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AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN GORMAN

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INTERVIEWED BY  
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AND  
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AND  
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NASHVILLE, TN  
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PIEHLER: This begins an interview with John P. Gorman Senior on April 8 2005 at the home of his granddaughter, who lives in Nashville, TN, but Mr. Gorman is from Brownsville, Tennessee and this interview is with Kurt Piehler.

BOULTON: Mark Boulton.

MAHONEY: Maggie Mahoney.

PIEHLER: And might I add that Maggie Mahoney is his granddaughter and Mr. Gorman's wife [Emma Jane Gorman] is also present around the interview table. Well let me begin by thanking you for coming for driving from your home and meeting us at almost a half way point.

GORMAN: Thank you.

PIEHLER: You were born in Memphis in 1926.

GORMAN: Yes.

PIEHLER: Could you tell us a little bit about your parents?

GORMAN: Well, my father came from Arkansas, originally from Holly Springs, Mississippi and Lagrange, Tennessee and my mother came from Ripley, Tennessee and Brownsville, Tennessee. (Laughter)

(Tape Paused)

GORMAN: Well, I was born in Memphis Tennessee in 1926 May 9 and us We moved to Brownsville later on in that year and then after that we moved to Forest City, Arkansas where my grandfather lived and he was mayor and my grandmother formed the Episcopal church over there. I was christened Episcopalian in Memphis by Bishop Lee Winchester. But we moved to Forest City and lived over there for several years. Then we moved to—I was in the flood of '27 in Arkansas and that's when they had refugees. There was a lot of Hispanics there, and we had to provide houses for them. Of course this was related from my father who was a farmer and real estate man in uh Arkansas at the time and then in Memphis. We moved back to Brownsville, Tennessee out on the old home place, Mannsboro, and that's where I spent my young years. It was a little boy's paradise.

PIEHLER: Let me ask you first a little bit about your mother. She went to college at Randolph Macon.

GORMAN: Yes Randolph Macon, the women's college and I think yeah she went to Julliard too. She was a musician and she loved to play and she taught music all of her life.

My father died when I was nine years old that was 1935. We moved back to Memphis so she would, could have a studio and teach music there because the demand for music teachers was greater. And uh, we moved there in 1936 and she taught music [at] 1780 Galloway, Memphis, Tennessee and we lived there until 1940. We bought another house on Galloway. It was close to Southwestern and she had her studio there in the house. I went to school in Central and then Webb school in Middle Tennessee. Later on I was drafted when I was about 18 and went to World War II. Came back in about two years and went to Southwestern, a school there in Memphis, it was a college, and later it became Rhodes college. They changed the name of it. But this was a big part of my life, going to this school. And then after that I always wanted to farm because we had property and we were in the farming business, so I started farming in 1951; and that's the year I kinda got married here to my wife (Laughter). 1951, but from then on it was just farming and family and I have five children, at the present I have sixteen grandchildren, and I've got six adopted grandchildren, so that makes me twenty-one. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Going back to your mother, do you know why she went to Randolph Macon? Did she have friends she stayed in touch with from college when you were growing up?

GORMAN: No I didn't know of any, but my mother was a very smart person, she had red hair (Laughter). And she—my grandfather gave my, I had an uncle and aunt and mother. He gave them choices. She chose to go to Randolph Macon and my aunt chose a farm they offered her.

PIEHLER: So it was a farm or a college education.

GORMAN: Yes uh huh. So my aunt took the farm and my mother took the Randolph and the college education.

PIEHLER: Did she ever say why she chose Randolph Macon?

GORMAN: Well, it was a women's college and she just wanted to go there, and no she never did say.

PIEHLER: Because it's all the way over in Virginia.

GORMAN: Well yes, we had ties people in Virginia from General Robert E. Lee but that's another story.

PIEHLER: What sort of family ties?

GORMAN: See uh, Washington College was in Virginia and my grandfather on my father's side.

PIEHLER: So your mother had strong ties to Virginia family-wise?

GORMAN: Yes Mm hmm, I think so.

PIEHLER: Julliard. So she ended up in New York. How long was she in Julliard for?

GORMAN: I really don't know, she never did say.

PIEHLER: Did she ever tell you what New York was like?

GORMAN: No, no, in those days no, she didn't, but h I imagine it was—we used to love, my mother did and my grandmother lived on 510 Beale in Memphis Tennessee. Now it's a historic playground for a lot of people, Beale Street is, but I haven't been there in sixty or seventy years.

PIEHLER: So you've never been back to where you grew up?

GORMAN: Uh no, I didn't grow up there, I didn't, she did. I grew up out at the farm in Mannsboro and it was a wonderful place for a little boy.

PIEHLER: Did your mother perform professionally at all before she married?

GORMAN: No, no I don't think so no, she didn't. Sshe got married and had two boys. I have a brother, I had a brother. He died some years back. Like I say, she moved to Memphis to teach piano and she did for a good many years. Then in '69 she had a stroke.

PIEHLER: And she taught all the way until then?

GORMAN: She taught all the way. That's what she, of course she had to rent off her farm or two. She put us through school, and raised us and made a living through teaching music.

PIEHLER: So it was really music that supported your family?

GORMAN: That's right, music supported [us].

PIEHLER: Not just the farm.

GORMAN: Not the farm, no, no.

PIEHLER: How big is the farm?

GORMAN: Well its four or five hundred acres over in Arkansas. My sister-in-law still has that farm.

PIEHLER: Growing up you really lived in Memphis?

GORMAN: I lived in Memphis and out at the farm in Haywood County, Mannsboro.

PIEHLER: So would you move to the farm in the summer?

GORMAN: Yes we'd go to—my grandmother lived out there alone. Of course she had servants and everything. But we would go out there ever weekend during the winter.

PIEHLER: Every weekend?

GORMAN: In the summer we would move out there and spend the three months. Let's see, when I was six and seven years old I went to private school out there. Calvert Course they used to call it, and that was at the farm, that's where I liked to be. Then daddy died when I was nine and that was when we moved to Memphis

PIEHLER: Do you know how your parents met?

GORMAN: No I don't. Oh, it was a play (laughter).

PIEHLER: You got a little prompting I should say, you got a little prompting from your wife.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Well, I have known him since I was four years old. I took music from his mother at Mannsboro from the time I was four years old. My mother and his mother were friends, our parents' were friends and that's the reason I can fill in some things that he's leaving out. He's left out a few things.

PIEHLER: So your mother was in Forest City and was a music teacher?

GORMAN: Yes, Mm hmm.

BOULTON: What kind of a farm was it?

GORMAN: It was just a cotton. See in those they had—there a good many Hispanics down there and colored folks and they raised a lot of cotton down there.

PIEHLER: Your father had some college education; do you know what college he attended?

GORMAN: No I don't.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I've got it, I've got it at home; I don't [recall]. We didn't bring it; it's in that book I think.

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier that the flood of '27 was very vivid for your father.

GORMAN: Yes, it was.

PIEHLER: It sounds like he told you some stories. What sort of stories did he tell you?

GORMAN: Well, we have pictures of it. I was one year old. I was in a boat and we were taking refugees out, trying to get them to high ground.

PIEHLER: High ground.

GORMAN: Yes, they didn't have any levy system on the Mississippi River at the time and there was another flood in '37, but since then they have raised it.

MAHONEY: There are some pictures in here.

GORMAN: Do you want to cut this thing off so we can look?

PIEHLER: Oh no we can just ...

MAHONEY: Here is the flood right here. It says flood waters, let's see and ... Walter's farm.

PIEHLER: So your farm was all ...

GORMAN: This was the Arkansas farm; we had the Tennessee Farm and other places.

MAHONEY: See there he is when he was little.

GORMAN: In a cotton basket, that's what they used to weigh cotton in, in a basket like that. Hmm. Well let's see ...

GORMAN: These were the refugees. This was my father; and that I can't see too well, that's my grandfather right there. He's the one that knew both Lee and Grant. And there I am.

PIEHLER: So did he tell you stories about Lee and Grant?

GORMAN: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Anything that you can remember?

GORMAN: It's in here.

MAHONEY: I'll grab it.

PIEHLER: Also, if there's a story you want to tell, it's your interview too.

GORMAN: Well there are so many, though, see. So many I can't get them in the right order.

PIEHLER: Don't worry about the order. We'll come back to it. That's why we do a transcript too.

MAHONEY: Can I ask a question about Mannsboro farm?

PIEHLER: Oh yeah.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: His mother was also a teacher with the National Guild of the Piano Teachers in America.

GORMAN: That's a pretty famous organization and it's wonderful to belong to it.

MAHONEY: I want you to tell about the Mannsboro camp that your grandmother had.

GORMAN: Oh well ...

MAHONEY: That your grandmother would have a camp out at Mannsboro farm.

GORMAN: My grandmother loved people. She didn't turn anybody away and they were always welcome at her house. She would have friends out, put a big tent—we had two ponds, two lakes and a drive between 'em and she would put tents up down there. People would come for maybe a week or two, she would have this camp. They would camp down there. She would feed them. She had plenty of servants and it was just a good time for people from Memphis, and Brownsville, and Ripley and all around the community would come and be with her. She loved people and the camp days were—I didn't remember, I wasn't born then. I have pictures of them and my mother told me about them and they were just wonderful days. That was in 1917.

PIEHLER: Did you have another question?

MAHONEY: No that was all I wanted to ask about the camp.

PIEHLER: Your mother was a piano teacher but she was also in the Guild?

GORMAN: The National Guild of Piano Teachers.

PIEHLER: Did she go to any annual meetings, national meetings at all?

GORMAN: No, I don't remember. She was so busy with the teaching and with us. The students would come and have—what would you call them Mama?

PIEHLER: Recitals.

GORMAN: Recitals, yes. they would be judged and they would come to Memphis. The Beethoven club was where they would have it. I remember every year she would have

auditions and she would have people in these auditions and she was in this National Guild.

MAHONEY: Now you took piano from your mother?

GORMAN: I took (laughs) ...

MAHONEY: There is a picture of you in the paper.

GORMAN: I started when I was four years old and I took it for seven years. I've always wished that I would continue. But about an eleven year old boy, he has got other things on his mind besides practicing piano. (Laughter)

MAHONEY: So would you see Grandmamma, would you all have lessons around the same time or would?

GORMAN: Yes uh huh. She would try to get me to take a lesson. (Laughter)

MAHONEY: How long did you take from Grandmamma? She still plays very well.

GORMAN: She's a concert pianist. She plays beautifully.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I took from the time I was four all the way through with Mrs. Gorman and into college. And I have a high school diploma from her.

BOULTON: What kinds of things would you do for fun on the farm growing up?

GORMAN: Oh my goodness, on the farm. Fishing, hunting and there were colored people out there now that, they looked after me. I had an 'ole colored woman in the yard there. She and her husband lived in the yard in an old house and anything I killed she would cook it for me.

PIEHLER: What were some of the other things you hunted?

GORMAN: Oh everything. Rabbits, birds, possums, coons, everything in the world. (Laughter) There was lot of it in those days. And fish, we had tree limbs growing out over the pond. In those days we couldn't catch, so I'd crawl out there on the limb with my rifle, I got a rifle when I was 7 years old. Everybody thought mamma was crazy, but I learned how to use it. I would shoot directly down in the water, and I would kill these big bass and I would take them up and this colored woman would keep 'em for me. (Laughter) Just little stories like that you know.

PIEHLER: Now would you go off hunting alone, or would you go with friends?

GORMAN: No, I had colored folks out there. They would. I had one over there in particular there, John Johnson. And he would take me hunting all the time. We would



walk through the cotton stalks and he would say, “Dars a rabbit; shoot it.” He never did get in a hurry, he was like that (Laughter) He was the kinda caretaker of our orchard. We had about an eight or ten acre apple orchard. We had trouble with people going back there and stealing apples you know and John Johnson looked after that and somebody said “Who’s gonna watch John.” (Laughter) Oh there are a lot of stories but I can’t think of them all now, but many of ‘em. We used to have a cider mill, ground our own cider and vinegar. We bought very little; coffee, tea, sugar but everything was raised on the farm. We had dairy, we had milk, had cattle, hogs, everything. That’s the way it was in those days.

PIEHLER: How many people lived on the farm in terms of the colored folk?

GORMAN: There was one, two, three, four, five, six, that was six in houses around on the farm and then the household help lived in the yard and that’s the way, people came from other farms. Grandmother had a wash woman that would come once a week to wash once a week from another farm my aunt’s farm, my great aunt’s farm. And then she had people to do different jobs for her, they would come and she would pay ‘em. But that was in the 30’s and things didn’t move too fast in those days.

PIEHLER: But you were also in Memphis. What would you do in Memphis for fun?

GORMAN: Oh, well, when I just, well, we’d go out to the farm every weekend.

PIEHLER: Come to the farm.

GORMAN: I couldn’t belong to the scouts, because they had the scout meetings every weekend and I, we couldn’t I couldn’t go. But we used to play with friends, I met with one of ‘em the other day, Edgar Bailey, he was at the doctor’s office. We used to play tops, tops you put on milk bottles and they would get worn and those were the kind you wanted. They’d stick, we’d play those. A lot of my friends were in Memphis and a lot of them are gone now.

MAHONEY: Did you play any sports?

GORMAN: Yes, well I wasn’t in any sports, because school, because we went to the farm. But we lived close to Overton Park and the zoo there and we would go over there to the park and play baseball, football, baseball. We used to play football in the, if you’re not familiar, but there’s a Galloway mansion there, it’s a beautiful old home, it sold last year but uh, it had carriage houses, it took up a whole city block. It was one block from where we lived. We would go up there and play football in the yard we just had a little neighborhood around there. My mind jumps around when I get to thinking about these old things. Oh marbles, That was my big game, marbles, playing with the neighborhood children (Laughter). I got a fussed at many times for coming in late playing ... to supper. We had supper during the middle of the day and supper at night. Marbles was a big game it was a lot of fun, that was when I was s about nine or ten years old something like that. We had other games that we played too, rubber guns (shooting noise, hand, gesture).

PIEHLER: Your friends, they lived in the city and wouldn't go out on the weekends, so you were the only one that went.

GORMAN: No, no. I was the only one that went. I had friends in Brownsville. The farm is about seven miles north of Brownsville. We didn't stop much, but we always went to Brownsville to get supplies and ice. There's an ice house there and ... things that we needed.

PIEHLER: Now how did you get to Brownsville, what was the route you took?

GORMAN: You mean from then or now?

PIEHLER: Yes then.

GORMAN: Then, on Highway 70. It was a big highway going through Tennessee and we'd go from Memphis to Brownsville. You have to go through the center of Brownsville on 70.

PIEHLER: Now did the farm in Brownsville, did it have electricity?

GORMAN: It didn't when I was out there for years. No we had no electricity, no modern conveniences at all and then it was real nice when electricity came but that was much later.

PIEHLER: After you came back from the war.

GORMAN: We had lamps.

BOULTON: You didn't have the radio or anything while you were there?

GORMAN: It would have, I tried to get the right crystal you'd have to get it just right and you had earphones so you could get a crystal set. But it was a lot slower time, it was so nice and I wish that I could go back, but I can't.

PIEHLER: When you say it was a slower time when you got to the farm, what time would you wake up.

GORMAN: Oh, well you got up at four o'clock. The bell rang right by my window at four o'clock every morning and that was the bell to ring the hands up, to get them up. And then that would get them up, they would do their chores and then they would eat breakfast about five and they would get in the fields by six. Now this was in the summertime when crops and things were going on. Of course there wasn't any such things as tractors, there were mules and we didn't have any oxen, but some people did have oxen.

PIEHLER: So it was all mules?

GORMAN: All mules and horses. I had my own horse and I would ride my horse. My brother had one. And it was just a good time

PIEHLER: You would wake up early with everyone.

GORMAN: Oh I woke up (Laughter). I would go to bed early too. I wouldn't stay up late at night.

PIEHLER: So you would go down with the sun.

GORMAN: Just about, now they didn't come out of the field until sundown.

BOULTON: How many days a week was that?

GORMAN: Depends. I was in a gin one time close by there and I would manage it and they would come to me for a job. They would say "well what are the hours?" and I would say, "Can to Can't." That's exactly what it was: from can to can't. Work as long as you can come, and then as long as you can and then quit. But things have changed now, they have shifts that they work in gins. Gins are so much improved now. Oh, I had a dog, no it wasn't my dog, it was my brother's dog (Laughter). Everything came by rail, and this little English Shepard puppy came from North Springs, Missouri. He came in a box. He was as clean as a pin. It was my brother's birthday present, but it was my dog. But uh, I took that dog to the farm and I slept with the dog. The winters were long and cold on the farm and they were a little more severe than they are now days. There was no heat in that house except fireplaces and we would have to put churn next to the fireplaces so the milk would clabber, so we could churn it to get butter. At night when I was a little boy we had feather beds, and I remember I would stand in front of the fireplace to get my backside just as hot as I could with my pajamas on. Then I would go jump in a feather bed. I had one under me and one over me and there was no way to get cold, but the water did freeze in the water bucket every night. So it wasn't modern convention, but it was a good time. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now your home in Memphis, I take it, you had electricity?

