, and all that good stuff. But it was an entirely different atmosphere than what goes on here now.

We liked the movies. Daddy liked them. He like—He loved the Western thing. But we liked the musicals and all the rest of them. So, we were good movie fans. Every neighborhood in town—I think we had three of those movie houses downtown, and every neighborhood had its own, that had the—If you missed the movie there you might get it later on in your neighborhood, sort of business. I think it's just like Winston. So that was part of—

But the business of going places: Mother and Daddy belonged to a Saturday night club, and it was a bridge club. The men smoked cigars and the ladies—It was pot luck,

and someone was the hostess and you brought those things. Of course, we went to that too. We had to! And that was okay, and people accepted it. We didn't—We were good little kids. And we loved it because these various houses we went into, of our adult parents, had different kinds of magazines than what we had at home. We had standards and they were very good. And so we always looked forward to seeing the magazines, and so we'd just plop down in a big chair and be very quiet. And when we got too tired, well, we'd wander into a bedroom. They usually put the coats on the bed somewhere. And we'd wander into a bedroom and just flop down on the bed and go to sleep until they got through about midnight playing cards and take us home.

So, we—it was a different kind of growing up, I think, than kids are getting these days. We participated. Every Saturday we went to the library, and every Saturday we came home with books. Or they deposited us there until they did what they wanted to do in town. "We'll pick you up at six o'clock. Be ready." And I have to laugh because of this 3D thing. Honey, when I was eight, nine, and ten, I was taking home stereopticon views, and the big batches of cards with them.

BK: Oh. Did you have the viewer at home?

SW: Oh, yeah. No, no, no—

BK: Oh, so you rented the viewer.

SW: They checked it out. It was just part of the deal. You know, you had a library card and you could take out the whole kit and caboodle. And we saw all this 3D stuff, god, back in the thirties. Come on, give me a break.

BK: Not impressed.

SW: I'm not impressed one bit with it. Mother told us you didn't have to look at the African naked men. [BK chuckles] But then that was all right. We didn't care. We weren't interested in naked Africans anyway. But we saw a whole batch of stuff that way, in stereopticon view. It was very nice.

So, we were library people from way back, and a reading family. My dad read the *Saturday Evening Post* when it came in the door. He read it from cover to cover. Took *National Geographic*, Mother took the *Good Housekeeping*. And this was the time when canned goods were just beginning to come on the market. She would not buy anything that didn't have the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.

BK: Got it.

SW: We were close enough and we had—I, you know—You talk about organic food, I grew up on it, I guess. Because Mother always—The farms were right around us all over the place. We had two huge open air markets. One was in the center of town. It was a big stone building with three blocks, I think, down the middle of town. And then we'd got a

big one out by where we lived, at that point, too. And it was just like it. But the farmers had all the fresh stuff. Mother never bought fresh stuff in the grocery store. We got all of our fresh stuff from the farmers. And I think it was before they were making fertilizer.

[chuckles] So, you know, it—Well, anyway.

BK: So your dad did find another job?

SW: He found another job. And when they did, of course, he—They came down and picked us up. I think we only stayed at Uncle Fred's place for maybe—maybe a week and a half.

And they found another house.

BK: And they rented.

SW: No.

BK: Oh, they bought it?

SW: I think they—I'm not too sure, you see—

BK: Right, exactly. He didn't talk about it.

SW: We didn't talk about it. This was where we lived, and this was what we had. And it was good. The neighborhood was fine, and the kids were good on the block. They were all different from what we'd had. But I had to get special permission to graduate from my grade school, because we moved when I was in, evidently, the eighth grade—seventh or eighth grade. Then I had to have a bike to ride back and forth, which I thought was a good idea. But they were a little bit horrified about the whole idea, but it worked out okay. And I rode a bike back and forth when I was in the eighth grade to get—so I could graduate with my class. But then the high school was no problem, and it was closer to where we lived anyway. I used to probably ride a bike to school too, once in a while.

And the kids, we walked. We walked no matter what. The kids would start at one end of the block and just collect. Kids would drop in going by. You might start with one kid, and by the time you got down to the end of the block you had six or seven of us there. Pick each other up in this way. [We] walked home at lunch, walked back in the afternoon. This was all in an hour. [chuckles] Although they had a cafeteria, which you could stay in if you wanted to, or could. And we—

And we knew what adults were, and we never if—We never stepped on anybody's yard; we never cut through. And we knew that every adult had the power over us that our mother and father had. All they had to do was come out and say, "You will not do that," or, "Why are you doing what you're doing?" And we didn't do it again. And by George, they—sometimes they told our parents, sometimes they didn't. But we had a great, huge respect for the adults. No matter who they were—and for property and for things of that sort. If it wasn't ours, you had no business being there. Period. You know,

it didn't hurt! I'm a happy, silly person. I managed to get through all of that. But the thing that worries me more is that they were parents. Mother was never "Mom." She was always Mother, and it was Mother and Daddy.

And oh, for the health thing, not much wrong with me except my eyes. I didn't do that. Alamance Eye did it. But anyway, when we were little, of course we were banging around and got hurt and scraped and everything else, and Mother would take care of us with a—not Band-Aids, but whatever had to be done. And then when Daddy came home—because he was the first aid guy on his floor, in his business that he was in. It turned out to be Oil Burners, finally. Wayne Oil Burners instead of the other one. He was the first aid guy, so Mother would tell him, I'm sure, ahead of time, what had happened and what the problem was. But anyway, she said, "We'll just turn Daddy over to it. Daddy will help you with this, and he'll take care of you when he comes home."

So he would get his little black box of all this first aid stuff and come out to us and say, "Now, tell me what happened." And he'd sit there and we'd tell him all the things that had happened and why we were hurt and how it happened and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I'm sure the stories were great. And he'd listen very carefully. "Okay," he said, "let me take a look at you. Let's check this bandage here, see if Mother did a pretty good job. Eh, that's not bad. Let's see if we need to change this," and the whole thing. And then he'd be very quiet and he'd look at us, and he'd say, "Well," he says, "I think I know what's wrong."

Oh, my eyes would bug over, I am sure. "Yes?"

He said, “This isn’t too bad.” He says, “I don’t think you’re hurt real bad, but you do have the epizootic.” [dramatic sigh] And he said, “Now, don’t worry about that.” He said, “I think you ought to go to bed early tonight.” And he said, “We’ll check all of your bandages and see that they’re all fixed and everything is fine.” And he said, “I think if you get a good night’s sleep,” he said, “you’ll feel better tomorrow morning.” Honey, when we got up the next morning, we didn’t have a pain or an ache or nothing was wrong with us. Now, I’ve always—Now, you remember about the epizootic. It’s all in your head.

BK: Got it.

SW: It’s all in your head. And I have carried that with me all since. And that’s true. Something’s wrong, well, I probably have the—I don’t know how you spell it—but I probably have the epizootic! Daddy said you had it, go to bed and forget about it and get up the next morning, maybe take an aspirin these days, but not very often, and you’re okay.

BK: Wow. That’s great.

SW: So that’s the solving of the medical problems of the world.

BK: Got it.

SW: The epizootic.

BK: So you have one younger sister?

SW: Older.

BK: Older, okay.

SW: Four years older.

BK: Four. And you all—

SW: And one day she—Evidently she called up to Mother, who was in the kitchen, and said, “Sherley’s eating dirt!”

And Mother opened the thing and said, “Okay,” she said. “That’s all right. You have to eat a peck of dirt in your life anyway,” and put the window down. [chuckles]

BK: Yeah, there’s studies on that.

SW: So, that’s the end of that one. But it was a happy family. And I will say this, which shocks everybody, I do not ever remember Mother and Daddy ever saying, “I love you.”

But we knew it by the way they—We lived by the way they treated us. We felt safe. We felt loved. We had fun. As a family, we played together, we went on trips together. Everything—We went to the Saturday night club together with all the cigars and everything else. And—But I don't remember this business of the minute you walk out the door "I love you!" and then you go off and leave for the next ninety hours or something of the day. I never remember them actually saying that. You know, taking and saying "I love you." But we knew it down to our core. And we were right. We were safe. We were loved. We were taken care of. We were never involved in their business, which was money, whether or not they bought a house or not. But they said, "We had a nice little house that we bought." And they said, "We're going to be happy there." And we were. It wasn't the same. I found later that it almost broke my mother's heart when we lost the other house. It was a nice house. So, I think there's a difference in bringing up kids these days that could be looked into.

BK: Now, did you get along with your sister? Were you similar?

SW: Yeah—no.

BK: No?

SW: We were entirely different. But she was the talented one. She was a budding artist, without any doubt. Mother had the music and—I messed with music a little bit, but I

didn't want—I don't like to perform, and I didn't want to get involved in that. But Elinor could out dress-design any of them in Hollywood. She made beautiful things. She went to every art class, every art school we had in Fort Wayne, and had a—won a scholarship to Chicago Art [School of the Art Institute of Chicago] when she graduated, and turned it down and I don't know why. She was in Bill Blass's class; Bill Blass was in Fort Wayne.

BK: Oh wow. Okay.

SW: And that idiot—And she won all the prizes and he didn't. But what did he do? He went and packed up his bags and went to New York and became famous and healthy and wealthy. She turned it down and we—I wasn't involved in any of the conversations. I don't think the folks discouraged her one bit. But I do know she finally went to Ball State [University] and did—I don't know whether she—She didn't graduate from Ball State. I think she only went two years. She hated it and—because the only art she could get there was teacher's art training, that sort of thing. And she got married down there. The thing that I was thoroughly aware of: that every morning or on weekends—I can see her now, at the back door, you know, pouring rain, sopping wet, crying and crying and crying, and she was homesick. They sent her home—homesick more than—you know, at least once a month, and sometimes more often than that.

BK: From Ball State?

SW: From Ball State.

BK: Wow.

SW: So, I don't know what her—what that problem was. But it was the loss of a gift somehow, and why it couldn't have been forced or something, that kind of hurt was carried through her life. She also graduated and got other degrees and became a reading teacher and was excellent in that area with the kids and—But her artwork was something that Adrian [costume designer] couldn't do.

BK: Wow.

SW: It was all costume design. It was all the kind of thing that these guys made a fortune in. And they still—Charlie still has a lot of her stuff at home. She died of breast cancer. Or, no, no, no, that was Susie, wasn't it. Anyway. She had—I don't know. I think she had strokes and they said she had Alzheimer's. And she was poured through with all those drugs and didn't make it. But we were very different.

BK: So, if she was the creative one, what were you?

SW: I guess the tomboy. Hello [rag house white. Hi, blue?] We were very active: we played tennis, we skated. I had a red wagon. I had skates every summer. And we played tennis

out in the street. And we were always by a park in Fort Wayne. We'd play out there in the summertime. We'd spend our time at the park and back and forth. I don't know. I was—I liked to write. I liked to write and did things of that sort. But I was a little more physical. And as I say, Amelia Earhart was my—

BK: Right. Well, tell me about that. Tell me about your interest and how—when your thoughts—

SW: I was interested in flying, but I was carsick all the time. No matter where I went, I was carsick. Even when Mother had to go back when her father died, and she had to—or her mother died, and her sister was left. I was an infant, evidently, and she said, “You were sick every mile of that trip on the train back and forth.” And I’ve been sick every since. There’s something wrong with my—whatever’s in my ears or something. I don’t know. But I get carsick very quickly. And I managed to overcome it when I was flying around through the air. I decided this was not going to work, so I tried to—and I did a pretty good job of it. But the—What was the train going to?

BK: Well, the Amelia Earhart—

SW: Oh, yeah. And I was fascinated by her. She was good-looking. She was quiet. She was from a good family. Her dad, I think, was a doctor. She had her graduate degrees in social service and was doing that. They were a fairly wealthy family—a little more than

average. And I was fascinated with flying and soaring and all that other stuff. I'd get the books out of the library and had a little notebook at one point for diagrams and things. And I remember climbing trees there, before we had to move in that house. And I'd wrap myself around the trunk of the tree and I had my—I carved out a little bit, just slightly so I wouldn't damage the tree—had my control board and that sort of thing. I'd climb up the tree and sit in there and look around and I'd fly my airplane around like an idiot. [chuckles] But—And I found out that she wrote poetry, and I found it in our library. And it was very nice poetry. It was very light, very—few words, few lines, and very nicely done. And I followed all of her races and things of that sort, and I wanted to be like her.

BK: You wanted to fly?

SW: Sure. That's when I first decided I wanted to fly. They took me up as a birthday present one—somewhere along in here. Out at the Fort Wayne airport, for a birthday present, they let me take the trip. I think it was a five dollar trip around Fort Wayne in the air, and then you came back down again. And whoo, that was fun. That was fun. But when she took that last trip, I put a *National Geographic* map on the bedroom, and I put it in there and had her marked out where she was going. When she was lost, that was pretty terrible.

I didn't learn until later. [chuckles] Mother told me this later, when I was tooting around the world. She said "Well, we thought we were going to lose you at one point."

I said "I don't understand that."

She said, “When she was lost,” she said, “you almost died.” She said, “You were so grief-stricken and,” this sounds rather weird, “and concerned. And you knew she was going to be found. You knew she was going to be found, and she wasn’t. And all this was happening.” And she said, “I had never seen such grief in a child in my life.”

BK: Now, how old were you about?

SW: I don’t remember the date of that.

BK: Right. We can look it up.

SW: I guess I was in high school. [White was fourteen in 1937.] And she said that was—But she was my ideal of a woman. She was feminine, but she was also very bright but very caring and had this dream. And she was doing her dream, and I thought that was what I would like to do and be like, somehow. So, and I still think about that a little bit. I still think about that a little bit.

BK: So, did you like school? Did you have a favorite subject?

SW: Oh, yes! Oh, I loved all of them. I loved—We both loved going to school. Yes, indeed. Liked them all. And I liked English, of course. I became an English major later on. But oh, yeah, we took four—I took four years of Latin and took the college prep courses.

The folks reminded us, they said, “We don’t have the money to send you. You’re going to have to get scholarships.”

And, “Well, that’s okay. We’ll try.”

Elinor got the scholarship she needed. By that time I was in the service. And of course we in the service did not have any idea about that they were going to pass that [GI] Bill for the graduate degrees and whatnot. And so that wasn’t the reason we joined, but that’s the way I got to Mills [College]. And they gave you money based on the number of months that you served, and I figured I could do three years. So, I said, “Okay, I’ll do it in three years.” And I did. I took overloads every three—every year, and I went to summer school and got all the credits. The thing that I regret is that I had no opportunity to take the electives that I would like to have taken at Mills. It’s an excellent school out in California. But it was an excellent education, and I managed to squeeze it out that way. As I say, I got that after I had my master’s, so—

BK: Right, exactly.

SW: One of those things.

BK: So, where did you go to high school?

SW: South Side. South Side High.

BK: And what year did you graduate?

SW: Forty—let's see, '37, '38, '39—I think it was about '40.

BK: Okay.

SW: I think I was a freshman in '37, I think.

BK: Okay, so—

SW: Four years.

BK: So Pearl Harbor hadn't happened.

SW: No, no.

BK: So, you graduated high school, you couldn't afford to go to college, so what did you do?

SW: Lincoln [National] Life Insurance Company.

BK: You became—

SW: They only took, in their [chuckles] awful jobs, honor society students. You had to belong to the National Honor Society.

BK: [chuckles] Okay.

SW: I managed that one, too, so that was all right. I think we made thirty dollars every two weeks.

BK: Wow. What was your job? What was your position?

SW: I worked in the notice department. And it was a big room where they ran off, on some sort of machine over here, a three—a piece of paper that had the three notices of payment due. And there were two of us, and we were both about the same age. She was from Kendallville [Indiana] I think, or somewhere there. We got these two jobs together. We had to take them and sort them by state, because Lincoln Life is a big company, and this was the home office. We had to sort these things by state, by district, and that sort of thing. And back in the back corner was an efficiency expert. And he had his little black book and he had his little clock and he had his pen, and he'd sit back there and watch us. He'd count how many we did in certain periods of time and that sort of thing. Oh god. Honey— [laughs]

BK: How long were you there?

SW: Until I could get out. Until I got to be twenty. I guess I went there when I was seventeen or eighteen.

BK: Seventeen, eighteen, and in the meantime Pearl Harbor happened.

SW: Pearl Harbor hit and—

BK: Do you remember where you were?

SW: Oh, yeah, at dinner—

BK: At dinner?

SW: —that Sunday. Yeah, that Sunday.

BK: Just heard it on the radio?

SW: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We always had radio. And then that's when I decided that maybe—I knew I wanted to do something else, that I wasn't going to stay here forever, by George. Although it was a place that a lot of people liked to come and stay, some of the other people, but not me. And—

BK: Did you know before, you know, the SPARS [Coast Guard Women's Reserve, from "Semper Paratus, Always Ready"] or that women joined? Did you have like an escape plan?

SW: Oh, yeah.

BK: Okay.

SW: My escape plan was this: that we were getting a lot of publicity down from Canada for the RAF [Royal Air Force].

BK: Okay.

SW: And what the RAF needed were trainees for their radio operators.

BK: Oh, okay.

SW: So, Daddy and I got our heads together. And he said, "You know, Purdue [University] out here, down the street in town, has a radio engineering course." He says, "Why don't we go?"

It was a night course, three nights a week. And you go down, take this regular radio engineering course. And he said, “Don’t—.” Because I was listening to Boston, which had Morse code courses on it.

And I said, “That’d be great.”

He said “I’d like to go with you.”

I said, “Okay!”

So, the two of us—

BK: That’s great.

SW: —packed up and went down to Purdue three nights a week. I think I accumulated something like six hundred hours of radio engineering down there. And I kept my eye on Canada. And I finally wrote them a letter and said, you know, “I would like to have more information about your campaign for people in the Canadian—Royal Canadian RAF and maybe radio engineering, and I have this as my background,” et cetera, et cetera. I was a pretty good letter writer.

One day Mother opened the mail and she came in holding it like this. And she said, “What is this?”

