

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH BUFORD E. LONGMIRE

FOR THE
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INTERVIEWED BY
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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Buford E. Longmire on March 14, 2005 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

GEORGE SOUTHER: ... George Souther

KURT PIEHLER: And at times I think we will also be joined by his wife, and her name is Helen G. Longmire. I gather you're childhood sweethearts, is that accurate? I see some nods. (Laughter) Well, let me begin by asking you a little bit about your parents. Could you tell me a little bit about your parents?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Well, they were native Tennesseans, born and raised in LaFollette. They came to Knoxville when I was four years old, and I'VE lived in Knoxville ever since.

PIEHLER: So you came at four years old from the LaFollette area or of Careyville?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What led your family to leave Careyville to come to Knoxville?

LONGMIRE: I guess to come to the city to work.

PIEHLER: Your father was a carpenter?

LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: When he moved to Knoxville, where did he work? Do you remember?

LONGMIRE: He worked for George W. Reagan I guess. Then he went to work for the Norris Dam in 1936, and then he wound up retiring from Oak Ridge.

PIEHLER: How long did he work for Oak Ridge? Did he start at Oak Ridge during the war, or was it after?

LONGMIRE: No it was after the war.

PIEHLER: But then he stayed with Oak Ridge the rest ...

LONGMIRE: He stayed at Oak Ridge 'til he retired, he was eighty-two.

PIEHLER: Eighty-two years old, not 1982, but eighty-two years old?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So how long did you father live 'til?

LONGMIRE: He was eighty-two.

PIEHLER: Eighty-two when he passed away?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So he worked until he died.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: He was retired, he retired.

PIEHLER: He retired.

BUFORD E. LONGMIRE: But he hadn't been retired too many years. So he was eighty-two when he died.

PIEHLER: Eighty-two when he passed away. Do you know how your parents met?

LONGMIRE: No, not really. (Laughter) Just grew up together.

PIEHLER: Did they go to the same church growing up do you know?

LONGMIRE: I don't know.

PIEHLER: You never heard stories about ...

LONGMIRE: No.

GEORGE SOUTHER: I'm going to ask Mrs. Longmire, what do you remember the first time you met Buford's parents, what do you remember about them?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I enjoyed the visit. It was on a Sunday afternoon, after church, before lunch. Very pleasant, very nice people. I enjoyed it.

SOUTHER: Had to make sure I got what you thought on the subject.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Okay. (Laughs) Thank you.

KURT PIEHLER: How often would you go back to Lafollette and Careyville when you were living in Knoxville, after you moved here at four?

BUFORD E. LONGMIRE: Oh, went a couple of times a year.

PIEHLER: Did you still have family?

LONGMIRE: Went in the summertime.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: His Granddaddy still lived there.

PIEHLER: Where did you live in Knoxville growing up? What neighborhood?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: In the Lonsdale area. And Virginia Avenue.

PIEHLER: Did you live there the whole time before you went into the service or did you move around?

LONGMIRE: No, we moved to Fountain City.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, and didn't your Dad go to Florida and work?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: That was in 1929.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh, Okay but he did ...

BUFORD LONGMIRE: For six months.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh, okay.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Yeah, during the Depression.

PIEHLER: How steady was your father's work during the Depression? And during the '30s?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: He worked pretty regular during the Depression. Had a job most of the time. Not a very good job.

PIEHLER: What was the best job he had growing up, do you remember?

LONGMIRE: Guess I remember most of the Cotton Mill. He was a maintenance man. And that's about it.

PIEHLER: Because you mentioned he worked at Norris Dam. How long was he at the Dam?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: When they were building the ...

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Now, he didn't actually work on the Dam. He worked on the town of Norris. He worked with the CWE or something like that. [CWA, Civil Works Administration] He wasn't a TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority].

PIEHLER: It wasn't a TVA job. Did he ever work in a WPA [Works Progress Administration] job?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yes, so he was a carpenter for the WPA. So it sounds like he was involved in building the actual town of Norris, is that ...

LONGMIRE: Yes, that's right.

PIEHLER: Growing up you went to Beaumont Elementary School.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit about school?

LONGMIRE: Well, don't remember much about it. (Laughter) It's been a long time.

PIEHLER: Well, do any teachers stick out?

LONGMIRE: Well, my first grade teacher Mrs. Lennons.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about her?

LONGMIRE: I just remember her (Laughs) when I was in school. That's about all. It's been a long time.

PIEHLER: What was your favorite subject?

LONGMIRE: I guess art.

PIEHLER: You mentioned moving to Fountain City and that was in '41. Before that, how often did you live in the same apartment or home? Did you live in a home or ...

LONGMIRE: Lived in a house.

PIEHLER: House. Did your parents own it or did they ...

LONGMIRE: No, rented.

PIEHLER: What did you do for fun growing up? Did you have any hobbies or did you play any sports?

LONGMIRE: Played football, mostly softball I guess. That's about all I remember.

PIEHLER: How often did you go to the movies?

LONGMIRE: Wasn't very often. I mean, back then you didn't have transportation. Wasn't any movies close by so didn't go often. Maybe went once a week.

PIEHLER: When you say that you didn't have much transportation did your Parents have a car growing up?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, when I was a teenager.

PIEHLER: But before then they didn't?

LONGMIRE: (Shakes head no)

PIEHLER: Particularly for students reading this interview, how did you get around without a car in Knoxville?

LONGMIRE: Walked. That was our exercise. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You never took the streetcar or the bus?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: But in terms of a car, it sounds like you didn't rides too often, even with your parents.

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: How active was your family and you in the church growing up?

LONGMIRE: Well, we went to church a time or two.

PIEHLER: Growing up, which church did you go to?

LONGMIRE: Beaucity) Baptist Church on Virginia Avenue.

PIEHLER: You went to Beaumont School, did you go to high school?

LONGMIRE: ... then went to Fulton. Then graduated from Styer Tech.

PIEHLER: Which tech?

LONGMIRE: Styer Tech.

PIEHLER: Where was Styer, where was the tech?

LONGMIRE: At that time it was a former forerunner of Fulton High School. But at the time it was up at Boyd's up on Knoxville ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Up near the railroad. It was, it's near the fairgrounds.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: And had to walk three miles in snow. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you did walk to school?

LONGMIRE: Yeah. There was a neighbor that lived close by that we would get a ride with. He worked up town, and he'd give us a ride most times.

GEORGE SOUTHER: I'm guessing both of you went to the same high school?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

SOUTHER: Didn't go to the same high School? Where did you go to high school?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Knoxville High School.

SOUTHER: Do you remember how ya'll met?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

SOUTHER: Just through friends or?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Met at church didn't we?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, my girlfriend was his girlfriend. I was ...

SOUTHER: Okay.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: But he changed his mind when he saw me. (Laughter)

SOUTHER: I bet he did.

PIEHLER: And this was in High School, you were in High School?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And where did you live in relationship to your ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I lived in north Knoxville.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: About a mile and a half ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I went to Christenbury Junior High School, and then went to Knoxville High. And walked four years there and back. Didn't miss a day in high school. (Laughter) That was everyday.

PIEHLER: What were you studying in high school? Because you went to a technical school it sounds like.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Yeah, I studied commercial art. That was my main subject. Took a half-day of that. And had English and the three R's. Reading, Writing, Arithmetic. Just basic 'cause it was a technical high.