GORMAN: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: And indoor plumbing?

GORMAN: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: So in many ways you would go from all of the modern conveniences...

GORMAN: That's right.

MAHONEY: What were some of your chores in Memphis?

GORMAN: Oh yes.

MAHONEY: You talked about the fireplace?

GORMAN: Fireplace, we had a fireplace I had to keep that going. We did have natural gas in the first house we lived in, in Memphis. We had coals and a hot water heater and tank, but uh that was just for the hot water and I would have to light that and sometimes I would have to go up and forget it and have to go back and turn it off because it would explode, the heat and everything was too much. But I used to make lead soldiers in the basement of that house, that first house. That was a lot of fun. And then I had neighbors next door, Sonny Golden. We played together. We lived about three doors from Trinity Methodist Church. My mother was a Methodist after my father died. I was an Episcopalian, christened Episcopalian and when he died, my mother was Methodist. We would go to Trinity Methodist but it was very seldom because we were gone to Brownsville on the weekend, but then when uh, I went to Presbyterian School. then I married a Baptist and that was it. (Laughter)

BOULTON: Do you remember how the Great Depression affected the farm?

GORMAN: It was a pretty rough time. We nearly lost the farm in Arkansas, but at the time President Roosevelt was in, and he saved that farm for us there. It was pretty rough. There wasn't any money, but my grandfather said if you've got a little spot of land you can always make it and you don't owe anybody and that was it. The Depression affected us, we didn't have anything, didn't anybody have anything, and it didn't, didn't bother. You didn't worry you about what the Jones had because they didn't have anything either. It was just a bad time but then after World War II all that changed, and it was some for the good, some for the bad.

BOULTON: Do you remember specifically what Roosevelt did, how he helped out on the farm?

GORMAN: No I don't, I was a young fellow at the time and I didn't care too much about it. But I know that he did give us a loan on the farm and we paid it out. That's one thing that helped my mother later on. She had a stroke in '69 and wanted to go home. She went back to the farm and we were able to fix it up for her, we reconditioned that farmhouse completely and it took four ladies to help keep her. But she had a stroke in '69 and died in '72. But that's where she wanted to go, back home. That worked out, but nowadays you probably couldn't do it, couldn't find the help to do it.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about your teachers and school?

GORMAN: My first public school teacher was Mrs. Florence Swepton at Snowden high school, Snowden grammar school and it was right between our houses. It was about three or four blocks from my house, right between Southwestern and where we lived. That was

my first experience in a public school and it was quite an experience. It was the third grade. But she was a fine lady and I never will forget her. I went to Snowden School and graduated there and went to Central and I went to Webb. Those were my high school years.

PIEHLER: Did you go to school with the same group of friends in your neighborhood.

GORMAN: Yes, oh yes, but I couldn't be with them on weekends because we went to Brownsville every weekend. But I've still got some of those friends uh, they're still living; but of course I will be eighty next month and many of them have gone on.

PIEHLER: Your friends from Memphis, did they ever come out to the farm with you?

GORMAN: No, some of them did ... later, but this friend of ours had a, Mr. Hughes, he was a professor at Memphis, they called it states teacher's training in those days but its University of Memphis now and he taught there. They would come out every summer and stay with my grandmother. And then for two years, Mrs. Hughes stayed there and their two children and our two children, my mother's two children, we went to school there took Calvert's Course stayed at the farm for two years.

PIEHLER: So for two years you were at Calvert's school?

GORMAN: Yes, uh huh.

PIEHLER: Do you remember which grades they were?

GORMAN: First and second.

PIEHLER: First and second?

GORMAN: First and second yes. I guess that was before—somewhere along I went to kindergarten.

PIEHLER: No, I don't think you did, I don't think they had kindergarten.

GORMAN: No, I don't know, I don't know. Well, was it Idlewild? I don't know, it wasn't then, but that's where the first two years of schooling were, on the farm and Calvert's course was a wonderful course. It taught you how to read and write and arithmetic, that's one thing that the schools have gotten away from, the basics; the three R's.

PIEHLER: So Calvert's course was a home school?

GORMAN: It was a home school.

PIEHLER: You mother was the teacher?

GORMAN: My mother was the teacher.

PIEHLER: What was your mother like as a teacher both teaching at the Calvert's school but also as your piano teacher?

GORMAN: Well, she didn't teach out there at the farm, piano, she taught, but that was later on as she moved to Memphis. But she was good, she was a born teacher. Mother could convey what she had in her to the other person. Teachers are born; I don't think they're made. It takes a talent to do that, you have to have a talent to do that. There are a lot of other things but I can't think of them now.

PIEHLER: Well, one of the things you said just before we got started you said you sometimes wish the old colored folk you knew, you'd have tape recorded them. It sounds like when you would go hunting particularly you would hear stories.

GORMAN: Ohh.

PIEHLER: Tall tales.

GORMAN: Not only that, it's when you're sitting around coming back home and sitting around the fireplace with the 'ole colored folks.

PIEHLER: What are some of the stories that they would tell you?

GORMAN: Oh my, they would tell some. Beam, Sunbeam. They all had two names, so if they got in trouble they could get out with the other name and Sunbeam Taylor was uh, B. Midget was his name, but Sunbeam was what everybody called him. This was later on, but he could tell big tales. He said he would go haul the logs to Jackson. Now Jackson is twenty-six miles away from where we live and they would cut logs and haul them on a wagon with mules. They would go over there and take the logs and spend all, maybe two or three days going over there and coming back. Like I said it was a lot slower in those days. He believed in uh, ghosts and that old farm out there had a cemetery on it and the Confederate soldiers were buried on there somewhere, I don't know where it is. But he could see a white thing of that soldier going across the yard, the backyard out there and he believed it, it was real to him.

PIEHLER: He really believed it.

GORMAN: He really believed it. And all of them had beliefs like that. They said that house, the 'ole farm house out there was 'hanted', haunted. You know, there were ghosts and things. The stories, well, colored folk, they were nice in those days, but sometimes they would get agitated. I remember my grandmother would sit out there in her rocking chair. One of them, they were two of them there that didn't like each other they got in a fight right there at her feet. One of them ran into her house, he knew she kept the .38 special; and he got it, and he pointed it at this other fellow fighting with his daddy and he

clicked it twice and that's—my aunt who lived out there at the time, she was a no-nonsense person. She wore this high leather boots. She had a little automatic pistol she stuck in one side; she took that pistol, that .38 special, and stuck it in her other boot and those folks straightened up. They didn't have any more trouble with them from then on (Laughter). But its little things like that you know.

PIEHLER: The colored folk on the farm, how long had they been out there?

GORMAN: Oh for years, there were some that were born on there, they were raised on there. Joe and Ellen Johnson lived down in a log house in the thicket for years. Tump Jeffets lived up there with his family for years and years. No, they lived, they didn't move in those days.

PIEHLER: They didn't move.

GORMAN: They didn't move, very seldom.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

GORMAN: Not unless the landowner wanted them to. But they stayed in one place.

PIEHLER: How long had the farm in Arkansas been in the family?

GORMAN: Oh I don't know, I really don't know, but a long time.

PIEHLER: A long time.

GORMAN: We had a hill farm too, had a peach orchard, but uh, that played out. We sold that, I think. Had a little house on that and we stayed in that at one time, on the farm.

MAHONEY: Would the children of the tenants work, do chores there or would they just play with you?

GORMAN: Well, they'd play with me. We had a ball team and we played baseball, but in those days school—they paid more, it was more agricultural and they would let out for school for cotton choppin' and cotton pickin'. They had to do that because that was the livelihood you see. I've still got a one room school on my farm. It's on the back of the corner on the farm. And the stipulation was when it ceased to be schoolhouse it would come back to the landowner. So we moved that one room school, it was Loanoke school, we moved it about a half mile with mules and rollers and block and tackle. Its still there where we placed it. We used it for a tenant house later on. But a lady still has the bell. I'd like to have but they used to call the students in to ring it you know, to come in. But that was a few years ago.

MAHONEY: You said that turned into a beauty shop?

GORMAN: Oh, now Nibs and J.C. Taylor moved there. He lost his farm later on; he drove a tractor for me. We petitioned that schoolhouse off, four petitions for a tenant house and put a little room on the back of it and she had a beauty shop in there and folks would come from all over and have a beauty shop there. But J.C. drove a tractor and J.C. was a good and faithful person. But later on he got mentally off, and he wandered away from home. I said to Nibbs, "Where's JC?" and she said, "Well, he was going to church and he was going that way" and she pointed kinda to the northeast and I went over there and we had a pond about a half mile and he was in that pond. So, he didn't get to his church over, Taylor Chapel was his church. But they're all good old colored folks.

PIEHLER: The colored folk in Arkansas, where did they go for church? Did they have a church on your on your farm?

GORMAN: Yes, I don't remember too much about the Arkansas farm, because that was in my later years. When I would go to Arkansas to stay we would stay in Forest City because that's where my grandfather lived. And we would stay with them. They had chiggers over there terrible. (Laughter) But that house is still there where my grandfather in Forest City lived and my grandmother. I used to go over there they had a long hall and rooms on either side and I wasn't allowed in the dining room. She had too many, she had beautiful things from Richmond and all this fine crystal and stuff but I would run up and down the hall, the wide hall.

PIEHLER: Growing up on the farm, what kind of chores did you have?

GORMAN: Yes, I had a little wagon. I've still got it in my basement. It was an exact replica of a farm wagon. It was my job to get the kindling in and the stove wood in. For the house and the stove, we had a wood cooking stove. The kitchen was separate from the house and they had a dog trot between the two, because if the kitchen caught on fire, it wouldn't be likely to burn the whole house down. But we have taken all that in now since we redid the house. Maggie has got some pictures of the house.

MAHONEY: There are some pictures of the old house and now of what the new house looks like.

GORMAN: But the old house was built in 1832. It was early American. It was before Southern colonial. It was a small house, it had, it didn't have but eight or nine foot ceilings. It didn't have tall like the twelve foot Southern Colonial. But that was a wonderful place to be.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: The outdoor kitchen in the summer time.

GORMAN: We had a screened in summer dining room, about a about fifty feet from the main house. Every summer we would move out there and the cooks would cook out there and all the hands would eat and we'd have, we had everything on the farm- all kind of fowl. Peacocks mainly, and turkeys, ducks, geese, chickens, guineas. The peacocks had these beautiful tail feathers. My grandmother would give the children so much a penny



for each feather they would find. Then she would make them and put them in a thing like this (gestures) and they would make a thing to keep the flies off the table, they were about as long as six or seven feet long some of 'em were tall and long and they would make up to keep the flies off the table. You would have a servant there in the summer dining room. And this is what we would use there in the summer dining room. But that's just little things and we had different wells, the wells would play out and we would have to dig another one. The wells were about thirty or forty feet deep and then in the winter time we would move back in the kitchen and we had a well and a trough and to cool the butter and things like that we would draw water out of the well to keep them cool. Now luxury it was a big luxury was to go to town about seven miles to get a block of ice and eat shavings off of it, but that didn't happen very often.

PIEHLER: So you had to go get the ice, you didn't have ice man that came out?

GORMAN: No, no. Well, they would come out oh about once or twice a week, but if we wanted some we would have to go into town to the ice plant and get the ice. We had an old car, a '31 Chevrolet. It had a trunk in the back, we liked to ride in that, and let that down and we would put the ice in there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you have an icebox in Memphis or did you have a refrigerator?

GORMAN: We had an icebox I think, that's first. Then later on we got a refrigerator. We had an icebox at the farm but we used it for when we would get ice.

PIEHLER: So ice was a very infrequent?

GORMAN: It was very, now at one time before I came along the two ponds were down there and they would cut ice in the winter time. They had an ice house they called it and they would insulate that house and they would put the ice, cut it off the pond with saws and axes and store it in that icehouse and it would last on, it was an insulated cotton with cotton seed, and it would last on up into the summer so they would have ice that way...A lot of things they did in the old days.

PIEHLER: Did you go to any movies when you were in Memphis?

GORMAN: Well, that was a treat- to go to a Saturday afternoon movie. We didn't go to a movie any time except Saturday afternoon matinees and then all the Memphis friends we would go to a movie on Saturday.

PIEHLER: But you weren't in Memphis that much?

GORMAN: No I wasn't in Memphis that much, but I remember that, that was a treat. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: What movies did you like?

GORMAN: Oh, Tom Mix and uh, and oh yeah. *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* and they were all...

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah my late father-in-law was a huge Tom Mix fan and in fact when he moved to Oklahoma just before he died, he went to the Tom Mix museum.

GORMAN: Oh me. (laughter) Yeah, but they, those were the, there wasn't anything in the movies in those days that was objectionable. It was all clean. They shoot somebody, they'd fall and then they'd get up and walk off you know (laughter). It wasn't all this special effects stuff. That's what I like about the good 'ole days. When I say the 'good ole days', the physical time was kinda rough...

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: We're back on.

GORMAN: The good 'ole days were what are those, the values of the good ole days. You didn't have to have a contract with anybody, you would shake their hand. And that's the way things were done. Nowadays, we have a peace of property in Mississippi and we have had five contracts on it and they have all been broken; they don't hold up. It's the values of the times have changed and they've changed for the worst I think. I like to live in the old days, but I can't. (laughter) You have to live in the times you're livin' in.

MAHONEY: This goes back to kind of the entertainment. Did you take dancing lessons?

GORMAN: I did. I did, I have every opportunity I child would have. I took speech lessons, dancing lessons, music lessons. You name it my mother made sure I had it. Mmm (laughs) and a lady, Mrs. Emily Hadley. She was a wonderful teacher. She had two daughters and they took dancing too. She had a studio over on Linden, I remember that. She moved to New York with her daughters and she wanted me to go, because she thought I would be a good dancer, you know the programs that we had. Every time we had music programs, dance programs, speech program, everything we had and you had to participate in those, because that was the end of the year for the activities. So she wanted, they left, and she wanted me to go to New York with them to study dancing. But I didn't want to go to New York (laughs).

PIEHLER: You never went to New York?

GORMAN: Oh I've been to New York. No, not that time.

PIEHLER: But she really wanted you to come to New York?

GORMAN: She really wanted me to come to New York and dance.

PIEHLER: And what did you mother think of this?

GORMAN: Well she liked it, because, she likes the art. And ... but she didn't want to leave Memphis ...

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GORMAN: She helped Mrs. Hughes with her school that she taught at Calvert Court School she had on Autumn Avenue. They couldn't break it up.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because I have only been to Memphis a few times, but I think I have been to your neighborhood, roughly by the zoo and the art museum is in that area?

GORMAN: Yes.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to the art museum growing up?

GORMAN: Yes, I did. Brooks Museum, yes. It's right there.

PIEHLER: Its a lovely museum.

GORMAN: They had the Shell there, but that's deteriorated; it's gotten in bad shape now. That was an open air theatre.

PIEHLER: How often did you go to that?

GORMAN: Oh we would go. A young lady lived with us that sang. She stayed the whole summer with us. I remember momma, she would wipe her makeup off on momma's towels and it just got momma so mad. Little things like that, they're not interesting but they're funny to me. (Laughter) Betty Stallnecker, Betty Pascal was her name but she is a Gospel singer now. She's a famous Gospel singer in this part of the country, but that's what she'd do. Of course mother—they had the uh, Southwestern School of Music. What did they call [it]? The School of Music of Southwestern ... anyway. It later moved to the Galloway Home and had the School of Music for Southwestern there for years and years and then it went back to the campus. But there are other things that I just don't think of.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because your mother was a professional musician. How often did you go with your mother, not to the recitals she did with her students, but how often would your mother go to concerts with you?

GORMAN: Oh, she would take us every opportunity that she got. Classical music was her thing, I mean that's what she taught- Beethoven, Bach, and Strauss, these things like that.

PIEHLER: Did you ever see any famous acts coming through Memphis?

GORMAN: I don't remember, I think they did. But I was a boy. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now you were trained in classical piano, your mother was a classical pianist, but what music did you actually like?

GORMAN: I'm kinda semi-classical type. I like beautiful music. This stuff they call music now is noise, its racket. It's not worth listening too. But semi-classical, like ...

PIEHLER: So you didn't listen to Jazz at all growing up?

GORMAN: No, no. I turned it off. I mean I didn't like it. That's classical now. I mean the Jazz. Memphis and Mississippi, that's where it was and that's where it started. The blues, that was the famous, we have some of it in Brownsville Sleepy John Estis was a Blues singer. But usually those people, they lived and sang the songs about the Blues. That was what it was; it was the Blues. And then of course the Jazz came more from Dixieland, down in New Orleans and down in there. Beale Street was, we didn't go on Beale street. We weren't allowed on there.

PIEHLER: Really? your mother said that was off limits?

GORMAN: That's right.

PIEHLER: What about on the farm. Did you ever hear music on the farm from the colored folk?