“Oh! Is it from Canada?”

“Yes. Would you mind opening it for me?”

And so she gave it to me to open up and they said, “We would be charmed.”

BK: It was about 1940? [chuckling] That's—That's very British.

SW: I think I'm about eighteen. "Yes, your recommendations look very good, and we would be very interested in sending you more information," and whatever. I'm not sure what the dang letter said. Oh, boy.

Mother said, "What has possessed you?" [chuckles]

And I, "Well, I want to join something, and they won't take anybody over here in our country until you're twenty-one." I said, "I don't want to wait that long." I think I was eighteen or something.

And she said, "No."

[sighs] "Okay."

So, I just put that in my back pocket and found out that I could join—I went across the street. The big post office in Fort Wayne was right across from the Lincoln Life building. I went across the street to the recruiting offices over there, and I said, "How do you join the Coast Guard here?"

He said, "You don't." He says, "You have to go down to Indianapolis to join the Coast Guard." And he said, "You want to join?"

I said, "Well, yeah—No, I just wanted to join the navy, I think."

He said, "Well, you have to go down there for the navy, too."

I said, "Okay."

BK: And you're what, eighteen, and it's like—

SW: I was eighteen, and he said—

BK: Summer of '42, maybe.

SW: Yeah, somewhere around there. He said, "This is the address." He said, "Why don't you run down there."

Well, Indianapolis, we could go down to see Uncle Fred and Aunt Minnie. Why not? So, we did. We went down there. And I told them I'd like to talk to the recruiting people down there. Mother and Daddy, "Okay." So, they went with me.

And we went to the recruiting officer, and they said, "You're too young. You cannot go." And he said, "The only way that you could possibly enlist would be at twenty, and then your parents would have to sign for you."

And so, "Okay." So, I went back home. I thought "Oh, brother." [laughs]

Well, I lasted until I was twenty, and then I said, "Can I apply again?"

They said, "Yes."

And so, I applied and I was sent up to the—The tests and everything were up in Chicago, and we had to go to the Naval Station up there. And all these people were in booths, and the Coast Guard and the [U.S.] Navy and the [U.S.] Army and Marines and all of them were there. And you had to wait in line.

And the [U.S.] Navy gal was real busy and the little Coast Guard was saying, "It's practically the same thing." She said, "I can give you all the basic information." [BK

chuckles] But she said, “And then you can just move over from when that line gets a little bit shorter.” And she said, “You can move right over and just slip right in. All your paperwork will be done.” And she said, “Would that suit you?”

I said, “Sure, that’d be all right. I don’t mind.” So, we sat down there and we did all that and we did the paperwork.

BK: Now, you and your parents? Who are “we”?

SW: Oh, no! No, I went on the train.

BK: Oh, just you and a friend?

SW: No, I went up—

BK: Just you by yourself.

SW: Yeah, I just got on a train and went up to Chicago.

We went through all that business and she said, “Well, I think that’s about all I can tell you.”

And I said, “What about the Coast Guard?”

And she said, “Well, I can tell you a little bit about that.” She said, “You can’t get in that line yet.”

I said, “No.” She said—I said, “Well, okay.”

Well, I went home and opened up the front door and Mother said, “How’d it go?”

I said “I’m a member of—I joined the Coast Guard.” [laughs]

BK: Now, why’d you join—Why did you want to be in the [U.S.] Navy versus the WAC [Women’s Army Corps] or the Marines?

SW: Well, because—Oh, I didn’t want to be in the army. Oh, no.

BK: Because?

SW: It didn’t—It just didn’t suit me. I don’t know. The navy was a little bit cleaner or something.

BK: Okay.

SW: I don’t know what there was about it. And the Marines were pretty tacky. They were pretty snooty, I thought. And anyway. And I couldn’t—I wasn’t a swimmer. I wasn’t a water person by any means. But I always liked the navy. And they—The navy had good publicity regularly in the newspapers. And they were—They had WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service—U.S. Navy] going by then.

BK: So, the WAVES had good publicity or the navy in general?

SW: The navy, but also the WAVES.

BK: WAVES.

SW: And then the WAVES were in operation by this time, and they had big pictures of them in the newspapers and spreads of them marching up and down and doing all this stuff, and the kind of stuff I'd been looking at in my book and so on. So, I was going to join the WAVES.

BK: They just had better publicity, you think?

SW: Yeah. And the nice thing about the Coast—It's a small group. It has a better job in peacetime than it does in war. It's taken over by the navy in the war, and is subservient to the navy. Because they have all these skills with small boats and things like that, and they were the ones that took them all into the shore and off the big boats and off the shore and all this stuff. And they were—But they were the older. They were an older—August 4, 1790, Alexander Hamilton created the Coast Guard. [laughs]

BK: All right. [SW laughs] Semper Paratus [Always Ready].

SW: Semper Paratus right down to the ground. But it's a fine little service, smaller service, and I'm real glad that I made that choice. She was nice and I couldn't tell the difference particularly. And I thought, "Well, this sounds like a good idea, too. I can do it right. Let me go."

BK: Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do?

SW: No.

BK: No? You just wanted to join.

SW: And you didn't have much choice in those days. I mean, it isn't like it is now. Except for the Canadians and they were looking for specific kinds of things, I think.

BK: Do you remember what day you entered the service?

SW: No. It was darned close to my birthday, because when I hit twenty—

BK: So, it was May '44, maybe?

SW: Yes, I know it was May '44 [White enlisted in May 1943]. And I remember, yes, it was. That was—I said, "Okay, I'm—This is it."

And they said, “All right. We’ll sign for you.” And they did.

And I’m not sure where all the—I’m not clear on where they got the papers or how we got them or anything else, but they had to sign me out of the family and into theirs, in a sense, because I was only twenty. And it was on my birthday that I—“I’m going!”

You see, it wasn’t because I was an unhappy kid at home. I cried every time I left. I really did. That went on even when I was working in New York and I was flying all over the country and doing all that work. When I—I always arranged my route so that I could stop by Fort Wayne and see the folks for a little while and then pack. And every time that—it was United Airlines—would start its engines and I was in the window and I’d see my folks, going back to New York, I cried every time. It was not that I wanted to leave home. It wasn’t that I was unhappy at home. It was a dilemma. The best thing that ever happened to me was my family. And it was not a perfect family. I mean we, I suppose, had some hard spots, but I can’t remember any of them except the hard spots the adults handled. We were kids.

BK: So, if someone asked you why you joined, what would you say?

SW: Oh, okay. The choice in Fort Wayne was you either are in service or you’re in a plant. Like I say, we had the GE, we had Magnavox, we had Pistons, and we had a whole batch of factories there. It was a factory town, in some ways. Everybody else was going to the

factories and making a pile of money. So, I chose Coast Guard at twenty one dollars a month. [laughs]

BK: Because—Why'd you choose it versus making the money?

SW: I'm not a money person. I don't work for money. [laughs]

BK: So, you wanted the—

SW: I wanted to be a part of what was going on. I wanted to be a part of the actual business, the actual affair. But I didn't want any part of the army. I was never interested in the [U.S.] Army or the Marines. The WAVES were the ones that sort of appealed to me. Then when the Coasties came along, I thought, "I think I'd like that even a little bit better, because we're a smaller family and it's a smaller group and has a good reputation. And it doesn't blow its horn. And it has a bigger job in the peacetime than it does in wartime, in a sense." It's more a—Look what they're doing down there in the blasted oil thing. They took charge of that.

BK: They did.

SW It took them five seconds to take charge of it. I don't know. I don't know. But I do know that I didn't want to work in the factory.

BK: Okay.

SW: And people were making good money, had bonds coming out of their eyeballs and a few other things.

BK: Yeah. So, you just were drawn to the navy; they were classier. Lot of the posters at the time said that if you enlisted, you'd be freeing a man to fight. Is that—Did you view your enlistment that way?

SW: Sure. That's what we did. That was our job. That was our job. And this is what I say that they lost in this. We took off—we were—we took off the—We took on the shore jobs. The men who were doing that were put out to sea on the ships and boats—and on patrol and things of that sort that they did. They had port authorities and things of that sort that they manned, too. They did an awful lot of escort work and things like that during the war. But that was not what our—Our job was to take all of that stuff away from them and to become the clothing, the people, the schooling, all of the office work, and all that sort of business. And that's what we did. We learned to be yeomen and storekeepers, if you would, and to be in charge, to be managers, to run the clothing departments and teach.

Because we had to go to school in training. We had six weeks of boot, and we had to go to—August 4, 1790! And we—[laughs]

BK: Learned your history.

SW: We had to learn our history and the history of the country and all that other good stuff. That—those women that were in those top jobs—in the Coast Guard you had—The officers had to be paired with a male officer of the same rank. She could not get advanced until he did.

BK: Wow. I didn't know that.

SW: I always thought that was just a little bit not nice. But they had a buddy all the time that they had to—They couldn't be advanced. But those women were in charge of huge groups of people and a lot of money and a lot of responsibility. They became great managers. And when they got out there wasn't any—There weren't any jobs for them. And if they—If they had been a little more farsighted, they would have hung onto those WRs, the Women's Reserves, as they do sort of with the state patrols. And we would become like that. We were completely trained. We didn't have to go into training. And to dump us in with the men and think that that situation was going to be anything but what it is now—And I don't think it's working as well as it could the other way. In other words, we would still be the reserves, like the state patrols are, but—and could be called to do whatever had to be done. But our pay wasn't what theirs is. You see, we were—

These exorbitant salaries that they have been giving to these contract people to cook—only they don't cook; they haul it in over there by air. And one of the chefs was

quoted as saying, “When people saw the kind of food we were feeding those kids over there—.” And what’s wrong with peeling potatoes? I don’t know. But anyway, that—My god, you know, you have everything here from pork to chicken to beef to et cetera, et cetera and seafood. Everything is fresh. And he asked one of the chefs, also hired on contract by god knows what, he said, “Yes.” He said, “It costs thirty dollars a plate to feed these men, three times a day. And they can have anything they want, and it’s all flown in fresh.” Now, honey, that’s not right. I don’t care how you run an army or anything else. That is not right.

Anyway, they had this women’s group. And we had our own cooks. I mean, we had our—It was the only reason we had some men down there, because of the hotel equipment. But if they had kept the women’s reserve, at the prices we came, and yet at the skills we had and the experience we had after the war, it would’ve been an entirely different thing. There might—I don’t whether they ever merged the two or not. They haven’t put the guard in yet. Well, it is officially and unofficially, but they can be called up, but they don’t have to play with those boys. I mean, they do their own guard duty here and have their own set-ups and such. They do not have to be in a battalion, an army battalion, or anything like that until they are called up. But it seems that they missed the boat on that one in not hanging onto those reserves. Fully trained, eager, well-equipped to do any kind of those jobs, and to take over the shore duties again. Of those—all those organizations just keep those things and keep the guys out on the boats and the ships and doing all this kind of thing that they’re doing here, in that oil dump thing. Let the other stuff be handled by the women. Why not? And I’m not that—and I’m not a—I’m a

feminist. Boy, you betcha. But I can't see paying a—what was that? Who are those people down here? Black somebody or others? [unclear]

BK: Blackhawk? No.

SW: Yeah, black—somebody. [Blackwater Worldwide] Do you know that those guys are paid \$695 an hour down there to escort the state department people so that they wouldn't get hurt? And yet they were doing all this other stuff on the side and being ugly and a few other things. That's—And look at what they are doing with the food. We had perfectly good food. It was good food. It didn't have to be fresh off of the garden and flown in at the expense of the plane, the da, the da, the da, and the chef and all that. It's got—It's become out of joint, I think. Somehow it happened. I'm sorry about that.

And this was one of the things that happened as far as we—particularly those of us in the Coast Guard—we women, after it was over, getting a job. We were overqualified all over the place. All of us were overqualified for whatever we could do. But you know who took over—[chuckles] and I went to school and then I ended up in the brokerage firm in New York because I had pull. I lasted there for about three years, and I saw what was going on and I couldn't take it. I said, "I'm not going to do this."

BK: What do you mean you saw what was going on?

SW: On Wall Street, all of this mess and—Oh, no. I know more about that than I want to know. And they were going to send me to that fancy school in Philadelphia to get a—

BK: Wharton [School of the University of Pennsylvania]?

SW: Yeah. Another [degree] in finance.

BK: MBA [Master of Business Administration].

SW: They were going to pay me to get that and stay with them. And I said, “I don’t think so. I don’t like what I’m doing.” I had a whole batch of businesses that I was responsible for, but you know what knocked me out of it?

BK: What?

SW: This was Lion, Lady and Company. Am I talking too much?

BK: No, I just—my only fear is that you’re going to—I don’t want you to run out of steam before we get you into the Coast Guard.

SW: Oh, I’ll be in the Coast Guard in a minute.

BK: Okay, great.

SW: I'll be in the Coast Guard in a minute. I'm out of it now.

BK: No, I know that. Just story-wise we're circling back. It's good.

SW: Circling back. But I was hired by Dr. [Lionel D.] Edie, who was in charge of—He was the top economic advisor for President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower.

BK: Wow.

SW: He spent more time—He's a good old Republican. He spent more time down in New York—or up in New York, wherever—up in New York—or I don't know. It was down in New York—down wherever it was, than he did in the office. But I had some contact with him and he said, "When you graduate," he said, "you come and I'll give you a job." Well, he did, thank you very much. I was hired as the editor for all of the paperwork that his company put out. They had all of these things for their companies: this is good, this is what this stock is doing, this is where you should put your money, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And these are the trends, et cetera, all this other stuff. They had a big research department. These guys did all this work.

He said, "It's miserable." He said, "Read some of it."

Well, I did. Well it's terrible! Those guys, you know, they couldn't put—the sentences went on and on and on. You couldn't read them. It was very confusing. It was a mess. So, I said, "I'd love to do that."

So, I started. After about three months, there was a—when he finally got it back in the office—there were about three guys from the research department waiting for me. "We're not going to put up with this. She can't change a word we say in our papers. [banging on table for emphasis] We can't—We'll not put up with that. She doesn't know what she's doing, and she doesn't know anything about this business. And if she changes a bit of any sentence, it could be wrong."

And he laughed. And he says, "You're crazier than a batch of idiots." He said, "This is ridiculous." He said, "Look at the difference." He said, "There's not a—I've looked at this stuff," and he says, and there's not a thing." He said, "This is good writing. This is intelligible. It's quick. It gets to the point, and not all this rambling and raving. Look at—They took three sentences to say what she said in this area."

"No, no, no, no, no. We're not going to stand for it. We just do not want her messing with our words."

He said, "Okay."

So, he turned me over to his assistant, Bill Rhodes, and he was a young fellow that did special things with special companies. The one that really—And I worked with him well. That was fine. They had a nice little library up there, and she was a real hellion when it comes to the library. I'll tell you, you better not get anything dirty. You better not

bend the page or anything else. Anyway, she was an excellent librarian. But anyway, we had Wesson Oil.

He came to me one day and he says, "I've got a problem here." And he said, "I have to give a recommendation." And he says, "I need a lot of research on it." He says, "I'm going to dump it onto you."

I said, "Okay."

And he said "Here are your spreadsheets." We had these big folders of spreadsheets. And he said, "Wesson Oil wants to move to Texas and set up a new plant." And he says, "Now, you have some idea of what this means?"

And I said "Sort of. You have to move the people there to work and a few things, and you have a product."

And he says, "Yeah." He says, "We have to know about corn, because that's their main interest, and about the farm situation and what—how it works there and what have been—We have to go back at least twenty years and find out what the weather has done to the crops and this sort of thing, et cetera, et cetera." And he said, "Then there are the workers. Is there a good—we have to check the employment and what the workers might be and could they staff this place with good people and have good workers that they need."

I said, "Yeah, okay. I see that."

And he says, "And you have to see what the population for the whole area is going to be like, so we would have a source to sell our stuff at locally, for that kind of

thing. But also to ship. Of course, we'll have to ship. We want this to be a major—They want this to be a major plant.”

And I said, “Okey-dokey.”

By this time I was working a slide rule and doing all this fancy stuff after three years, you know. And I said, “Okay.” So I got into the library and got all the books I needed and started to go back twenty years and keep all these figures on population and pigs, because pigs eat corn, and people eat corn, and—but then you have to know what the population is and how that's happening and all this other stuff. So, I had all these things to put together and finally got ready. I said, “What's the deadline?”

He said, “Well, end of the month would be nice.”

I said, “Okay.” So, by the end of the month I had my spreadsheet and I took it in there.

He looked at it and he said, “Okay. Now we have total population and we have the pigs.” He says, “That looks like it's a growing business town here, doesn't it?”

And I said, “The farming of corn, hey, that's good. That's pretty good.”

He says, “The population's increasing a lot too, isn't it?”

“Yeah, okay.”

He said, “Well, that's not a bad layout. They might want to move there.” But he said, “I have one question for you here.” He said, “Now, pigs eat corn and people eat corn,” he said, “and that will effect what they can make in product before they can get the product.” And he says—an important moment—he says, “I hate to tell you, but you've got the pigs eating the people.” [laughter]

BK: Oops. [laughter]

SW: He said, “You’ll have to do that little part over again, because I don’t think it works that way.” See, if the people eat the pigs, then that cuts down on the pigs eating the corn.

BK: Right. Exactly.

SW: And all this is very logical and all dumb and stupid, you know, everything else.

I said “Okay.” So I went back and I got the people eating the pigs instead of the pigs eating the people.

Took it back and he said, “That’s good. Good job.”

Well, I was also in charge of several companies that I had to go to. And I had to go to annual meetings for their stock and all that other stuff. They were nice. Of course, you got samples of everything they sold and stuff like that.

But I thought, “Yeah, pigs eating people.” That spreadsheet was an awful big spreadsheet. I said, “I don’t think I like this job. I think I’d better quit.” [laughs]

BK: Wow.