PIEHLER: And Mrs. Longmire, what were you studying in high school?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Working in an office. Typing, shorthand.

PIEHLER: So secretarial.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. Mostly bookkeeping, whatever goes with that. That's what I've done all my life.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you've had a long-standing interest in art. When did you start drawing growing up? Do you remember?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Don't remember when I did it. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Let me phrase it another way, do you remember a time when you weren't drawing or sketching and painting?

LONGMIRE: No. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Had you thought of trying to go to college to study art?

LONGMIRE: No I didn't.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: He took a course at home, correspondence in art.

PIEHLER: When did you take the correspondence course? Before going into the war or after the ...

LONGMIRE: After.

PIEHLER: After the war. Did you use the GI Bill to take the correspondence?

LONGMIRE: (Shakes head no)

PIEHLER: Growing up, how often had you left Knoxville? Besides going up to the Lafollette, Careyville, area.

LONGMIRE: Not often. That was about the extent of it.

PIEHLER: Had you been outside of the state before the war?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Where did you go?

LONGMIRE: Well we went to Rossville [North Carolina] to get married. I don't remember every time we left the state but ...

PIEHLER: So you had never gone to say, the beach, the shore, a beach area?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: How far west had you gone? Had you ever been to Nashville before the service?

LONGMIRE: Not before the service, not before the war.

PIEHLER: And North Carolina, did you go to North Carolina at all?

LONGMIRE: North Carolina ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: After the war several times ...

PIEHLER: Yes, so before the war you really ...

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Didn't travel much.

PIEHLER: Growing up, did your parents read a newspaper regularly?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What paper?

LONGMIRE: *The [Knoxville] Journal*.

PIEHLER: You took *The Journal*. Were they regular readers, subscribers, of the Journal?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Did you have any inkling about the war coming in the 1930s and early 1940s that you can remember?

LONGMIRE: No. In '39 when Hitler invaded Poland, when Germany did, that's about as far back as I go.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: You went in the service in '42.

PIEHLER: When did you graduate high school?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: 1941.

PIEHLER: 1941. So the summer before Pearl Harbor. What was your first job after high school?

LONGMIRE: At Gilreath signs.

PIEHLER: As a sign painter?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm, designer. And of course later years I was in drafting and design work. Parts, plastic parts.

PIEHLER: I think now when you see billboards they are sorta just pasted on, but in your era when you started your first job, you would actually ...

LONGMIRE: Hand painted 'em.

PIEHLER: And you would actually sketch it out.

LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: You would decide what this sign's going to look like. How long did you stay a sign painter?

LONGMIRE: I don't know ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE:: Several years.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Twenty-five, thirty years. And then I went to work as a designer with this guy, he worked with the guy that owned the sign shop at that time. It was just a two person shop. But I wanted to work with him. He's up on the side of this building on a ladder and started laying it out. Of course I made a little scale drawing of it. And then blocked it off in one inch squares, one foot squares on the scales. So I got over there and started laying it out, and told him to go ahead and come behind me. "Oh no" he says, "not 'til you get through." I said why, he said, "Well, Bill always had to wait 'til he got through." Of course, he didn't do a sketch like I did so he didn't know where he was

going until he got to the end, no plan ahead. (Laughter) So that boy said, “You go ahead.” I said, ‘It will be alright, it will come out right.’”

PIEHLER: Because now it’s so standardized, signs are so standardized, when someone bought a sign, how specific would they be in what they wanted?

LONGMIRE: Well they’d give you the wording of it, and sometimes they might give you an idea that has already been made, to copy that.

PIEHLER: Well, in a lot of ways they didn’t give you a lot to work with it sounds like besides ...

LONGMIRE: No, just copy.

PIEHLER: What type of images would you use or what were some of your favorite signs you did?

LONGMIRE: Well I remember, we used to do signs on the Wheel Oil Company, it’s out of business now, out in LaFollette. Billboards and then we painted the laddered Bush [Produce] trucks. Illustrated the cans of beans and stuff on it, the canned vegetables, and then Tony dog food and illustrated the can of Tony dog food on it.

PIEHLER: On the ...

LONGMIRE: On the truck.

PIEHLER: On the truck. So you did more than just billboards, you also would paint ...

LONGMIRE: Oh yeah, wall signs and metal signs.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: And real estate signs.

LONGMIRE: Any kind of signs.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Decorated KUB [Knoxville Utility Board] windows for a number of years and that would call for artwork.

PIEHLER: I think George just wanted to ...

SOUTHER: I was just going to say, you were talking about how you graduated high school the summer before Pearl Harbor?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

SOUTHER: I was gonna see what you thought when you heard about Pearl Harbor, what was the first thing you thought?

LONGMIRE: Well, I don't remember, it's been so long.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I just remember the men raising the flag, most about Pearl Harbor, wasn't it three men raising the flag?

BUFOR LONGMIRE: That was at Iwo Jima.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh okay.

PIEHLER: How long did it take you to get your first job? How did you get your first job?

LONGMIRE: I was working when I was in high school. I just went to work there when I graduated high school.

PIEHLER: So you were doing commercial art even while you were in high school?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Before that did you have a job, growing up?

LONGMIRE: Delivering papers.

PIEHLER: Did you deliver *The Journal* or?

LONGMIRE: *Journal*.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: That was the morning paper.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: [*The Knoxville*] *Sentinel* routes were hard to get. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm curious, what kind of music did you listen to growing up?

LONGMIRE: Hillbilly mostly.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go dancing growing up? Did you ever go to school dances?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: No, never ...

LONGMIRE: Never danced.

PIEHLER: Never danced. Now you met each other before Pearl Harbor, well, in high school?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: What was a typical date like? I guess I'll get two views. What was the typical date like from your perspective?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Go to the movies I guess, most of the time. 'Bout all we did back then.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Ride to the mountains once in a while.

PIEHLER: And what car would you use to get to the mountains?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: A friend's. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now would you go together as a group?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And what curfew was there? What was your parent's attitude towards all this?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: During school, anyway, about eleven o'clock. I remember the longest I was ever out on a date was we went to see *Gone with the Wind* and I got to stay longer than eleven o'clock. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: After Pearl Harbor did you expect to go to war?

LONGMIRE: Yeah

PIEHLER: Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

LONGMIRE: I was drafted. I started to join the Marines and they said I was flat-footed and they turned me down. So I went down to the Naval recruiting office, they had one in Knoxville, and they said, "Well, when can you go?" They had a two-a-day going out of Knoxville to Nashville. They said, "You can go today or in the morning." And I decided I didn't want to go to the Navy. I didn't want to go and I didn't go. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So you tried first, the Marines.

LONGMIRE: Yeah, the Marines turned me down.

PIEHLER: But the Navy, they would have sent you two-a-day. When did you try to join the Navy?

LONGMIRE: When?

PIEHLER: Was it in 1941 or is it '42?

LONGMIRE: Around that time, '42 I guess.

PIEHLER: When did you get your draft notice?

LONGMIRE: When I turned twenty years old.

PIEHLER: When you turned twenty. You enlisted in 1942, well you were drafted in 1942, where did you report?

LONGMIRE: Fort Benning.

PIEHLER: Now how did you get to Fort Benning?

LONGMIRE: Train.

PIEHLER: Now did you report with a group of people from Knoxville?

LONGMIRE: (Nods Head)

PIEHLER: Where did you have your physical and where were you sworn in?