GORMAN: Yes goodness. They would sing. When we were growing up on the farm we had the two ponds on the lakes. One was a bigger one and one was a smaller one. There was a church right on the corner of the farm. They would always have their meetings in August. And the white folks would baptize, they'd have their meetings a week or two before, and they would come in wagons and things and baptize in that pond. Then the colored folk would come to Hickory Grove church which was right across the road over there, and they would baptize a week or two later because they're meetin' was a little later. We weren't allowed beyond the fence when they were having their baptism. We would stay on the fence; but oh the singing and the shoutin' and the hollering; it was, now they've got rhythm. Black folks have got, they've got beautiful voices, they've really got the rhythm, they really have. But that's just another—see I don't remember these things. You mention 'em and then I can tell you a little bit about it.

PIEHLER: That's why we're here, to ask the questions. You remember quite a bit so you don't have to apologize. You have a very good memory; our goal is to just prompt you a little.

GORMAN: Well, that's what I need.

MAHONEY: Do you remember if they would sing while they were working at all?

GORMAN: Yes, and at night, of course all of them. They didn't like the night. Now moonlight night, they like the moonlight. It was just like day. They had good eyes. Walking in front of the house we had a fence all the way in front of the house. They would come from one side of the farm to the other side of the farm to visit neighbors. If they got caught at night they would have to go walk back across in front of the pond, the house. They would come through there and they would sing at the top of their voices to keep the ghosts away. (Laughter) You could hear them comin' through and singing; and they had good voices, oh boy they really did. They loved to sing. They sang while they work, cooked or things like that. You know, behind the plow, something they could sing.

PIEHLER: Any songs that you remember?

GORMAN: No, most were Gospel songs.

PIEHLER: Most were Gospel?

GORMAN: Gospel that's right. They were Gospel songs ... Negro Spirituals that's exactly what they were. Those days are gone I reckon.

PIEHLER: I'm curious in terms of health, did you ever have to go the hospital when you were growing up?

GORMAN: (Laughter) Oh me. My cousin, my wife's first, he was a doctor ... my mother's first cousin he was a doctor. Of course he would come out there any time we needed him about seven miles from town. As boys you would do things you wasn't supposed to do. (Laughter) I went barefooted. I couldn't wait until the peach trees bloomed and go barefooted. One day I was foolin' around somewhere and I stick a nail in my foot. I was scared to tell mamma and grandmother about it. I slept with my grandmother. A few days went on and then red streaks started going up my leg and so I got restless you know. She said, "John what's the matter with you" and I had to tell her. So she called Johnny, that's what she called him, the doctor. She didn't call him, she sent for him, and he came out there. He had an old car and he said, "Boy, what's the matter with you?" and I said, "I don't know my legs hurting and my foot. I told him I stepped on a nail." He said, "lay across that bed." Before I knew it (sound effects) he had cut open my foot just like that, no anesthetics or anything. He fixed it, but that was it, that's the way they did things in those days. If you wanted a tooth pulled or something like that the dentist would come out in his old buggy or his old car and say "grab that tree right there" and pull your tooth. That's right, that's the way we did it. It was just a lot of changes that have taken place.

MAHONEY: I have a question about grandmamma. How often would she come out to the farm when you were growing up?

GORMAN: She'd come out ... well let's see, I'm a few, I'm about three years older than she is. She would come out all the time. They would come out in this old buggy. (Laughter) Oh me, and the roads were dirt in those days, but ... they were dirt roads. And

um they would come with a horse and buggy. They had colored woman that would come with them and she carried ice pick with her to protect ‘em for the 7 miles. Her name was Mosela and they would stop and sit in the shade and put the horse in the shade and they would sit in the sun so the horse you know could be rested ‘cause it was seven miles to the farm but they came out there all the time. We would have parties out there later on after I got grown. Mannsboro’s house party.

MAHONEY: What would you do out there? During the parties, what were some things you would do?

GORMAN: Oh. I had to work to get ready for them ... (Laughter) Those pancakes ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You can tell them.

GORMAN: She was going to be real nice and smart, and cook breakfast for us. So [what] she cooked first thing was pancakes, well they didn’t turn out quite right.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It was a wood stove (laughs).

GORMAN: Wood stove, we put ‘em outside ... had syrup on ‘em and everything and the dogs wouldn’t even eat the pancakes (laughter) ... oh me.

GORMAN’S WIFE: I was trying to impress him.

GORMAN: But we’d have parties out there, but later on when I—she died, my grandmother died in uh ’41 ... and the house stayed vacant for several years. And during that time- we had some real nice things in that old house. We had a secretary in there that came from Virginia in a covered wagon and vandals got in there and just destroyed some of the stuff. But since then I have had some of it fixed so it is about as good of order as it can get. After that somebody else lived in that house ... but anyway then somebody lived in there in ‘67 or ‘68. We fixed it up we dug a well you know a three hundred foot well, and we had running water and had a bathroom and that was unusual, electricity. That electricity made a lot of things possible, sure did.

PIEHLER: Well in some ways one of the things my students, particular my students at Tennessee, read these interviews but also students from other countries and parts of the world. I think they will have a hard time imagining not having indoor plumbing or electricity.

GORMAN: Oh listen. We had an outhouse. And it was away form the house and the way we would fixed it we would dig a whole about the size, a little smaller than the size of the outhouse and then we would line it with timbers and uh you’d have a bucket of lime in there and we got really uptown when we moved the schoolhouse and it had a concrete floor and two- we had one for the girls and one for the boys and we moved those outhouses too and we thought we were really uptown for having a concrete floor in the outhouse (Laughter).

PIEHLER: That was really living. (Laughter)

GORMAN: That was luxury, it really was. Oh me, but all the houses on the farm had outhouses too and they had a well. We had metal buckets, some wells had wooden buckets. But they were dug by hand. But when I was a boy we got it out by hand or with a bucket, a metal bucket.

PIEHLER: Now your parents, were they wet or dry? Did they drink at all?

GORMAN: No, no. uh my mother she didn't allow it and my father didn't on both sides. Now I imagine some of the folks from Virginia might or other places might have a nip or two, but neither side of my family drank.

PIEHLER: What about the colored folk on the on the farm, was there any moonshine passed or?

GORMAN: (Laughs) Oh yes. As far as I know, in those days they were a lot of thickets because everything was done by mules and thickets. When a little tree was in the middle of the field they wouldn't cut it, they would back off of it and it would get bigger and bigger and then it became a thicket. In these thickets, a lot of times they would make moonshine, but as far as I know there wasn't one on that farm. Now, there were some on joining farms, there was one on the Nunn farm. And around, but they just thought it was a natural way of living, there wasn't anything wrong with it that they could see. They just made the whiskey, the moonshine and, some of 'em liked to drink it too. They liked the spirits. (Laughter) But later on they liked it more and more and I'd have to go to town on Monday mornings to get 'em out of jail. I didn't enjoy that, but I just went with it, tractor driving and things like that you know.

PIEHLER: I always ask people from Memphis, particularly your generation, what they think about Mayor Crump?

GORMAN: Mayor Crump (laughs). Mayor Crump was a benevolent dictator. It's the most efficient form of government that there is. We had a good city, everything was fine and then he died. Of course there were drawbacks to it too, but I wasn't in politics at the time of Mayor Crump. But he ruled that city with an iron hand, he really did. I knew a lot of his ... associates, the Orville Brothers ... Stratton One Hardware Company, others too. But it was a good time, to me it was, of course I was a young fellow and I didn't get into politics much. But it's a lot different from what it is now.

PIEHLER: How often did relatives, particularly your Virginian relatives visit?

GORMAN: Oh not very often, we really didn't have that many in Virginia.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Before you were born there were quite a few from Virginia, they'd visit as long as his grandmother was alive.

GORMAN: Visited Forrest City and they also visited Lagrange which was the Charles Mickey home, my great-great-grandfather in Lagrange Tennessee. That was a beautiful house and in fact it has a historical marker in the front yard where the ... federal troops used it for the hospital or ... a shipbuilder from Biloxi bought that and restored the house completely. Maggie has a picture, you have that? I should have brought that. But there were a lot of old homes. They were a lot of homes, southern colonial, in West Tennessee and people settled there ... and they built these beautiful homes there and that's how they lived they had plenty of help and servants to waited on them, ... but like I say that's an era gone by.

PIEHLER: Did you have servants in Memphis?

GORMAN: We had one. One or two we had Dood, she nursed me. We listened to Stella Dallas together down there on the radio (laughter). She lived in the house.

PIEHLER: How long did she stay in the house?

GORMAN: Oh, I've forgotten how many years.

PIEHLER: So when you were growing up?

GORMAN: Yes, she stayed at the house.

PIEHLER: Now would she come out with you to the farm with you or would she stay in Memphis?

GORMAN: No, she'd drive out to the farm and help on the farm.

PIEHLER: So she'd go with the family.

GORMAN: Yes she'd go with the family.

MAHONEY: Now did you see your mother's—you were closer to your mother's sister, your aunts?

GORMAN: I called her, I couldn't say aunt, so I'd call her Anne. Her name was Minnie Elma. I called her Ann because I couldn't say aunt. And I had another aunt, she's named for her [points to Mahoney], Mary Gwynne. She had a ruptured appendix at eighteen and died out there on the farm. And those were the only three aunts I had, but I just knew two of them. But, Anne Harbert lived with us. She was more like my second mother, she was very close to us. She worked on the cotton trade journal, she was a very fine lady; they had land in Mississippi she with her brother. That's another story too.

MAHONEY: That's where the land in Mississippi came from?



GORMAN: Yes, the farm down there she left it to me. I would go down—she lived in Trezvant Manor and Emma Jane and I would go down to take her to see her little puppy dog. What was the puppy dog's name? A little puppy dog and a colored woman would look after her all the time while she was in Memphis, in Trezvant Manor rather. And we would take her down there every so often to look at this little dog. And course used to go down to her brother's house, he had this beautiful house in Robinsonville, Mississippi and it was his land was all around the house. It was several thousand acres; and I would stay a week or two at a time during the summer time. I remember shooting pigeons with a sling shot from the barn down there (Laughter). I remember that. He had a commissary down there now, now it's the Hollywood restaurant, or café or something.

PIEHLER: But then it was a commissary?

GORMAN: It was a commissary. The plantations in those days would have commissaries to furnish the hands. Everything was still by mules and things. That's where they would do all the settling up in the fall, but I played in that commissary a lot of times, many a times. Now things like that, we went down there and ate one time in the restaurant. They have good catfish down there. They have good, in all that area they have catfish ponds down father on Mississippi below Tunica.

PIEHLER: Now in your farm, you didn't have a commissary did you?

GORMAN: No, we had little stores around that were very close. I don't know if we had a commissary out there at one time or not. That was about 2000 acres at one time

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Your mom had some things ...

GORMAN: In those days we had, we couldn't keep things from freezing so she built this log house away from the main house with a basement in it and lined it with bricks and she would keep jars and fruit jars and things. She loved to cook and can things like that, my grandmother did. That's where she kept it, at this log house with this little basement under it and it wouldn't freeze. You had to keep some way from freezing. But that's gone too now.

BOULTON: You were still very young, but how aware were you of world events like Hitler coming to power or things to that effect?

GORMAN: That was in the 30's. I wasn't too impressed with that, I mean I wasn't too cognizant of the fact because ... I read about things.

BOULTON: Did your family get newspapers?

GORMAN: Yes I don't know whether they have any old newspapers or not. Do you remember? I know there is a copy of the Commercial Appeal in the old desk out at the farm. It was a centennial edition and it's still out there I think. Now what's in it, I don't

know that was some years back. I put it there, and John, my son, still lives out there unless he took it out of that old desk. But then course when I did go to the military. I graduate from high school and went to Southwestern. That was in '44 wasn't it? '43 or '44. I knew that I was going to get drafted so I started in Southwestern and I got drafted I think in October. That was it, after that ... more than that I don't know how long was Blanding.

MAHONEY: So when you decided to go to Southwestern before, why did you decide to go there?

GORMAN: Because I could get established there, do it like I was doing the school there, which I was. That's what I wanted to do. It worked out good, because I got the G.I. Bill after that and took up there where I left off.

PIEHLER: Growing up you mentioned going to Mississippi, Arkansas, and obviously the farm. Where else did you travel?

GORMAN: I didn't travel much when I was growing up, we didn't travel very much.

PIEHLER: What's the farthest east that you've gone?

GORMAN: That I have gone?

PIEHLER: No, before the war.

GORMAN: Oh, I don't know. I expect the farthest was Nashville.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You went to New York with Carl and Anne.

GORMAN: Went to Chicago ... that's right.

PIEHLER: When did you go to Chicago? Oh you went to the World's Fair of '32.

GORMAN: No I went to Dallas Centennial in '35.

PIEHLER: Okay, so that's the farthest south and west that you have been?

GORMAN: My grandfather, he moved to Texas, to Mercedes, Texas and he established a law office down there. And he had some property down there and in '36 my mother and my aunt and I went down there to dispose of it. He had a little hotel and grapefruit orchard and a few other things. Which was unheard of in those days, he had a Mexican secretary. Her name was Maria Laura, but she was real good and she liked me and she cooked me a whole tub of hot tamales one day (Laughter). I remember that, you know little things like that. But we did stop off at the Dallas Centennial. That was the first place I remember television. This was in '36 I think, there was only one room and you would pick up a telephone and the other end of the phone you could see who you were talking to

and they could see you (laughter). That really impressed me I remember little things like that ... That was when I was about four years old. Granddaddy had a cabin out there right over in Twin Lakes Colorado right over the mountain from Aspen.

PIEHLER: So that's when you were four.

GORMAN: When I was four; I wish we have that cabin now but we don't. (Laughter).

MAHONEY: I do too.

GORMAN: We went out there, Mother took my brother and I, took me to Twin Lakes, Colorado and it was in July. We went out there and we stayed in these little cabins they had, someone was using our cabin. So, we stayed in these cabins and I remember in July the water froze in the water bucket that night now that impressed me because it was cold out there and I wasn't used to that kind of weather in July (Laughter). It's a beautiful country out there. The highest incorporated town at that time in America was ... Leadville, Colorado that's right. It was a mining time and we went up there and saw Leadville, but that was a long time ago I've forgotten a lot about that.

PIEHLER: How far north did you travel?

GORMAN: Chicago.

PEIHLER: And you were there for what?

GORMAN: Oh I went up there for, stayed in a hotel right off of Lake Michigan, I've forgotten the name of it, but my aunt her husband took me up there with them. I think it was Morrison Hotel, but I was a little boy and I had a good time. Big city, oh my goodness. (Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It was the world's fair wasn't it?

GORMAN: No I didn't go to the World's Fair that was in New York.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You went to the World's Fair in New York.

GORMAN: I did? Well I don't remember. She remembers a lot that I don't. I might have. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well we should maybe look through the albums if you did.

GORMAN: (Laughter) Maybe ... I've forgotten so much.

PIEHLER: Well you've remembered quite a bit. You don't have to be so apologetic. Why don't we break for lunch and then we can think about unless you had a question.

MAHONEY: Just one more question about Anne Harbert. How did did your family come to know your family?

GORMAN: Anne Harbert and her brother Frank Harbert ... now their father died and their mother was mentally unstable. She was in an institution, so my grandmother took these two children in, she and some other folks, and she helped raise them. ... They never forgot it. And so when my ... when Anne Harbert, Frank Harbert died first, he owned this commissary in Mississippi and Anne had a farm down there it was about 750 acres and so she left it to us, Emma Jane and me.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: But you left out that Anne stayed on the porch at the farm for so many years.

GORMAN: Yes Anne was a fine lady, but she never married, But we built a little screen porch at the farmhouse out at Mannsboro for her and she had tuberculosis and she stayed on that porch winter and summer for two years; and it completely cured her tuberculosis, the fresh air. But that was the way they did it. Just things like that she remembers, I forget them. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well let's take a break for lunch.

GORMAN: Alright.

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: Before we sort of go to the war itself, is there anything we forgot to ask you about, particularly Brownsville or growing up in Memphis.

GORMAN: Oh different things.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I'll tell you something.

GORMAN: That willow tree?

MAHONEY: It's okay. What about it?

GORMAN: Well Marnie and Billy Barns were friends of mine. They helped develop Holiday Inn. They came out to see me one day and grandmamma went to town. She had a prized willow tree on the side of the bank. So we decided we would make a raft out of that willow tree and we cut the willow tree down and made a raft and it floated real well. But then when she got home I got it, about cutting that willow tree down. (Laughter) That's just something I happened to think about back on the farm you know. We had a pile of white oak posts and decided to make a raft out of those. And I tied 'em together got the raft and I was going to float out like Mark Twain or something like that. I didn't know that white oak doesn't float. And it sunk to the bottom of the pond and as far as I know it's at the bottom. Little things like that, we used to kill birds with sling shots. We'd

make sling shots you know, and break up cast iron for the bullets and sometime we'd get ball bearings out of the wrong places like mowing machines and things like that. But we were told never to shoot a sling shot at a person and we tried to go by that rule, 'cause a sling shot, it can hurt you, we'd kill birds and rabbits and everything. But some of the things, I'll mention some other things and I'll think of something else.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: When you were in college you were quite a man about town.