SW: While I’m ahead, at least. So that convinced me, when I started doing that and I thought, “I don’t think you’re that—The math of that is simple, but your mind might be

somewhere else.” [chuckles] So, that’s why I quit the brokerage firm—one of the reasons why I did—because I couldn’t keep the pigs and the people separate the right way.

BK: It’s a good story.

SW: I think it’s a good one. [laughs] I’m stuck with it. Oh, dear. But then I found a job with the Girl Scouts. There was a notice in the paper, in the *New York Times*. And it said, “We need a financial advisor for local councils,” and what the qualifications were. Well, by the time I took it to my—incidentally, Theresa Colley[?], who was the head of that whole kit and caboodle down there, she had got—she had the contact with Edie & Company—with Dr. Edie. She was living in Stuyvesant Town [New York]. You know, Metropolitan Life [Insurance Company] built that Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper [Village] with all those apartments on the river. They did that for—you had to be personnel. You had to be discharged, ex-[U.S.] Army, [U.S.] Navy or Coast Guard or whatever it happen to be, in order to get an apartment there.

She got a nice big apartment. And she also had the Kerry—another Kerry Blue [Terrier]. And she said, “If you’ll come to New York, you can get the job with Edie.” And she said, “Come on to New York.” She said, “I’ve got a gal who will share her room—her apartment with you for a while until you can find something if you want, and take care of it.” And she said, “Incidentally, I have another Kerry Blue. It’s name is Imp. It’s a little girl.”

“Okay!” So she’s the one that got me to New York. And I had another—and she was in Peter Cooper. I lasted with the other gal, who was a little weird. I lived in the [Greenwich] Village for quite a long while. Well, it was almost—It was almost two years.

BK: So, it was like late forties, early fifties.

SW: It was—It was ’50. Because I graduated in ’50, and I went right up. So it was ’50, ’51 when I went to New York.

[chuckles] I called in when I had arrived and they wanted to—I said, “I don’t know how to get to Wall Street.”

They said, “Well, where are you?”

I said, “I’m in the Village.” No, I didn’t say the Village, I said I was in [pause]—What in the hell is the lady’s name? Excuse me. Is that on the tape? I’m sorry.

BK: Yeah. It’s okay.

SW: I’m sorry. They call it by the same name that they do up north, Westchester and all that area.

BK: Soho?

SW: No, no, no. Greenwich.

BK: Oh, Greenwich Village! Okay, yeah.

SW: I said, "I'm in Greenwich."

And they said, "Oh well, then you take the train," and they told me the train to take and all this other stuff, "and then you get on the subway and that'll take you down here and here and here."

I said, "I'm not up in Greenwich Town, I'm down in Greenwich Village."

And there was a bit of a pause at that sentence. "Oh, well then just get on the subway and come on down." [laughs]

BK: Right. Excellent.

SW: I know. Oh, dear. But Terry became—she became—Dorothy Stratton became the head of the Girl Scouts when she got out of service, because they needed a new—

BK: And Stratton was SPARS?

SW: She was the head of the whole kit and caboodle of SPARS. She was the big captain. Captains in the navy are the captains of the boat, and not a captain like the army has. Terry was a commander, but she was below the captain. It's different.

Anyway, Dorothy Stratton was there, and she brought her assistant with her for that staff. And she found out about Terry there, so she dragged her in. Terry was put in charge of—not personnel, but in training, because she did a pretty good job of training. Then other people would come in. There were some navy gals in. We didn't have any army that I can remember. It was mostly Coast Guard and [U.S.] Navy.

Terry said, "There's a job open."

I said, "I've already applied for it."

She said, "Oh, come on! You have to pay a fee. She said I could have—." She said, "I could've gotten—You didn't have to pay a fee if you'd gone through me."

"Oh, that's all right."

And they took me up there. They said, "You have an interesting background."

And I said, "Yeah."

So we were loaded down with these women. I keep saying, these women were highly trained. The other advantage of the Girl Scouts—that was the national executive—That was the national executive staff there in New York, and they were responsible only for the keeping of the book and the handbook and the rules and regulations. But they—and they still are. The Girl Scouts are completely run by volunteers. The staff is the staff. And you see, all of us knew all about staff and line, and we knew we weren't the line, and we didn't have any problem one way or the other. We all worked for those fancy ladies. [chuckles] And they came in to their board meetings and all this other good stuff, you know? Ran all the meetings and did all that other stuff. We were their staff. So, that was one thing that worked out beautifully, and I think is

probably still working out that way, in many ways. And they used these women up to their eyeballs, because we had a big staff and we also had a field staff. Within that field staff they also hired people locally in their areas. The field staff was divided up like the twelve—what are the—reserve— Federal Reserve—

BK: Branches?

SM: —branches that we have in the country. We have twelve of those. They're all like that. But anyway, it was organized like that. But they swapped up all those people to their advantage.

BK: Well, that's good.

SM: Good advantage, yeah. That should've happened elsewhere, but that's okay.

BK: We've skipped six years, so let's go back to—

SW: Oh, so six years.

BK: We're back in May '44. Were your parents kind of okay with you joining by—two years later, both of them?

SW: Oh, yes. That was no question. That was no question.

BK: So, they were supportive of you then.

SW: Oh, completely.

BK: What about your friends at home? What did they think?

SW: Well, most of them were working in the factories. I was—I think there was one of the notices in there that I'd joined or something, in one of those books maybe. No, it wasn't a big deal. Everybody—see, everybody was in one way or the other, and I was—not very many—I don't know of anybody else from Fort Wayne at that point that joined the Coast Guard. But, you know, we just joined up.

BK: Okay. So, you're up to Chicago. You came back. You started a few months later, I guess?

SW: Right away. They sent me the orders of what I could take, what I couldn't take. And every female had to either have a short haircut that could not touch your collar cut—and this—my hair is getting a bit too long—or she had to have a permanent.

BK: What'd you choose?

SW: I chose the permanent and I'll never do it again.

BK: Got it.

SW: Oh, lord. What I have is what I have, and I don't mess with it. It has a mind of its own anyway. What we had to take and how to pack our bags and what you do not bring, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. If you have any ideas about this that and the other thing—then they would send orders for—our transportation orders and tell us—It would be a troop train. It would start in Chicago and stop at various places and pick up people. That ended down in Cincinnati [Ohio], I think, for that first trip down to Florida. And it was a troop train.

BK: So, how long—So, you went from Chicago to Cincinnati, and then from Cincinnati down to Palm Beach.

SW: Yeah, the next day. It took two days to go down there.

BK: Do you remember anything about the train ride? Was this like your first time away from home that long?

SW: Yes, this was the first break from—yes, alone. The bag was—although they recommended these canvas bags, which we bought, but the bags were awful heavy to lug

and all that. We had absolutely no help one way or the other. We had to wait in Cincinnati for several hours for the next batch to come in to consolidate to make one trip down to Palm Beach. We spent the afternoon—I forget how we spent the afternoon, some of us. We didn't wander very far out of the train station. [laughs] None of us did.

BK: You didn't have your uniforms. Did you have your uniforms?

SW: Oh, heavens no.

BK: You're all just in civvies [civilian clothing]?

SW: We were all in civvies all over the place. This is a funny array of civvies. We were fed oatmeal for breakfast. And I can't remember anything else about the food, one way or the other, going down on the train. But I remember the oatmeal for breakfast.

BK: Was this late summer, maybe?

SW: No, spring.

BK: Spring, okay.

SW: No, it was spring.

BK: Okay. So you're—May, okay. So you got down—

SW: Ate navy food, I guess.

BK: All right. So, you got down—

SW: Palm Beach.

BK: —to Palm Beach, got off the train, what happened?

SW: There were some busses there, and they took us over to the Biltmore Hotel. And it was, as I say, in—it was open. [chuckles] And we were the first company. Those of us who were coming in were the first company to be formed, and we were sent up to the sixth deck, and—

BK: The first company of SPARS—

SW: Yeah.

BK: —or the first company of SPARS at all?

SW: Oh, yeah.

BK: Okay.

SW: This was the beginning of the Biltmore. And that was the only training station they had in the country.

BK: So you were the very first class of SPARS?

SW: Yeah, yeah.

BK: Wow.

SW: They marched us up to the sixth floor where the booties would be, and three bunks with six kids in it, and gave us orders as to how to—what we had to do, what we could—shove your cases under the beds and all this other stuff. “And someone will tell you what to do next.” And there was a mate at the end of the desks, of some sort. I forget. I guess there was a small core of these kids that had come earlier. But anyway, we all had—there was a mate on the desk, and she would yell and scream at us regularly as to what we were supposed to do. “Two and three muster!” I remember that, and we didn’t know what that meant except that we all got the other—

BK: How many people were in your platoon?

SW: Oh, I would imagine maybe twenty—twelve or twenty—something between twelve and twenty, I'm not sure.

BK: And that first group was a few hundred, would you say?

SW: Yeah, yeah.

BK: Took up two floors?

SW: No—

BK: Just the one?

SW: Just the sixth floor. I think we had to put our beds together and stuff like that when we first got in there, because I think the stuff had been dumped. And I think, if I remember right, you get the mattresses and the sheets and the pillowcases and all that other stuff organized. And “Your [unclear] will go there and this will go there,” and everybody kept yelling at us. “This’ll happen here and this’ll happen there.”

“Okay,” you know. [chuckles] It was pretty riotous for a while, until we settled down and found out what our platoon number—

“And when you hear that, you assemble!”

And, “Okay.”

Then they finally got us by height so we looked halfway decent and a few other things. But it was a rag-tag—Everybody had something different on, of course, and this sort of thing. I think some of the girls who were—came first decided they wanted to be SPARS instead of WAVES, because I think some of those. I think some of them came from the WAVE department—from the WAVE group, somewhere along the line, and were assigned down there to the training station. And they were our enlisted company commanders. And that’s what a coxswain [boat leader] and **bosun** [crew member] does: They’re in charge of those groups of people.

We had one roomie. We had a strange roomie that first batch of six. One roomie was Liz Orison[?] from California. Elizabeth Orison. And she had arrived in front of the Biltmore Hotel in a white or cream colored—cream colored convertible.

BK: Wow. She drove from California.

SW: Yes. And the seats were all red leather, and all of her luggage. And she had luggage. She had luggage; it was red leather. Well, she carted that upstairs. I don’t know what happened to the car. It ended up—whoops! It was gone at some point. I’m sure it went to a garage somewhere, and I don’t know if Daddy ever sent for it or whatever happened to the darn thing. Oh, boy. And she was allowed to keep, I think, the big case, and

everything else had to go somewhere. I don't know what happened to it, but it had to go because we didn't have that kind of space.

By fall, she was screaming and yelling all over the place. She said, "My suitcase is completely moldy!" [laughter] She had closed the darn thing up down there, and we were right on the edge of the ocean and the lake—between the two, the ocean and the lake. It was. It was humid down there. And her beautiful, beautiful red—We just laughed. [laughs] She ruined her big case because it all got moldy and she'd sealed it up and so she had to junk it anyway.

But, yeah, it was that kind of a beginning. And we'd just get started—They'd say, "Platoon three, muster!" and we'd go to class, march us around to class, and then in the middle of the class they'd haul us out to do something else and back and forth, because we had to fill up that whole hotel. And there were nine decks and the two towers. And the two towers had the two important people in them. Terry was in one of them and I think her two sisters were in the other. And the ninth deck was for officers. The eighth deck was for the—what I became. I became a member of ship's company. Now, these were the teachers and all the classes that they—heads of company, and—

BK: Would this be like the equivalent of NCOs [noncommissioned officer] or—

SW: Yeah, yeah. And that was the eighth deck, and then seven, six—and I'm not sure how far down it went. I forget. But I went from six to eight, and from six kids to four kids. But

there was something that had to be done almost—for those first—at least four out of the six weeks that we were supposed to be getting a certain kind of training.

BK: Just putting stuff together, you mean?

SW: Just putting things together and sorting things out and getting clothes lockers set up and all that other good stuff that had to happen.

BK: How long till you got your uniforms?

SW: Well, we got those awful seersucker jobbies first. It was a jacket and a skirt. And then they had these little jumpsuit type of things, shorts—all one piece shorts and a skirt that you could button up and down the front and you had a dress and a top. That was a little bit easier to wear and—But that first uniform of seersucker was ugh. It was a while. It was a while before the uniforms came in. And they had cotton ones for a while, and they were not that good-looking. And if you saw some of those pictures, we didn't have jackets on at some point, but that didn't last very long. We were in wool suits, shirts, ties, gloves, cotton hose, long cotton hose. You had to have a belt or something.

BK: Sounds steamy.

SW: Very steamy. And legal shoes and a hat.

BK: No air conditioning, huh?

SW: [laughs] Oh, there was a lot of air out there, but we were not conditioned for it.

BK: That's true.

SW: So, it took a little while and finally when we got all—when we got the good uniforms and so on. But we only had one. Anything after that: If you wanted a white one, you could have it, but you had to go to a tailor and get it made. And if you wanted another ordinary wool, you had to get it made and find out about it and that sort of thing.

BK: So, how did you get the position of drum major? How did that happen?

SW: Just the fact that I was the tallest of the clarinet players.

BK: But how did you get into the band? I mean, that was—You're sitting there and they assign you like, "You're going to be in the band?"

SW: Oh, yeah. They had meetings every day, and evidently the order came down from somewhere that the training station needed a band. So, they just called at the usual meeting, they said, "Okay. Everybody who's ever played an instrument, make yourself

known!” And when only a couple of them got up, they said, “All right.” So, they got out the paperwork [laughter] and found out any of them that had been blowing any kind of a thing or twiddling any kind of a thing in school or anywhere else. Okay! And then they’d yell our names out and we—I didn’t want to do that particularly. I was tired—I was in the band for four years, and I loved it—high school band. But I was tired of it, and I didn’t want to be a performer and do that.

And they kept telling me, “Yeah, but you go from seaman to musician third. What’s the matter with you?”

I said, “Well, I don’t know.”

Anyway, so they just pulled it out of the audience from the paper they had.

BK: Wow. So, how many women were in the band?

SW: Oh, geez. What’d we have? Three or four across. Three—I think we had three across and maybe six or eight down. I think just six back. Square of—

BK: So, about eighteen.

SW: About eighteen, finally. It turned out. And the director was Reddick, and she was a music teacher and she was a lieutenant.

BK: R-e-d-d-i-c-k?

SW: Yes, yes. And I think she was named Martha. Martha Reddick? I think it was Martha. And she had an assistant. And I think I had something about “Pretty Girl” or something about in there about “Fancy Pants” or something? She was her assistant. She also had a music background.

And we did have people who—the other clarinet—I think there were three clarinet players. One of them had been a teacher of music in clarinet. She was a funny little old lady. Oh, lord. She was a funny one. She didn’t look like us kids. But anyway, she knew her music and she was hauled in in a hurry. Penny—Pennifold[?]. Penny had the tuba, and she also had the job at the Sun and Surf Club, [chuckles] both of them. It was kind of hard to know when you were going to have one or the other.

And the drummer, snare, and bass were from Boston—Waters and I forget who the other one was. And we had a couple of saxophones, and one of them’s—her name was Jenny and I forget what the other one was. And I think we had a trombone and coronet—may have had two cornets. I can’t think who their names were.

BK: No trumpets, just cornets?

SW: Well, just cornets. Trumpets are kind of light. The cornet has a—well, I don’t know. That’s about it.

BK: No French Horn or—

SW: No. I don't think we had a French Horn. I don't think so.

BK: So, you—

SW: We had the basics of it, and it sounded pretty good. Reddick brought it together. She was the teacher, and she would get—Of course, a lot of us were familiar with a lot of these marches, or at least I was. Good night, I'd been playing them at every basketball game in the world and knew them inside—didn't even have to look at them.

BK: You played clarinet in high school?

SW: Yeah. I have a fine picture of myself doing that. [chuckles]

BK: Oh, yeah.

SW: Uniform and all.

BK: Very dignified.

SW: Oh yeah, all my pictures are dignified. They—It sounded good. It sounded good. And then they had to get trained to look military and training and playing at the same time and

all this other good stuff, you know. I was no drum major. Good lord, come on. [chuckles]
I didn't like it. I didn't want it, the strutting around and—at least they told me I didn't
have to twirl it, but I had to make signals and things like this, you know, and whatever.
Oh god. And they—I had—I was schooled in how to walk because I had a funny walk
supposedly. I don't know what it was. I don't think it was. I don't know. But they'd
march me up and down the streets with the—

BK: How long were you trained for this?

SW: Oh, maybe a week, two weeks.

BK: Okay.

SW: See, the other time, when you're a musician, instead of doing these other jobs, you were
pulled off and you were supposed to be practicing. See that was—

BK: Other jobs like what, like KP [kitchen patrol] or—

SW: Yeah. Well, no. We didn't have things like that. We had cooks and that was their job. But
while we were still building the thing up and—

BK: Okay. So, instead of making a bunk, you'd be practicing.

SW: We were supposed to do that. And [pause] then when the new kids came, of course it would start all over again. But it sounded good. It was an okay thing. I—But I was not that happy being out there strutting around, which I did not think I was doing well and I didn't want to do it anyway.

“Why me?”

“Because you're the tallest.”

I was five [feet] seven [inches]—five seven—seven—

BK: Five eight?

SW: No, five six.

BK: Five six and you were the tallest! Wow.

SW: Yeah, five six or five seven. I don't know whether I was seven or not. I was five six probably.

BK: So, out of the six weeks at boot camp, you were practicing for two weeks?

SW: Couple weeks.

BK: Couple weeks and—

SW: And then you saw us going down field with kids, marching. We had to march them from the hotel over to the field. And that was about three or four blocks away through town that we had to go, down streets and whatnot, and get everybody over there. The companies were behind us and—

BK: That was every day?

SW: Every day we had to do it and—No, there was a review every Saturday. Every Saturday morning there was an official review, and we had to go by the officers and all that stuff. It was a regular military review every week.

BK: So, what was a typical day like for you? Was it always the band practice or—?

