

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
FOSTER ARNETT

FOR THE
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INTERVIEWED BY
G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
JOHNNY GOINS

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TRANSCRIPT BY
PATRICK LEVERTON

REVIEWED BY
JONATHAN IVES
MAGGIE L. YANCEY

KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Foster D. Arnett on July 7, 2000, at Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

JOHNNY GOINS: Johnny Goins.

KURT PIEHLER: And I guess I would like to begin by asking you a simple question: when were you born and where were you born?

FOSTER ARNETT: Born in Knoxville, Tennessee on North Fifth Avenue, on November 28, 1920.

PIEHLER: And I saw from your pre-interview survey that your mother was a Knoxville native. She was born here?

ARNETT: That's kind of an interesting story, and if I wrestle around I want you be sure to pull me down! About 1875, two kids from Lexington, Virginia., Mr. Billy Fuller and Bud Deaver were going to be sent to VMI [Virginia Military Institute] and neither one of them wanted to go there so they hopped the train, and J.L. Deaver, Bud Deaver—my grandfather—got off here in Knoxville. Mr. Billy Fuller continued on the train; they didn't want to go to school in Lexington, their hometown. And my grandfather nearby was the largest mercantile house in Knoxville. Briscoe and Co.—I think that was the name of it! And my grandfather, just off the train—in effect running away from home, I guess, he was seventeen, eighteen years old—was there warming himself by this stove. They had, you know, pot-bellied stoves throughout this wholesale dry goods house. And, uh, while he was there he picked up a broom and was sweeping around and Mr. Briscoe came up and said something to the effect, “Boy, what are you doing here? I told you we didn't have no job for you! I told you we didn't need you! What are you doing?” He said “Well, Mr. Briscoe if you're kind enough to let me warm myself by the stove here, the least I can do is tidy up a little bit.” And then the story goes that Mr. Briscoe employed him; my grandfather went to work and I think it was something like five dollars a week. And he had a historic career—he really did! He had the largest wholesale dry goods house in this part of the country and then, tragically—and you gentleman are too young to remember this—a terrible, terrible thing happened, and that was the Great Depression. And the dry-goods company—I mean, he lost it, but he was quite a guy. And it was [at] the corner of Commerce and—gosh almighty, I've forgotten—but the building still stands there. Mother's family goes way back into Virginia. Father's side of the family—they came to Quebec City and were there and then moved to the Knoxville area. So, mother and dad came from quite different backgrounds.

PIEHLER: ... While your mother was born in Knoxville, your father was born in Cincinnati?

ARNETT: Right.

PIEHLER: And how long did he live in Cincinnati?

ARNETT: Oh, just as a child, then moved to Knoxville. I guess dad's branch of the family goes back in Knoxville over a hundred years, and I know mother's branch of the family goes back. Matter of fact, my father's mother was a Greenwood, and the Greenwoods were a very prominent family here in Knoxville and they had a big, big sign company! As a matter of fact, they had the first neon signs in the state of Tennessee! And, I think I showed you the picture—they were very, very focused in on things cultural; I think I showed you that picture of my father with the violin and the knickers and so forth. But in any event—and that's a short answer, maybe too long an answer.

GOINS: So most of his childhood was in Knoxville?

ARNETT: Yeah!

GOINS: How did they meet? How did your mother and father meet?

ARNETT: Gosh, I don't know and I, unfortunately, can't ask them! But Knoxville, of course, in those days was much more compressed, population-wise, than it is now, and Washington Avenue and North Fifth Avenue—everything was really concentrated there. Then, as you proceed west in Knoxville where, you know, Knoxville has exploded—why, it's totally different than what it was fifty years ago! The only neighborhood that I know of that's remained reasonably intact is Sequoyah Hills, and the reason for that, as you know, is because the Tennessee River comes in at the University Club there and makes that enormous bend and then comes in after making this enormous bend back up to join Lyon's View pike this side of Cherokee Country Club.

PIEHLER: Your father was a traveling salesman?

ARNETT: Yeah, that was a culture—that was a culture that was unique! It no longer exists.

PIEHLER: Yeah, there are very few traveling salesmen in the way they used to be!