LONGMIRE: At Oglethorpe

PIEHLER: How long were you at Oglethorpe?

LONGMIRE: Just two days.

PIEHLER: Had you thought about, did you think the Army would use your skills as an artist? You were an artist did you think the Army might put you in a ...

LONGMIRE: (Shakes head no)

PIEHLER: You didn't even mention it?

LONGMIRE: No. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You tried the Marines and the Navy, what specialty did you hope for in the Army?

LONGMIRE: Nothing particular.

PIEHLER: You didn't have a ...

LONGMIRE: (Shakes Head)

PIEHLER: I'm curious, why did you think of joining the Navy? Or why did you try to join the Marine Corps and the Navy first?

LONGMIRE: Well I just had a brother in the Marines and I just thought I'd like to join the Marines. And the Navy, of course, I didn't give that much thought.

PIEHLER: Your brother in the Marines, when did he join?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I'd say about 1940.

PIEHLER: So he joined before we'd gone into the war.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: He was a couple years older than I was.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: He had three brothers, and all four of them were in the service at the same time.

PIEHLER: And your other brothers, what service were they in?

LONGMIRE: Army.

PIEHLER: They were all Army? But one in the Marines.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And did you have any other brothers or sisters?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes I did, I had three brothers and three sisters.

PIEHLER: And did any of them serve?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, my two older brothers.

PIEHLER: Which branches did they ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: The Air Force, and then the Army.

PIEHLER: And your one brother who didn't serve was he too old?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: He was too little at that time.

PIEHLER: Too little. (Laughter) And your sisters, did any of them serve?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Was there anything that sticks out about Oglethorpe?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Nothing particular.

PIEHLER: You then went to Fort Benning for your basic training?

LONGMIRE: No I went to Camp Polk, Louisiana for basic training.

PIEHLER: So for basic training at Fort ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Then he was stationed at Fort Benning.

PIEHLER: Okay.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: I was stationed at Fort Benning.

PIEHLER: So you did basic training at Camp Polk. What do you remember about Camp Polk?

LONGMIRE: The end of the world! (Laughter) That place down there, about ten, twelve miles out from an old chicken farm. Prostitutes, they had them locked up out there with a ten foot fence. They'd holler obscene things at you, standin' there naked wavin' their dress at ya. (Laughter) We went on hikes past ...

PIEHLER: So you would have to hike past this?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: He didn't tell me that.

PIEHLER: You've never heard about ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Never heard that one. (Laughs) He did serve some time in California too.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: We went on twenty-five mile hikes up by there, after about fifteen in basic training.

PIEHLER: Had you seen anything like this before in Knoxville?

LONGMIRE: No. Nothin' like Camp Polk, Louisiana. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What else about Camp Polk, besides the ...

LONGMIRE: They put you in quarantine when you first go in. For about a month I think, and then you begin basic training. They slept in paramental tents, pushed in between the barracks, it was in November ... it was in January.

PIEHLER: January of '43.

LONGMIRE: Mmhhh. It was so cold, damp, and wet. We'd sleep with our clothes under us, between us and the mattress, and it'd be just like ringing water out the next morning. (Laughter) That damp. That was in December.

PIEHLER: And that was in December. How hot or how cold was it?

LONGMIRE: It could vary quite a bit in wintertime and get up to seventy during the day or something like that and it could get down to freezing at night.

PIEHLER: Did you face any mosquitoes while you were there? Or was that ...

LONGMIRE: No, they didn't bother us.

PIEHLER: I've gotten a sense that, I think this was the camp that a lot of people told me was very swampy.

LONGMIRE: Yeah. Louisiana.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you mentioned about the house out in the middle, as you would walk by. How many men you served with, was this off limits to you?

LONGMIRE: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Now did any of your people in your barracks go AWOL [Absent Without Leave] to go there or you remember any?

LONGMIRE: You couldn't get in there. No, they went AWOL in town.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about your drill instructor?

LONGMIRE: There wasn't anything outstanding about him.

PIEHLER: Was he regular Army?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, those were back then.

PIEHLER: What about the people you served with, where were they from?

LONGMIRE: All over.

PIEHLER: Any from Tennessee?

PIEHLER: A few from Tennessee, one or two from Halls.

SOUTHER: I was going ask was there, in Basic Training, were there a few guys that you would just hang around the whole time that were your friends or your buddies?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, you got the couple that you, just like in school.

SOUTHER: Right.

PIEHLER: Anyone in your barracks in Basic Training from north of the Mason-Dixon Line? Any northerners?

LONGMIRE: Oh yeah. More Northerners than there were Southerners.

PIEHLER: Really? How did the two groups get along?

LONGMIRE: Alright.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to chapel in basic [training], while you were in the States?

LONGMIRE: I went, once or twice I guess.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: At Fort Benning ...

BUFORD LONGMIRE: It wasn't a habit, not as a rule you didn't go all the time.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: When he was in Fort Benning, I went down there and stayed a while and we went to church.

PIEHLER: In terms of basic training, what was the most useful things they taught you? When you look back on it.

LONGMIRE: Well they taught you a trade, and I took radio, Morse Code.

PIEHLER: So you went through, you went through Signal Corps basic training. So how much ...

LONGMIRE: It was in the Army, in the regular 7th Armored Division, Signal Company.

PIEHLER: The Signal Company, but you were getting the radio work as part of basic training.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How much practice did you get at the rifle range?

LONGMIRE: Well, of course in the Signal Company you just took a minimal. Learned how to use the rifle and take it apart and went on the rifle range a couple of times is about all. Just to become familiar.

PIEHLER: But you were learning Morse code.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How fast were you when you left basic training?

LONGMIRE: Oh, about twenty words a minute. They had some outfits in Signal Corps... (Inaudible)

PIEHLER: What other sort of Signal Core, did you learn for example, how to string wire?

LONGMIRE: No, that was message.

PIEHLER: So besides learning Morse Code what other sort of skills, related to what you would do during the war, as a Signal Company did you learn?

LONGMIRE: That's about all.

SOUTHER: When you were in Basic Training and you got to fire the guns and everything, had you used a gun before you were in the Army? Or was this new to you?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, I guess I'd shot a .22 rifle, something like that.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go hunting growing up?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Did you learn any maintenance in terms of the radio? How to maintain a radio in basic?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: So it was really focusing on code. How many people could learn the code? Did anyone wash up from basic?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, I'm sure they did, just like anything else.

PIEHLER: After Camp Polk in Louisiana where did you go? Is that when you went to Benning or did you go to California?

LONGMIRE: Went to California, in the desert.

PIEHLER: And what did you do at the desert?

LONGMIRE: We went out there basically to go over maneuvers, Armored Division.

PIEHLER: This was the 7th Armored?

LONGMIRE: See they were in Africa. So the Armored Division went out there. And when we got out of Africa, we left the desert and went to Fort Benning for a while. Then went to Massachusetts at Myles Standish and stayed up there about a week. Then up there in April it was freezing up there. We stayed up there a week, but the Infantry started getting priority so we had to ship out to Camp Shanks, New York. We stayed there two months. That was the end of the world from Camp Polk, Louisiana. Smell those kitchens all the way in camp up in Shanks. Myles Standish is just like eating at the cafeteria in Knoxville. You could go down the serving line, get what you wanted. They had a sign at the end where you dumped your garbage that says, "Take What You Want But Eat What You Take." And they had an officer standing there if you had more than a couple of bites on your plate you had to eat it. (Laughter) But it was good.