SW: Early on, yes. You got up at six. The bugler got you up and you went down and had breakfast. Although the band, after a while, played at breakfast time a little bit, once in a while, trying to get kids up and out or something I guess. But no, you assembled for all of these things at this point because this was training. You assembled and you went down as a platoon to get your meal, and you went through the line and sat together. And then your coxswain or your boxswain **bosun**—we didn't—I think we only had a **bosun** or two among those companies, but there were some that were coxswains. They would get their

kids together and march them off to the next class or whatever else they had to do or whatever duty they had and keep them together. They were in charge of that group, to push them around the area.

We were busy all the time, one way or the other. And then back to the mess and back again, back and forth and back and forth, and then up into bed. You had to get your clothes washed and hung up and [chuckles] et cetera. Now, it was—there was nothing—It was good. It was—you knew—you sensed responsibility. And you [unclear] not only to yourself but to your bunkmates and people in your group. And a sense of [sigh] not just being a part of it, but being—but being of help and assistance, and that's what you were there for, to do a job. And if that was a strange new idea to you, why, you learned it in a hurry. It wasn't that, as far as we were concerned. I knew what I was there for, so that didn't bother me one bit.

That's why I think we ought to have a draft. You learn in a hurry, and it doesn't hurt a bit. It really doesn't. And it puts a lot of stamina and guts and a new sense and a new look at people and what your job is and what the world is all about.

BK: So, after boot camp was over in six weeks, then what happened? Then what happened to you?

SW: I was made ship's company. And I told Terry—I told the commander, Commander Crowley[?], I said, "I don't like this."

And she said "Okay."

BK: You didn't like being drum major?

SW: Yeah.

BK: So you went up to—

SW: I went up to her and I said, "I want a change of rate."

BK: Okay.

SW: And she said, "Talk to me." I did, and she said, "Okay." She said, "We can move you to coxswain." She said, "I don't think you'd have to take the test."

I said, "Okay. I'll be glad to if I need to."

She says, "No, I don't think you'll have to take that test." So, she said, "Now, you're sure about this?"

I said, "Oh, yes, sir." Now, we called everybody "sir" for the simple reason that we were paying respect to the rank and not to the gender. It was never, "Yes, ma'am." It was always, "Yes, sir," in this organization.

BK: Was that different in the WAVES? Do you know?

SW: I don't know about—I think it was in the WAVES too, but I know the army did it the other way.

BK: Okay. So, "Yes, sir."

SW: "Yes, sir," no matter what. It's the captain, it's the sergeant, it's the—whoever's in charge, you know. "Yes sir," and don't worry about the gender.

BK: So, then you moved up? You were a part of the line?

SW: So, then she moved that and then—well I had a company. I had a platoon, so they put me out of the—I had it, and it was one of those things. I took my thing off and put on the funny little coxswain one over here.

BK: So you were now a line.

SW: You betcha.

BK: Okay.

SW: And I had a platoon and—because I had become a drill instructor by then.

BK: Oh.

SW: I had to for the band. So, that was one advantage and one plus that I had that got me into the coxswain thing without too much trouble, because I had that instruction and had been doing it. So, I had a platoon and about pretty soon—wasn't very long—Let's see. I don't think the—I don't know when the exams came up. Exams came up in another year, I think, or something like that. I tried for bosun, bosun second, and they said, "Okay. You can take it." And I did, and I had that at the time that we—that Alaska broke loose and that they were going to close—this was a good, what, two or three years now? Something like that. I don't know. Maybe it was three. And they were going to close the training station and—

BK: So, you were in charge of different—

SW: I was in charge of a platoon, which is just like we used to—like the others were. The booties and whatnot, taking them in and out.

BK: So, training them and then they would be—Where would they be sent off to after?

SW: Many—I think that for a while you had a little bit of a choice where you wanted to go or what station you wanted or what part of the country or anything like that. Openings were

listed and I think it was up to the officers to figure out, you know, that kind of a business.
But they often—you had a choice, anyhow, but I was—I was on base. That's what—

BK: So, you were kind of a drill instructor?

SW: Only for the band.

BK: Only for the band.

SW: Only for the band. And I became a member of ship's company at that point, moved up to the eighth deck, and had my own boot.

BK: What classes did you have?

SW: I didn't do any teaching. I was—

BK: I just meant how many groups did you—and then they would go off.

SW: Oh, I—[pause]. I don't remember.

BK: Okay. So, you're there from like from May '44 till whenever they closed it, essentially?
That we can look up.

SW: Yes, yes. And the thing about the Alaska deal was we were—both WAVES and SPARS were to—had the choice of Hawaii or Alaska, when we found out the training station was closing and everybody had to go to Manhattan Beach [Coast Guard Training Station] to get training from now on. And the girls could either go to one of the Coast Guard offices across the country and cities and all around about—captain of the port, Coast Guard manned those places, caps of the port. And that was semi-civilian, you know, watching the boats and all the rules and regulations and that sort of thing, plus the military part that went with it. But there were captains of the port all over the country, and they needed some help, and if they would get a SPAR in there where they could get the guy off on that darn boat. [laughs] And we can call some of the little fellows boats. We can't call the ships boats, but we can call some of the little fellows boats.

So, the disbursement was—were listed, and the places that needed help were listed, and the gals could sign up for what they wanted. We were going to Hawaii at first, and then the orders came down from on high that only WAVES were going to go to Hawaii.

BK: So this was '45? This was mid-'45?

SW: I guess so. Something like that.

BK: Yeah. I don't think they were allowed to go there until mid '45.

SW: Something like that. And Alaska was the only one that was open. Of course, Sally[?] knew all about this because she was the yeoman in that office, and she said, “Well, Terry’s going to go to—Miss Crowley[?]'s going to go to Alaska, in charge of that base up there, and will take the crew of SPARS up there.” And she said, “Of course, I’m going to go too.”

BK: Now, was that just a SPARS base or was that a Coast Guard base?

SW: Oh, yeah. It was a Coast Guard—a basic Coast Guard base. You know, munitions and oil and the whole kit and caboodle. You know, repair and—It was a regular base.

She said, “I’ll talk to her about it.”

And I said, “Well, I don’t want to go to—.” My other choice was Manhattan Beach, and I said, “I don’t want to go there and get back into training and that sort of stuff.”

She said, “Okay.”

So, they talked it over, and so she got me into the office and she said, “I hear you want to go to Alaska.” [laughs]

I said, “Yes, sir. I don’t want to go to Manhattan Beach, thank you very much, if I can help it.”

She said, “Well, I think we can make that. Let me look at the roster so far.” She looked at it and she said, “Well, I think we can manage that.” But she said, “Something else will have to happen.”

And I said, “What’s that?”

She said, “I see that there is another bosun mate, second grade, on the list.” She says, “I’m afraid we’ll have to make you a first class.”

BK: Wow.

SW: I said, “Okay, thanks.”

She said, “I think you should be in charge of it.”

I said—See I was in charge of the barracks and cleaning all that—all of that mess. I guess that’s a personnel chairman or something; I’m not too sure. But anyway, I was in charge of all that mess.

And she said, “I think we’ll have to make you first class.”

I said, “Okay.” I said, “When do I take the test?”

She says, “I don’t think we have time.” [laughs]

BK: Oh, I like her.

SW: Oh, I did too. She became a very good friend of mine after I got out, and even at this point. So, that’s the way I got up to Alaska, anyway, and got my next rating, was because

she preferred to have me in charge than the other little girl she didn't know anything about down on the list. There were about thirty of us, I think, that went up on that crew from all around about. They weren't all—not all of them by any means were from Palm Beach. I don't know how many of them were, if any.

BK: So, in Palm Beach you said there were like maybe fifteen, twenty men that were there and everybody else was female.

SW: Just about, I guess.

BK: Right. And so how was your relationship with them? What was that like?

SW: Wasn't bad. The boys were on guard duty a lot, you know. They had regular guard duty. Of course, we had regular guard duty too, down on the quarter deck. You couldn't get out without going by the OD [officer of the day] on the quarter deck. And then they were in the—only place that I am aware of is that they were in the kitchen, and I don't know that I ever saw any of those fellows. But we did see the others because they were our drill instructors, and they were coming in and out off the quarter deck at night and that sort of thing, when they were on duty. I hated that night shift, and—We got to take quarter deck duty. And it was 8[p.m.] to 4[a.m.], 4[a.m.] to 8[a.m.], and 8 to 4 again, you know. And I hated that—by midnight, I'd been 8 to 4 and then—8 to 4 I guess, 4 to 8—8 to 4—

BK: Probably 8 to 4 to 12 and then 12 to 8.

SW: 12 to 8 again. And oh boy, when four o'clock hit and you'd been down there—and I couldn't get up and do anything at that point. I wasn't hungry. By the time—eight o'clock I didn't want breakfast. I didn't want any. Oh, I hated that kind of thing.

BK: Guard duty.

SW: Yeah.

BK: Did you enjoy the work generally, down in Palm Beach?

SW: Oh, yeah.

BK: The coxswain and boatswain—?

SW: Well, and the little brief business with the band, I thought that was a little bit outrageous, but then—

BK: So, you were there like '43, '44—You were there like three years.

SW: Just about, I think.

BK: I think the math's working out that way.

SW: Something like that.

BK: So, they were closing it down. How did you feel when you found out they were closing the—?

SW: Well we all wanted to know what's going to happen to us. And that's when we were anxious to see where the possibilities were and they published the list of openings. They were darn good about, you know, letting people go where they wanted to go, because they would be better people if they went where they wanted to go. Some of them wanted to go up to Manhattan Beach and some of them—had quite a few that were going to go to Hawaii, but I'm not sure any of those wanted to go to Alaska.

But this was, you know, throughout the organization. And there were some people still on—there were some people on duty in these outposts even. So, the training post wasn't the only place that you found SPARS at this point. They had moved on because we had several companies and they were at the port authorities and places like that. They were around the country.

And that is the—That quarter deck is the place where I learned the thing that I think is one of the more important things in my life. You could not get out without checking in at the quartermaster's desk to see if you had liberty, and then you had to do a

sharp about-face and there was the duty officer. And you had to salute the duty officer and say, "Permission to go ashore, sir."

And, "Granted." And then she made this little speech. She said, "Remember who you are and what you represent. It only takes one."

And, "Yes, sir."

"Dismissed."

And then you had to do another about-face, and then you had to march out of the front door. That has stuck with me. As a matter of fact, Mills College had a very similar one like that, that—And they were right, because this was the first time the country saw women in uniform, en masse sometimes, because when you went you usually went with buddies and pals. We were not allowed to date officers. And Palm Beach was real sticky, awfully sticky.

BK: Oh, that kind of nose-in-the-air sticky. Sorry, I didn't know what you meant.

SW: Yeah.

BK: How did the locals deal with you?

SW: [sighs] They didn't have much to do with us, really, because we were separated and we did have—We had not that much liberty. First thing we did was to go someplace else and get some different food, probably. Go into town, into West Palm, and look around a little

bit and see if there was anything that we might spend our—what we had left out of twenty-one dollars, not much—if we wanted to or not, that sort of thing.

We—there was the one thing that was nice was Worth Avenue, down the island just a little way at the other end, not too far down. The Breakers was that huge, gorgeous hotel on the beach, on the shore. It was very, very, very fancy. It had gardens and paths and all sorts of chairs and benches and things. And it was an air force hospital. We would go over there once in a while and talk to folks, and the nurses were there, you know, wheeling the guys around in their wheelchairs and that sort of thing. It was a pretty place. It was quiet and a pretty place to go at times. They had some good—very good eating places between there and Worth Avenue. Worth Avenue had at least one of every one of the better New York City stores.

BK: Got it.

SW: And they'd see one of us coming in, you know, "Can we be of any assistance?" sort of attitude. I bought some Christmas presents there for my folks. That was good. But they were very, very reluctant to be chummy or anything of that sort. They had their own ways of doing things anyway. And Whitehall was the other hotel down there, smaller one, very exclusive. It was between the two of us, and the third one was Whitehall down here. That's where the celebrities all stayed when they came.

They—That's where I saw Jeanette MacDonald. Jeanette MacDonald was another one of my favorites, and the whole family loved the MacDonald-[Nelson] Eddy pictures,

those musicals. And I had seen her in Fort Wayne. She had come for a concert in Fort Wayne before—while I was in high school, and mother paid the—She said, “I’ll let you go hear her there.” And I did. I got to see her down there.

Then we heard she was going to be giving a program over at Breakers for the guys and people who were wounded over there. It was the big hotel, pretty one. So, we found out when her car was coming in and we walked over. Pretty good walk, but we were in shape. Waited and waited and waited, and finally she came out and she was in a big black car that dropped her off. And all I can remember of seeing of her was a great swath of pink foam, you know. Like it wasn’t a shawl, but it was. It was supposed to be sort of a shawl—kind of swathed in that and whatnot. She was very friendly. She waved and said hello and whatnot, “Glad to see you,” and was rushed into Whitehall. So, that was my only thing that I remember too much about that. [chuckles] I was never in Whitehall.

BK: Got it.

SW: No, we went—[laughs]. When we did get out and we had to eat, we went to the B&W in West Palm. They had good food.

BK: The K&W [Cafeteria]?

SW: It was K&W. The K&W.

BK: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

SW: Yeah, they had good food. And we would go there and eat. We wouldn't go to these fancy places. Except there was one on the beach, and it was a hamburger—It was a big steak place. And they had this big pit in the middle of it, and that's where they cooked all the stuff on here, in this funnel going up. That's where the officers all went for their thing. And you could go, but you couldn't go with an officer, of course. They would let you in, and you could go and get a good steak there and behave yourself.

BK: But you couldn't go with an—Did you ever go out with anyone while you were down there?

SW: No, not really. MacEntire[?] and I were real good friends—

BK: That's the guy in the photos in the scrapbook.

SW: Yeah, yeah.

BK: That trained you for—

SW: Yes. He was a nice boy from Oklahoma, and we—This was an innocent time. It really was an innocent time throughout my experience. I'm so pleased with it. We went on picnics and things like that. I can remember a couple of nights we'd grab a blanket, and since he was on duty, he could go into the kitchen. Any time of the day and night, the guys who were on guard duty could go in the kitchen any day and night and fix all the sandwiches or anything they wanted. And it was a spread of all the stuff that you'd seen in the grocery store at that point in our world. All this meat, you know, stuff like that, and tomatoes—

BK: That they didn't have—

SW: —that no one else—They were on stamps!

BK: I know.

SW: They were on stamps, and they could get one pair of shoes a year if they were lucky, and they couldn't be leather and—

BK: Couldn't be rubber.

SW: No. Red stamps and blue stamps. But so we'd go in there and we'd stack up on some food, make some sandwiches, and go down to the beach and watch the convoys go by

when it got dark. Of course, the hotel was blackout. But when we got on the beach, we'd sit there and watch those convoys sneak by. That was the closest thing we had, I think, to a realization of what was really going on. It was quiet. You could just barely, "There goes another one." You'd sort of whisper it, as if they could hear or anybody else could hear one way or the other. We'd watch the convoys go by.

BK: The Coast Guard convoys?

SW: No, these were the big ones. These had the—

BK: Navy?

SW: Yeah. The military, the equipment, the Marine—

BK: They were from—

SW: They were going from all these stations up and down the shore over to Europe.

BK: Europe. Okay.

SW: So, they had been loaded up with something. It could have been ammunitions or something. It could have been anything. But it was from—

BK: They're off to Europe.

SW: Yeah. And these were the ones that were manned mostly by the Merchant Marines, with guards and stuff on them. But yes, speaking of innocence. When it got chilly, we'd wrap up in the blanket. And we didn't play feely-touchy or anything like that. We didn't have—It didn't even enter our heads. It was almost like brother and sister. And I suppose that sounds dumb. I have since found out, from people who seem to know, that I have a very low libido, whatever that is, and this accounts for the fact that I am not—I don't get excited when I see these guys in their tight pants and want to pat their heinie.

BK: Got it. [chuckles]

SW: Get what I'm saying all right? "Huh?" I don't think about that. I've known an awful lot—I've had some good offers, in New York and round about anyplace. Bob Treleven[?] was a good one, but that was broken up by a priest. He found out I was not a Catholic and he said, "You can't do this."

BK: Wow.

SW: But anyway, it was all innocence and it was nice. It was nice. Brother, it really wasn't—It was just friends for guy's sakes. [We were] in the same business, doing the same thing, and watching what's going on in the world, and hadn't anything to do with us personally.

BK: Anything else you want to talk about in Florida before we move up?

SW: Nope.

BK: Okay. So, you find out you're going to Alaska. About thirty of you go up. I guess you get into a train, go up to Washington State?

SW: Yeah, yeah.

BK: And then—

SW: We—Yeah, that was another troop train.

BK: And you didn't know everyone you were with?

SW: Oh, no. We didn't know these folks, because they all assembled—and then they assembled—I think the town is Port Townsend [Washington] up there.

BK: I think I saw that in the—support towns in Washington.

SW: Yeah.

BK: Thirty of you got there.

SW: And assembled in the group that was going to go to Alaska.

BK: Right, mid '45, okay. And then what happened?

SW: It didn't take very long to do that, and they put us aboard the Prince George and—It was a nice trip up. We took the Inland Passage. It was a Canadian National cruise ship—not a real big one, but a nice little ship. Took us up to Ketchikan [Alaska] and opened the gates and dumped us and that was it.

BK: Okay. So, these were the first women that these men had seen.

SW: And it was the only—We didn't get another batch. This was going to be the batch, evidently. We didn't know that at the time. But anyway, there were thirty of us that went that had responsibilities already outlined for us, no matter what. Evidently we all thought that meant that those men were designated to be put asea at that point. That's something I can figure out.

BK: So, you had told me—I don't think we were on tape—the photograph of that first woman who's name I can't remember.

SW: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

BK: When she got off—can you tell that story again?

SW: Oh, well, yeah. We found—The rumor went around the boat that, hey, you know, the first gal off's going to get a good hard kissing up there.