GORMAN: Nobody mentioned that, that's all right.

MAHONEY: He was 'most handsome.'

PIEHLER: What year did you enter college?

GORMAN: In '44 and then I was two years in the war and then came back in '46.

PIEHLER: Did you enter in September of '44 or earlier than that?

GORMAN: September of '44.

PIEHLER: You were there for one semester?

GORMAN: Not even one semester, till October. I was there for about three or four weeks and that was it. (Laughter) Then I was drafted.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: He was voted 'Most Handsome Man' He was so popular with all the girls. (Laughter) The cotillion and all of those things too.

GORMAN: That's not important.

MAHONEY: I wanted to ask you a question about the Cotton Carnival. You were involved, they still do that in Memphis. I know there were pictures of you.

GORMAN: Yes, she was Lady of the Realm. That's how I got to go to the Cotton Carnival with her. Talk about a man about town, that was a lady about town.

MAHONEY: But when you were a little boy, there's pictures of you as prince and princess with Halcyon Hughes.

GORMAN: That was a play we were in wasn't it? Yeah. We would always have at the end of school we would have some kind of presentation, a program or something like that and that was one of them. She was a princess and I was a prince, the white uniform, costume, they were costumes, that's exactly what they were.

MAHONEY: You were on a swing.

GORMAN: I'm not remembering too well.

PIEHLER: That actually did bring up something in terms of high school. Did you go to your school dances and proms, did you have them?

GORMAN: Yes. We had them and we would go to them and it was real nice.

PIEHLER: Where did you have your school senior prom? Do you remember?

GORMAN: Oh no, I don't remember that. We had a lake out there. Where was that lake ... past through Germantown and in through Collierville. And that was a popular place for people to go. It had a band stand at the time, but that was way out in the country from Memphis. Now it's just a suburb of Memphis. But that was—social life, when I was going to school in Memphis I didn't have too much. She [Emma Jane] was in a sorority, AOPI. Now when I went to high school, she remembers it I don't. (Laughter)

MAHONEY: Well now you went to Webb School? Where is that?

GORMAN: That's in Bell Buckle, Tennessee about fifty miles below Nashville. It's a wonderful prep school. They have more Rhodes Scholars than any other school.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It was an all boy's school.

MAHONEY: And you lived there?

GORMAN: Mm hmm. I lived in an old house called the Clary house about seven or eight boys of us lived there and one teacher. Boy, we did more stuff in there. (Laughter)

MAHONEY: Gave him a hard time.

PIEHLER: So how many years did you spend at Central?

GORMAN: About three, and a year at Webb.

PIEHLER: So you graduated actually from Webb.

GORMAN: No I didn't. I came back and graduate at Central at summertime.

MAHONEY: So why did you go to Webb? Why did your mother decide to send you there?

GORMAN: It was a good school. Strict school. Things happened there. You had rules and regulations you had to go by. One night one fellow—you had night school and you had certain rooms that you would go to night school in if you didn't behave right you know. So I had to go to night school one night, more than once. (Laughter) But there was one particular fellow there he went up to Sony Webb, he was the headmaster and he said,

“Alright. You’re gonna have to go to night school because you didn’t behave.” And he said, “well I just stepped off the walk.” And said, “well, I want you to send your part that stepped off the walk to school.” Well he had a wooden leg so he sent the wooden leg to school. (Laughter) Things like that you know. Then we would get a holiday and sing they hymn “Halleluiah and the glory” and we could really put it out when we wanted a holiday. We had a big room up there and everybody met in that room. It was called the Big Room and that’s where we had the big pot belly stove and we would meet in there and in the cold. You could blow those stoves if you put too much coal in them. We’d fill it up with coals and it’d blow. When we wanted to go to a holiday or something, we knew one was coming up why we would sing and we would get a holiday. We would go out to the creek, oh we had a time. Had chemical warfare I remember that. Got some onions and if the wind was blowing right there was a little island in that creek and some of us would get on the island and others would get on the bank and they would try to get us off that island. There was this one fellow named Charlie Bowen and he said he was going to fix us. We were on the island. He got some onions and the wind was going to blow it over and run us off the island see, but the wind shifted and came back and ran him off the bank. But it’s just little things like that you know, we had a good time up there. We’d go spelunking in caves and limestone caves up there in that part of the country. (Laughter) That limestone can shift at any time you know and we would crawl into those caves on our stomach and water bout; half to here (gestures) holding your head up and then you’d get to a big room back in there somewhere, great big room. And it was interesting, we used to do that all the time but she didn’t like that at all. She doesn’t like caves to this day. We went over to one in Arkansas and this guide took us down and said, “Now I’m gonna’ show you what total darkness is.” I had her by the hand and he cut those lights off. He turned ‘em back on, it was about a minute I think, and she said, “It was a good thing ‘cause I was going to scream I had to scream.” (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What was it that you wanted to do when you were growing up?

GORMAN: Farmer.

PIEHLER: Farmer.

GORMAN: I was going to be a plantation owner and sit on my porch and watch other folks work, but it didn’t work out that way. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You knew you wanted to be a farmer.

GORMAN: Knew I wanted to be a farmer.

PIEHLER: You were always on a farm at least during the weekends.

GORMAN: Yes that’s where I was raised on the farm.

PIEHLER: Were you ever in an organization such as Future Farmer of America or any of those clubs.

GORMAN: No because I lived in the city and I'd go to the farm on the weekends. Everything was put out of kilter as far as structured school, anything like that.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: After that you were President of Farm Bureau.

GORMAN: Oh that's later Mamma, Soybean Association and things like that.

PIEHLER: Do remember where you were when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

GORMAN: That was in '41. I don't remember. She remembers. I don't remember. I don't remember where I was.

PIEHLER: You were still pretty young when Pearl Harbor ...

GORMAN: Yeah that's right. I was about fourteen or something like that.

PIEHLER: Did you think you'd be fighting in a war?

GORMAN: No. No I didn't have any idea. (Laughter)

BOULTON: Did you follow it growing up? Did you follow what was going on?

GORMAN: A little bit, I wasn't interested in the war. Not at about fourteen or fifteen.

PIEHLER: Did you lose any of your help from the farm? Did any of them go into the service?

GORMAN: Not that I can remember.

PIEHLER: No one that you knew?

GORMAN: Not on the farm.

PIEHLER: What about your brother? Did he go in the service?

GORMAN: My brother was six years younger than I was. The war was over and he was in the Navy and he was a supply officer on a Goodwill ship and they made ports of call in the Mediterranean and all over the world. They would entertain these dignitaries and things like that and he had it made. On a ship where you come home to a nice warm bed and the best food in the world. My goodness. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Very different from your end.

GORMAN: Very different.



PIEHLER: I'm just curious, before we start in on the war, did you have any Klan activity near Brownsville at all?

GORMAN: Klan?

PIEHLER: Yeah the Klan.

GORMAN: No. I can't remember any, I sure can't. The Ku Klux Klan was formed for a reason. After the Civil war the carpet baggers came in and they excited the negroes and gave them positions of responsibility which they wasn't capable of holding at all. So something had to be done and that's why the Klan was formed.

PIEHLER: I'm curious because when I first started doing oral history in New Jersey up at Rutgers I remember one of the people involved with the project said, "You know back when we were in college in the 1930's and 40's there were still Civil War veterans alive."

GORMAN: Well sure. See me grandfather he wasn't a veteran, but he knew—he had been in the war and he knew both Lee and Grant. And he related to me a lot of stories. And he was captured as a spy and taken before a Union general and he didn't like it. They just were looking for him everywhere at home. And another general ... guard duty fellow, who was guarding him he said, "You see general so and so. General Grant is a rough fellow, but you see General McPherson". I think that's who it was, but I have forgotten, but he went to see him and sure enough they let him go. He said he came home and they had been looking for him everywhere. I think they kept him for several days. They had been looking for him everywhere and they were so glad to see him when they got home. That was about the end of his ... and then later on of course he met General Lee at Washington's College.

PIEHLER: Was he a student there at Washington?

GORMAN: Yes

PIEHLER: And so Lee was the President.

GORMAN: Yes, he was the President. He said Lee was such a wonderful fellow.

MAHONEY: That's where the letter is from right? General Lee wrote the letter to him while he was in college.

GORMAN: He just thought the world of General Lee. And evidently General Lee must have really thought the world of him, because he was one of the few to honor him in his funeral procession.

PIEHLER: Really?

GORMAN: Yes.

PIEHLER: What else in particular do you remember that people, veterans, and those that lived through the Civil War would tell you?

GORMAN: Well it was a pretty rough time. When they came down—of course Shiloh is up there where we go and have our family reunion at Pickwick you know I was telling you. And that was a terrible battleground there and what I think hurt the South as far as feelings and things was the way they came through, Sherman especially. They destroyed so many homes and families and things like that. And of course many of them, they used our ancestral home, Woodlawn, over in Lagrange, Tennessee they didn't destroy that. They used it for headquarters and it has a marker on the front of it describing what it was used for and how. I have a picture of that, but I didn't bring it. I've forgotten exactly what it says. But that was one of the things that made feelings so hard and they were hard to take from what I've gathered, from what folks have told, my folks have told me and things like that. And then of course the Reconstruction after the war. That was worse than the war in many ways, you asked me about the Ku Klux Klan. But that was why it was formed.

PIEHLER: Before I forget to ask, did you see *Gone with the Wind* when it came out in 1939?

GORMAN: I did. It was on Main Street. It was at the Warner Theatre I think down there ... in Memphis, and I saw it. But that's exactly what it is, gone with the wind. Beautiful, but that was very—I don't know about the characters, but the colored folks, that's the way they acted, that's the way they were. Chrissy, I remember her and Old Mammy, she was just like that ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: People loved each other.

GORMAN: That's right.

MAHONEY: Now in the scrapbook there is a mention of General Braddock.

GORMAN: General Braddock, that was the Revolutionary War. That was my great-great-grandfather's wife, the niece of General Braddock. I have a portrait of her that Sully did.

PIEHLER: Oh Thomas Sully the artist?

GORMAN: Yes .

PIEHLER: You have ...

GORMAN: They were friends. Edgar Allen Poe, they were all friends. My great-great grandfather was an artist. He has some works in the Valentine Museum in Richmond.

PIEHLER: What was his name, do you remember?

GORMAN: Edward Frederick. And he had painted a full life portrait of Lafayette and it's in the Valentine Museum up there now. They were friends.

PIEHLER: Did you see ...

-----END OF TAPE 1, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: I'm trying to get Maggie to do her whole Honor's project on your family, particularly your war time letters so ... Well this continues an interview with John P. Gorman on April 8, 2005 in Nashville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler.

BOULTON: Mark Boulton.

MAHONEY: Maggie Mahoney.

PIEHLER: And Mr. Gorman is joined by his lovely wife Mrs. Gorman. We were just talking about family, and it sounds like you heard family stories all the time.

GORMAN: I have.

PIEHLER: In a sense, when you dabbled with them what would you talk about?

GORMAN: Well, I heard a lot about family. Lot of both sides, on my father and mother's side of the family.

PIEHLER: For you it might seem like an obvious question what did you do, but I think a number of students reading this interview who now have TV and video games and computers and they can easily just get in the car often. You grew up in a world, not so much in Memphis, but when you were on the farm ...

GORMAN: Didn't have anything.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so talking was ...

GORMAN: That's right you talked, you visited with people. Of course when folks came to see you they stayed a little longer than they do now. Might stay two or three days or something. It was an easier time, it was a slower time because transportation and communications weren't near what they are today. But it was a good time.

PIEHLER: And you didn't have a telephone out on the farm?

GORMAN: No, no, a telephone was unheard of.

PIEHLER: So you had one in Memphis?

GORMAN: You had one in Memphis.

PIEHLER: But in Brownsville on the farm you didn't have a telephone.

GORMAN: We had no way to communicate except to go out there.

MAHONEY: How long did it take you to get from Memphis to the farm in you car?

GORMAN: Well we came 70 and we had that old '31 Chevrolet with the side-mounted tires on it, I remember that, and it would take about an hour and a half or two.

MAHONEY: Not too long.

GORMAN: Not to long no, just down the road ... but things have changed along 70. Of course a lot of traffic has been taken off 70 since the interstate came along, but it's still a much used road.

PIEHLER: I'm curious after Pearl Harbor did you face any shortages or did it affect the farm at all?

GORMAN: Well I wasn't farming at the time, but there were shortages. I remember sugar, tires, and gasoline. You had stamps—shoes, rations.

PIEHLER: So you stopped going to the farm during the war?

GORMAN: No, we went out there during the war. But see, after that my grandmother died in '41 so we didn't go to the farm, no, not during that time. That was the time that it was vacant, the house.

PIEHLER: And what happened to the people, the farm hands, the people who worked on the farm, the colored folk, where did they go?

GORMAN: They went to other places, most of them were pretty old. And about that time things were coming along in town and some of them moved to town, some of them moved off, but the older ones died right there.

PIEHLER: So ... between '41 and '44 you really were living in Memphis except for the year you moved out to the Webb School? You were no longer having the trips back and forth?

GORMAN: No, we would go out there every now and then to see about things, but not every weekend.

PIEHLER: Now how was your mother's business during the war?

GORMAN: No, it seemed like it held up pretty well. Mamma believed in teaching the basics starting from the ... a four year old. Four years old is when she liked to get a child. She would teach 'em all the way through high school. She had two of her prized pupils. This was one of them [pointing to Emma Jane]. Two boys, Dr. John Gratts still living in Memphis and he still plays the piano beautifully. And Jimmy McClin, another one, he lived in Earl, Arkansas but he has since died. They would come over from Earl and take music.

PIEHLER: The Gratts family, that sounds like a very familiar name.

GORMAN: John Gratts, he married. He's a radiologist and I think he used to go to Brownsville, but now he goes to Arkansas. But he's a wonderful pianist; he's a genius, that's what he is. Mamma classified him that way they were both geniuses. He could play anything anywhere with anybody.

MAHONEY: Would your mother play for you a lot?

GORMAN: I heard it so much, the practicing, and the scales and all that and all the classical. I heard it every day all the time. She didn't play, because she was so tired. (Laughter)

MAHONEY: Did she have a separate little studio or where was the piano room in the house?

GORMAN: It was in the dining room. We ate in the breakfast room and of course we had Alice the cook and Alfred, her husband, lived in the back house back there. She ... cooked for us, she was a wonderful, good cook. Jolly and fat. She knew what I liked to eat (Laughter). She fed me. But the place was in the house in the dining room. And she had a Steinway piano. She got that for a present and my daughter ... from her father ... and her daughter, that's the piano

MAHONEY: It's in my house.

PIEHLER: Oh, you have the Steinway [talking to Mahoney]. The Steinway that goes back?

MAHONEY: That was your mother's.

PIEHLER: Your mother's from her father. It would be your great-great-grandmother.

MAHONEY: Because we play.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: She plays beautifully.

PIEHLER: Oh so you play the piano too?

MAHONEY: Mm hmm. My sister took it too.

PIEHLER: Oh interesting.

MAHONEY: And all of their children took it, right? For some time.

GORMAN: Mm hmm. they came to get that piano, the moving folks came. We had two pianos. We had another one there with that. We had two grands in the house. They called up from the interstate and said we've come for the piano (Laughs). Wasn't long before tears came down these eyes and they loaded the piano and took it back. But then last year, or the year before last, I got her another Steinway so she has a new Steinway now. (Laughter) She plays it all the time

EMMA JANE GORMAN: We have enjoyed it.

PIEHLER: So you still play?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Oh yes.

MAHONEY: She's very good.

GORMAN: She's good.

MAHONEY: She used to play at the Crescent Club in Memphis, which is a very nice restaurant. She would go down on the weekends sometimes and play.

GORMAN: She still plays for church and different places around town.

MAHONEY: She used to teach to.

PIEHLER: There was a Navy base in Memphis and, air force?

GORMAN: Yes, Navy.

PIEHLER: Yeah, ... and I think there's aviation. I'm getting Nashville and Memphis confused in terms of factors. I know there's a big aviation plant in Memphis. Did you work at all from the time between Pearl Harbor and before you went to the army?

GORMAN: No, I didn't have any. I was in high school. I didn't have any jobs at all. Oh, I used to throw papers and things like that. We were out of town on weekends before that and I didn't have a paper route I could deliver on Saturday or Sunday. I didn't have a paper route, but a lot of boys did. I helped some of them throw it as a substitute but I didn't have a regular one. Oh I used to work for different places, Happy Day Men's clothing down there.

PIEHLER: When was that?

GORMAN: That was when I was in college wasn't it? That was in the afternoon and on Saturdays.

PIEHLER: Did the war change Memphis at all from what you could tell? Did anything strike you?