PIEHLER: So you were happy with the food at ...

LONGMIRE: Myles Standish.

PIEHLER: Myles Standish. What about the food at basic training. What do you remember about that?

LONGMIRE: Just regular Army food. Pretty good.

PIEHLER: But the best food it sounds like was at Myles Standish. Was the best food at Myles Standish?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Now how long were you in the desert? How long were you doing desert training?

LONGMIRE: We were out there about six months. Was the hottest summer ever recorded since they been keeping record out there, about hundred-ten, hundred-twenty [degrees].

PIEHLER: And this was in the summer of 1943?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Because you joined the unit right after basic training, the 7th Armored.

LONGMIRE: No, 7th Armored was formed in Camp Shanks, I mean at Camp Polk, Louisiana.

PIEHLER: So your basic training, you know you are gonna be apart of the 7th Armored from day one?

LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And you were going to be in the Signal Company. When you got out to the desert, how did you get out to the desert?

LONGMIRE: By train.

PIEHLER: And the whole 7th Armored moved together?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: How did that experience go? How did that all ...

LONGMIRE: A train ride's a train ride, and we was on that train for about five days and we didn't go in a direct route either. Sort of an alternate route, a secret route.

PIEHLER: And I take it you didn't have a Pullman, a Pullman car.

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: And when you got out into the desert where did they put you? Where did you ...

LONGMIRE: We was in the Mojave Desert, in tents.

PIEHLER: In tents, the whole [division]?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And what type of training did you do? Does anything sort of stick out in terms of war games or other types of training?

LONGMIRE: We had maneuvers, of course, and we operated the radio just like in combat.

PIEHLER: Surviving the desert, did anyone, I mean a hundred-ten, hundred-twenty is really hot. How did people fair?

LONGMIRE: Well, of course we get in shade, there was always a breeze. Of course come back to Fort Benning in August of that year and the humidity down there and got

sunburned. You were brown when you crossed the desert, about a week on that train you looked like you was white, you lost a lot of it. But then back at Fort Benning got sunburned.

PIEHLER: So you got a bad sunburn out at Benning, not out in the desert. Could you tell me a little bit more about the company and what they were like? Your signal company. Because you would be with them through training and going overseas, could you tell a little but about getting to know, them particularly in the desert?

LONGMIRE: Well, what do you mean?

PIEHLER: Well, you know, who were your friends in your signal company?

LONGMIRE: Well, you had friends everywhere you went of course. One day we were, some southern, some northern, just mixed friends. Got along with everybody alright.

PIEHLER: Did you have a best friend? While you were in the service?

LONGMIRE: Well I don't remember anybody in particular that sticks out in my mind.

PIEHLER: Now you mentioned going, after the desert you came to Fort Benning in August of 1943.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How long were you at Benning?

LONGMIRE: Maybe six months.

PIEHLER: And you were continuing to train advanced, were you continuing to train at Benning?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And it's still part of the 7th Armored?

LONGMIRE: Uh huh.

PIEHLER: And this is when you decided to get married. Is that...

LONGMIRE: No, we got married before we left, before went into the service.

PIEHLER: So when did you get married?

LONGMIRE: October 17.

PIEHLER: So you...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: '42.

PIEHLER: '42, so you got married before you went to the service. Now I have a question, why did you get married in Georgia?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: We couldn't tell it in Tennessee because I was still in high school.

PIEHLER: You were still in high school when you got married?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I was a senior, and you couldn't go to school if you were married.

PIEHLER: Really? So you had to go to Georgia...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Out of state to get married.

PIEHLER: And so, but then, how did that affect school? Or did you tell anyone in Tennessee?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No not, maybe one or two girls you know, and of course I told my parents.

PIEHLER: But your parents weren't there?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: So this was something of an elope.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: It was a surprise to my parents. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What did they say when you...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Really not much because they thought a lot of Buford.

PIEHLER: Okay, so they didn't think you...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: What did you parents think?

LONGMIRE: Well, they didn't comment.

PIEHLER: And they weren't at the wedding either?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Who married you?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: A judge.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: A justice of peace.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: And a couple of friends went with us.

PIEHLER: How old were you when you got married?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Eighteen.

PIEHLER: And you (Buford Longmire) were, how old?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Probably, nineteen.

PIEHLER: And so after you got married what happened?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I still lived at home with my mother and dad. Graduated from high school and lived with them while he was in the service, overseas.

PIEHLER: So you got married in November and graduated that following June?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, in October. We got married in October.

PIEHLER: October and then ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Graduated the following June.

PIEHLER: And your teachers and principal didn't know?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh no, I wouldn't have been there. (Laughter) And I knew that.

PIEHLER: Really? It was very clear? How did you know you couldn't go to school if you were ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh, that was, that was the law. Nobody could ...

BUFORD LONGMIRE: It was standard.

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

PIEHLER: I guess what I'm getting at is that this was not an obscure law, that you couldn't go to school [if you were married]. How many people from your high school had to drop out? And how many of these were G.I. marriages?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I don't remember. Most of the ones I knew, was just like four of us, and we got through school.

PIEHLER: So you were not the only ones that got ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh no, I knew three others.

PIEHLER: Three others, and they were friends or just people you [knew]?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Friends all through high school.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that also married there.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. Soon after we got married, the law got passed that you could go to school married. The first girl that went to school, Knoxville High School married, died last week.

PIEHLER: Oh really?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, her name was Wanda Brogden and there was a write-up in the paper that she got married and she could still go to school. She married a preacher. And he died just a few months ago, and then she died just this past week.

PIEHLER: You got married by a Justice of Peace, what kind of honeymoon did you have?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: We didn't. (Laughter) We went down on Saturday morning and we came home Sunday.

PIEHLER: So just one night was the extent of your honeymoon.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Now after, you came to Benning in August of 1943 and you came down to Benning.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, Uh huh.

PIEHLER: And where did you live?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I lived in, oh in a house, we just rented a room.

PIEHLER: So you lived off base.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And how did you get the house, how were you able to find a place to rent?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Well you just went down there and found it. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How hard or how easy was it?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: It was easy.

PIEHLER: Really there were ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Mm hmm. And I went to work at Woolworth's while I was in high school and I just transferred down there.

PIEHLER: You were willing to stay with Woolworth's?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. Just stay with them. Went back to Knoxville and still stayed with them for a few years.

PIEHLER: Where was Woolworth's? They had a store downtown.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Downtown, just across from the Rivera Theatre, does that tell you anything?

PIEHLER: Yeah, I have a rough idea.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: The bank was on the same side we were on, Hamilton Bank and Miller's was on the corner right there, close.

PIEHLER: And so you were living together and how long were you together at Benning?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Probably six months.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: At Benning?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And how many other couples were there, that were serving in the 7th Armored that were also married and living off base?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh, I don't know about any ...

PIEHLER: Let me put it this way, you mentioned going to church in Benning, do you remember what church it was?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: The woman that we had a room, she had a car and we just went to church with her.

PIEHLER: So you rented a room in a house.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, with one other person and us and the woman that owned the house. We went to church with her because she had a car. Her husband was in the Army. It was Church of Christ, so we went to church with her.

PIEHLER: How many friends were you able to make while you were at Benning?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Several, especially at Woolworth's.

PIEHLER: At Woolworth.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. Because they were just down there for the same reason I was.