And I said, "Oh, no." Most of us did. "Oh, I don't want—."

And so we started, "Who'd make a good one? Who could we send out ahead of us?" or something like that, you know. And really, this was—Sex has never had a part in this whole business. I'm sure everyone will think, "Oh," in this day and time. But yeah we finally—Yes, I remembered her name when you mentioned it. She's pretty.

BK: Yeah, very pretty.

SW: A little bit of a flibbertigibbet. She—and I found—she was finally on one of my crews. I think she was on the clean-up crew, as a matter of fact.

But we all said, "Hey, Kay[?], you're elected. You can be the one that is the first off."

And she kind of said, “Why?”

“Well, you’re going to be kissed.”

“Oh, okay.” Some attitude and—So, that happened. That’s—She was the first one down the plank.

BK: And how many men were there to greet you?

SW: Oh, mercy. There must be a picture of that somewhere—

BK: Maybe.

SW: —in that book.

BK: Did it feel like a lot?

SW: No. Oh, no, because see they were all on duty.

BK: Right. Okay.

SW: It may have been the men who were going to get put on sea duty instead of shore duty that we were going to replace. I’m not too sure. But no, it was just a—It was an adequate contingent of guys greeting us, you know, and the staff. Crowley had gone ahead of us,

and the officers had, for the most part, gone ahead of us. And the officers were officers that we did not know, for the most part. SPAR officers who had been somewhere—I don't know where they were—but had volunteered to come up and be the officer corps of that base. Terry was the only one that we—that I knew.

BK: So, were all the SPARS billeted together, officers and—

SW: Oh, yeah. That's where the big barn came in.

BK: Okay. Well, tell me about that. I'm sorry, did we skip something? Did you want to talk about—

SW: No, no, no.

BK: So, you get off the boat—

SW: We got off the boat and they immediately told us to form ranks, and so we did. They said, "Okay. Let's go." I don't—We didn't march into town—I mean, from the shore. I think they bundled us up into trucks and stuff and drove us over to the base, which is just at one end of the town of Ketchikan. I think they just bundled us off and put us over there. And that's when we saw the dormitories, so to speak, and it was just a big barn, two-story.

BK: Was it actually a barn or did they build it?

SW: Oh, they built it. But it was what I'd call—It was barn size and all. It did have some sort of a porch on it, as I remember. And then this back, just stairs up. It was ninety-some up that darn bare mountain. There was one landing to catch your breath or something. They varied in how they went up and et cetera. But they—It had been the men's dormitory before they knew we were coming. They were getting rid of this many men, so they put the remaining men upstairs. So, we had the men upstairs.

BK: Oh my.

SW: The gals were downstairs. And what they had done to make it for the women was to simply partition off enough—just one bunk. We only had to share one bunk now. One bunk a—and they were little squares like this. But they had to accommodate the crew. There was a big bathroom and it was—It had a row of sinks down the middle of it, sink on both sides and mirrors in the middle. The johns were all open stalls, no doors on them or anything like that, and then there was a shower. I think they had maybe six spigots around the shower, and that was it.

BK: Was that like in Florida, or was that different?

SW: Oh, Florida we had hospital—We were using the hotel stuff.

BK: Oh, in a hotel. So, that must have been quite a—quite a culture shock there.

SW: It was a culture shock. But we all got together very quickly and figured out the things that we had to do, that women have to do, and so on. And the one thing that we all had to do, we knew, was to wash hair and to shave. And so we—friends would go into the shower at the same time and take a shower, and we'd take our towels and we'd get down on the floor and shave our legs and do all this other good stuff and gossip and talk about boys. Yes, about the men on the base and about who was doing who with what, who was dating who and this kind of thing. And as far as I know there wasn't any hanky-panky going on one way or the other. It was just sort of who's trying, sort of business. But anyway, they—it was rather—It was very congenial. We got along with washing hair and we'd get a good job done. And all this gossip went on. And it wasn't until about a month or two later, we found out that the drain for their shower was above our shower—

BK: Oh, no.

SW: And the boys were up there listening. [laughs]

BK: Oh. Oh my.

SW: So, we changed our conversation only a little and knew that they were up there and let them have it.

BK: Oh, that's great.

SW: But it took a little while. But yes, we had all of that to clean and all that. I had a top bunk and Sally was my roomie at that point as well, because you could choose your own roommates. She always liked the lower, so I had the top bunk. You get in the top bunk and you could look down the whole room and see every—because these were all open things, you know. So, you could talk from one bunk to the other, one stall—you know, that kind of silly business. It was very congenial and you got to know some new folks, and they all had their time to go. We didn't have to muster to go to your job. You had to be there on time and that sort of thing.

BK: And what was your job there again?

SW: I was in charge of the building and the crew that took care of the building.

BK: Okay.

SW: So, I had a batch of kids that were the clean-up kids.

BK: And these were women or men?

SW: Oh, the girls. Yeah, the girls, always.

BK: So, you were a sort of property manager, I guess?

SW: Yeah, and see that the place—and it would have to pass inspection and all this other good stuff, and had to clean the johns and everything. And we found some of—They left one of their signs in the general areas that says, “We aim to please; I wish you would aim too.” [laughs]

BK: So you had to—you were in charge of cleaning the men’s—

SW: Oh, the—

BK: Okay. The whole thing.

SW: What used to be the men’s, you see, because this was—

BK: Right. But the men were living in there, were you in charge of that part?

SW: Up above. Oh, no, no. We didn’t have to do up above.

BK: You were just in charge of—

SW: We never went upstairs. We never went down—They never came downstairs except to get out of the building, and that was a separate exit anyway.

BK: Got it.

SW: But, no. [laughs] We found a number of little gems like that poked around and had some fun with it.

But other than that—I asked Terry afterward, when we were in New York, and I said, “You were in charge of both the base in Alaska and things.” And I said, “Who—all these problems that they’re having, the guys are killing their buddies and so on and having babies with them and—.” And I said, “What happened at Biltmore?”

And she said, “We did not have a single occasion of anything like that.”

She said we had—the only thing that we—and we had a psychiatrist. She was a funny old—she wasn’t an old—None of these people were old. We had a funny gal, wore her hat in a real funny way, but she was the psychiatrist. And the girls—you see, in the navy, you could not be married to another—to a guy in the navy, or the guy in the navy could not be married to a girl in the WAVES. I don’t know whether the army was the same way or not, but that’s the way it was with us. And the girls got as many—they keep talking about the Dear—

BK: Dear John?

SW: Dear John letters, you know? The girls—

BK: They got Dear Jane letters.

SW: They got Jane letters. And they had emotional problems that way, because their husbands were in the army and they were doing other things that they weren't doing, and they had no intention of doing that kind of stuff. But—

BK: You mean extramarital affairs?

SW: Yeah. Yeah, that kind of thing. Well, dating enough and doing enough that, you know, they wanted to, I guess, get married or something. But they also—and they had deaths, you know. Their guys were over there shooting and so on. They had—It was mostly the gals who had husbands in the [U.S.] Army or the Marines that had personal problems of that type, and that was the kind of problem that we handled a lot. I remember very especially, one of the gals—I don't know what—I forget what her job was there, but it was on the eighth deck. And around the eighth deck the Biltmore had these little partial deck—

BK: Railings?

SW: Yeah, railings that you could put a pot on or something like that. Well, we didn't have any pots to put on them. But I was inspecting—I had to inspect the eighth deck because I was the bosun over there. I found this one little kid on the outside of her window hanging onto that damn little pot—that little railing. And I thought, “My lord, what’s going on here.” So I walked in and I started a conversation. You know, “What’s the problem?”

Well, it was her husband and he wanted a divorce. And she said, “I can’t handle this.”

And I said, “Well, this isn’t the way to do it, actually.” And I said, “Come on, come on back.”

She said, “I can’t do that.”

Well, it was a long—It seemed like forever. I’m sure it wasn’t. But I said, “Excuse me, Miss, I’ll be right back. Now don’t do anything foolish.” So, I yelled for the psychiatrist. I said, “You get down here in a hurry. I’ve got a problem. [chuckles] It’s beyond me.”

And so she came down and she got her off of the edge and then took her into her office. And I don’t know whether she was discharged, whether it was that bad. Anything of discharging that I understand, from what Terry had told me as civilians, was that they were so disturbed that they really needed to be discharged for emotional reasons, and they didn’t want to stay in the service if their husbands had been killed. Primarily that

was one of the bigger ones. And—or their boyfriends, or their fiancés or something like that, you know.

But I said, “What about all this baby business?”

She said, “There was—We had no record of anything of that sort.” She said, “I would have known.”

And I said, “What about Alaska?”

She said, “No.” She said, “The—It’s part of the fact that you’re invited. It’s compulsory. Go have a good time; that’s an order.”

We did. We had a good time. And I think the fact that the chaplains and whatnot knew a lot about us, enough to say, “Look, she’s not Catholic. You can’t play with her anymore.” Not even, you know, not doing anything.

He loved to fish. And he was a photographer and he also loved to fish. And by George, he was a member of the Elks Club—I think it was Portland—in Portland.

BK: I’m sorry. What was his name again? Tree—

SW: Treleven[?].

BK: Treleven. Right.

SW: And—Bob Treleven. I think I have some pictures of him. He’s holding up a fish.

BK: Yes.

SW: And he was real nice, and we had a lot of fun together. Since he was an Elk down there, he could get into the Elks Club in Ketchikan for nothing. So, we went to the Elks Club for our entertainment, and they had a room where you could—they had a jukebox and it—all you had to do to turn it on, you didn't have to put any money in it. And the—There was room to dance if you wanted to dance. And they had ongoing card games all over the place. Everything—a lot of gambling. [laughs]

BK: Did you gamble, dance, or play cards?

SW: [chuckles] We danced and we played cards a little bit, that sort of thing. And the drinks were a quarter. And it was all good Canadian liquor, I'll tell you that. [laughs]

BK: Nice.

SW: I like Scotch.

BK: Right..

SW: And it was very pleasant. And the salmon that—There was a stream that went right through Ketchikan, and it was a salmon stream. And we used to go out and watch the

salmon go through. And he liked to fish and do things of that sort as, you know, kind of good healthy things. No, he was a pretty good dancer. And when they'd have these things, "Go have a good time," why we'd search each other out and enjoy the evening and have some ice cream and that was it. And if you dated somebody more than once, if you call it a date, you know, it gets around with a group like that in a hurry. You know, who's going with who.

"Are you and Bob going together? Is this something you're going to do?"

And I said, "I don't know."

It wasn't anything that was that serious up there. There was nothing like that down in Palm Beach. We—no, nothing like that. But yeah, I liked Treleven a whole lot. And we were having a nice time. But I wasn't going to fight the Catholic thing. I didn't have any reason to, at that point anyway.

But she said, "No," she said, "the men are either on duty or on a boat. And whatever they're doing, that's none of our business one way or another." But she said, "In all my records, I have no records that this kind of thing was going on or was prevalent." And she said, "You girls were kept pretty darn busy all the time and—." She said, "Now, what went on throughout the country, at the stations and things of that sort, ports of authority and things like that, if it was a mixed group, I don't know."

But as far as I know, the sex part of it didn't happen. We were too damn tired, for one thing, and you have things to do and you have to get them in by a certain time and you only have a certain—"I am going to be able to have the sink at eight o'clock. Go away." [laughs] "I'm going to do it." At that point, you see.

BK: So, your day was essentially kind of—

SW: Was all mapped out.

BK: Was all mapped out.

SW: All mapped out. And it was all mapped—and it was certainly at the training station. It was all mapped out and we—one of the—I think that I remember something about the fact that one of the cooks had made a pass at one of those SPARS or something. I think that was a rumor or something, back there in the kitchen. And see, they were civilian cooks. I think—I don't think that they were Coast Guard. I think they were civilian cooks. And that got around in a hurry, and it was ~~kyboshed~~ kiboshed in a hurry. I don't know whatever happened about that. But there was some rumor about something going on in the kitchen at one point, but it was [unclear] for the most part.

Now, whatever happened off base, there really wasn't that kind of time or any place to go. And Palm Beach—this was what was—It was so sticky that they wouldn't let you in. [laughs] I mean, what are you going to do? They wouldn't—except this one restaurant. What was it called? I forget what the name was. But it was a good place. There were rumors, you know. “Yes, but you know what's going on upstairs,” that they had rooms upstairs of this big building. And it was expensive, so—I suppose that was for Worth Avenue. I don't know what those people had to have.

BK: So, up in Alaska you basically did not work with men. Did you enjoy your time—work there in Alaska and your time in Alaska?

SW: Yeah, yeah. We had good picnics and things like that. We had movies occasionally. There are—We had all the ice cream we could eat and all that other good stuff, because we made it ourselves. And the food was halfway decent. I still do not like dried eggs.

BK: Got it.

SW: But the food all around—And that was another thing that I preferred to the army. Navy food's good. I don't know why, but it is. And I knew that—The food was good. Of course, they weren't particular about how they got it to you on a tray: just slap it on, slap it on, slap it on, and off you go with it. But food was good. We all had full time jobs. And there was something going on every night. There was no doubt about that. But you didn't want to stagger up those ninety-two stairs at midnight. [laughs]

BK: Got it, because you had to get up very early.

SW: It was just too much to do and to be sure that your clothes was cleaned up and taken care of business and all that other good stuff. Go to bed for lord's sakes. We worked. We worked. And I think all of us were pretty darn healthy as a result of it and didn't mind. In

town there were—I do not know if people escaped into town. As far as I know, my crew didn't. There'd be no reason to—You'd have to walk into town. I don't know. And the men had been so reduced because we'd put all the sailor types out to sea aboard ship. There were still some men there. There were some officer families there, as I remember now. Husbands and wife and civilian little kids, something of that around about once in a while. But it was mostly hardcore Coast Guard.

BK: Now, were you up there before or during when VE—or VED—VE [Victory in Europe] Day happened?

SW: We were up there.

BK: What do you remember about VE Day?

SW: [pause] Victory—fine, you know, it was fine. We were not—We were happy about it, of course. We had not much—This is VE or VV?

BK: VE. I want to start with VE and then do VJ [Victory in Japan].

SW: VJ. We had little—except for those people that had husbands in the army over there. And by that time, you see, I don't know that any of the girls up in the coast—up in Alaska at that point had husbands over here. I'm not too sure.

BK: What about VJ Day?

SW: Of course we were pleased by it, glad to get it over with. VJ Day was about the same because I think by that time we were getting a little tired of the routine, and we all had been thinking about what we'd do next. And there were a lot of possibilities. A lot of these gals had fiancés or somebody at home who were working in the factories and doing things like that that they wanted to get back to. They certainly had families back home that they wanted to get back to that they hadn't seen for a long time. It was that kind of a pull, primarily, that—

The brutal part of the war, the maiming and the blood that you imagine the nurses would have had all of that experience, we didn't. We didn't experience that. We were workers and supporters. Some of the girls got more active on the cutters and things of that sort, the small ones. What were they called? I forget. They had a nice little ninety-foot job. Oh boy, would you like to have one of those. Yes. Those were little patrol boats and things of that sort. Some of the girls were mechanics and could do some things of that sort.

I don't know. I was so wrapped up in that one responsibility that I had for the barracks that—and that crew of thirty. And they had personal problems, sure, and we'd kick them around and see what the best thing to do was. Very good friends were made at that point and seeing people they hadn't known before and that sort of thing. Everybody sort of let down the shield between officer and enlisted but—

BK: You mean during the time or at VE Day?

SW: Yeah. I don't—I think what it was was that it probably turned into a church thing. I think they probably gathered us all. I don't remember.

BK: VJ?

SW: VJ or the other. But I think at some point we were talked to by the ministers and whatnot that were there, and that was what we—that was when we knew that it was about over and decisions had to be made as to what we wanted to do and where we wanted to go or what was going to happen to us.

BK: So, what was your decision? Did you want to—thought of staying in the military or—?

SW: No, I wanted to go to school.

BK: Wanted to go to school.

SW: I had heard about the GI Bill, and we had after we—you know, by that time the bill had been passed. I heard about the bill and thought, “Well, that's one scholarship I can get.”

BK: Did you know what you wanted to study?

SW: Yeah, I was going to be an English major, and I was. [laughs]

BK: Okay.

SW: And as I say, Mills was a rich school and it had many things that I would like to have taken and gone on and not whipped through as fast as I did. But I made the dean's list things like that. I was never fly bait. I remember my last exam as a senior. Oh, lord help us. And we had been working on, in my senior class—Oh, what's that Irish book of that guy? Oh lord.

BK: *Finnegan's Wake*?

SW: *Finnegan's Wake*!

BK: James Joyce?

SW: Yeah, James Joyce. And we had to go through and analyze that—

BK: Wow.

SW: —and write a—

BK: Brave woman. I never—I can't do Joyce.

SW: And write, write, write some things. I don't know whether—I think he probably—this was Dr. Weeks[?]. I didn't like him very much. I think we had to write certain things about certain—in certain categories and also—I don't know. But we were given the semester to read it and to work on this thing. Well, I opened that thing up for one page and I thought, “I don't understand what's going on here. I really honest to goodness do not understand what's going on here.” And so I said, “I've got other things to do.”

I had three years of Chinese, Mandarin, because I knew that the Chinese were going to take over the world. How I knew that, I don't know. But I knew the Chinese were going to become very important when the wars were over. And I said, “Okay. Mills has one of the finest Chinese group—.” It was a Chinese thing, anyway. All the help in our kitchen at Mills Hall was from China. This was an original family. The Mills people were missionaries to China, and then they formed this female—What do you want to call it? I forget. An academy of some sort, outside of San Francisco, and then it became a college, top flight. Awfully expensive now. You don't even look at the front door without fifty thousand being dumped on, and that's just to open it up.