ARNETT: And, of course, there are a lot of reasons for it. I mean, our culture has changed and our transportation capabilities have enormously changed. And in the old days—I don't know whether I showed you that picture of the old Cadillac taken about 1903? Bud Deaver, my grandfather, had I guess the first Cadillac in Knoxville, and that picture is taken in front of the old Knox County Courthouse with a bunch of kids in it, you know, celebrating the Fourth of July, I guess it was, or Labor Day. But, Knoxville was *tightly* compressed and—just one thing for illustrative purposes: the entire commerce of the city—and with special focus on hotels—was around the railroad station. [Like], the Regas, for example. Which, you know, is closing down tomorrow night—and I *weep* when I say that, as Bill Regas wept during his interview [The Regas was a four-star restaurant that became a historic Knoxville landmark]. But, Knoxville was *tightly* compressed. Of course a lot of reason for that was the lack of transportation. I think I showed you that horse-drawn trolley!

PIEHLER: Yes, you showed me that going out to the Cherokee Country Club was a major expedition.

ARNETT: Right!

PIEHLER: You said that your father was a traveling salesman; what did he actually sell?

ARNETT: He actually sold a variety of things, but his focus was stocks and bonds. Those were in the days before the stock market and the brokerage houses as they exist now, and he was primarily a stocks and bonds salesman. Then, he ran a business in Chattanooga for the Atlantic Ice and Coal Company, which was a big, big outfit at that time. And, I notice that you're wincing when I mention that, but Atlantic Ice and Coal company we don't have! You know, people would actually have coal delivered to their house or go down to get a block of ice, you know to stick in the refrigerator. And so, that business which was highly ...

PIEHLER: It was very important.

ARNETT: Yeah! And, among other things, they expanded into the beer business. Old South Beer—I'll never forget—that was their product. But, as I say, that's gone the way of a lot of the artifacts of my culture.

GOINS: How did that work? I mean did he work for a larger company and just go out and sell the bonds and such?

ARNETT: Yeah, right—right on the market, and that kind of thing. As a result, he was away from home a *great* deal, but mother and her two sons, my younger brother and I, would go where ever he was at during the summertime, you know when we were not in school. I will never forget—we spent one summer at the Sagemont Inn in Joplin, Missouri, and that was very, very elegant and special place. Mother would bring the two sons to join dad during the summertime. Obviously, since we were going to school in Knoxville, it had to be limited to those perimeters. But, dad came from a highly, highly cultured family. His family was very gifted in music and the arts and that kind of thing, which is great—which is great, but it was not a big money maker! I mean, it was not easily converted to cash. So, Dad was quite a guy but two things occurred: first, the Great Depression, and secondly, World War II. And you two gentleman are too young to have any memory of those two events, but I make the argument, the comment, that they were *the* two most catastrophic events in the history of the planet Earth. I am talking about the Great Depression, and I'm talking about World War II, and they were almost back to back. When did the stock market crash, 1926?

PIEHLER: '29.

ARNETT: '29, yeah, 1929. And we were just then when World War II broke out—just beginning to defeat that horrible plague, when along came World War II, which

developed into the largest and most devastating war, as I said, in all of history. And our culture was different. Ever so different, because the quality of life back in those days was great, but it was modest. It was modest, and some of the things that we take for granted, just as our birthright, for example cars—if you had a car, an automobile, you really had something! Nowadays, every family has at least two cars, it seems like—some of them three and four and that kind of thing! But it was a curious, a great, a marvelous, a frightening time to grow up in. I'm talking about the Great Depression.

GOINS: So, did you travel most every summer to be with your father?

ARNETT: Yeah, to where dad would be. My mother would take her two young sons. My brother Bill ...

GOINS: That must have been a bit arduous, traveling like that with small children?

ARNETT: Well it wasn't by Pullman, I'll tell you that! It was by coach to wherever dad happened to be! (Laughter) But it was ...

GOINS: Was he even restricted in region? Could he go, like, to the Northeast or wherever he wanted?

ARNETT: Wherever he went, you know, wherever he thought the market was—there was where he would go. And that's kind of a curious thing, and this is *my* take on it and therefore you ought to consider it carefully that it's *my* take. Dad was, in a sense, a lost ball in the high weeds. He came from an extremely cultured sophisticated background and he only went to high school, and he ... anybody that tells you the Great Depression was fun doesn't know what they are talking about; it was grim.