GORMAN: Well, except the rationing and there were a lot of soldiers, a lot of men, out of Memphis, out of town. The USO would come there when they would have soldiers there like out at Millington base, and they would come for the entertainment and things like that. But I don't know otherwise, 'course it affected it because the war was going on ... The thing about World War II, people were behind it, they were in agreement with it. There wasn't any dissension in it. They were for the soldier; everything went out for the war effort. They were working together and it worked. Now days I don't know, it's different. I think Its been said that World War II was the last real war that we fought, have had. The rest of them Vietnam, Korean, they haven't been the same. And I think the people have felt it and the soldiers have felt it, and everything.

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier you wanted to get started with college and so you entered what is now become Rhodes College.

GORMAN: Yes.

PIEHLER: When did you get your draft notice and where were you?

GORMAN: I've forgotten. I guess I might have gotten before I started at school but I went on to school I was hoping that if I was in school maybe they wouldn't draft me. But ... that was about the time I was drafted. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Had you thought about trying to enlist? I know it was very difficult, but had you thought of trying?

GORMAN: Never entered my mind. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Never entered your mind, no?

GORMAN: Once I got in I was looking for the time I got out (Laughter). Now see I got out on a dependence of discharge. My mother and my brother had the farm and they would ... go out and see about it and tend to it and I put in for a discharge from overseas and they put in for a discharge in the states. And I've forgotten which one, but one of them was denied and the other one went through. I was laying in my barracks one night and a sergeant walked in and said, "John you want to go home?", I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "You can go home." I said boy ... and I had a pass the next week to Switzerland, and Austria and all over that part of the country and all I wanted, still want to go over there, but nothing like going home. (Laughter) We were stationed at Frankfurt, Germany at their headquarters after the war. After the war ended in Japan in

the Pacific theater, because in that time in the end of the war in Europe to the time of the end of the war in Japan, we were training to go over to Japan, that's what we were training for.

PIEHLER: You got your draft notice, where did you have to report?

GORMAN: Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

PIEHLER: That's where you had to report?

GORMAN: I think so. It was in Georgia, the other one was when I got my discharge, Atterbury Indiana.

PIEHLER: So you reported in Memphis?

GORMAN: No, I went down there I think, and then came back home.

PIEHLER: By the way, were you living on campus or were you living at home?

GORMAN: I was living at home. You see I just lived a few blocks from Rhodes.

PIEHLER: Oh okay.

GORMAN: And I could ride my bicycle, walk or I walked most of the time. In those days every family if they were lucky then they didn't have but one car. My momma needed the car so I would walk to school, it wasn't very far. About a half a mile I'd say. No, I enjoyed that part of my life and there were a lot of things I just overlooked.

PIEHLER: So when you reported, how did you get to Fort Oglethorpe?

GORMAN: Train.

PIEHLER: Did you go with another draftee?

GORMAN: Mm hmm. There were some others, I remember some. Jimmy Nelson went with me and several others, but we didn't wind up in the same outfit overseas. I saw some of them, but I don't remember where they were at the time.

PIEHLER: And after you got to Fort Oglethorpe what happened next?

GORMAN: We just took a physical and got inducted and I think we went home and then had to report somewhere. All of that is kind of vague. I went to Blanding but that is where I had my basic training. It was north of St. Augustine.

PIEHLER: When you reported to Camp Blanding what time of the year was it? You got drafted in October so it was November?



GORMAN: I would think so. Some time back in there. I have never been as cold in my life as I got in Blanding ... It wasn't but about thirty seven degrees in that cold sand down there and that cold wind blowing down there with the moisture over the ocean. Oh me I near froze down there. I didn't get as cold in Germany as I got down there (laughter).

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier that you had a very abbreviated training, you only had six weeks?

GORMAN: I think it was six weeks. They were in a hurry they needed troops and they would just put you through the very basics stuff, at the time I was training for Intelligence and reconnaissance troop. I don't know what I wound up in something similar overseas, got scattered. We landed at Le Havre. We went over in a big boat, a beautiful Italian luxury [liner], [they'd] adapted it for troops and put bunks in it and things like that and they had us packed in there. We landed in the Le Havre and then from there its kind of hazy because we were shipped everywhere, we walked everywhere. And we came home from the Le Havre, but we came in a victory boat. They had a band around that boat to hold it together and that's what held it together.

PIEHLER: The victory boat.

GORMAN: The victory boat, that's exactly what it was.

PIEHLER: I'd like to back up a bit. Going to Basic training, you had grown up on a farm and you were used to the outdoors. How did you take to the army way of shooting?

GORMAN: Well, it wasn't any trouble. I'd been shooting a rifle nearly all my life.

PIEHLER: They didn't try to teach you the army way or did you adapt?

GORMAN: No that's the way I shot [it]. The way I'd been doing it was the way they did it.

PIEHLER: So you didn't have a clash?

GORMAN: No, I didn't have a clash at all.

PIEHLER: What was the easiest task of basic training and what was the hardest?

GORMAN: I guess the easiest part was lying in the bunk. (Laughter) They had sand down there and sand got in everything. And you had to keep it out of your bed. So we had these sand caps made out of a blanket that would keep it out of your pillow. You were supposed to have been able to bounce a half dollar on your [bed sheet]. That tight you know. So, I could get in that bed and sleep on my back just as well as anything and never disturb those covers at all. That's the way I did it. I'd slip in that bed so I didn't

have to make it up; I made it up a little bit but I didn't mess it up much. (Laughter) We had five men to a house.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Was it a tent?

GORMAN: No, it wasn't a tent it was a little house. All the windows let up on it so you could get some air [through there], but we didn't need air. (Laughter) We'd have to go on these hikes. I don't know what they'd call them. They'd be about twenty miles or something like that with a full pack and things like that. They were training and it came in pretty handy. I carried bazookas around in the war and they were heavy.

BOULTON: Could you describe some of the people that went through Basic with, where they came from?

GORMAN: Well, there were several from my hometown and I think they were with me in basic training. Jimmy Nelson was I know, I remember him. He was a little fellow always comical and putting a little humor in things, and I've forgotten who else. But I remember him, in basic training.

MAHONEY: Were there people from all other areas?

GORMAN: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Any Yankees?

GORMAN: Yes a few Yankees. (Laughter) In war I remember a little better those in my platoon.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you were being trained as a replacement.

GORMAN: That's exactly right.

PIEHLER: So these were not going to people that you would serve with.

GORMAN: No ... I was a replacement. That's what they were doing in those days, replacements because they were losing some and needed replacements.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about your sergeants, your drill instructors and others?

GORMAN: Oh boy that fellow he was real nice, a big fellow. His name was Honeycutt down at Blanding. I remember him. But he was pretty strict, but he had a sense of humor and he smiled a lot so that helped a lot.

PIEHLER: Had seen service in combat?

GORMAN: I don't think so. I don't think he had.

PIEHLER: How old was he?

GORMAN: In his twenties. They wanted 'em young because they had to go through some pretty vigorous training they usually went with you to boot camps and things like that. So they were mostly young.

PIEHLER: How often did you have to do KP [Kitchen Patrol]?

GORMAN: Oh that came around every now and then, that was pretty regular. I didn't goof off any in the army. I was kind of scared to. We would have regular KP and they trained you to clean up the latrines and things like that you know, wash up the lavatories. That would come around and then digging ditches. We could dig ditches most anywhere. A lot of sand down there, it was in everything, Your food your gum. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now did you smoke at the time?

GORMAN: No, I didn't smoke. I did one time. I won a pipe in the KP after the war, I mean in the PX after the war and I filled that pipe up with tobacco and I dropped it and broke the stem of it. (Laughter) You remember little things like that when you mention it.

MAHONEY: Now when did your mother and brother go visit you?

GORMAN: Christmas. Christmas they came down there and rode all that way down there on the train and I slept for two days and a night. (Laughter) I was worn out I reckon. I was a young fellow at the time too. I was tired.

MAHONEY: So how long did they stay?

GORMAN: Oh I think about a day after that, because I just had a three days pass. But I did get to come home after basic training was over before I went overseas and I left Pennsylvania, I think is where I left for overseas.

MAHONEY: You said you went to New York before you left?

GORMAN: Yeah, I went to New York. No, that was a pass I got to go to New York and see the Rockettes. Radio City Music Hall. But it was, it wasn't Adberry, that was in Indiana ...

PIEHLER: Fort Hicks, or Camp Kilmer?

GORMAN: Kilmer that sounds right in Pennsylvania I think, New Jersey

PIEHLER: New Jersey

GORMAN: New Jersey that's right. I think that's it that's right. And we shipped out from that camp overseas.

PIEHLER: You went to Radio City Music Hall. Did you go to the Stage Door Canteen?

GORMAN: I don't think so, I might have. I don't know and I don't remember. I remember the Rockettes.

PIEHLER: Did your mother tell you to do anything in New York; she had gone to Julliard?

GORMAN: No, she didn't, She didn't tell me to see anybody. I don't know that she knew anybody.

PIEHLER: The Rockettes have left quite an impression (Laughs).

GORMAN: We had a friend at home. He's a CPA [Certified Public Accountant], my CPA, and his wife was a Rockette. Betty was a Rockette wasn't she? That's in my mind.

PIEHLER: Oh okay so there is also a continuing connection with the Rockettes. (Laughter) How long you were home in Memphis before shipping out? How many days did they give you?

GORMAN: I don't remember exactly, maybe a week or two.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I don't think it was two.

GORMAN: It was a very short time I remember. They were in a hurry for replacements. That's what they wanted and everything was eating up in the war.

PIEHLER: When did you sail from New York, do you remember?

GORMAN: Oh it was in January I think. And as I remember I don't think I don't know whether we were in a convoy or not. Really convoys were for the German U-boats you know. But we didn't get shot at, we didn't sunk I know. We got over there so it worked all right.

BOULTON: That was a short period of time. Did you feel that basic prepared you for your experience?

GORMAN: I'd say it did. They did a good job it was very concentrated. I think they did. But of course there wasn't anything that could prepare you for it.

PIEHLER: Well it sounds like you still did a lot of hiking you do in basic. They had you marching quite a bit.

GORMAN: Oh yes. You did a lot in basic, you had formations. Training with machine guns, and rifles, and things like that you know there was something every day and what you did. I don't remember exactly when

PIEHLER: You arrived in Le Havre in February or January?

GORMAN: I think January or February. I've forgotten which.

PIEHLER: Where did they send you after Le Havre?

GORMAN: From there, we went to the front, we were in trucks and that was hazy, very hazy because they were moving you around until you got on the front.

PIEHLER: Were you in a replacement depot battle for any of the time?

GORMAN: Not that I can remember.

PIEHLER: And you would serve with the 63<sup>rd</sup> Division and Company F in the 255<sup>th</sup> Infantry. You came into an existing unit, what was that like as a replacement?

GORMAN: Well, it was pretty rough. They were pretty rough on new fellows. You know you were the very bottom of the totem pole and you got all the things that they didn't want to do.

BOULTON: What kinds of things?

GORMAN: Well, like carrying those bazookas for one and digging fox holes for another. It was just, then you got there for a little while and things picked up. We had a lieutenant whose name was Schaeffer and had a first sergeant whose name was Abelard I think that's what it was. Remember that thing we found on the list ... and they were all right. It's just— war is just bad that's all it is. And things happened that you don't realize are going to happen, you don't think are going to happen. This conflict over here in Iraq right now with the news media, it's terrible how they report the news over there and bring it back. How many people have died and the soldiers and the families and they all want to make it sound as bad as they can. In World War II we didn't have that. We had a magazine over there called *The Stars and Stripes* that came out over there and you had the radio stations and, I never met him, but Ernie Powell was a reporter. I don't know if you've read about him, he went with the GI's and he told it how it was and you didn't get a play by play description of the casualties and things like that. That's what hurt this war over there and the people over here in the United States more than anything else, I believe. And they want to tell the bad things over there. A lot of good has happened in Iraq. You never hear about it in the news media. No, you never will hear anything like that. It's tragic, it's bad. 'Cause people back at home need to know the good things not only the bad.

PIEHLER: Going back to your war, when did you join the unit was it night or day?

GORMAN: I don't know. I don't remember that at all. I think it was at night.

PIEHLER: And they were actually on the line?

GORMAN: We were in trucks and we would go, I guess the closest call I ever had was with white phosphorous. You know what that is? We were in an apple orchard. It was mined and you could hear these soldiers screaming up there when they stepped on the land mine, and these shells started coming in and I remember I hit the dirt and rolled over on my back. A wad of that stuff went right across my chest and it didn't touch me, but if it had just been about an inch or two lower that would have been it and I've always thanked the Lord for that. He looked after me over there and got me home, that's right. There's been other times too, but that was the closest I ever came.

PIEHLER: That was the closest, the incident with the phosphorous? Any other close calls?

GORMAN: Oh I don't know that's the closest I remember. There were a few others, like I say that time in a way it was hazy in a way. I remember instances like that. We went through this German village one time and they couldn't bury the dead and the people were just out there, laying out in the street like that. Things like that made an impression.

MAHONEY: You spoke a lot about your good friend you met up there, Womack. Where was he from?

GORMAN: Womack. I don't remember where he was from, but I do remember he was an Indian. He was a very religious fellow. He always talked about the Bible all the time and Jesus. He was a big fellow, but he helped everybody he was just that kind of person, I don't know what happened to him.

MAHONEY: You have a picture of him.

GORMAN: Yes I do. But he wasn't with us after the war in the occupation forces. I don't know he might have been sent somewhere else, but I don't know where that is.

PIEHLER: It sounds like he had been in the unit for a long time. Womack.

GORMAN: Not too long I don't think. I'd say several months or something like that.

PIEHLER: How many old timers were in the unit?

GORMAN: Oh there were some old-timers. I think, I don't know how old that division was. But there was one in there we called Pat Pop. He shouldn't have been in there, he was really too old to be in there. He was in his 30's or early 40's. I don't know how he

got in there, but he just barely made it as far as marching and things like that you know. Then I was trying to think of some others

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I've never been able to get him to talk about the war. Did you have to shoot the bazookas?

GORMAN: They weren't anything to shoot, it was carrying them (Laughter).

MAHONEY: So you mentioned part of your role was going out ahead of the soldiers and mapping out the area.

GORMAN: Sometimes, we didn't do a lot of that after , that's what I was trained to do but we didn't do that when I got over there. Some of it, but not as much.

PIEHLER: You mentioned the incident with the phosphorous. By this point in the war a lot of Germans are starting to surrender. How much fighting was going on and how much was movement?

GORMAN: Well, see you've got this resistance and when you're going through these farmhouses and things like that well they were hiding and were trying to find them in these farmhouses. That laid a dozen eggs (Laughs). We went through a farmhouse and a dog bit me, I got wounded, that dog bit me. I didn't get a purple heart though. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: This farmhouse with the dog, how big was the dog?

GORMAN: It was a little old dog but he bit me on the leg. But anyway we hit this farm and the Germans were indigenous people. They had water glass, what do you call it, silicone? And they would have a big jar of silicone and they would fill it with eggs and those eggs would stay fresh indefinitely. And that's what we ate that day, I remember that so well, little things like that you know, (Laughter) C rations; they were terrible but they kept me going.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like you were not getting a lot of hot meals on the line.

GORMAN: Not very many. (Laughter) Every now and then we would try to get us a field kitchen behind us, we would try to get it.

PIEHLER: But you were mainly on sea rations.

GORMAN: Yes K rations and C rations.

PIEHLER: And what you could forage.

GORMAN: Forage, now you hit it. That was it.

PIEHLER: I mean these eggs have left quite an impression, how often were you able to get food that way?

GORMAN: Not too much, not too often. I'm trying to think of some other things. The Germans liked to make potatoes. We would find potatoes. That was a treat you know. Of course they made alcoholic beverages out of potatoes, they called it Schnapps and there was a lot of that around.

BOULTON: How were you treated by civilians as you went through?

GORMAN: Pretty well, not too bad, I think they realized what they had gotten in to. The Germans have always been a people of high nationalism. They're very spiritual about their country. So the way I look at it, it's been easy to talk them into most anything, they're like that you know. That's why Hitler has such a good job, that's why the Kaiser had such a good job doing it. But the people are nice people, most of them are agricultural, I ran into. Now of course the cities such as Manheim and places like Florsheim where they built the bomb shells, they were bombed pretty well. It was agricultural, most it. That's where we would pull guard duty. In Frankfurt that was when pulled guard duty there at the Hauptbahhof, the glass railroad station there. They had a winter garden there in Frankfurt. It was beautiful, glass enclosed, all tropical flowers in there.

BOULTON: Did you take many Germans as prisoners?

GORMAN: No.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you grew up on a farm. What did you think of German farms?

GORMAN: Well, they are completely different than we are. They are very centralized. In other words, they had the carts that they'd haul the manure in and they would spread it. And they'd have a little plot out here to sustain themselves on it from what I saw. They lived in the same house with animals and the barns were under the house. In these villages now I'm talking about, the cities were different, but in the villages. They were good people. They were hard working people. They just followed the wrong leader. Well some of them couldn't help it. We were looking at *The Sound of Music* the other night, my wife and I, and that's what happened to so many countries in Europe, what happened to Austria. They took over from within really before they knew what was happening.