But anyway, I've had these kids calling me all the time about what I can give. [laughs] Anyhow, I looked at that thing and I said, “Okay. I've got all these things to do: I've got a paper for this and that and the other thing. I'll do it.” So I—“Okay,” I said. And

then I—Oh god, it came to the end of the semester and we had these finals. [laughs] And I looked at the paper and the questions on it, and he said, “All I require is your written response to my questions that I gave out at the beginning of the term and your analysis of it.”

I looked at that, “Okay.” And I looked around and I had written some things down. I looked them over pretty good. “Well, okay. I don’t know what that means either, but anyway.” I did that and I turned it in. Honey, that’s the only class I ever got a D in.

BK: Oh!

SW: Senior English major—I hadn’t read the damn book.

BK: You still passed.

SW: [laughs] I hadn’t—I ignored it, I didn’t understand it, I wasn’t interested in the darn thing, and I just kept putting it aside and aside. But at some point I had written some things down. And I, “Okay, here.” And oh boy: D! Holy—I never made a D in my life. It had to be in my senior year in my major. [laughs] But I had been on the dean’s list a couple of times, I think, and I had managed pretty well and got through in three years, which I think is not bad taking overloads and whatnot.

BK: So, you got out sometime in ’46.

SW: And I went in '47.

BK: Okay. So, did you move to California or how did you—

SW: Oh, yeah. I packed up and—well, it's a residence school so I—

BK: So, you went directly from the military?

SW: No, no, no.

BK: Oh, you went back home.

SW: See because there was about a—almost a year between fall of those two years. I forget when we were discharged. We had to go to St. Louis to be discharged. And they hauled us all down there to do that. But then—Anyway, I'm class of '50 at Mills. That was three years. My freshman year was '47. I never knew whether I was a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior.

BK: Right, right. So, what did you do in the—between the two? Between—

SW: At home?

BK: Yeah.

SW: I think that's when Mother and Daddy decided that they were going to operate on [sounds of movement] this.

BK: Oh my. That's a scar on your—Just for the tape, that's a scar on your leg, your knee.

SW: Yeah, my kneecap kept falling off.

BK: Your kneecap! Wow.

SW: Kept falling off. And this is when I was a little kid. And my leg would be bent, and I'd scoop it back on. And it hurt but I put up with that all those years. I think that's when it was decided that we ought to—And how I got in the service, of course, it never occurred to me to tell anybody.

BK: Wow.

SW: And I wouldn't tell anyone about it. I had no problem with it when I was in the service anyway, near as I can tell, or I would have said something. I seldom wore a support, if ever. Because if that thing went over, all the support that was to hold it, I had—It was a

mess. I think that's when I had that operation. I'm sure it was. And it was painful and all this other good stuff, but I was in good enough shape to go off to school, and I graduated in '50 and had met these people again and—Terry again. Of course, she was a graduate of Mills and had received her doctorate there. She was a dance [student].

BK: Oh, so before she went in the military, she got a doctorate in dance.

SW: Yes.

BK: Okay.

SW: Was at Barnard [College] and was a teacher at Barnard. But anyway, yeah. And then since I had this contact, I didn't mess around. I kept in contact. I was in New York shortly after this. As soon as—I had to be there in the fall, and we had—we graduated, I think, in May. And I had to be there in the fall for this job with Edie & Company.

BK: And then you went from there to the Girl Scouts.

SW: Yeah.

BK: And then did you stay in New York after?

SW: Oh, we were—I was in the Girl Scouts for ten years and met my other half-sister. All these gals that I bunked down with—Sally was a half-sister. I helped her get married and leave her mother. [laughs]

BK: Okay. That was around 1960 or so?

SW: And I was on the phone when she was dying of damn cancer of the lungs, emphysema. I even bought her damn cigarettes in the Coast Guard for her. But anyway, I hate that part.

Yeah. And we had both been in the—I met Eloise at a meeting one of the first years that I was at the—in the Girl Scouts. And they had a mass meeting, and they had this grand plan that they were going to change the way the Girl Scouts operated. They hired American Management Association to come in and give us a week's course in management. And we were going to divide the country up into these twelve districts—regions, just like the Federal Reserve, and the field department would field it with director and two or three community advisors, who would organize. The point was that everything—all—every council was to be contiguous. You couldn't have a city, town, or county thing and then have some lone troops out here. Everything had to be shoveled in with everything else. It had to be one nice big council. We put together one—that council in Pennsylvania. I think it was twenty-eight counties, for god's sake. Anyway, Eloise's job was to do that organization. She was an organization person.

And they—then these people in the field had the privilege of asking those of us who were supposed to be staff specialists—finance, program, camping, anything, public

relations, any of these things—they could write to New York and say “We need help in our council in this area. Will you send one of your staff?” So, we would go out and do that. We were—We had this big chart on our wall. There were two of us that were finance advisors, and we had six regions. Each of us had a half of the country. We were committed with tape on this big thing, three years in advance. I knew three years in advance what darn hotel I was going to stay in, for Pete’s sake. They provide, of course, all the forms to get us back and forth and whatnot. And so we were on the road. And we would actually move in and work with these people for weeks. This wasn’t a visitation or anything of that sort, but we’d work with them.

And as far as my personal responsibility, I had to know everything from articles of incorporation. I was a fundraiser. I knew that pretty well. But we had—the accounting systems were terrible, and so I got with Burroughs and Company, when I got back to—after one of my—after a couple of my trips. And I said, “We’ve got to do something about this.” And talk about the pots, you know, of money. The dollar was the national organization’s. When they collected the dollar, one year membership—dollar membership, was—went back to New York, and that’s what paid our bills. Every meeting we had in New York, the first thing they said to me, “Look”—to us. They said, “Look at your paychecks. Look at your travel reimbursements. For every dollar there, a little girl had to give you a dollar. And she might have had to get it herself, she might have worked for it, her mother and daddy may have given it to her, but that’s one little girl. Now do a good job.” [laughs] That’s part of the service that we—and we carried the

stuff over. And I really—I agreed with that anyway, of course. But the point that—Oh dear, let's see.

I went to Burroughs and said, “Look, we’ve got to do something about the money.” Because each troop leader had to collect the dollars and anything else that they were doing—troop dues if they had a nickel troop dues or something like that—separate it all out, get to the council office, and the council office had to get it all together and get it to New York. And all this stuff taking money. Some of them would come into the council office with their dollars or personally would give a dollar to the council office from a kid, and it was all mixed up. So, I said, “We’ve got to do something about this.” And Burroughs got with me and we org—We developed a write it once system. And this was a system of layers of stuff, just a few layers. But once you wrote a receipt and once you did this, once you did that, and the person got the receipt and all this other good stuff, you had a complete record and you didn’t have to go from one set of books to another set of books to another set of books, you see. I thought that was a good job done.

BK: So, we’re up to 1960. And then what happened after the Girl Scouts?

SW: Oh! We got tired. We were all over the place.

BK: Right. Sounds very busy.

SW: Eloise got the key to New Orleans at one point. [chuckles]

BK: Wow.

SW: We were real tired. So, we decided, “If we can sell the Girl Scouts—.” Oh, I want to tell you one Girl Scout story.

BK: Okay.

SW: Community Chest—Do you know about Community Chest? That was before the United Fund.

BK: Yeah. I only know about it from Monopoly. I don’t know what Community Chest is.

SW: Well, that’s the way we raised money community-wide, at that point, before the other thing came. Okay. So, this is in the era of Community Chest. There was a new exec in Memphis. Now, that was the regional office for that particular area. And she was brand new and she had called for some help on her budget. And so Eloise called me and said, “Can you come over for—.” And she said, “The Community Chest is going to be meeting at such and such a time at such and such a date.” And she said, “She’ll probably need some help in getting the budget together anyway. She’ll have the backgrounds and so on, but let’s get a nice budget for Memphis.” And Memphis was expanded to the county and to something else, I forget all of it.

And so I went out to do some work, and I was out there for about a week with her. And we got the thing all organized and we were going to the budget meeting. And this is when the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts and the this and the that, all these organizations, got together with the board of the Community Chest. And they all presented their budgets, and then they took the total of that and that was the total of the goal, you see, for the campaign, city-wide—or county-wide, whatever it was. So, we said, “Okay. I think we’ve got a—have a good budget. Let’s add just a little bit more—a wish-pot over here.” Because it was well known that when the youth groups came up for their budgets, it was sixty/forty, sixty/forty, sixty/forty, the boys got sixty [percent] and the girls got forty [percent] of the budget—of the youth money collected and so. “Let’s see if we can’t change those percentages. It would be nice.” So anyway, we were all primed to go. And when we would go to these meetings—I have worn a uniform all my life: band in high school, in service, of course—

BK: You had a uniform in the Girl Scouts?

SW: Oh, yeah, the green one.

BK: I didn’t know.

SW: Oh, you betcha.

BK: All right.

SW: Green one. No pants, but skirt and jacket and hat and gloves and bag. They—we were supposed to—We usually wore our uniforms for official meetings and regional meetings and things like that. One thing, to identify who we were, I guess. But no, they all wore uniforms too, the volunteers and everybody else. So, we had on uniforms, and we—I don't know. Eloise had a car somehow. Anyway, we drove up to her apartment and it was getting kind of tight on time. But we honked for just a minute and she came out the door. She was an attractive gal: nicely tall, great figure, short hair, not even very curly, but short hair. She came out and she wore a red—I don't know if it was satin or not—shift, was just long enough, not too short. The sleeves were just long enough and not too short. Had a tiny little boat neck, string of pearls, and heels.

We took one look at her. I said, “My god! Hey, you can't do that. You have to wear your uniform!”

And she said, “Oh, it's at the cleaners.” We knew damn well she was lying.

And, “But we haven't got time for you to change. You ought to change.”

And she said, “No, I think I'll do this. This is fine. I have the budget and everything. I'm well prepared.” And she was, god, a hundred percent—a hundred and sixty percent.

And so, “Okay.”

Well, the meeting was in a theatre, to start with. The Community Chest people were in a big table on the stage, and just below the stage in the first few rows were the

agencies. And some of them were designated and some of them weren't. And of course we were about the last to come. And as we got out of the car and came in—I forget what her name was. We kind of filed in, and when we came out from under the balcony—they couldn't see any of who was coming in at this point because it was all dark. And as we came out from under the balcony, here we came and here was our friend, the new executive of Memphis, and the two Girl Scouts behind her and so on. No one said anything. The head of the Community Chest was an old geezer, and he got up from the end of his table and struggled to get up and came down to the edge of the stage and in a stage whisper that was not meant to be a stage whisper—and it wasn't—he said, "Honey, I don't know who you represent, but you're going to get anything you want." [laughs]

BK: That's great.

SW: She did, and she got agenda on the other side, too.

BK: Excellent.

SW: And we—arms and legs were just chopped off at that point. What are you going to do?

BK: Right. Okay. So, just to kind of quickly—so after the service—

SW: I know. You've got a whole—This is too long.

BK: So, '60, you got tired, understandably, then what happened?

SW: Then, as I said, we decided we could sell the Girl Scouts anywhere, and her brother in law had some property he was trying to sell down on the Jersey Shore, just below Barnegat Light [New Jersey]. He says, "It's a gift shop, and they want—They want to get out of it. They're from Philadelphia. It's a retired couple, but she's been to San-somebody in California and wanted to start a shop there." And he said, "I might be able to get it for a reasonable amount of money or something." And so he said, "Why don't you come down and take a look at it and see if you want to be shop owners and a resident and all the thing."

And so, "Well, okay." So, we went down there and took a look at it. And, "Hey, this looks pretty neat. It's kind of nice. It's right on the—" It was on Long Island, the beach of Long Island. And we did that. We decided, okay, we'll try to raise some money, so we did, to get a down payment for the thing, and moved in. We had a pretty good—We had a very good year, and encephalitis hit.

BK: Oh my.

SW: That meant that—and they closed the bridge—the bridge over to the island from the interstate and the Garden State, the two main highways that went down Jersey and fed all of this, between Atlantic City and the other one. What was the other one? Well, the other

one—Asbury Park. And so we had a nice little to-do about encephalitis and no one was allowed on the island. We said, “Okay.” And the nice thing about this, it was an old Coast Guard station—I have pictures of it, and they had redone it very nicely—when the Coast Guard was known as the Lifesaving Service. Goes way back. And they had some sort of a—They got from the government somehow. We didn’t particularly know what that was all about. Anyway, they—so they had a little case of encephalitis. Things were getting a little bit stiff.

And then that fall—See, they had made a deal with us, as part of all this, that they would not return and they would not set up business anywhere around here if they did return, et cetera, et cetera. Well, they lied.

BK: Oh, no.

SW: And they came back, because she didn’t like it out there finally. She couldn’t find what she wanted and so on. And anyway, all of her friends were here. Her Philadelphia friends always came over and kept her company and a few other things. And [they] moved just one block from us, into a space there. And we thought, “Okay, she can’t do this.” Well, our—We’d been doing some volunteer work up and down the island, as it seemed. But the president of that strip of council is called the—I forget. It’ll come to me. Anyway, happened to be a lawyer, and we said, “Can we talk to him?”

And she said, “Oh, sure.”

And so we got him, and he had been—He was a good lawyer. He had practiced before the Supreme Court a couple of times and this sort of thing. We presented our business to him and what was going on. We'd had a good year and a partial of another, and we didn't know whether or not to stick this thing out much longer—how we can handle it, because we had to pay the balance pretty soon.

And he said, "I think we have them." He said, "We're going to have depositions." And he says, "Both of you will be there and so will they."

And she said, "Let's call that and let's see what happens with the depositions."

So, we did that. Well, they sued us for three hundred thousand dollars.

So, he turned around and he said, "We're suing you for three hundred thousand dollars."

And that took the air out of their steam just a little bit. We went [unclear] about this. He said, "Do you people not know that you have a lease from the government? And that lease is a ninety-nine year lease and it is against the law to sell that lease. You are not allowed to, and I can sue you out of this state for even attempting to do it."

[sighs] So, we took a deep breath. "Okay."

And they said, "Oh, all right."

So, we decided we were going to have to get out of there anyway, and they were going to stay and this sort of thing. So, we took a little bit of time and left. But we had to go up to New York to get some—Eloise, I think, had a dental appointment up there or something.

Ran into the head of the field department, and she said, "We need you."

We said, “Why, where, when, what?”

And she said, “Are you still with the shop?”

We said, “We won’t be long.”

She said, “Well, I have a council that needs a good executive and somebody that needs some fundraising help. Why don’t you take it?”

“Oh, no. We don’t want to do that.”

Well, we did it. We did it once, and it didn’t last—It was good. I volunteered all the finance stuff and doing the—and that was a nice year we had on the Jersey Shore. The house was real good. That was a pretty house.

And then we decided, “Well, come on, we’ve got to move along. What are we going to do?”

“I don’t know. We’ve got some time yet to figure this out. Let’s not get too hippity-hoppity.”

And they called us again and they said, “We have to form this council up in Pennsylvania.”

And she says, “It’s the twenty-sixth county council.” And she says, “There are three major Girl Scout councils in it and a whole batch of troops.”

“Oh my god. Why do we have to do this?”

“Because we do.”

“Okay.”

So, she was made the assistant director and the director of training, and I was made the finance advisor to the treasurer and the fundraising people and to the office

help, the bookkeeping and that sort of thing. Because we had to bring in all of these things, you know, camp sites—Tear up these buildings and this whole structure and make it just one nice big happy family. So, we finally—We did that. Allentown [Pennsylvania] was our base, and we got that one straightened out.

One of the stories that I do [chuckles] want to tell you was my experience in Texas. When I was down there doing this—I was doing the finance part of the Permian Basin, which is a big area down there, in that Texas area, that we were bringing together in the same way. And you do have these battles because they have these established camps, and a lot of them are given by Rotary or their church group or something like this, you know; they own them. “We don’t want those other kids going to our camp!” You know, this sort of thing. “We want our kids going to the camp.”

“That’s not very [unclear]. You’re going to have to give in sooner or later.”

And so we had to get these—Well, this Permian Basin one was all set to go except for one lady and one pretty decent, good-sized established camp, a year-round camp, and a couple little [down?] things around it. And they were just adamant. They were not going to join. They were not going to join the council. They were not going to be a part of this anymore, and just a completely battle all the time about it. Well, I’d worked in Texas long enough to know what was going to happen, maybe, but I didn’t expect this, and it was a beaut. I got there at the meeting, and the rest of the officers got the meeting that were working on this thing from the other councils, and they were saying [whispers], “What are we going to do about this? Mrs. Jackson, what are you going to do?”

And we didn't know and the—they had a man that they thought—that was a temporary chairman to try and bring all this together, because there was a lot of finance involved and things of that sort. They felt a guy would handle it better in Texas. And the other part of Texas is going to show its head right now, pretty soon.

So, I sat beside him at the end of the table, and he said, "How is it going?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't know what the magic is going to be to change her mind and to bring this in." I said, "We've tried almost everything we can."

And he said, "Well, let's get the meeting going." And so he clamped the meeting in order, and he said, "This is a very important meeting." And he said, "We have a lot of work to do." But he said, "Before we get involved in that, we'll do what we usually do." And he says "Mrs. Jackson, would you please lead us in prayer."

You don't do anything in Texas without praying first.

BK: Got it.

SW: She said, "Why, Mr. Wydell[?]." I'll never forget that man's name as long as I live, "Why, Mr. Wydell."

And he said, "We need to bring ourselves together and to respect everybody's purpose in life and what the little girls are expecting." And he had a little quickie speech about what she should be doing at this point. And she was just—A great sigh went up around the table, you know. Well, she stood up and she prayed them right into the council. [laughs] Was over and done with.

BK: All right. Excellent.

SW: Good point for Texas prayer.

BK: Right.

SW: [chuckles] So, it happens in many different ways. But anyway.

BK: You continued to work for the Girl Scouts through the sixties?

SW: Just—Yeah, I think that was our last job, and then we got tired of doing that. And I'd been doing some fundraising on the edges, too. We decided we wanted to stop doing this and settle down and get somewhere. And we were going between Fort Wayne and Winston-Salem [North Carolina], Fort Wayne and Winston-Salem, wherever else we'd been in the world, and back and forth and back and forth.