PIEHLER: How did it affect your father? I mean what specifically happened to him? Because it sounds like he was really battered by it.

ARNETT: You know it wasn't any fun! Things that you and I just take for granted—you know, the quality of life, if I can use that phrase—I am not sure it fits. But, the Great Depression was absolutely no fun and especially until the stock market broke in October of '29, as I remember, why it had a *profound* effect upon—I mean it wasn't any fun. Anyone that suggests that it had an element of glamour to it just doesn't know what they are talking about.

GOINS: Was he in sales at that time?

ARNETT: Yeah, Yeah. He basically was a quote “traveling salesman,” which is an anachronism; I mean, they don't exist anymore.

PIEHLER: He was selling stocks and bonds which made it—yeah, I mean he was immediately hit. Because in a lot of other industries ... people started getting hit badly in '31, '32, but ...

ARNETT: That's when the *big* hit came!

PIEHLER: Yeah, that came in '29. And what happened; how long did he continue as a traveling salesman?

ARNETT: Well, he ran an operation for the old Atlantic Ice and Oil Company in Chattanooga.

PIEHLER: When did he take that job; do you remember?

ARNETT: No, I really don't, and Dad died—that picture will tell you—just before the end of World War II. Both my brother Bill and I were, you know, gone; I went overseas, and my brother *was* overseas. And so mother, in response to this *dreadful* economic impact, became the first cafeteria manager in the Knoxville City School System. We lived on Emoriland Boulevard at ... 207 Emoriland Boulevard, as I remember. And mother, on her own, undertook—because school cafeterias, you know public school cafeterias, did not exist—[to] establish the very first one in the Knoxville City School System.

PIEHLER: Do you remember what year that was?

ARNETT: I think on or about *circa* 1927. And from that came the cafeteria system in the Knoxville City Schools. But, she was a *remarkable* lady. Curiously—and I don't think I mentioned this to you before—mother was unique in the sense that she was a college graduate. She was born in, what, 1891, as I remember. And women—girls—didn't go to college in those days, and she was a college graduate. Her father was very, very well-to-do all those years until the Great Crash. ... I'm guessing it was about 1930 that she established the first school cafeteria in McCampbell School, which no longer exists. But she was quite a gal; she was indomitable! If I had to pick out one word, that word would fit I think remarkably. And I started to tell you a minute ago—and to put this in context, when I was about two years old she became stone deaf. I don't mean hard of hearing, I mean *stone* deaf. And, you know, you could fire a pistol beside—except for the concussion—beside her head and she wouldn't hear it. But she became extremely adept—she was indomitable, she was a fortress—and she became *extremely* adept at lip reading! And, curiously, a number of people who had known her through the years did not know that she was stone deaf! And about the only time that that would surface was when she would be talking with someone—why, would you turn this way please?

PIEHLER: If you turn the opposite way?

ARNETT: That's right; you couldn't read the lips.

GOINS: Yeah.

ARNETT: She was a fantastic female. She and dad were—they had a lot of things in common, but they were from totally different molds. And I'm not suggesting one is better than the other, but they were just totally different cultures. She was quite an inspiration—*Quite* an inspiration.

PIEHLER: She also created—you mentioned in the pre-interview survey she was responsible, had a key role in the *Knoxville News Sentinel's* Christmas Empty Stocking Fund program. When did that start; what was her role?

ARNETT: Oh gosh. I don't know. You'd have to ask Harry Moskos, but she was the originator and her role was to set up the Christmas giving program—you know, Empty Stocking Fund, and all that kind of thing—and to purchase all the food and recruit all the people. You can bet my brother and I were among her first recruits! You know, to gather these foodstuffs together and to deliver them to the needy and that kind of thing. Oh, she was a lady. Who had, I think, an excellent cultural background, but she was tough and anyone who knew her would acknowledge that. She was something else, again.

PIEHLER: Now your mother was a Methodist?

ARNETT: Right.

PIEHLER: And was your father a Methodist?

ARNETT: Yeah. Yeah, and the old church still stands out there. I forgot what is ... it was Trinity Methodist Church. You know where Broadway Baptist Church is? On Broadway? Alright. Right at Broadway Baptist—if you turn right on that street that dead-ends into Broadway Baptist and go a block and a half or two blocks—that's the old Trinity Methodist Church. And it still stands, but I think it's used for a different purpose. But [anyway], Mother and Dad were both remarkable, marvelous people, but they were each totally different.