PIEHLER: Did you encounter many displaced persons, in February, March, and April [1945]?

GORMAN: No I didn't I didn't see too many of those. Very interesting, it was after the war, we had to guard a convoy and we went to Marseilles, France. I guess there was about thirty in that convoy we were guarding. They were empty going down there but we picked up a shipment off of a freighter down there and I think it was for Spain. We waited down there for about two weeks for it to come. That was the most interesting



place. You see people there at the seaport. You see people from all over the world, every kind of dress in the world you can imagine. We stayed in a nice villa down there and the ship came in. You know what it was? Cognac. It had the general's name on the box.  
(Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: They had a whole convoy of Cognac.

GORMAN: (Laughter) You remember things like that.

MAHONEY: Speaking of the civilians, who was the little girl you always talk about in the pictures?

GORMAN: What was her name- Siegfried. She was in a little town outside of Kumelsort. And we stayed in that little town for about a month or two. The people there were very nice, but something that struck me, all the people there needed dental work done. She would have been a beautiful girl but her teeth needed fixing. But this little girl was about four years old. She would come in every morning and wake me up. She was as sweet as she could be. We've got a picture of me holding her there. (Gestures) There was this reservoir up there and we'd go swimming up there. Womack was with me then. That's just after the war.

MAHONEY: Didn't you write your mother a letter telling her.

GORMAN: (Laughs). I wrote my mother and said, "This beautiful German girl come in and wakes me up every morning with a kiss." (Laughter) You can imagine what was going through her mind so (Laughter) I wrote her a letter the next week and sent her a picture of this beautiful German girl. But they were ingenious people they could make ... we stayed in a kind of a resort area we went through it. I got this book out of there. I got a book too of *Mein Kampf* written in German. I've got a doctor friend and he likes to fool with that so I gave him the *Mein Kampf*. I really didn't want it in the house. I gave him this picture book, it was about this big. I wish I had kept that but I can get it any time I want. But it's got pictures of how they, propaganda. Hitler how they put out you know these things like that. It's a big book about that thick. (Gestures) It was , we stayed there. I remember (Laughs) I stayed in that place and it had a nice blanket there and I used that blanket and I got lice. Little things like that about places you remember, but ...

PIEHLER: Where did you get the lice?

GORMAN: It was an area they had set up for soldiers to come back and get some R&R [Rest and Relaxation] so they had baths there and things like that. Then they had this propaganda for them to read and everything like that and that's where I got that. They had a propaganda machine ...

PIEHLER: So this was a German rest center that you had captured?

GORMAN: Yes.

PIEHLER: So that's why the German material was out (Laughs).

MAHONEY: You were saying that the German knew how to make gasoline or something?

GORMAN: Oh, not the soldiers only, but they had an autobahn, over there, that was the interstate. They were way ahead of us in time and things like that. You'd see these trucks with this tremendous tank on 'em. You'd see it parked by the road. What they were doing was going in the woods and cutting firewood. This big boiler, or tank, had a fire under it and somehow they caught the fumes and that wood burning and they ran their vehicles on it. That's what propelled that truck, their gas, off of that. We could do that again here.

BOULTON: Might have to.

GORMAN: Might have to.

PIEHLER: How often did you have to fire your weapon when you were in combat?

GORMAN: I don't remember that. I really don't. Every now and then. I remember one time there was a hill over there and we were on another hill over there and we had a .50 caliber machine gun. We were shooting rabbits on that hill over there (Laughter). You better not print all of this. Oh me.

PIEHLER: After you joined your company, did you lose many people in your platoon?

GORMAN: Not in my platoon. The land mines were bad over there.

PIEHLER: You've mentioned the land mines more than once.

GORMAN: They were pretty bad in places and you had to be very careful. Mainly we went through, I remember riding down the autobahn in a tank one time. You were going from one place to another, you'd catch a ride anywhere you could you know. Well, this was kind of a clean-up operation. I remember that though. I didn't have to fire too many times.

PIEHLER: When you were in the army, when you were state side or overseas, did you go to see a chaplain?

GORMAN: Well, not too often. I wasn't too interested in chapel at that time or the Lord or anything else. But when you get over there it makes you think about things like that you know. We would have chaplains come out, then of course we'd have service after the war. But during the war maybe once or twice they would come.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Would they have people come for the dying?

GORMAN: No, unless a person like Womack, he was just a G.I., but he was a religious type of fellow.

PIEHLER: Do you remember what tribe he was from. You said he was Indian?

GORMAN: No I don't.

PIEHLER: Was he called any nicknames?

GORMAN: His last name was Womack and Womack that's what I called him.

PIEHLER: No one called him chief or anything?

GORMAN: No not that I can remember, he was just—there was an Italian fellow there and his wife would send him pickled peppers. He loved them. Oh me. I just bit one, one time I said, "Whoo" it set me on fire. (Laughter) I remember that, he'd get these packages from home. Sometimes they'd get through. He'd share them with us, but I didn't want him to share any more of those.

BOULTON: How often did you receive letters from home?

GORMAN: I would get one I would say about once a week. Pretty nice, pretty regular. That was the thing, the folks back home, you knew they were behind you, that was it. They were in an effort- plants and everything. People were working and doing the best that they could to work and the machinery and guns that went over seas. And that's what you felt like and they were. But today, I hope it's good.

MAHONEY: Now what was the city you went to where they made the bombs? Was that Mannheim?

GORMAN: No, this was a little town, it wasn't a big city but it was a pretty good size. And they were famous for their watches, German watches ...

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

GORMAN: ... They were famous for German watches and we went through there and allies had bombed it out. But what they were making were bomb sights for planes and this is why they cleaned it out. And Mannheim was an industrial city they did a lot of bombing. I think we have a picture of it. We stayed awhile in Mannheim. I think I had a motorcycle in Mannheim. This was after the war. I was helping deliver meals on a motorcycle. They had a river, I think that was the Rhine and but they had these tremendous barges and people would live on those barges and they would carry anything in them and this one guy had a motorcycle and he let me have it. I remember we got a plank and then drove that thing over. And I delivered meals and the kitchen caught up with the unit then and that was after the war and we did hot meals every now and then so I did that one thing during that time.

MAHONEY: Is that what those goggles from the motorcycle ... that's from the motorcycle?

GORMAN: Mm hmm. But they literally flattened that town, Florsheim.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: (...?)

GORMAN: No I never did ...

BOULTON: Did you remember where you were when you heard the news that Roosevelt had died?

GORMAN: No I don't. I don't remember. I'm trying to think.

BOULTON: You don't remember if it affected the platoon or the morale.

GORMAN: No I didn't see any change in that at ll. Because like I say those boys knew, we knew that folks were behind 100 percent. And they were sacrificing back home for us. I remember one time I got put out. A plane came in there and had these jerry cans, G.I. cans you know, and they were filling up this plane taking these cans off the truck and they didn't use a funnel or anything that impressed me. People back at home were rationing gas and they were pouring these things in a hole about that big (Gestures) in this plane wing out of a tank of a five gallon can and gasoline was going everywhere, and they didn't care. That got away with me bad ...

PIEHLER: This was during the war or after the war.

GORMAN: This was after the war.

PIEHLER: You were in Germany a long time. Where were you on V.E. day? Do you remember?

GORMAN: I'll tell you exactly where I was at. We pulled back for some relaxing R&R. And it was this bombed out building but the water was still working in there and it was cold, but it was working. And I found a bathtub. I was taking a bath and someone came in there and said, "The war's over, the war's over!" Man I got dressed, and hopped up out of that thing. That was good news to me. I remember that well. It was May 7 I think, I believe that's right. Things you remember and things you forget.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Well, he never talked about the war ...

PIEHLER: He never talked about it? Even when you were first married?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: No he never did, because he said, "It was horrible and people don't understand much about it."

PIEHLER: What was so horrible to talk about the war?

GORMAN: Well it was the way things were. I didn't go in any of them, but the concentration camps, we heard about them.

PIEHLER: When did you first hear about them?

GORMAN: Oh after we got over there you know and then when we saw the German bodies laying out in the street. That was bad.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: The phosphorous bombs.

GORMAN: Oh the phosphorous bombs.

PIEHLER: You had never heard that [to EMMA JANE]?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: He did tell me that. That's the only thing ...

PIEHLER: That's about the only thing you knew.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: The phosphorous would stick and burn and they couldn't get it out you know, but he didn't like to talk about it.

GORMAN: Well there's no need, no need.

PIEHLER: Occupation, you were in Germany a long time. The war ends in May. Where were you based at? Mannheim?

GORMAN: Frankfurt.

PIEHLER: Frankfurt.

GORMAN: That was USFET headquarters, United States Forces European Theatre headquarters.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned earlier you were being trained to go over and fight against Japan.

GORMAN: Yes uh huh. Until the war in Japan the Pacific ended. It was summertime and we didn't have any khakis. So we were wearing wool in uniforms, shirts, and pants and everything. Of course if that wool gets wet it keeps you pretty cool. I remember that (laughter). It worked out pretty good. We didn't want to go to the Pacific at all. It was bad enough in Germany, but going to the Pacific. I had a cousin that was over there and he has since died, but he told me stories about the Pacific. It was terrible over there. The Japanese are sneaky, they're cruel and, well, they're just terrible.

PIEHLER: Where had your cousin served?

GORMAN: Bob Draughn. What did he serve over there?

EMMA JANE GORMANN: Bataan?

GORMANN: Bataan? I don't know.

PIEHLER: Was he captured?

GORMAN: Yes I think so. He lived in Tunica, Mississippi.

PIEHLER: When did he pass away?

GORMAN: Oh he came home and he lived a good while, but over there in those jungles and things they've got disease and I think that's what eventually got him. But it's been ten or twelve years ... But I've got some friends in Brownsville that are getting pretty old. One of them, Ned Rooks, he's a little older than I am. He was in the air force and he has a wonderful tale to tell. And Jim Miller, he's eighty something and he flew in World War II. They don't talk about it much and I don't ask them. I don't want to ask them. Ned's got dementia now, or beginning to have it. But his group gets together every now and then. He got together last year didn't they? They get together.

MAHONEY: Now I read about this in some, a book about the 63<sup>rd</sup> division, a group of men got together for entertainment after the war was over, this was in, maybe, Frankfurt. Did you do anything like that?

GORMAN: No I was transferred out of the 63<sup>rd</sup> division into USFET headquarters. So I didn't much keep up with the 63<sup>rd</sup> after that. Like I say all I wanted to do was to get out of the army. That's all I was interested in.

PIEHLER: When did you hear the news of VJ Day?

GORMAN: I don't remember where I was, but it was a happy day. Boy it was, 'cause I remember hearing the news of how they dropped those bombs on Hiroshima. It wasn't long after that, just a few days 'til that was the end of that war. That bombed killed a lot of people, but it saved a lot of lives, many lives.

PIEHLER: After VJ Day when did you think you would get to go home?

GORMAN: I didn't have any idea. But I put in for that dependency discharge from both ends and one of them came through thank goodness.

PIEHLER: Well but you were there until May of '46 so it took ...

GORMAN: It took awhile.

PIEHLER: The war ended in August in the Pacific and you didn't leave until May.

GORMAN: That's right. I sure didn't. I don't know why they wanted me over there. I didn't want to be there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What did you do during all of that time?

GORMAN: I pulled guard duty, like when I went to Merce.

PIEHLER: So you were still based out of Frankfurt?

GORMAN: We stayed out in Frankfurt in old army barracks out there. We would go in and pull guard duty and they'd send us anywhere they wanted us to go. Different buildings we had to guard. The main one was right across from the Hauptbahnhof, the railroad station and we'd pull guard duty there.

PIEHLER: In some ways doing guard duty. It sounds like you didn't have a lot of contact with German civilians while on duty.

GORMAN: Well we did, because, during that time mainly tobacco and sugar were two of the big items and if you got anything over at the PX, like tobacco, cigarettes, pipes or something like that. Now, Germans had a lot of pipes, but they didn't have anything to put in them. No tobacco. You could barter that stuff for anything in the world. Lighters, cameras, watches, anything else you could trade it. Money didn't mean anything because the occupation, the German Mark, the reason it wasn't worth anything, they discounted that and gave occupation money and it wasn't worth much either to tell you the truth. There was a lot going on over there but the civilians they didn't resent you too much. Not that I saw.

PIEHLER: Did you do any trading? Did you come back with anything? Did you trade?

GORMAN: Oh let's see. I had a P38 [pistol], but I traded it for something. You did a lot of swapping over there. (Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Where did you get my ring?

GORMAN: Out of the bottom of a castle.

PIEHLER: Was that during the war?

GORMAN: During the war, yeah.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: During combat I guess.

GORMAN: They had trunks and trunks in this castle, beautiful castle, nobody was in it. And they had trunks just full of linen, the most beautiful linen you've ever seen. And I just picked up a piece or two of it. We couldn't carry it because we were walking. There were those rings, earrings, laying right there. So I just, I liberated those. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And so you still have the earrings? Do you remember what town that was near?

GORMAN: I don't have any idea what town. I sure don't.

MAHONEY: What about the pipe, don't you have that really gorgeous pipe? Where was that from?

GORMAN: I think that was from World War I. I got it from Germany. It's about this tall and it's ...

PIEHLER: It comes up off the ground, yeah.

GORMAN: You put it on the ground, it has a ceramic bowl and that's where you put the tobacco and it has different figurines on it all the way up the stem of it and then you have a flexible stem and you stand it up and smoke it like this (Gestures). It's all, the flexible stem has gotten kind of threadbare, I think. Its all in one piece still. That bowl, I don't know where that is.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It's in that cabinet.

GORMAN: Alright, that's where that is.

MAHONEY: Anything else that you swapped?

GORMAN: We were always swapping. I brought a gun home. I had to cut it, cut the stop into to put it in my barracks bag. (Laughter) Of course you had to check it out with them and tell them, but they didn't really care what you brought home or anything else. I brought that and all that stuff we took out, you were there when we took that barrack bag I've got a Hitler Youth knife, a German helmet with a swastika on it and a lot of German pouches and belts and things like that you know. I've got another barrack's bag somewhere and I think it's got my Eisenhower jacket in it wool pants that match. I've got to find that. It's somewhere in that house.

PIEHLER: For awhile there was the no fraternization law. How ...

GORMAN: Yes, but you know how G.I.'s are. (Laughter) They can get around that in a hurry and they did. A lot of trade was going on, but that didn't hold up too long. It was a rule, no fraternization.

PIEHLER: After the war ended did you date any German women?



GORMAN: No, there were some that did. All I had my eye on was home. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now you mentioned having this pass, could have had this pass to Switzerland and Austria.

GORMAN: Oh me.

PIEHLER: Did you have any other passes between the end of the war and May.

GORMAN: No, not that I can remember. I didn't.

PIEHLER: So you never say, got to Paris?

GORMAN: Oh yeah we went through Paris one time on that convoy.

PIEHLER: Oh, on the convoy.

GORMAN: Going through it that was it. I didn't get to stay any time. But we went through it, so I have been to Paris. (Laughter) Paris, Tennessee.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go back to Germany?

GORMAN: I haven't. I've always thought I'd like to go back.

PIEHLER: But you've never been back to Europe.

GORMAN: No I've never been back to Europe since. Been to South America. I never have been west. That means the Far East and things like that, but I'd like to go. I don't know I'm too old to go now. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: No I wouldn't say that. Definitely not to Europe and even ... since you've read some of the letters, in terms of the war.

MAHONEY: Right. There were some cables in the letters about she was trying to get you home and you were trying to get home.

GORMAN: Yes. That's right.

MAHONEY: How often did you receive letters? Did you receive more letters than you wrote letters home?

GORMAN: I think I did. I wrote home some, but not as many as I got. Folks would write to me, and my aunt and my wife wrote to me all the time.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: So did Gail and so did Berta.

MAHONEY: We found some more girls' letters she was reading.

GORMAN: Oh, we won't bring that up. (Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Let's see if I can name some more. (Laughs)

MAHONEY: You mentioned earlier, but do you remember how soon.? You applied to go home and then the time you applied to when you actually got to go home.

GORMAN: It took a little while. It was, things work slow when it comes to that part of the army, the government, you know how it works. It was I'll say, about six months. One of them didn't. We were advised to do that. One would come from home and one would come from Germany. And I've forgotten which one came through, but I had the prettiest radio but it was too big to come through. Oh we'd swap for radios; they were a big item over there too ... I brought a camera, but it wasn't a Liecher I wanted a Liecher. I've still got that camera.

MAHONEY: There were a bunch of flashlights, you seemed to ...

GORMAN: Oh those old flashlights. I liked flashlights too. (Laughs) Old German flashlights. That P38. I think I swapped that for a 45, I believe. I don't know.

PIEHLER: I'm curious that German girl you got to know, did you stay in touch with her after you came home with her.

GORMAN: No.

PIEHLER: So that was just ...

GORMAN: I don't know whether she could write at the time or anything.

PIEHLER: Was her mother and father still alive.