We said, "This is ridiculous."

And she said "Well, I'd just as soon—."

BK: I'm sorry. I've forgotten her name again?

SW: Eloise Baynes.

BK: Eloise Baynes. B-a-i-n-e-s?

SW: B-a-y.

BK: B-a-y-n-e-s. Okay.

SW: Supposedly they're kin to everybody in Forsyth County [North Carolina].

Anyhow, it was that sort of situation. And we said, "Well, let's—." I said, "Why don't we try Chapel Hill [North Carolina]? We'll go down there and take a look around and see what's happening and see if there's anything that we could do."

And she agreed. She said, "That'd be all right." She said, "I just don't want to—."

I said, "Well, I don't want to go back to Fort Wayne particularly either."

She said, "Okay."

We went back to Chapel Hill and they were trying to find a fundraiser for the Children's—the Crippled Children's Organization [Crippled Children Society]. They were trying to build a camp outside of whatever down there, and they needed a fundraiser.

So, I said, "Well, why don't I take that?"

And you will be shocked at this. Occasionally, she worked and I didn't, but I would always volunteer around her. And when I would work, she would volunteer around or do what she wanted to do. And people are horrified at that way to run a

railroad. But I'm eighty-seven and I've survived. I couldn't do much about her cancer and—well, anyway. Anyway, it was a neat set-up.

So anyway, we went to Chapel Hill and we rented a house there, and of course she knew everybody because she had her graduate degrees from there and so on. We—I got the job as organizing. I had to organize the state-wide campaign for the Crippled Children camp. And I prepared a brochure. I liked to do the artwork, and I prepared the—had all the ideas for the artwork and so on and got that settled. Then we had to go to the mountains and back and forth, trying to find—down to Charlotte [North Carolina], talking to people about how they could get organized and so on. And it was working out fairly well, but they were having a hard time getting the locals to organize. They didn't have the right people involved and so on.

Anyway, I said, "Well, I think I've done what I can do, and I've given you the bare stuff to do to get this thing off of the ground."

I understand they built it finally, somewhere. I don't know where they were. And she—Oh, the lady down the street from us was the president—was the principal of the Chapel Hill High [School]—I mean of the grade school.

And they said, "We need a Latin teacher." And she said, "Can you fill in for a few minutes, for a little while?"

And she said, "Sure. I'll go down and work with that."

So, she taught Latin down there. And then the new middle school over there opened up, and they said, "We need a Latin teacher,"

And she said, “Well, all right. I’ll do a little.” She loved Latin. She said, “I’ll do a little bit of that.”

And so she, “It’s an new school and we haven’t had, really—And you’re in town. Why don’t you do it?”

So, she did that and I did some more fundraising and—[laughs]. I don’t know. Of course, we met a lot of people down there again, too. One of the professors up here lived down there, just around the corner from us. We were down by the hospital, in that area of Chapel Hill, and they [sighs]—she didn’t—She needed a trip now and then up here and wanted to know if I’d take her up and that sort of thing—get her to church for one thing. She was Catholic, Lithuanian. She was Catholic and she wanted to know if we could get her to—drop her off at eight o’clock Mass.

We said, “Sure, we can do that.”

And you know it just got all mixed up and reorganized and whatnot. They needed a Latin teacher here. Eloise could teach Latin, French, Italian. What she really wanted to do was get some Greek. She loved Greek. She’d like to get some—I don’t know if she had any or not.

She said, “Okay,”

They said, “Well, why don’t you try?”

And she said, “I don’t want to go back to teaching.”

And I said, “I know you don’t. You don’t want to do that.”

In the meantime, I had picked up an art business: cards, note cards and things like that and also some graphics for companies and things of that sort. That's what that studio back there was all about. Then I had some art classes during the afternoon.

And she said, "Why don't I go to the college and see what they're saying."

So, she went over there and they swiped her up in a hurry. And I had the classes and I guess I became the housewife, if you want to put it that way, in one way. I had my classes and kept things going here and that kind of stuff. And here we are. Built a house. Decided, might as well do it, and there were these lots here. This was a village.

BK: In the sixties? '60—

SW: This was '66.

BK: Sixty-six.

SW: Sixty-six. We built a—they wanted to get faculty in town. Most of them were back and forth. They had big transportation and stuff like that, but they wanted the community to be complete, and they wanted more faculty to build. They offered the lots on a ten-year business, and if you every year—and there was a price, a standard price for them—and every year you stayed, that got that nicked off the price of your lot. If you stayed ten years you got a free lot. We stayed ten years. We thought that'd be a good idea [chuckles], one way or the other. And then the lot next door came up and we decided,

well, why don't we pick it up, too, so we did. When we did this—Then we decided we were going to build. We were going to build on it, of course. Her first teaching year was back and forth and back and forth and back and forth.

And we found out that my mother was very ill and was there—My sisters said, “We’re going to put her in a hospital. We have these things to do. But Daddy—We can’t take care of Daddy, too, and the house. And will you take Daddy?”

And I said, “Sure.”

So, that’s when we changed our house plans. And we—These were called cube houses or something like that, and you put them together, whatever you want, and we put three units together. We thought three adults, not all of us knowing everything about everybody or being family or anything, might be a good idea. So, we did that, put it all together, and had it built. And my dad came down to stay with us, and he died down here. Mother died up there in Fort Wayne, so I had to go back up there for that business.

But the best thing about it was that we had a good—When we started this, we said, “Okay. Let’s get a CPA [Certified Public Accountant] that knows a little bit and tell him what we’re going to do and is there anything we need to watch out for. What were the breaks in this business?”

And we did. We got a guy that was an offshoot from a Durham firm. And he said, “Three things you have to know: One of them is that you’ll never have enough—what you think [is] enough money when you retire. The next thing you need to know—which means, start changing your pattern of living, one way or the other.” And he said, “Cut down whatever you have to do.” But he said, “Just keep that in your mind. The next thing

is that you better own what you're living in, no matter what it is, when you retire." He says, "You can usually manage after retirement to pay off the taxes," but he says, "beyond that it gets pretty tough." So he says, "Own what you have, and change the way you do your business as you need to." And was there another one? I guess that was it. To change—those two things. Anyway, he says, "I'll prepare a spreadsheet for you." I laughed at that one. "A spreadsheet for you to see whether—how you have to—how you can handle this." He says, "You have a twenty-year mortgage, and it's one of these things that you can pay off on the principal." He says, "That's good, without any penalties."

We said, "Okay." So, we said, "Okay. Do it." And we looked at the thing.

He said "This is what you can do." And he said, "I would recommend it."

The college was offering some sort of a plan where they would take money out of your paycheck and put it into a fund, and at the end of the year they would give it back to you with a little bit of interest or something like that. And he said, "Don't do that." He says, "You'll never get rid of it."

So, we didn't and we did the other, and we paid off a twenty-year mortgage in thirteen years.

BK: Wow.

SW: We did it by dropping Christmas and we told our families, "Look, there's just the two of us and we are buying presents for everybody and your kids and your grandkids."

And I said, “We don’t think that’s fair, and anyway we don’t want to do it anymore, because every time you send something, it’s the wrong size. You don’t know—We don’t know what everybody wants or needs or anything like that. And all you do is turn it back in to the store anyway, for the most part. And I resent having to send a check or money at this point.”

And they all agreed. They all thought it was a grand idea.

So, we said, “What we will do, we will call each other and write each other.” And I said, “If we get to places where we see something that we simply know that ‘Elinor simply has to—Oh, she has to have that. That has her name all over it,’ well, pick it up. Birthdays or around any other time, just send surprises to us, but let’s all of us drop Christmas.”

BK: It’s a good idea.

SW: And so we did. And every month we knew exactly how much we had to save out of that, out of whatever pay we had. And at the beginning of—before the holidays, going to Community Federal with our car and putting down our book. And she always says, “I know what you’re going to do,”

And I said, “You darn betcha.”

And we paid the monthly and then we put in the check for the other, and she says, “Oh, boy. Okay. Do it.”

BK: All right.

SW: So, we did it in thirteen years.

BK: Impressive. Just a few more questions about the military. What was the hardest thing you had to do physically or emotionally while in service?

SW: [pause] The threat was learning to swim.

BK: Okay.

SW: [chuckles] And I still do not swim well. I don't know if I could save myself or not, but we were not a group—a family that had access in Fort Wayne, Indiana. There was YW[CA]s and things. My uncle had a little lake that he went to, but we never did that sort of thing. So, I did not know how to swim. [chuckles]

BK: Okay. And you had to. All right. Many consider the women in the service during World War II to be pioneers. Do you feel that way?

SW: I wouldn't call it pio—not really. We were not as hard put to for facilities and things of that sort, certainly not in the service. They were different from what we had lived in and that business, but we didn't quote want for anything, even at twenty-one dollars a month.

After all, they clothed us and housed us. So, pioneer in that sense, no. But I think breakers of tradition and making a way, a pathway that we had not done, and that I wish we had done.

BK: What do you mean by—

SW: With that WR [women's reserve] thing, and the state guard and that sort of thing, that they dismantled the Women's Reserve and instead sucked them into the main force.

BK: So, you think they should have been otherwise?

SW: I think that the thing would have paid off better all the way around, financially and service-wise. And if eventually they wanted to suck them in, that'd be fine. But that was a group of women who moved very quickly, finally, into upper levels, as you see by the fifties and the sixties and so on. They were getting—They forced themselves into better jobs. They were highly trained and very, very exceptional. You know, it was—It's a shame all that stuff was lost.

BK: But if women were fully integrated into the military, you think that would have been lost? I mean, they were kind of encouraged to leave.

SW: No, see we didn't know anything about being put into the military. That didn't happen until after we were disbanded and all the rest of it, when they started nagging for allowing women in. That was in the seventies, wasn't it?

BK: Well, they still—I mean, women were never completely disbanded, but it was down to a very small percentage.

SW: Okay, okay. Well, whatever it is, I don't know where it was. But the Coast Guard kept them for a short period of time. As a matter of fact, we all had the option to go to Washington [D.C.] to help disband it, I guess.

BK: Right. Would you have wanted to stay in if it—

SW: I was—They offered me. And they offered me chief if I'd do it, on the spot, and then would I—then warrant officer, and then I could—See, they only take college graduates for officer. And if I get a degree or something like that, why, I'd get into the officer class. But I really preferred to get a—be an English major. It hasn't done much for me one way or the other. Yes, it has, too. It's the core of my life. And there's nothing wrong with English majors, and people make a lot of fun of them. But you are quick to do an awful lot of things. [laughs]

BK: Got it. How do you feel about women in combat positions?

SW: It doesn't bother me. I don't think that is probably the most effective way they could serve, though. And if that's the only way that they can, and to keep up, it's—From what I've seen, just in the art work and whatnot, women approach things on the far end of the stick, as you well know, in what we do, how we do it, and why we do it. And when you're in a situation where the only thing that you have in your hand is a gun and up all night and up all day and up all night and growling around in that situation, I don't think it's one that is to be desired.

I admire the nurses, but they're not actually in the battle too much. I think they can keep their—[pause] their gender a little bit better, and they're used to it. They're doing what they would be doing in a hospital, for the most part, and handling that kind of situation. But in—I think they've learned how to do that, maybe, than just women who are in a job, an ordinary kind of a job. I don't—I wouldn't deny them, but I wouldn't—I'm a peace person and I'm against war. [chuckles] And I don't think that any of us should be carrying guns and shooting each other. I think we ought to be sitting down and having a little palaver and wait. And if we're not, then we're angry about something and these kids are angry about something and we need to sit down and find out what they're angry about, instead of doing what we're doing to them, or not doing anything about them.

The education business is very important, and not tell these kids that the best thing that they can be is a celebrity. These kids—All these kids around here, all they want to be is a celebrity. And they've taken, oh, tests and things like that around the world

about, you know, what do you want to be when you grow up or something like that, and all the little girls want to be celebrities. The boys want to make a lot of money. And that is about the least—and we’re losing our culture. We’re losing it so fast and—because we destroy our buildings when they get just a little bit tattered and torn or something like it, and that is a shame. We are nothing, individually or as a country or as a group or as a gender, we are nothing without our history, and we’re destroying our history so fast.

People don’t care anymore. We can’t even spell. These kids aren’t even taught words. I’ve heard horror stories coming out of Elon Elementary [School] over here. Grandmother that drives me to work every morning, she has a seven year old, and she said, “What do you know about words?”

She said, “We don’t work with words.”

And she said, “What do you work with?”

She said, “Oh, just things.” And she said, “You don’t learn spelling. Oh, no, I don’t learn to spell.”

And they don’t. And with this machinery that we have, they don’t spell. They don’t use words, and they have all this silly stuff going on, and all for the fact that it’s faster, it’s faster, it’s faster. Faster for what? What are you doing? And they go on vacation with these machines attached to them, so they can keep up on the—what’s going on, one way or the other. That’s no way to live, and that’s no way to build up children—build children, if you’re going to have them, and give them a background.

It—I think it’s very dangerous what we’re doing. And all this anger that these young boys have, for one thing, we don’t even know what they’re mad about. At least I

don't. And you talk to these reporters, they don't know. Oh, what was that guy mad about the other day? He came over here. He had a good job. He had a good education—

BK: New York.

SW: —and yet he was so mad that he had to go back home and learn how to do this and come back and react again. Well, he's mad about something. I don't know where all the psychiatrists are and whether they can figure this out. Last—I've got a batch of students back here, and I found out—They kept me awake Tuesday night firing firecrackers. One of them—Two of them were rockets. I heard them—My bedroom's back there. And I heard the [imitates firecracker noise]. And I thought, "Why, they've got rockets now. What are they going to—?" And the second one hit [imitates firecracker noise]. And it hit the house! And I heard a shatter and I thought, "Well, good night, they're busting the windows now. What in the world are they doing?" Well, I find out—We looked. I got the neighbor to help me because I can't see that well. And we could find nothing, so they must have been firecrackers, high speed firecrackers for scaring, you know, that kind of thing? I was worried because I have woods back here, and dry, and I thought they might—

BK: Set a fire.

SW: Set them on fire. And then I talked to the gal that used to live here, and we're—we've been close friends. She works in the library. I was telling her.

She says, "Well, don't you know that the police arrested fifteen of those kids the other night?"

And I said, "No."

She said, "Yeah, they were horsing around, making noise, and blowing this stuff up and," she said—

I said, "These are college students."

She said, "Yeah. You know who they are? They're the ones that were going to graduate in another few weeks, and they're the ones that are going to stay here all summer, because they don't want to go home." And we have a whole batch of those brats that are here. And where they're getting their money, I don't know. But if the parents are paying for it, they are fools.

And I'll tell you there [laughs]—On my birthday a year ago they sent a photographer off to take my picture and to talk a little bit about my age and so on. I was talking to him. Before that, I had had a talk with my boss, my young boss, and we're pretty good friends. She's all right. But she was asking me some questions, and I was mentioning something. And I said, "Yeah, I'm the oldest one on campus now, and I think I'm the only World War II veteran on campus. I don't know the area." I said, "That's not the only thing. I think I'm the only virgin."

And she goes [gasp].

And I said, “I think I know, in fact, on campus and probably in the town and maybe in the county and in Burlington!”

And she says, “Oh my god.” She didn’t know what to say.

And I said, “I didn’t think it was against the law yet. They haven’t passed any ordinances about it, have they?”

And she said—well, the next day was when the—Is this on the tape?

BK: It is. We can stop it if you’d like. We don’t have to transcribe it.

SW: Oh, no. I don’t care. I don’t care at this point. But she—The photographer came up and he wanted to know some of the things. And I mentioned about the service, my age, and that sort of thing. And I said, “I think I’m the only one on campus that is still a World War II veteran,” and I heard this gasp from this desk over here. Of course, I didn’t say anything. I just went on.

When he left, she says, “I was terrified you were going to add the rest of it to that.” [laughs]

I said, “Well, I’ve got a little bit of sense.” [laughs]

BK: Two more questions.

SW: Yeah, why don’t I shut up?

BK: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

SW: Oh, sure.

BK: Okay.

SW: You betcha.

BK: All right. And then I guess just how—How has your life been different because of your time in the military, would you say?

SW: Oh, a hundred percent.

BK: Hundred percent.

SW: And—but I had a good edge into it. I didn't—for what I expected and what I got out of it. I was—I suppose you can say an innocent when I went in, and I was not shocked. I worked hard and did what I was supposed to do. I liked to learn and all this other good stuff. I had good—I was in a family. I think this was the thing that was the main thing, as I think back on it now. There were things that I wish I had done better and things that—I wish I'd said things better to my family, maybe. I don't know. I can't really put something on that. But yes, I think for that age group, as it was—I had not been away

from home that long and I didn't go home for eighteen months. I was down there for eighteen months before they let me out, and I had spent Christmas and all this other stuff, you know, down there in this situation, during war and all the rest of it.

I don't know if I was changed. I think there is a certain kind of maturity that took place in those few months, and I learned a lot about myself. And I learned that I was just one of many, *E pluribus unum* [chuckles]. And if I had any indications, you know, of being better or doing it for my own personal gain or something, those things never came up. But it's the kind of discipline.

And I met so many people. Good friends. And it—well at Mills, I had this funny thing and funny schedule of what I had to do, and I found one of my best friends was Ellet Colyn[?]. C-o-l-y-n or something like that—Dutch. Her dad was the Shell Corporation's major representative there in the islands. She—when the war started over there, she—The Japanese took over the island. Her mother was a—They were Dutch. And she was a Dutch diplomat, and her father was the head of the Dutch thing over there—Shell who were there. And they were incarcerated. Her father was put into a male camp, and her mother was separated and put into a female camp. And she had two sisters, and they were put into another prison camp. They were there for, I think, two years. And she was in her teens. Her two sisters were older. She's written a book. I think I have a copy of it here, I think. I really don't know. I couldn't find it. I hope I do.