PIEHLER: So your circle of friends wasn't necessarily the people your husband was serving with, it was more of the people from Woolworth's.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: And their husbands who were ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: At Fort Benning also.

PIEHLER: Following your husband to Benning, how did you like the area?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: It was alright. Of course, we couldn't get around much because we didn't have transportation. I rode the bus to work.

PIEHLER: And how many days did you work? What was your work schedule like?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Six days a week.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: So Sunday was the one day off?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. That's the way it used to be with the stores. (Laughing)

PIEHLER: Now, I'm curious, why did you stick with Woolworth? Had you thought of going to another company?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, not till after I got home, sometime after that. I still stayed at Woolworth's for a number of years. I liked it and it was a good job, I was satisfied and happy.

PIEHLER: You mentioned getting around was difficult at Benning. Besides going to church, how often for example, did you get to go to movies?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I can't remember any; we just didn't get to go anywhere. Well, he was there such a short time at the room, where we rented the room. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Like how long was it, how many months was it?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: That we were in Benning?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I'd say about six months.

PIEHLER: Where would you shop? How much shopping was done in town, would you ever shop at the PX [Military Post Exchange]?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, we never did shop at the PX.

PIEHLER: You never bought stuff from the PX. How was the rationing like? What do you remember about rationing?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Well, I just remember more items at the store than food, at Woolworth's, rather than the food items.

PIEHLER: So what items were at high demand? It sounds like at Woolworth's, what were people clamoring for?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Nylon hose. I can remember that being the most thing.

PIEHLER: That really sticks out.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: 'Cause we got very little.

PIEHLER: And when you did get it, what happened?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Well, they went in no time and most girls at the store got them first. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So there was some advantages to being ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. That's right. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Now would you ever sell some of the nylon hose, like you'd buy some and then you sell it to someone else?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, I wasn't that smart I don't guess. (Laughter) Or I knew it was not the right thing to do, one or the other.

PIEHLER: Besides the hose, was there anything else that was in high demand? That would sell out quickly.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Health items. Sanitary items. Was very ...

PIEHLER: Was very scarce?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: When did you learn that you were going to finally be deployed and how much notice did you have? When you were going to be deployed, I mean even though you had spent a lot of time at Myles Standish and at Camp Shanks, when did you get the word that you would be leaving Benning?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: You went overseas from Benning.

PIEHLER: Yeah, how much notice did they give you?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Not much. Because I know when I went there, I told 'em they said will you work after your husband leaves going overseas? "Oh yes, I will" but he came home and said he was going to be shipping out the next day and what not. So of course, I went in Woolworth's crying and had to leave that day. (Laughter) We rode the bus, didn't have to have any reservations for anything.

PIEHLER: Now where did you go after ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Went back to my mother and dad's.

PIEHLER: And you spent the war ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: With them, until he came home.

PIEHLER: And continued to work at Woolworth's?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: How often did you write to your husband?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Everyday.

PIEHLER: And how often did you write?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: 'Bout once a week...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh no, it was quite often. He wrote to me and my mother both.

PIEHLER: And because, when you mentioned you only have one letter that survives?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, I kept it for something special.

PIEHLER: What happened to the other letters?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I guess I just didn't know to keep them. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: What's so special about this one letter, do you remember?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I can't remember, oh he was telling me how precious I was and how good I was and how pretty I was. (Laughter) And it was just outstanding. But the thing about it was when he was discharged, he called and told me he was going to be discharged from, Fort Knox?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: No, I didn't say where.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Anyway, so our friends, couple that we had chummed with for a number of years and double dated and what not, he had just been discharged from the Army. So he says, "Helen, do you want to go to Fort Benning and see, and look Buford up?" "Oh yes."

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Fort Knox.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Okay, Fort Knox yes. So we got ready to go and we borrowed a car from my brother-in-law, it wasn't a very good car. On the way up there we discovered that we had a leak in the gas tank. So we chewed bubble gum and would stop every once in a while and cover that hole with bubble gum, we bought lots of bubble gum. And, so we got to Fort Knox and we looked for Buford for two days on the loudspeaker and everywhere, just looking for Buford, not there, not there, you know. So we decided to, Sunday afternoon, to come home and I called my mother and told her I said, "Mother, we can't locate Buford anywhere and we're just going to come on home." She says, "Well, wait just a minute," and Buford came to the phone. (Laughter) He was at my mother's house. So I guess we got back in Knoxville that night.

PIEHLER: I want to go back sort of, you mentioned, Camp Myles Standish was okay.

BUFORD LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How long were you in that?

LONGMIRE: Five days.

PIEHLER: Five days and then they sent you to Camp Shanks?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And what was a typical day like at Camp Shanks? What did they have you do?

LONGMIRE: Drill and practice with the radio.

PIEHLER: But you were just in a sense waiting to go overseas?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you get any passes to go off base when you were at Shanks?

LONGMIRE: I can't remember gettin' any passes at Shanks.

PIEHLER: Did you ever get to New York for example, New York City?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: When you were in California or anywhere did you get any leaves like to go to any towns?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, you could get a pass every once in a while, but I didn't go anywhere.

PIEHLER: So you never went anywhere in California, say San Francisco or Los Angeles?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Or to Boston or New York City?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Now after you did finally leave Shanks, how did you go overseas?

LONGMIRE: On the *Queen Mary*.

PIEHLER: And where on the *Queen Mary* roughly did you stay while you were going overseas?

LONGMIRE: Oh I don't know, [there were] a number of decks on it.

PIEHLER: How far below roughly were you?

LONGMIRE: We were below the water line.

PIEHLER: And what was the journey like?

LONGMIRE: Wasn't bad.

PIEHLER: You didn't get seasick?

LONGMIRE: I didn't get seasick. Some people got seasick when they got on the boat and we were in the harbor. Just sittin' in New York harbor.

PIEHLER: How did you like the food aboard ship?

LONGMIRE: Well, it was all right; it was English food on the *Queen Mary*.

PIEHLER: Did you smoke during the war?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Did you smoke before going into the service or ...

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And just kept ...

LONGMIRE: Kept smoking.

PIEHLER: And where did you arrive?

LONGMIRE: In Scotland.

PIEHLER: In Scotland. And this was in 1944.

SOUTHER: About June, July.

LONGMIRE: We left New York Harbor and sailed on the seventh of June.

PIEHLER: 1944.

LONGMIRE: Yeah. And took us about three, four days to cross.

PIEHLER: And you landed in Scotland, and where?

LONGMIRE: Glasgow.

PIEHLER: Where did you go after Glasgow?

LONGMIRE: Went to England. Stayed there about two months, and crossed the Channel.

PIEHLER: Can I ask, was it in England where you got to see Patton and his speech?

LONGMIRE: Yeah. He spoke to the division, had an assembly.

SOUTHER: I brought a picture of one of Patton's speeches. (Hands picture to Buford Longmire)

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

SOUTHER: Is that what it would be, standing on a box like that?

LONGMIRE: No, this was in an amphitheater where we were, with the whole division.

SOUTHER: Do you remember in his speech, did he use any foul language at all?

LONGMIRE: Every other word. (Laughter) This was our first commander. (Looking at other pictures) And then he, this one, Hasbrouck relieved him; Patton didn't like the way he operated so he relived him in France. And Hasbrouck took over, he just died recently, Hasbrouck did.