GORMAN: Yes, yes I think so. They were agricultural, they were farmers. They worked there out of the town. They would live in the community in this little town and then they had a little farm out from the town but they lived in together I guess for safety purposes.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to a USO show?

GORMAN: No I don't, I might have gone. I don't remember. I think we might have gone to one or two USO functions. But I don't remember if it was a show with some celebrities or not.

PIEHLER: Did the Red Cross get involved with trying to bring you home? Did you have any contact with the Red Cross?

GORMAN: It seems like they got in, it seems like that's the way I got mine started over there. I believe that was the way, yes I think so. I had some contact with them

MAHONEY: The letter that your mother wrote, one that I read mentioned the Red Cross ... trying to help bring you home.

PIEHLER: Since we're on your desire to get home, did anyone try to convince you to stay in?

GORMAN: No because they were trying, I think they were trying to get rid of us as fast as we were trying to get home (Laughter). But I remember going back over that victory ship with the band around it. OF course we listened to the *Stars and Stripes*, newspaper they'd put out all the time. The ship's radio said, "We're going to try to get home. We're going to try to get through", we'd been getting the radio from Europe. And they got in and they first song I heard "I'm gonna take a Sentimental Journey".

EMMA JANE GORMAN: When you got to the States, I can't remember. You went to Camp Atterbury.

PIEHLER: What port did you land in?

GORMAN: It was where I came in from New Jersey. And then took a train to Atterbury, Indiana and that's where I was discharged and I remember as soon as I got in they let us make a phone call and I called Mamma and said, "Mamma I'm home." And she couldn't believe it. She just said "well I'm glad your home," she didn't talk to me long. (Laughter) I said, "Mamma it doesn't sound like you're glad to see me when I got home." She said, "I was so astounded and so thankful." (Laughs) Oh me.

MAHONEY: So how soon after that did your brother leave?

GORMAN: It was several years after that.

PIEHLER: And you got back in the states when? In May?

GORMAN: May.

PIEHLER: In May of '46?

GORMAN: That was the best birthday present I ever had.

PIEHLER: Was that when you got discharged?

GORMAN: That was the discharge on my birthday.

PIEHLER: Oh okay.

GORMAN: At Atterbury, Indiana.

PIEHLER: When did you start college again?

GORMAN: That was in May. I started in September.

PIEHLER: And what did you do during the summer?

GORMAN: Oh I went to the farm. I lived it up (Laughter). It was a good time.

PIEHLER: Did you draw any of the “fifty-two and twenty,” or any of the employment insurance?

GORMAN: No.

PIEHLER: No, But you did use the G.I. Bill.

GORMAN: G.I. Bill, yes.

PIEHLER: How much did the G.I. Bill pay for at college?

GORMAN: I think it pretty well covered the whole thing. I took a Bachelor of Arts course and it got it all.

PIEHLER: What was your major?

GORMAN: Economics, minor in Math.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of going to an Ag. School [Agricultural School].

GORMAN: No. I was, Southwestern was close by. I had a lot of friends there. I knew the fellows there. The president of the college when I got ready to graduate said, “John” ... the engineers there and I were good friends. I like mechanics and machinery and things like that. See that school moved from Clarksville to Memphis years ago. And he came with it from Clarksville and so he and I were good friends and he put a good word in. And Mr. Deal said, “John would you like to be an engineer here at the college?” I wanted to farm. I said, “No sir. I appreciate it.” And then Diamond Match came and offered me a job. That was a big thing in those days. Of course I wanted to farm.

PIEHLER: So you definitely had ... other people were asking you to ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Oh yes. We got a letter here of recommendation that somebody had, that Dr. Bass Walker ...

GORMAN: Oh that was just a friend of ours that just a ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Well, he was recommending you for a job.

GORMAN: Well I reckon. I don't know what that's for.

PIEHLER: I got a sense from something your wife said earlier. You were a little bit of the man about campus, big man on campus. (Laughter)

GORMAN: We won't get into that. (Laughter) Oh, there were a lot of pretty girls and a lot of sweet ones, but here's the one I got right here (Laughter) She's the main one.

MAHONEY: Now you need to tell them about your best friend, your roommate at college and how he tried to take her.

GORMAN: Oh. John Dulaney. He's a corporate lawyer down in Tunica, Mississippi. He's a good friend of mine . We were roommates up there at school.

PIEHLER: So you lived on campus when you got back?

GORMAN: No this was Webb, he and I went to school up there. We would think up of more crazy things. We would lay the fire at night so we wouldn't have to get up in the morning to light the fire we would take bathroom tissue and roll it out to one of our beds and then we'd light that with a match. No wonder we didn't burn the house down (Laughter). John Dulaney was a fine fellow, man he is some kind of a lawyer down in Tunica Mississippi. He knew how to set up all these corporations where farmers could get, in fact one farmer, a friend of mine, down there right now he had sixteen corporations set up where they would get government payment. Which was legal, but it wasn't quite right. But he's a very intelligible lawyer, a smart man. He's retired now and he can't hear and he's not well and his wife is not well. I mean we're not getting any younger folks and it makes a difference. But he's still a good friend of mine. There were four of us that went to Webb. One of them has passed on, but three of us are left and one of them has the same birthday as I do. He lives in Bolivar, we'll go over there and see him.

PIEHLER: So that Webb group. That's the group you, the friendships that have lasted the longest.

GORMAN: Yes, I guess they have.

PIEHLER: What about Rhodes, any friendships?

GORMAN: Dan. Dan went to Rhodes. He is deceased now, he died. But he was a good friend of mine. A lot of people at I know at Rhodes, we ran into one, still know them. See them all the time, but I guess at Webb we were the closest.

PIEHLER: When you got back to college, what was the rough ratio of G.I.'s?

GORMAN: I couldn't tell you the ratio, but it was a lot of them.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you were not alone.

GORMAN: I was not alone. It wasn't but seven hundred at Southwestern at the time.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It wasn't very big. Bur you were S.A.E., was Dan an S.A. E.?

GORMAN: I think so ...

MAHONEY: Were you in school?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: AOP.

MAHONEY: When he was in college?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: No

GORMAN: Yeah. She came , two or three years.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I came the year after you, didn't I?

GORMAN: I don't know, about that time.

MAHONEY: So did you get married right after you graduated from college?

GORMAN: Well speak up if you going to.

PIEHLER: Please if you have something to say.

EMMA JANE GORMANN: I was just telling her [Maggie Mahoney] I taught at Mrs. Hughes Kindergarten and first grade and nursery school through the third grade. And when I went home for the summer, your granddaddy was farming, working for the John Deer. Then I went to Chicago to Dee and Diddle, they were famous musicians at the time and they would teach some classes to musicians and Mrs. Gorman and Margaret Anne Underwood and myself went up there. She didn't pay for it, but they told us to go, and then when I came home he asked me to marry him and ...

GORMAN: That was it (Laughter).

PIEHLER: So You were working for John Deer at the ...

GORMAN: Just the local.

PIEHLER: When did you graduate from college?

GORMAN: '50...

PIEHLER: '50 and your first job was?

GORMAN: The farm was rented to somebody at the time, so I couldn't take it away from them. And I had to equipment, so I took a job with John Deere in Brownsville, that's right John Deer. And it was a small thing we didn't have, I think we had horse drawn plough points and things like that you know. I remember the first self-propelled John Deere combine. It was unloaded off of the flat car down there by the railroad.

PIEHLER: In 1950?

GORMAN: In '50 ...

PIEHLER: So your farm remained mule less during the war? The people you rented it to, did they use tractors or mules?

GORMAN: They used mostly mules.

PIEHLER: Mules even during the war?

GORMAN: Yes. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And when you started farming, what did you use?

GORMAN: The first tractor I ever had was my John Deer tractor.

PIEHLER: When did you get it?

GORMAN: I bought it in '51 I think, old tractor. I gave that tractor to an old fellow who said he was going to recondition it two or three years ago I gotta' go find that.

PIEHLER: You still have that tractor?

GORMAN: Yes, this friend of mine has it. He said he was going to recondition it. It's old John Deer, real old.

MAHONEY: Where did you live during that time, did you live at the farm?

GORMAN: No. I lived with Mrs. Alice. The house where she used to live, Mrs. Alice Chambers. She was a sight. (Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You'll have to tell them the story about ...

GORMAN: How she called me her little boy. I slept on a screen porch and that's what I liked. I'd pull the covers up, down quilts and everything like that but thirteen below one night in February. She would play all kind of jokes on me. She would, that bed, it was cold out there on the porch. And then one day, one night I came in there and jumped in that bed and my feet hit something down at the bottom and I came out of there like I don't know what. I thought it was a snake. She had taken a piece of hose about this wide (Gestures) and cut it and put it in the bottom. (Laughter) She always, I was sitting in the breakfast room table in the kitchen and the sink was over there by the window and the table was facing the wall and I sat with my back to the sink. And she was leaning over, she had my pancakes fixed, she knew I like pancakes. So I started cutting and it wouldn't cut (laughter). I had my fork and a knife and it wouldn't cut. She was back there dying life. She had cut a piece of muslin just the size of my pancake and cooked it in those pancakes and she was having the time of her life (Laughter). Oh, she played all kinds of jokes. But that was the house that they left her in the baby bed, the house caught on fire and they left her in the baby bed. Because they said they wouldn't forget they baby as they got everything else out of the house. And the house caught on fire.

MAHONEY: So when did they rebuild that house? When was the fire?

GORMAN: That was in the twenties.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I was about three years old, so that's a long time ago.

GORMAN: It was the early thirties.

PIEHLER: And you started farming in 1951. How long did you stay? How long did you farm it yourself?

GORMAN: I farmed it up until I had my first heart problem. That was in 1982, I had open heart surgery, so I leased it out then and rented it.

PIEHLER: That's a long time to farm (Laughs).

GORMAN: A long time to farm.

PIEHLER: How did having the tractor change how many employees you needed?

GORMAN: Oh my goodness. It changed, we just had tractor drives. I had James, Mo, and I think one other and then later on I got some from town. But when they didn't live in the farm there was problems. Weekends were bad because Monday mornings you'd have to get 'em out of jail, as a rule. But the mule drawn, we started out with that, had the old tractor. But we started out with mules, had mules, planters and things like that. I remember later on though we got equipment, eight wheel tractor and things like that. It had a monitor on the tractor to tell whether the seeds were being planted or not. And it fowled up one of the hoppers fowled up and I missed one hopper in panting those seeds. Eight rows and one in eight rows and you go down and come back you're skipping



sixteen you see. I had to get those rows planted. So I had a mule and a one row planter and I let J.C., it was on a hill. I said I was going to take a picture of that, but I never did. This colored fella and this one mule, and that one row planter planting cotton on that hill.

PIEHLER: When was that?

GORMAN: That was in the '70's.

PIEHLER: Now it's just, you'd have to go to the museums or probably to your shed to get one of those old ... (Laughter)

GORMAN: I've got all that equipment. I've got it. All the old stuff like that. This friend of ours, he could tell a tale really well his name was Jimmy Nunn. He graduated from UT He said "Mrs. Julia, Mrs. so and so wants you to come wash today." She said, "No I can't come today." He said, "What you've got to do?" she said, "I've got to open, so and so's got to sling, and Sam's got to 'kiver' ?" you know what she was talking about. Opening a row with a hoe, slinging the seed; Now they could sling it just exactly right down that lower stream and the other one would come and 'kiver', cover it up. (Laughter) And that's the way they used to do it. A mule drawn planter was a big invention at one time. So times have changed.

MAHONEY: So did you have people move back on the farm to help you?

GORMAN: No, I liked to keep them on the farm, because they were there when you need them to call. And I had about three or four that lived on the farm. Sam lived there and later on they moved off and they would die. I would have to get them out of town and that's when the trouble started. I miss farming, but I don't miss the supplies, the labor, and the equipment that you have to buy now. One John Deer six row cotton picker with everything on it is \$325,000. Now that will only pick cotton five or six weeks, that's all it will do now. You've got to justify it somehow and a lot of people didn't know how to do that, because one person I know, I think he's got five of them, another one has got four or five of them but they have thousands of acres and they justify that kind of machinery you see going through the field. Now days the small farmers are out of it, in this part of the country anyways.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Maggie have you got something you wanted to say?

MAHONEY: I didn't know, when did Fannie May move in the house? And Buddy Bill, when did they live on the farm?

GORMAN: Fannie May and Henry lived down on the lower farm which was a smaller farm down on Nixon Creek which was a bottom farm and then they moved up to a little house, a tenant house, I picked up and moved for them in the yard. Sunbeam, her brother Henry died and then Sunbeam came from the bottom across the creek and lived with her grandmother until she died. This was Fannie May. It's hard to imagine, that was in the '50's or '60's, and he didn't know what a telephone was. It would ring on the wall and he

wouldn't answer it, he was scared. We had a telephone in Fannie May's house to get in touch out there. He was the one that like, believed in ghosts and things like that you know. He could tell some tall tales, I've forgotten all of his tales. But there was a friend of his that lived across the creek about three or four miles named Uncle Sammy. And Uncles Sammy would walk and visit with Beam and they would talk about old time stories. Now that's when I messed up. I should have had one of these tape recorders. I had that down, but I didn't get it, I put it off. Can't put things off; but that would have been so interesting.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Did you say the tale about what was his name, going to ...

GORMAN: Oh. (Laughs) we had some little towns around. One of em's name is Gaits, Halls, and another ones Curr and he said "so and so," she said I want to go to Chicago.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: What was her name?

GORMAN: I can't think of her name.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Mary Julia.

GORMAN: Mary Julia said he liked to go to Chicago. He said, "Well Mary Julia how would you go to Chicago?" "Well first I'd go to Deets and then I'd go to Halls, and go to Curr." Now these were little towns there just a few miles from each other you know. But this was her idea of how to get to Chicago. (Laughter) It's funny. She wouldn't have gotten far. But the folks that don't understand, the old colored folks, they just don't know how they are. It's past, it's gone and they never will. We loved them down here and we looked after them. I've got one left that I'm looking after now. She's in a nursing home and I tend to her business, what she has. Her burial insurance is all paid up and everything. Her name is Viola Farmer. Her husband helped me a lot. He died. I took care of all his babies, Viola and Sam and Rosa.

PIEHLER: [To Boulton] You had some questions about Lisa's work.

BOULTON: What was the Hatchie like? Do you remember going down there?

GORMAN: I never went down there much. I never did like the Hatchie much. We had a farm on the Hatchie one time. There were so many mosquitoes and snakes down there, I wasn't really, but look if you float that now it's a lot of fun. Just get up there somewhere at a bridge put it in somewhere and go down and have somebody pick you up at the other bridge.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You can tell he has gotten old, because we went down there and camped with all of them one time.

GORMAN: In a house.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: No, it wasn't in a house, it was a camp house.

GORMAN: It was a camp house, sure. A camp house on the river down there, a lot of people had camp houses down there. It's loaded with them. A lot of people live down there on the river.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: They really did.

GORMAN: Those mosquitoes will carry you off down there. Oh me, I just don't care about them mosquitoes. (Laughter) I'm not sacred of snakes, but I just don't like them too well. (Laughter) Now it's against the law to kill any snake. Wildlife is really increasing and they're becoming more daring. John, (Laughs) some skunks got under his house the other day and he had a time getting them out. He finally got them out, had to fumigate and everything like that. Ffour or five of them out in the grove , and cows everywhere and deer all over that farm.

PIEHLER: Did you keep hunting after the war?

GORMAN: Yes I went a good bit hunting after the war. We crawled many a mile on my stomach in sandbars on the Mississippi trying to get a goose.

PIEHLER: Now did you take your children hunting?

GORMAN: Oh, they're avid hunters. All of them love to hunt.

PIEHLER: Did the girls hunt also or just the boys?

GORMAN: What?

PIEHLER: Did your boys ...

GORMAN: Oh, they're not too crazy about hunting. Are they Maggie?

MAHONEY: My mother told me this story. Tell them the story about the first time that she a shotgun or rifle. (Laughter) My uncle set her up on the white fence and told her shoot it and the backfire, she fell flat on her back. (Laughter) She was a tomboy. She did. They learned a lot from him.

GORMAN: We used to hunt dove hunts, in September, goose hunting, duck hunting, rabbit hunting, just every kind. Now I never did, I don't guess I had the patience to shoot turkey's. (Laughter) It takes time and ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Now John Dulaney was a turkey hunter.

GORMAN: He was a turkey hunter.

PIEHLER: Your children, my understanding was that you lived in town and then drove out to the farm. How much of their growing up was like your experiences growing up in terms of the farm? You took them hunting.

GORMAN: They loved the farm, they love it today. See we have twenty one acres in town.

PIEHLER: Let me ask you one or two more questions just related to the war, but more coming home. Did you ever join any Veterans groups?

GORMAN: No I didn't. I should've, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you never joined the [American] Legion or ...

GORMAN: No, I so wanted to get out of the army so bad. I just wanted to get out.

PIEHLER: Did you stay in touch with anyone you served with?

GORMAN: No, I don't think I did and I should have.