PIEHLER: When you say they were totally different, in what ways? What were the examples of where they were totally different?

ARNETT: Oh golly darn! I haven't thought about this in a long, long time. Mother was strong willed; Mother was "get-it-done." Mother—I mean if one of her kids had come in crying, [she would say] "What are you crying for? You're a *boy*! Boys don't cry!" You know, that kind of thing. Dad had a—I want to be careful, but he had a much more—his mother's family, Greenwood, when they were in Canada was Boisvert, which is French for Greenwood. And mother was, of the two, better equipped to confront and defeat adversity; that kind of thing. She was quite a lady! She was an institution in her own time and we had better not—my brother and I had better not get into any difficulty except *her!!!* (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Sure.

ARNETT: And that was over laced with love, I might add! We were astute enough to recognize that it was her way of having her boys grow up. And that picture that I showed you, the last picture taken—it was right outside of Gatlinburg, the last time my family was together. I had been pretty badly shot up in the Philippines and got an emergency leave to go home because my brother was going to be home for his last leave before going overseas. He was with the 41st Infantry Division, which was a *historic* infantry division, and that picture was taken the last time. [It was] the last picture taken of the family: mother, dad, my brother and I. Bill was just getting ready, as I say, to “jump off” for the Philippines and ultimately Japan, and I had just got back, but it was a very, very *moving* period in my life.

PIEHLER: How active was your family in the church; in the Methodist Church?

ARNETT: Mother [was]; Dad was *not*, because, as I say, he was essentially away from home most all the time. His parents—Grace Greenwood *et cetera*—were active in the church, but Dad was not very involved in the church. Mother was kind of the sturdy arm; by that I mean, we went to Sunday school. We went to church, my brother and I ... Oh, I should have brought in a copy, the *Sentinel* did actually ...

PIEHLER: I saw it on your wall!!!

ARNETT: On, I think it was Christmas Eve of—oh gosh ...

PIEHLER: I think it was 1967?

ARNETT: Sixty-seven?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ARNETT: I had forgotten, but the *Sentinel* on the front of what was then called the Society Section—the entire front page, as you may remember, featured Mother! She was—my brother and I ... had a much ... closer relationship with Mother than we did Dad, for some of the reasons that I have explained. And I *don't* want to leave the impression that there was anything inappropriate between Mother and Dad.

GOINS: What was it like? You talked about living here in Knoxville, but what was it like—an average week or day in the life of Foster Arnett as a young man? Stickball, or was it farming ...

ARNETT: No, no. I started when I was six or seven years old carrying the *Pictorial Review* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. And the *Pictorial Review* went out of business long before you gentlemen came on the planet Earth. I would go around, literally, all over the neighborhood. I'm not talking about just the neighborhood in which we lived, but I mean *literally* all over town selling *Pictorial Reviews* and *Liberty* magazines and so forth! And, I never will forget, a big deal was when I would, as a carrier salesman—I

think that's what they called us. If I was in West Knoxville, I'd stop at my grandfather's house, which was on Melrose—you know where Melrose is, just a couple blocks from where we are today—and spend the night. I never will forget how impressive that was because everyone called him “Daddy Buddy.” Except me; I called him Uncle Bud! He and I had a special relationship—and he was a toughie! But, I was so impressed with this handsome house! It had servants' quarters in it, [for] a male and a female, a husband and a wife. It had a dumbwaiter in it; you know, where they could deliver food from the kitchen in the basement to the first and second floors—and that was a big, big deal! That house was torn down; it's right next to the—what's the name of—come on—up on Melrose—lovely restored old home! I'll think of it ...

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Too quiet to be picked up by the tape]

ARNETT: Yeah. That empty lot; it was adjacent to that. And, I'm sorry I can't recall the name of it, but it's quite a lovely home. I'm talking bout—well both of them, for that matter—but the one that still exists. I think the university owns it?

PIEHLER: I'm not sure.

ARNETT: I should have swung by there today on the way over here. Maybe it'll come to me in a minute.

GOINS: Well, I guess with sales and the route and then traveling in the summer—did you get involved in sports in school or [not]?