SOUTHER: Talking about Patton, when you saw Patton at the speech in England, was that the very first time you had heard of General Patton or did you ...

LONGMIRE: I knew of him.

SOUTHER: Beforehand?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

SOUTHER: But you said he did use foul language?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What else do you remember about his speech?

LONGMIRE: Nothing much, he just said, said of course “if you got captured, you just lived to escape.” He believed, once you got into battle, get the battle over with as soon as possible so you can recuperate and be able to go back into battle in a short period of time. Spent a longer period of time in a battle, it took you longer to recuperate and be ready to go back. Very stern person. I admired him more than any other general because I think had the right philosophy.

PIEHLER: You mentioned the first divisional commander, what did you think of him? And the one that Patton relieved when we showed you the picture, what’s his name again?

LONGMIRE: General Sylvester.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about him, or did you have any contact with him?

LONGMIRE: No, no personal contact.

PIEHLER: What was the feeling in the division about him? Did you ever ...

LONGMIRE: I don’t know, nothing particular.

PIEHLER: What about the new division commander that Patton ...

LONGMIRE: He was all right, he wasn’t...

SOUTHER: That was General Hasbrouck?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, Hasbrouck. (Nodding) He just died recently.

PIEHLER: While you were in England, what type of training did you do? And types of maneuvers did you do?

LONGMIRE: Just preparation, preparation to go overseas. Nothing much, just the staging area.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have any combat veterans come out and train with you and instruct you? Did any combat veterans come out and instruct you while you were in England?

LONGMIRE: Who?

PIEHLER: Combat veterans.

LONGMIRE: No, it was just our own men.

PIEHLER: Did you meet any English civilians when you were in England?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Where did you meet them?

LONGMIRE: In the town.

PIEHLER: Did you go to pubs at all while you were ...

LONGMIRE: Probably a few of 'em, not many. Didn't get to town often.

PIEHLER: Did you go to church at all when you were in England?

LONGMIRE: No, I don't guess I was going to church.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to London?

LONGMIRE: No, didn't get there.

PIEHLER: What was the nearest town you were based at when you were in England do you remember?

LONGMIRE: No, I don't.

PIEHLER: And, were you living in tents or barracks while you were in England?

LONGMIRE: In barracks.

PIEHLER: How much notice did you have when you were actually deployed again, this time to France? How much notice did they give your unit? Do you remember?

LONGMIRE: A few days.

PIEHLER: And how did you get overseas? Where did you leave from?

LONGMIRE: England.

PIEHLER: Do you remember what port?

LONGMIRE: No, don't remember what port.

SOUTHER: This was about the beginning of August?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: You mean leaving the United States going over there?

PIEHLER: No, leaving England for France.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh, okay.

PIEHLER: What ship did you travel across the English Channel?

BUFORD LONGMIRE: I don't know. It was a Liberty Ship.

PIEHLER: And where did you land?

LONGMIRE: On Omaha Beach. Just after the invasion, of course.

PIEHLER: How long were you on Omaha Beach before you got deployed?

LONGMIRE: Oh just landed, wasn't there but a day or two.

PIEHLER: And then what happened?

LONGMIRE: Well we spearheaded the the 3rd Army drive across France, Patton's Army. About three weeks.

SOUTHER: Was the first place in France that you went to, was it Chartres?

LONGMIRE: That's the first one I remember.

SOUTHER: That was in August, about August 14th?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Let me ask a very broad question. What was the most vivid memory you have about combat?

LONGMIRE: Well, a lot of things about it, of course. What happened from day to day. The 3rd Army drive across France. We traveled in column mostly until we ran into opposition, and then cleared out the enemy. And then travel. We traveled about eighteen hours a day in column. Traveled in parallel columns and cleared that out and then move on.

PIEHLER: Did you have any close calls?

LONGMIRE: No, none that I recall.

PIEHLER: Were you ever strafed by enemy airplanes?

LONGMIRE: Yes.

PIEHLER: Where was that?

LONGMIRE: It was in Holland. 'Bout dark, just before dark.

PIEHLER: How often were you under artillery fire?

LONGMIRE: Quite often.

PIEHLER: And did the shells ever come close?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: When you would stop for the night in these columns, would you dig a slit trench every time you stopped?

LONGMIRE: No, just slept in bed, it's an armored vehicle.

PIEHLER: Armored vehicle, so you thought that was ...

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What about small arms fire? Did you have any close calls with small arms fire?

LONGMIRE: Well, we had some small arms fire. Mostly we were back two or three miles behind, behind the line.

PIEHLER: So you were about three miles behind, from the tip of the column. You were about three miles from the tip, the very ...

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: But still that doesn't mean you couldn't ...

LONGMIRE: No, we [would] come under small arms fire.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have to fire your own weapon, during the war?

LONGMIRE: Few times, not regular.

SOUTHER: Did you run into any German resistance in Chartres, do you remember?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, we were tied up there two or three days.

SOUTHER: Were the city streets in Chartres, were they hard to get the tanks through?

LONGMIRE: Yeah. (Laughs) Very narrow.

SOUTHER: [I] brought a picture, this is in Chartres right here.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

SOUTHER: Did you ever have, did you ever meet up with any French resistance fighters?

LONGMIRE: French resistance?

SOUTHER: Mm hmm.

LONGMIRE: Yeah we saw them. Ran into them occasionally.

SOUTHER: In France, did you ever see any women, any French women that had gotten in trouble because they had helped the Germans out?

LONGMIRE: I don't remember any personally. But the French women was ostracized because that.

SOUTHER: [I] brought a picture outside of Verdun, France. Where two French women were being paraded down the streets, they had their heads shaved because they had helped the Germans.

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You've seen that, you've encountered that in towns? You encountered that type of scene...

LONGMIRE: No, I didn't see that.

PIEHLER: No, you never ...

LONGMIRE: I didn't actually see any of 'em.

SOUTHER: Were the French people overall nice to you, were they glad to see you?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, when you first went in there and then a month or so they were ready to get rid of ya. They'd be out two and three and four o'clock in the morning in the streets, throwing rolls and anything they had. Food and champagne that they'd just dug up, give it to us. A month later they didn't care for us.

SOUTHER: The Germans surrendered Paris on August 25th, do you remember what you thought when the Germans had basically left Paris?

LONGMIRE: No, not really.

SOUTHER: I think your division had gone towards Verdun, which was past Paris.

LONGMIRE: Yeah, we didn't go into Paris.

SOUTHER: Right, you went to ...

LONGMIRE: They pulled us off the side of the road, towards, I really can't think ...

PIEHLER: Did you ever get to see Paris?

LONGMIRE: (Shakes head no)

SOUTHER: After you went to Verdun, on September 27th, 1944, you ran into Germans in Metz, France?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, that was right on the border.

SOUTHER: Between France and Belgium?

LONGMIRE: Yes, yeah.

SOUTHER: And December 17th, you were still moving and General Hasbrouck was now your Major General and you were ordered to St. Vith to defend the city. Do you remember anything specific at St. Vith?