BOULTON: Did the war affect you in any negative ways? Did you have any sleepless nights or anything like that?

GORMAN: No, I don't think so. I would say one of the best night's sleep I ever had was in a snow filled fox hole, half full of water. I was worn out, I was tired. It depends on the situation of how you're feeling. Where you can sleep and where you can't sleep.

BOULTON: How do you think the war change you in more personal ways?

GORMAN: Well it changes you. It matures you. It helps, let's put it that way. You come to the realization that you've taken things for granted and you don't now. And that's one of the things that helped me. Anytime these people talk about wars and things, war is, it's the worst thing in the world, it really is. I think some of these people turn it off very lightly. Of course it's coming home for a lot of them with the news media, transportation and communications are so instant, now. The world has changed; it's changed everybody's way of thinking. But it's a lot of negativism. If we had had, during World War II, if we had the same communications and things now that we had then, I think the war in Iraq would be going a lot better, I really do. But you have the news media and you have transportation. They can be over there just like that. Who was over there- the President was over there and they didn't know he was going to be there. And it just took a few hours. That changes things. I guess that's the way it changed me the most.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: On the radio did you ever hear, what was that woman?

GORMAN: Axis Sally.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Was it Axis Sally, I couldn't ...

GORMAN: Yeah ... we stayed in the barracks one time and she said "Bed Check Charlie will be coming"

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

PIEHLER: And you were saying about the ...

GORMAN: Oh. (Laughs) We were staying in the barracks one time and she would come on, turn on the radio, we would get some music, *Stars and Stripes*, things like that. But we would also get this woman. She spoke perfect English. We called her Axis Sally. And she would come on and tell the troops there was no need in fighting and you might as well give up and things like this. And we had some fellow, I don't know if he was in the division or not, but he would come through he's say, "Well it's Bed check Charlie's time tonight." And they'd come through playing it straight for the building you know and planes and things like that. I just happened to mention that. I happened to think about that. (Laughter) Oh me, a lot of things happened over there. I forgot about them and then I remember them, they come to me you know.

PIEHLER: Is there any movie or novel that is closest to reflecting your war time experience? You mentioned Ernie Pyle, did you read Ernie Pyle during the war?

GORMAN: No I didn't meet him. I would like to.

PIEHLER: Or did you read his column?

GORMAN: Oh yes. I read his column and saw his cartoons.

PIEHLER: You saw, Bill Mauldin's?

GORMAN: Bill Mauldin's cartoons and Ernie Pyle was the writer and Bill, remember the one of the tough soldiers had his 45 and did like this in his jeep? (Gestures) (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I've seen that.

GORMAN: You've seen that. He was putting it right to sleep right there and he hated to do it. But they were people that were with the soldiers and they knew how they were actually, they lived with them and that makes a difference. I think people like Dan Rather they go over there and I don't if they're there with them or not, they sit in these hotels and things. But that could be dangerous over there. These men were over there with the soldiers and people on the front and things like that. They lived with them and they knew how it actually was. And they wrote about it, but it wasn't instantaneous. It didn't come back immediately to the people. And it wasn't demoralizing like it is today. I don't know I better not get started on it. (Laughter) The news media and things like that.

PIEHLER: Oh no, no go ahead.

MAHONEY: I think you were about to ask this question, but how do you think that, my mother and the rest of your children's experience was similar or different from yours? Because they went out to the farm and I know you, Mag, lived out at the house.

GORMAN: They enjoyed it. They enjoyed it immensely and the people that were out there at the time Lula, Mag, and Sam and Rosa and J.C. and Nibbs, there was so many. To me now, I like it and I think the children liked it, your mother and her brothers and sister you know. And they love to go out there. Robert, they go out there and ride motorcycles. They take West.

MAHONEY: They still go.

GORMAN: Mm hmm. They still do. They love to fish. Just go out there, it's a place ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: I have caught some big bass out there.

GORMAN: Yes, it's a place you can go, there is one spot up on a big old tree up there n the hill and you cannot see another building from that spot. You just see the pond and the trees and the things like that. And that's my favorite spot.

PIEHLER: Not that sounds ...

MAHONEY: Very nice. Now did you have, did Mag live with ya'll?

GORMAN: She lived in the cook's house behind the house in town. She lived back there. And then her sister came to live with her. They later on died. She was over a hundred wasn't she?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Oh yeah. Katherine was a hundred and nine.

GORMAN: But they were just fine old colored folk and then my youngest son got married and had the first child so we fixed up the little house in the back, the cook's house, put a room or two on it, fixed it up real nice and that's where they came from the hospital and brought our grandson West so that little house is still back there. You've got some pictures of it haven't you Maggie?

MAHONEY: But they lived there for two years, their youngest son

GORMAN: Three years. They took West back home and moved to Germantown. I said you can go to Germantown or wherever you want to but you've got to leave him. But you know they didn't. (Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It's a good thing; we're too old (Laughter).

MAHONEY: Can you tell briefly, a story, I just thought about this. You've told me a few times about the deaf cook, Neely.

GORMAN: Oh Neely. We've had more servants, good old servants, faithful. This particular one's name was Neely Nubbin. And her husband worked with Clyde, his was Abner. Abner and Neely. They didn't have any children. She could cook, Oh she was a wonderful cook and she waited on him, he wore khakis and I wore khakis but she had a fresh pair of khaki shirt and pants laid out for him every morning, you know ready for him. And she was a wonderful cook. The servants that we've had all through the years there is a story about each one of them. But Neely was deaf she couldn't hear. It was kinda bad, because things would happen in the kitchen, she would drop things and we'd say, "Well it sure sounds like Neely." (Laughter) But she was a wonderful cook. She was a wonderful cook and Abner was faithful.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You must tell them about Martha.

GORMAN: Oh Martha. Martha lived over across the Hatchie River that's where she came from. Her mother moved out there on the Haralson farm in the house and Martha came. She was about 6'4 or [6'] 5 and Mrs. Emma was trying to teach her how to be a house servant and it's just hard to sink into Martha's brain and do anything right. And Mr. Clyde had company one day and he said, "Martha would you bring us some muffins please." Martha came in with a muffin one in each hand and put it on the plate you know and you weren't supposed to do that at all and he just died. I don't know who it was, some important person he had there bringing to lunch. She just couldn't get it quite, you know, some people are like that. One night she came up to the back door and knocked on it, it was night, she was crying. I said, "Martha what in the world is the matter?" She said, "He done stabbed me." I said, "Stabbed you? Who was it?" She called his name, I knew him, fella down at the ice house. Stabbed her with a little old pen knife. I said, "Martha you're big enough to defend yourself. She said yes sir Mr. John, but I just didn't want to hurt him." That's the way they felt you see. I could think of them, tales like that all the time, everywhere. Because they come up and you have to deal with them and I forget so many though.

MAHONEY: You've remembered a lot.

GORMAN: Mosela, that's the one that rode with them in the buggy to protect them from anybody with the ice pick. Buggies had a seat or two up in the front and had a little box in the back, you had your groceries or something, you put them in there. Well, that's where she was riding in the box. And she came up to the house, she was living up on the Shaw farm at that time. She came up to the hosue and watned to show us what was in that shoe box. It was a little baby about this big. She has had a little baby. In a shoebox up there to show us at the house and people don't understand that's they way they are ...

EMMA JANE GORMAN: That's not what they wanted to hear.

GORMAN: Well, I was just answering Maggie.

MAHONEY: Ya'll are fine.

GORMAN: Ya'll are going to have to edit this, cut out everything I mean.

PIEHLER: Is there anything you want to talk about, that I forgot to ask. You have such good stories. I am encouraging Maggie to do some more interviews with you and your family.

GORMAN: This old colored fellow Beam, Sunbeam Midget, Samuel S. Taylor. I'd go by to get him, he couldn't do too much in his latter years and I'd go by to get him, to see, he was a nervous kind of type. But he was good as he could be and one day I went by to get him in the truck and he rode over to the farm and was coming back by the fence rope, and one strand of wire from one tree to another tree and I saw the cat on the ground, but I didn't know what the cat was after. The cat was after a snake climbing up that tree and the cat jumped and caught that snake by the tail and it fell across that one strand of barb wire and they were swinging back and forth eye to eye right there (Laughter). Just looking at each other. Beam said, "Mr. John, you've just got to leave; it's making me so nervous I can't stand it." (Laughter)

EMMA JANE GORMAN: It'd make me nervous too.

GORMAN: I went to the store one day. I said, "Beam how are you felling today?" He said, "I'm feeling pretty good." I said, "Beam are you in poor health? I said I believe you enjoy poor health Beam." He said, "Yes sir I dun enjoyed it all my life." That's the way he put things. (Laughter) Oh I can't think of all the things that I've heard from the old colored folks and things.

PIEHLER: How did the Civil Rights movement change Brownsville?

GORMAN: I better not tell you. It's changed it. In some ways it's not as bad as that, it kind of reminds me, I didn't know anything about Reconstruction, but in some cases bad but in some cases good. The school system is not so well. In Memphis it's in the shambles. I don't know what they're going to do about it. They put people in places of responsibility they're not capable of and that's what bothers me. Now you've got exceptions, I'm not saying that. But what's going on down here with our senators, Senator Ford and our mayor it's just repulsive. But they still will keep putting those kind of people in. They keep electing them and that's what bothers me. I think they're some good colored folk, some of them know what they're doing. But a lot of them can't handle, like they should responsibility and money. A lot of white folks can't too. This is the way that Civil Rights has changed. It's like getting rid of the statue of General Forrest down there; it's history. They can change that but they can't change history as it was. But they can change the history books and I think that's what's happening in a lot cases, they're trying to. But one of these days I won't have to worry about that. (Laughter)



PIEHLER: You've been in a sense retired for some time, but you still have twenty one acres which is ...

GORMAN: Oh , that's just in town.

PIEHLER: That's still a lot of land, for me that's a lot of land. In New Jersey some would even consider that a farm. I've seen twenty one acre farms in New Jersey.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: They have beautiful things in New Jersey. Princeton ...

GORMAN: They do, listen.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: Our daughter lives there.

PIEHLER: I've heard about Princeton.

GORMAN: Princeton, it's a beautiful country. Here though and in New Jersey you know they got to have this industry factory and everything and shopping center right next to it you have a soybean field or wheat field just like that you know. And my daughter tells me they're subsidizing to the nth degree. They pay them ...

PIEHLER: Well they're not so much getting paid, they're lowering the property tax.

GORMAN: They're lowering the property tax.

PIEHLER: That's the subsidy.

GORMAN: Oh I see. No, but that farm in town, see we lease our land and that farm is one of three tracts that we lease to.

PIEHLER: So you lease the tract in town too.

GORMAN: Yes it's one of three tracts. They plant soybeans on it or plant cotton on it. But we keep about, we have to cut about, I've a tractor down there in the barn and some out at the farm. We've got mowers that will cut anywhere from twenty one inches to fourteen feet. (Laughter) So we have that in town to keep. I keep a tractor in town to cut that and two or three lawn mowers. And then out at the farm on that one we have a grove, barn lots and pastures and things like that to clip so we have to keep that grass clipped and down. So that, it keeps us busy. In the winter time I tote firewood and in the summer time I cut grass. (Laughs) We like fire, we have a open fire all the time.

PIEHLER: And I also get a sense you like to fix things.

GORMAN: I do.

PIEHLER: Your granddaughter has said you really like to ...

GORMAN: We have a shop out at the farm.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: He can fix anything.

GORMAN: Well used to could. We have a shop out at the farm. It has everything you could need to fix anything. We have a swinger on there to lift someone up high for a truck or something or underneath.

PIEHLER: While you were still actively farming, did you grow cotton the whole time?

GORMAN: Cotton, soybeans- those are the two main crops and then sometimes we planted some corn. And little milo, I have planted some milo. But cotton was the main, Haywood county is the largest cotton producing county in Tennessee. And so that's what we planted, that's all we know. I was in a gin at one time and thank goodness I'm not in it now, but the fellow that bought us out, one of the partners, he now has two high speed gins. They will gin anywhere from forty to fifty bales an hour. Now that's putting cotton out. That's five hundred pound bales, delinting the seed from the fiber in the gin, that's what they do and then put it in these five hundred pound bales. And it doesn't look so good right now, but I've got a five year contract on some farm. But he's a big farmer and he hauls cotton for miles and miles to keep those gins in operation. He has to. The other fellow who used to rent a farm from me. He has another gin. He does the same thing. They've got to keep those pieces of machinery in operation.

PIEHLER: I feel like we're only scratching, I'm going to encourage Maggie to really spend a lot more with you on the history of agriculture and farm. But I hear a lot about the efforts to cut the subsidies particularly for cotton.

GORMAN: Brazil started this. I don't know whether they started it, but they're outspoken. I would say we've helped every nation in the world to some extent. I went to Brazil in '75 on a president study mission to see the situation down there. They are clearing up those rain forests by thousands of acres and they don't have much root systems. So it doesn't take much machinery to clear them up. They've cleaned up a lot since then and now they're complaining that the United States is subsidizing their crops and they've taken it to the World, the WTO [World Trade Organization]. They've told the United States to quit subsidizing. European market over there I guess was one of the most highly subsidized markets in the world at one time. I don't know how they are now.

PIEHLER: I'm not sure.

GORMAN: I don't keep up with it like I use to. I'd say it's been twenty something years since I farmed actually. But I've got friends that are still into it pretty heavily. I ask them about it every now and then and they tell me about it.

PIEHLER: I should ask you because it came up, you were active in the Farm Bureau.

GORMAN: Yes.

EMMA JANE GORMAN: You've been Board of Directors for I don't know how long.

GORMAN: Yeah.

PIEHLER: The board of directors for the national?

GORMAN: No ... not the national, just for the local. Then I've been President of the Farm Bureau. I've been on the Board of the Directors for the Tennessee Soybean Association. And then I've been President of the Tennessee Soybean Association. I've kind of lost contact with that since I quite farming.

PIEHLER: Going to Brazil, you went there as part of what trip?

GORMAN: It was the Soybean, the president study mission. A group sent us down there to see how they were, for soybeans, how they were competing with the United States. And it was most interesting. A chemical company sent us down there, they sponsored it. Land Co. and it was a wonderful trip. It was probably the nicest trip I ever had. We saw a lot, learned a lot. There was one island down there that had 30,000 acres on it. Everything in there went by plane or by boat. It was surrounded by water but it wasn't too much in places, but everything had to go there. They had a third of it in cotton, a third of it in soy, no they didn't have cotton. A third of it in rice, dry land rice, a third of it in wheat and a third of it in soybeans. Now all of that produce had to come off of that island in some way. And they would clean up thousands and thousands of acres down there at the time, that's been thirty years ago. No telling what they've got. People are investing down there. I don't know what's going to happen to this cotton. This fellow that has a farm down in Mississippi went down there to see how it was going. But it's, things are changing now. Cotton's changing. If they don't find another use for cotton besides for fiber, it's liable to be on its way out. There's bound to be something they can make out of cotton. (Laughter) There has got to be.

MAHONEY: So your land in Mississippi, are those cotton farms?

GORMAN: Mm hmm. They plant a few beans down there, but all that's cotton. That's what they raise down there.

PIEHLER: I hope to make it out to the farm next spring.

GORMAN: I want you to come.

PIEHLER: Hopefully I will be able to convince my wife and we'll bring our two babies..

GORMAN: Sure, absolutely.

PIEHLER: We're going to go to Wales in the fall.

GORMAN: Oh that's fine. You're from Wales?

EMMA JANE GORMAN: [To Boulton] Are you going too?

PIEHLER: No, he's actually going to Alabama. He's following his wife. (Laughter) I actually confess, I'm cutting you a little short, but I have a feeling Maggie will ... I've been trying to convince her to follow up and do a big honors project.

GORMAN: She can ask me more questions and I can answer them. I'll try to.

PIEHLER: I want to see the farm equipment when I come.

GORMAN: Some of that old equipment stuff?

PIEHLER: And I want to see the portrait by Sully.

GORMAN: Oh, all right.

MAHONEY: Now, can you tell real quick again, who was the portrait of?

GORMAN: Lady Jane Braddock. That was General Braddock's niece. He painted it and I had a letter from ... and it's, maybe we can get somebody to read that, the paper is about gone, it's just in bad shape, very bad shape. But ...

PIEHLER: Oh no, go ahead.

GORMAN: I want to get back to Richmond one day, some day to see that Valentine Museum. But we've got a book at home with those paintings in it.

PIEHLER: Maggie, I think there's more family history that you didn't know. I wish I could have made it to Memphis.

GORMAN: Well come on!

PIEHLER: My wife is seven months pregnant so I need to get back a little earlier today. But thank you very, very much and I hope this interview will be continued by Maggie.

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: This concludes an interview with John P. Gorman on April 8, 2005 in Nashville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler.

BOULTON: Mark Boulton.

MAHONEY: Maggie Mahoney.

PIEHLER: And I might add Maggie Mahoney is his granddaughter. (Laughter) And again thank you very much.

GORMAN: My angel.

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