But I found—and when I was at Mills and she found out I was a veteran—I don't know. We talked a little bit about something at one point and that came up. I thought, “Oh, boy. Here's a buddy.” And we became very, very close friends. She's still out in

California. She graduated—We finally graduated in the same class of '50. We managed to do that. She stayed in California.

She—the guy—when they—What happened to them in the camps is another whole story. But when they finally were flown off of the islands, they went to Singapore or some place like that and then out. They were shipped out. But the Australians were the flyers that took them wherever they had to go. And she was on one of those planes, and she married the pilot when she got—after they'd been—after he flew her home. That was his route. He took a route, and he was back and forth quite a lot. And they eventually married and had a couple of very nice boys.

She—They visited me when I was in New York and we went to the parade, Macy's Parade, at Thanksgiving time. They stayed at my—piled up in some way in that little apartment I finally had in Ramsey Park. And we kept in touch all this time. And it's a relationship that I—her mother was a—I met her. She was the most grand person—female I have seen in all my life. Heroic female. She was tall, she was good-looking, dignity—It was just part of her and all the rest of it.

The story within the story is that one of her boys came to his mother—of course, these boys are awful bright—but came to his mother and he said, "I'd like to introduce a girl to you." He says, "We're pretty serious." They went to Cal—Cal [California State University?], I think, and I don't know where else. And they were—he said, "We've met," And he said, "I'm very fond of her." And he says, "I'm thinking of getting married."

And she said, "Well, tell me a little bit more about her."

And he did. He explained. And he said, “Well, I’m holding back the one thing that I am hesitant about.”

She said, “What’s that?”

And he said, “She’s Japanese.”

Ellet said, “I went cold at first and shudders went through my body.” And then she said, “And you love her?”

And he said, “Oh yes.”

And she said, “Then we love her, too.”

BK: Wow.

SW: But she said, “I cannot say this. You must go to your grandmother. She’s the head of the family, and you must ask her permission.”

And so he said, “Oh boy.”

He did. And she was living out there in California, too. And so he went over to his grandmother and explained this was what the situation was. She asked the same question. And he said, “She’s Japanese.” And he said, “Grandmother just looked at me and said, ‘And what difference does that make?’”

BK: That’s pretty great.

SW: I know. You can go through hell. I mean real hell—not what they keep talking about around here; this is stupid—and have those experiences and more, when you're a perfect innocent. I mean, they weren't military or anything. And yet, that is somehow in you that dignity and that feeling of who you are and what you represent.

BK: Nice way to end, I think.

SW: And it just takes one. And I remember that so long. And we send—we talk on the phone and I send cards back and forth once in a while. She's still up and doing what she's doing. Her husband died and the two boys have married and they have brilliant students, of course. That and the combination of that and that Japanese on top of it, holy Moses they're brilliant. And they've gone to have all sorts of degrees, and they're happy and she has grandchildren and—but you know, nice things happen in war. Your contacts, the people you learn, the people you meet, little lessons you also learn, you can be just a little bit more timid. [laughs] And awestruck. I can still see that woman, and I can still hear what she said, although I wasn't there.

BK: It's great. Anything else you want to add before we finish up?

SW: I don't—I'm sorry I was so—took so long.

BK: No, this is great stories so.

SW: There's a lot that are in here. But I have very strong feelings about the war. I mean about war, that this is no way to solve problems. We just keep having them. And I think the commercialization of it is the worst thing that you can do, because there's so much—as long as you do that, they're making money. And as long as they're making money, they're going to do it more and more and more and more. That's what's happening here. And we don't need to spend that kind of money on this. It disturbs me that all of these silly people around here are so afraid. What are they afraid of? Are they going to hide under the bed? Come on, give me a break. And find out why a kid like that is angry, and why your kids are angry, and why kids have to be hauled in by the police because they haven't anything better to do and they're in a college. I don't know what their parents think they're doing out here or what they're doing or what they're learning or not.

But there's something very wrong about this thing that we have, personal freedom. We are who we are and we're so wonderful and we know everything. We still have to do all of our computer work by the Arabic mathematics: one, two, three, four, five. And they're not stupid. And when are we going to get out of this "I'm better than you" business and all the rest of it. War is not going to help it. And women could—the other thing that made me mad the other day was we went to vote, and I voted for [Elaine] Marshall, who is running for the Senate. And we have that other gal. What's her name? Hogan, I think. Hagan.

BK: Kay Hagan.

SW: Kay Hagan. And Marshall has a great background for this job. And I said to my friend, who was driving me. And she said, “Well, you know what Connie said?”

And I said, “No.”

And she said, “I would like to vote for her.” But she says, “We can’t have two female senators in Washington, can we?”

Why not? Do—We’ve had men all the time, two men. What’s wrong with two women, well-qualified? Now you see, I don’t understand. This is a woman’s—that voting thing and all this other stuff and very, very involved in politics and everything. How can an intelligent woman like that—“Yes, I’m a feminist.” Why wouldn’t it be nice for us to be the first state, if that’s what it’s going to be—

BK: Maine has two women senators.

SW: Oh, they do? Well then see, you know more about it than I do. But why? Why—what would be so bad about it? And that appalls me that women who want to be known as feminists can say, “Well, we couldn’t have two senators in Washington who are female, could we?” No, I guess not. Not if you don’t vote—vote for them. You know, it’s just one of those—Well, the other thing is the men, bless their hearts, they’re always with us and they’re mad. We’ll never—I can’t see anyone voting for a female president. I voted for who’s-it what’s-it—

BK: [President Barak] Obama?

SW: No, no.

BK: [John] McCain?

SW: No.

BK: [John] Edwards?

SW: No. [laughs] Our secretary of state. Our secretary of state.

BK: Oh, [Hillary] Clinton.

SW: Clinton, right down to the core.

BK: Got it.

SW: And I refuse to vote for president. It's the first time in my life I've refused to vote for it. Obama was ill-prepared for this and it burned me up. But I can—There's not an American male on too many streets that I can look at right now who would see a woman in charge of his army and navy. But there's the Queen of England, there's all these other

people, goodnight. Catherine [the Great] of Russia and all these people in Israel who have been presidents—What’s wrong with the men here? When are they going to grow up?

BK: I don’t know.

SW: They’re killing themselves off because [unclear]. Are you married?

BK: I have a partner.

SW: You have a partner. And that’s good. Okey-dokey. Okay. You can have a partner. I have a—I call her half-sister, this one. And that also burned me up just a little bit after she died. She’d been around campus and everything else and was well known as active, and the fact that a couple of people came up to me after she died and they said, “Well, I hope you can find another companion for you. We understand lesbians have a hard time doing that.”

I could have slit their throats, literally. Slit their throats. They had no business in that kind of business. They really didn’t. And to think the people in this kind of a situation do not understand what—I don’t know. What we need. Who we can get—who we want to live with. It’s as simple as that: who we want to live with.

And I have a long theory. I do believe that we have another life. I do think we have past lives. We’ve had them checked out. We both went and had—I’ve had about three different readings. And we had a past life together that we were trying to finish off

here, and I think we did a pretty good job of it. But past lives simply mean that in this life it is not inconceivable that you would come back and want to finish this. And if it happens to be a female, or it happens to be a male and you're a male, you can't help that. But that's why you're drawn to that person. There's something about that person that you know that you remember and it's unfinished business. And I really honestly and truly believe that this whole question about homosexuality and if you don't marry a man, why, there's something wrong with you, and if you don't marry a woman, the same thing is wrong—of course, they go out and play games—but it's just that in our past lives. We had something we had to finish. And if you happen to find it and it's in a female body and you're a female body, so? This is something that you need to finish, and we did. We did a good job of it. I miss her.

And the only way I can get around not having people—This is an awful statement. It's an awful county, Alamance County. This is an awful area here. We still have the Ku Klux Klan. And that's the only thing that they can think of. That if you live with someone else, why, you're obviously having sex and you're obviously queer and you shouldn't be this and you shouldn't have that and you're terrible people. Well, that's not true. That's not true. And if we are, it doesn't make any difference because there's this unfinished business. I believe that firmly, just as I believe that it applies to all these genius musicians like some of these guys in New York who ended up in the Lower East Side. Their parents are not even, you know—ill educated and that sort of thing, and yet it can produce [George] Gershwin. Honey, that guy has been making new music a long time before now. We don't know who he was or how he was or where he was but he—or

whether he was male or female or any of that. But you can't tell me that you can have a five year old kid come up and just suddenly be able to do this out of nowhere without having a background, for god's sake, or having something in him. I don't know what it is.

BK: I never thought about it that way.

SW: But these geniuses that they keep talking about, yeah. They don't have to be the Bachs and the Beethovens and that sort, but this is not the first time they've done it. It really isn't because that's not what's up there. It takes a while to put stuff into those little nubs and whatnot. So, I believe very strongly that we've had past lives. And I've—and when I find somebody that I'm having a problem with, I start looking around. And I can do a little bit of it. Not a lot, but I can do a little of it. And I can figure out, oh, merciful father, okay. I know where we're coming from now. And we can take care of it, maybe, as long as I know that: that we did have a past life and this was one of our problems, and we don't have to do it again here. We can just be good boys or girls or whatever it happens to be and take care of it at that point. I think it's reassuring. And that spirit, whatever it is, I think is part of the electricity. I think it's what they talk about, the digits and all this other stuff. Well, I think that's just part of—I don't think—I think whatever you want to call it, that part doesn't go. That part flies away and comes back if it needs to or wants to. And that's what keeps all of this going. Something has to keep it going.

BK: Yeah.

SW: And I sure don't think there's some old buzzard up there throwing out the corn or something and saying, "This is how it is and this is what's going to be." I think that's kind of silly. I think they're playing it pretty nice and simple. But it's hard for an old Methodist. I think that was what drove me off of the Methodist church, because the weekend I came—I was discharged and I came back to Fort Wayne, Indiana. I was still in uniform. We were allowed to wear our uniform for one month, and then they had to be stripped and start wearing some clothes, kids. And the—Mother and Daddy wanted to know if I'd go to church with them. I said, "Sure. I'll be glad to go to church. That's all right."

So, I had to go in my uniform. And we sat only—it wasn't way down front, it wasn't way in the back, sort of in the middle. I didn't look around too much to see if there was anybody else in uniform. I don't remember seeing anybody else in uniform. But there I was, and this minister came out and he started to rant and rave. He took off on the women in service. And he said, "All it is, they're just troop followers. That's the reason they were created: satisfy the troops." And he said, "This is a sin." And he took off and just went on and on and on and on about this is our function, this is what we did, this is what we were doing, and the devil will get us. Oh, the devil already had us. You know all this. I just sat there. And we got up and very quietly walked out of the church.

Mother and Daddy said, "We're terribly sorry."

I said, "Yes, I am too. And I will never go back to that church again."

And I haven't, and I have no intention of it. It's that kind of mentality that is—you know, it's just beyond the pale. As I have said, and I have asked those in charge and whatnot, whatever went on elsewhere, I don't know. But we were not Puritans, I'm sure. But nothing vile ever happened or anything because we had to be sure of who we were and what we represented. I think they all did a pretty good job of that. The service gives you a different sense of those things I think, maybe. I don't know. But that hurt. That hurt real, real deep.

And I said, "I will not put myself through that again."

And they said, "We don't blame you."

The one thing that Mother said when I went out the door and she left me off at the—and they left me at the station in Fort Wayne and I got on that troop—It was a troop train down from Chicago.

She said, "Please don't start to smoke."

And I said, "I wouldn't." I said, "I don't—."

Both of us hated it. Daddy smoked cigars and cigarettes, and Mother just hated it. It got on the curtains and everything. She just hated it.

And I said, "Don't worry about that. I'll not do that."

She said, "Okay. That's nice." She said, "Oh, one more other thing. Don't marry the guy until you see him in civvies. Every guy looks good in a uniform."

BK: [chuckles] That's great.

SW: “Okay. I’ll try not to do that.” And I didn’t. [laughs]

BK: That’s good advice.

SW: I think it is.

BK: Two pieces of very good advice.

SW: I think so too. She didn’t say anything about drinking. Now, I learned to drink in the service.

BK: Okay.

SW: I really did, and what is excess and what isn’t and how to handle it and how not to handle it. I found out that the Girl Scouts were pretty good at it, too. But they—I think because a lot of them had been in the service. But they knew how to handle themselves and how to, you know, not over drink or anything. Except for one occasion, and this was when I was the drum—whatever that thing was—drum leader of that thing, of the band. And something had gone very bad, and I am not too sure what it was. I can’t even remember, but I was mad.

And I said, “I am going—I have liberty and I am going out and getting drunk.”

And the gal with the tuba, Penny, and one of the others—I forget the other one.

“Hey, we’ll take you and we’ll pay for it.”

BK: Wow.

SW: I said, “Okay.” So, we got ourselves out, all the rigmarole. And we had to get—because we were good at that. There was nothing between us and the next block, and then there was the ocean—just lined with bars, all kinds of bars.

So, we stopped at the first one and they said, “What are you drinking?”

And I said, “I have never had a drink in my life. I haven’t the vaguest idea.”

They said, “Oh, okay. Well, why don’t you have a Tom Collins?”

I said, “That’s all right with me.” Well, that tasted pretty good. I said, “Okay.” I had one of those.

They said, “Well, how do you feel?”

I said, “Fine.”

They said, “You want another one?”

I said, “Not really.”

They said, “Okay. Let’s go next door and see what they have.” So, we went around to the next one, and I had a rum and coke around there. And they said, “Well, how do you feel?”

I said, “I don’t feel anything.” I said, “You know, it’s just one of those—I’m okay.”

“Okay.” Went around to another one and—I forget what it was. It was something scotch-y. I forget what it was. And then we went around to the other one, and they said, “Okay. Come on now. You’ve got to be. You’re just playing here.”

I said, “I can salute and I can turn around and I can do anything I want to do.”

So, they fixed an Old Fashioned and I drank it. Well, just about that time I was feeling just a little bit floaty, and they said, “We’d better get in.”

And I said, “Okay. Let’s get back to the station.”

Walked in the front door and did a smart about—or half-turn to face the officer and gave her a smart salute and then did a roundabout one, a complete one, and went over to the desk to get our liberty card and then did another one to go off of the quarter deck and to get to the elevators. And we did that and we got to the elevators and—this was when we had booties yet. We had little trainees there. And they had the duty. They hated our guts because we got off campus, off of the station, and they couldn’t. And they always had the duty at the wrong time, they thought. So, we got on the elevator. And we got on the elevator, and she took some whiffs.

“Been drinking.”

“Oh, not really.”

“I think you’ve been drinking.” So, she got off the elevator, shut the doors, pushed the button, and flew us up to the eighth deck, opened the doors, and we fell out like three dead ducks.

BK: Wow.

SW: Three dead ducks. And so our roomies came and picked us up and got us into bed—got me into bed. I assume the roomies got the others, too. Well, next morning we had to go out and play for the captain and get the band going and all this other good stuff.

Well, they tried to figure out what they could get. “What have you been drinking?”

I said, “Well, I guess everything.”

“Oh, lord.”

I said, “Well, let’s go down. Maybe tomato soup—juice might help or something,”

I don’t know. They had some funny ideas. So, I went down to the mess and, whoa. Drank something. I think it was something like V8 or something of that sort.

She said, “You’ve got to get that band going and go around the building and get in to the captain.”

I said “Okay.” So, I left and got the kids organized and got them out and got them organized and we started around here and went down the alley to the captain. These offices had these big wire—like what you said before—rail to—they were bigger than—they were almost like—What am I trying to say?

BK: Not the railings.

SW: Yeah, yeah. It’s the railings, but you step out on them.

BK: Balconies.

SW: Balconies. There you go. There you go. I'm eighty-seven. [laughs] And I have Alzheimer's. The hell I do.

Anyway, they—all these offices around here around this area had these balconies. They were loaded with all the other officers. Terry was in the middle of them and my roomie was there right beside her—and I could have killed her—and all the rest of these—all the other officers on that floor were there waiting for the band to toddle up and do their little bit and play and then do about-face and get out of there. And I—We made it. But oh lord, I was on the wagon for years, I think.

But I learned—and then Terry Crowley, the exec[?] called me in the office in about a month and she said, “Bosun, I think you need to learn how to drink.”

And I said, “Yes, sir.”

And she said, “I'll see if I can't take care of that little bit.”

I said, “Okay.” So—I forget where we went.

She said, “What all did you drink?”

I said, “I think a lot of something and a little bit of something else.”

She says, “How about scotch?”

I said, “I don't even remember scotch.”

She said, “Okay. Let's try scotch.” And—scotch and soda.

And I said, “Okay.”

So, we sat down. It was a private club somewhere. I forget. And so she started me on scotch and soda. She said, “How is that?”

I said, “It tastes pretty good.”

She said, “Well, that’s the only one you’re going to get tonight, and we’ll see what we can do about getting you reorganized.” And she said, “Did any of these others taste good?”

And I said, “The only one I remember was the first one.” [chuckles] And I said, “That was kind of limey and bubbly. After that I did like the summery ones that had a little bit of vodka.” I prefer vodka to the other stuff. So, she gradually took me in tow and fed me on scotch, which was her favorite, and I got to be a scotch drinker. But I knew the limit. Oh, did I know the limit. I guess maybe that was one of the better lessons I had.

BK: Probably.

SW: [laughs] I wasn’t ever asked about that one. She just asked about the cigarettes and be sure the guy was seen in civvies before you did any stupid thing.

Honey, I’m sorry I’ve done this.

BK: No, I really appreciate it. Thank you.

SW: ~~Good lord.~~

BK: ~~I always appreciate good stories. No, I think it's good. I just need—If you could just sign over the agreement.~~

SW: ~~I have to sign something?~~

BK: ~~Well, what they are—One is just saying for the donation of the materials.~~

[Redacted conversation about permissions for archiving and internet availability of transcript.]

[End of interview]