LONGMIRE: Well, we were up on the Ruhr River because it flooded the dams up on northern Germany. And waitin' for the water to go down to cross the river. So the water got out and we come down south, and we wind up two o'clock in the mornin' we got down there and you couldn't see the city. The first town on the border, it was completely destroyed, annihilated, was Aachen, was flat, nothing. And then we wound up at St. Vith, where we went in to the 6th and they were two abreast, were retreating and they were wiped out. The two regiments that were committed, supposed to be relatively quiet, of course, in the front, and they were retreating. General Hasbrouck, at two or three o'clock in the morning he was down in the what do you call it, he said, "82nd's over here and so and so is over here" it was just chaos. He didn't know what was going on, he was down there trying to find out what was going on. And then the Signal Corps, we was supposed to stay there forty-eight hours and it wound up being three or four days. Then they started pullin' us back and we went out on Christmas Eve, leaving St. Vith and turned us around and put us back in there and we stayed til March. And at Malmedy, snow was three feet on the ground, and that's where the massacre was. They found open

graves; two or three hundred people had been massacred. When the snow melted they found the bodies laying there. That was at Malmedy.

SOUTHER: In Malmedy did you happen to see any of the bodies or did you just hear about it?

LONGMIRE: I didn't see any of 'em. When they were uncovered we were somewhere else. In March. Germans and Americans both.

SOUTHER: On March 9th about this time, when they found the bodies at Malmedy, did your 7th Armored Division, did you cross the Rhine River in Germany?

LONGMIRE: We crossed the Rhine but I don't remember.

SOUTHER: About this time, did the 7th Armored Division have any problems with the supply line?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, that was in France, going across France. About three weeks, the march across France, ran out of supplies.

SOUTHER: Did you have to stop for a few days?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, we couldn't move more than two miles. And if there was a counter-attack, they'd have wiped us out.

SOUTHER: Going back to when you crossed the Rhine in Germany, on April 12th, 1945 President Roosevelt died in Warm Springs, Georgia. How did you hear about President Roosevelt?

LONGMIRE: I don't remember, probably the *Stars and Stripes*. The newspaper, you know.

PIEHLER: How often did you get the *Stars and Stripes*?

LONGMIRE: Once a week.

SOUTHER: And about this time you were still in Germany?

LONGMIRE: Yes.

SOUTHER: And this was about the time when Benito Mussolini was captured and hanged in Italy.

LONGMIRE: Yeah. I don't remember the exact time.

SOUTHER: Your division wasn't in Italy.

LONGMIRE: No.

SOUTHER: And then just a few days later is when Hitler killed himself, on May 1, 1945. And what part of Germany, were you around Berlin? Did you ever get close to Berlin at all?

LONGMIRE: No. When the war ended, we were at the Baltic Sea and made first contact with the Russians. And 250 miles of German soldiers running from the Russians and surrendering to the Americans and British. And just put them in fenced areas, out in the countryside.

SOUTHER: Do you remember talking to any Russian soldiers or seeing any Russian soldiers?

LONGMIRE: No, we were scheduled to meet the Russians and we, our particular vehicle, something happened to the radio it went haywire. So we couldn't find it. So we didn't get to go so they sent another vehicle in our place. And then they first contacted, about fifty miles, the German lines, about seven or eight hundred men.

SOUTHER: I want to go back a little bit, the 7th Armored Division was with Patton's 3rd Army right?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

SOUTHER: Were you ever assigned to any of the other armies?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, we were in every army in Europe except the 15th. Even in the British 2nd Army.

SOUTHER: What do you remember about the British 2nd Army, do you remember any of the men?

LONGMIRE: Not particularly.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about the Belgian civilians? You were in St. Vith a while.

LONGMIRE: Yeah, well they were nice people, we didn't have much contact with 'em.

PIEHLER: What about Germany, you mentioned the long lines of Germans surrendering in the prison camp. What other kind of contact did you have with German civilians?

LONGMIRE: Well, not much 'cause it was during war. We didn't see many of 'em.

PIEHLER: How long were you in Germany after the war ended?

LONGMIRE: Not too long. Just a matter of days I guess.

PIEHLER: Now did you ever make it up to Norway or to Denmark?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, we went though there. We didn't stop there. We passed through there.

PIEHLER: When did you come home?

LONGMIRE: '46.

PIEHLER: So where were you when the war ended, where were you from May to when you got home? In Germany?

LONGMIRE: I guess we came directly from Germany I believe.

PIEHLER: Where were you based, did you have any occupation duties?

LONGMIRE: No.

SOUTHER: Where did you come back? What port did you come back in?

LONGMIRE: In New Jersey.

SOUTHER: What were your sentiments when you heard the war was over, and that Buford was coming back home?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I was real excited and everyone else was too.

SOUTHER: Did you stay for a while in New Jersey or did you come back...

LONGMIRE: No, from New Jersey we went Camp Atterburry, Indiana. And discharged right there. Just a day or two.

SOUTHER: Do you remember Buford coming home? The first time you saw him when he came back?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, I was in Kentucky looking for him. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So he was at your mother's house. When did you actually meet the first time?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: At my mother's house. Yeah, he stayed there until I got back.

PIEHLER: Oh, he didn't go anywhere.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How revealing were his letters when he was in Europe? What did he tell you?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: He didn't talk much about what was going on with the armies, just different things.

PIEHLER: Now you knew where he was with, the unit right?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Did you try to track at all in the newspaper or on the radio?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh, well we just listened and read everything we could. Just wondering about different places and different things and where they might be.

PIEHLER: Were you ever nervous about some of the news you heard?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Anything that sticks out?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Not particularly.

PIEHLER: Like the Bulge, the Battle of the Bulge?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: One of the things I'm curious about, in working downtown in Woolworth, what did you think about people from Oak Ridge when they came shopping?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I don't believe they came much.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you don't have a memory of the ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Did you buy any War Bonds while, during the war itself?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh yes. We sold 'em at the store. The stamps. We had a black man that worked at the S&W, a real tall man, he's been in the paper many times, 'course he's been dead several years now. He would take his tips everyday, bring me a handful of dimes, nickels, and quarters and I would count 'em and he would buy stamps to get a bond. That went on for a long time.

PIEHLER: Did your mother or parents have a victory garden?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Did your parent's have a victory garden?

LONGMIRE: They always had a garden.

PIEHLER: I never asked you, what did your parents think of Franklin Roosevelt growing up in the 30's and what did you think of him?

LONGMIRE: They thought he was alright.

PIEHLER: Did they vote Democratic in the 30's or did they vote for a Republican?

LONGMIRE: They were both Democrats.

PIEHLER: And your parents, what did they think of Roosevelt?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: They liked him very much. Thought he was a good person. Maybe not morally, but, [we] knew what he was doing I guess. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did they vote for him or did they vote for ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, they would vote for him.

PIEHLER: They voted for Roosevelt. Had you thought of staying in the Army?

LONGMIRE: (Shakes head no) (Laughter)

PIEHLER: No? Go ahead.

SOUTHER: When you came back, did you go back to work at Joe Parrot signs?

LONGMIRE: For a while.

SOUTHER: You still did the same thing?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: For a number of years.

SOUTHER: And, do you two have any children?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, we had four children. Five years apart.

SOUTHER: Did any of them go into the military?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No. Our oldest son is fifty-seven now.

PIEHLER: Did you buy your home with the G.I. Bill, your first home?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No. We built it from a loan.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of taking out a G.I. Bill mortgage?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I don't think so.

PIEHLER: Actually, I'm just going to put on a new tape because ...

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Buford E. Longmire, on March 14, 2005 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

SOUTHER: ... George Souther.

PIEHLER: And Mrs. Helen G. Longmire is also at times joining us on the interview. You mentioned taking a correspondence school class after you got out, do you remember which school offered the correspondence school in art?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, it was a famous artist.

PIEHLER: And how long did you take the correspondence course?

LONGMIRE: Couple of years.

PIEHLER: And the GI Bill paid for the whole course?

LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of going back to college at all or to an art school?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: How eager were you to start a family I guess the both of you ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Not right off. We were married five years before we had any children. I guess we just tried to get a little bit ahead. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How long were you at Woolworth?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: About ten years.

PIEHLER: So when did you leave Woolworth do you remember?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: When our first son was born, 1947.

PIEHLER: When did you return to work? You left Woolworth after the birth of your first child when did you ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I went back there for, you know, a short time and then I got a better job. We needed a better job then. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Who looked after your children when you were working?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: They went to day school. Daycare.

PIEHLER: Who ran the daycare?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: It was in a church. My mother watched one child and then if I could find someone to come and stay at the house, that's what we did.

PIEHLER: So you really always worked while you had your ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes I did.

PIEHLER: And what was the better job you mentioned you left Woolworth eventually you ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I went as a bookkeeper at Lays Potato Chips.

PIEHLER: Oh okay. And how long were you with Lays?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I was there I guess close to ten years, maybe more. Then I retired from First Presbyterian Church downtown after twenty years there.

PIEHLER: So you went to First Presbyterian as a ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Business manager.

PIEHLER: Now did you go to the Presbyterian Church?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: So you were just ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: They didn't want a Presbyterian handling their money.

PIEHLER: They literally wanted someone who wasn't part of the church?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: That's right.

PIEHLER: Oh, interesting. Did you still go to the Baptist Church?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: What was it like going to Baptist Church but working for the Presbyterians?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I didn't get involved. It was just a friendship with the people there. Wonderful church, good people.

PIEHLER: So they were a good employer?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Oh yes, very.

PIEHLER: And, how long did you continue working as a painter?

LONGMIRE: Five years or so I guess.

PIEHLER: And what led you to go change jobs?

LONGMIRE: A better job and was related, you know.

PIEHLER: And how long did you stay with them?

LONGMIRE: Five or six years. Designed plastic parts.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to any reunions or stay in touch with anyone you served with?

LONGMIRE: Went to one of the reunions with the 7th Armored Division.

PIEHLER: When was that?

LONGMIRE: Three or four years ago. I didn't even know they had an association til' reading it in a magazine, a veteran's world war magazine a few years ago. And they've been meeting ever since World War II.

PIEHLER: But you didn't know about it until recently?

LONGMIRE: Not a thing about it.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: We did go to Washington for the celebration of World War II.

PIEHLER: Recently, this past summer, the dedication of the World War II memorial?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

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

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Did you join any veteran's organizations when you got home?

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: Did you join the Legion or, you mentioned reading the VFW magazine.

LONGMIRE: Just subscribed to it.

PIEHLER: But that's it, you've never ...

LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: What movie, if any movie reflect your wartime experience.

LONGMIRE: Yeah, *Patton*. George C. Scott.

PIEHLER: What about that movie reflects ...

LONGMIRE: The story and Patton mostly.

PIEHLER: Having heard Patton lecture you; does Scott capture Patton's personality?

LONGMIRE: Yeah he ...

PIEHLER: He's got a lot of it? He had a lot of it right?

LONGMIRE: Yeah. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I get a sense that Patton was a real stickler for discipline was that accurate when you were a part of his army?

LONGMIRE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Any instances you remember anything you remember about Patton?

LONGMIRE: Not personally.

SOUTHER: I was going to ask, when you were in France and you were having problems with the supply line do you remember General Patton General Eisenhower kind of got into a scuffle about that.

LONGMIRE: Yeah, they didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things. And he was in trouble all the time, Eisenhower and the commanders.

SOUTHER: Do you remember hearing when General Patton died when he had his accident?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, it was in France. Supposed to be on a huntin' trip, in a jeep accident, shortly after the war.

PIEHLER: Did any of your children think of joining the military?

LONGMIRE: I don't think so.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Our youngest son died at thirty-seven. And then we had two girls and two boys. And the oldest one thought he was gonna be drafted but he wasn't.

PIEHLER: I guess you've been married a long time.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Sixty-three years.

PIEHLER: I guess this question is often asked to people, but, what's been the key to a successful marriage in your ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Having family. (Laughter) We were just more or less the same, what would you call it, raised to the same ...

SOUTHER: Beat of the same drum.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes, that's right.

PIEHLER: Had you thought, particularly coming home from the service, thought of leaving Knoxville had you ever ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No.

PIEHLER: You both wanted to ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Stay in Knoxville. He was offered a job in New York at one time but ...

PIEHLER: Who offered a job?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: The Blood Bank.

PIEHLER: To do what, to design?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, to work with taking blood and that sort of thing, just like they do here when you go to give blood. A friend of his ran the one here.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: But we didn't even give it a thought. After we were approached.

PIEHLER: When was this, what year roughly?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I believe about 1952, 1953 or something. Because we had two children at that time and I thought, "no." (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Where do you live in Knoxville compared to where you grew up?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Where we live now used to be country but it isn't, it's in the city now.

LONGMIRE: Fountain City.

PIEHLER: Fountain City so that's where you live...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And how long have you lived in the same house?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: About fifty years. We built it in '47. No, '57.

PIEHLER: When you say you built it yourself did you literally build it yourself?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: We built what we could and got a loan to hire people to do the plumbing, the electrical.

PIEHLER: You did the framing and the sheet rock ?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: My dad helped some and his brother helped some and his dad helped some and my dad helped some.

PIEHLER: So it really was a house built ...

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: But we did a lot of it too ourselves.

PIEHLER: Yeah, oh no I believe you. (Laughter)

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: And it saved a lot of money.

PIEHLER: Yeah, oh I can imagine.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: 'Cause we paid thirty-eight dollars a month on our house payment.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that's even low by 1950 standards. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well is there anything I forgot to ask you?

LONGMIRE: I guess you covered about everything.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: You don't remember anything particularly outstanding?

LONGMIRE: (Shakes head no)

PIEHLER: Have you ever been back to Europe?

LONGMIRE: No. Like to go back, never had the opportunity.

PIEHLER: When you went to the 7th Armored Reunion, did you meet anyone you knew from the service? Did you meet anyone you had served with?

LONGMIRE: No.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: That's been a couple years ago, we went to Kentucky.

SOUTHER: I was going to ask, do you still know Morse code very well? Can you still do Morse code?

LONGMIRE: Yeah, pick it up pretty good.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: It's probably just like typewriting, you know.

SOUTHER: You got me, I don't know any. (Laughter)

LONGMIRE: It takes a while.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I mean it's just the memory that you could sit down. Like doing typing, if you typed for twenty years, you can still sit down and type, like you left it.

SOUTHER: Right. When he came home would he ever, did Mr. Longmire ever talk to you about the war?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: No, he never did discuss it much. No.

PIEHLER: Did you learn anything new today?

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Yes. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You did mention about Camp Polk, you had never heard about the prostitutes before.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: In a way I guess, but not exactly like he said. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well thank you very much we really appreciate it.

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: I enjoyed it very much. I learned some things too.

PIEHLER: We hope you will come to some of our lectures too, particularly we have three lectures a year we hope you'll [come to them].

HELEN G. LONGMIRE: Well, maybe we will.

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