ARNETT: The only thing—well, yes and no! I mean, not sports as you gentlemen in your generation would recognize. It was really pick-up, that kind of thing. But the only thing that I was really good at—of course I played baseball. We didn't have tennis courts and basketball courts in those days but, [I enjoyed] baseball and football. But the only thing that I was really good at was boxing! That's one reason that as you look at me you can see my distorted nose! (Laughter) What's the name of the place up here on Melrose? Golly, well, I'll think of it I hope! But, I have worked literally all my life; selling magazines, carrying newspapers. I never will forget! We would pick up after I started my route at next to Belle Morris School—the old fire hall—which I know doesn't exist [anymore], and go to all the way to intersection of Millertown Pike with Washington Pike.

GOINS: Now, did you walk that or?

ARNETT: Oh yeah—walk. And then, subsequently, because I guess I get this from mother, I lived a pretty interesting life in that I always had change in my pocket. I had a pony and a buggy, and I've still got that buggy and that buggy is *historic*! It's over a *hundred* years old and I would frequently use that in connection ... particularly on Sunday papers, which were much thicker of course than the daily editions of the ... papers. But that was big time—me with my pony buggy! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How long did you continue to deliver papers? When did you finally give up the route?

ARNETT: I guess—I guess when I entered high school. And that, incidentally, bears a small comment. I graduated from Knoxville High School. You know where that is—with the statue of the World War I veteran, which is like it was when it was installed except for the fact that vandals broke off the bayonet? If you'll look at that statue next time you pass by you'll see this World War I doughboy, and the bayonet is missing from his rifle. But, I did a little of everything! I ran a parking lot full-time during the summer at Oakwood School. You're asking me questions I haven't thought of in a long time! (Laughter) I worked at the finest men's clothing store in town: J.S. Halls, which is as recognizable as a hole! Well, you know where the new KUB [Knoxville Utilities Board] building is? Right up the street, slightly to the north in one of those empty lots was J.S. Halls. I ran the boat dock at the Norris Dam for a couple of summers. I did *literally* a little bit of everything! That enabled me to, for example, to acquire the finest automobile I have ever owned up to and including the present time: a 1937 Dodge station wagon—and it was wooden! It had the most powerful engine that you could get in those days, 125 horsepower engine! And to show you my reason I worked like the dickens at spare jobs and so forth—that 1937 Dodge Station Wagon was something else. I took it on a long trip to Florida one time with some of my fraternity brothers. I took, as a matter of fact, some friends: Judge McAlister, who was a federal bankruptcy judge at that time, and Spears McAlister, and Herbie Hessler, who was Associate Head of the German Department. We spent, I guess, six weeks in Mexico in that station wagon! We just had a heck of a time and because of Judge McAlister's standing, why, we got some special consideration—invited to the Embassy and all that kind of thing. I never will forget—we're talking about the summer of 1941 I suppose—and we had gas rationing and tire rationing and we had all been saving up our gas rationing tickets so that we could get from here to the Mexican border, then we could buy unlimited gas! And, one of the gimmicks on it were—there were five of us—one of the gimmicks were that each of the other four people in the unit would furnish a tire—tires were rationed! I'm telling you about things you don't even know about! And I furnished the spare tire, and while we were in Mexico those tires which you would be afraid to drive around the block with, all expired and due to Judge McAlister's influence and so forth with the American Embassy we bought five new tires in Mexico. So boy, you know, my car—we really had something: five new tires! We had a heck of a time until we got back to the border at Laredo and there, they looked at these tires and said “You can't bring them in the country.” And Judge McAlister had the appropriate papers from the United States Embassy. What he had done is go, I guess, to the Mexican Ambassador—someone—for us to have permission to buy these tires and put 'em on the car, and that was great! Because, you know, we had five new tires for five that had *died* while we were traveling around Mexico.

GOINS: What had prompted the trip?

ARNETT: Well we knew—let me finish what I'm gonna say right quick and then I'll try to respond. They actually put my 1937 Dodge station wagon up on blocks and took the

tires off and would not let us bring them into the United States!!! And I called Dad and I told him what the problem was. I said, “Dad I’ve got a problem; I need your help.” I don’t know what he did, but within forty-eight hours we had four wearable, legal tires to put on the station wagon so we could all come home together. And your question was what, sir?

GOINS: What had prompted the trip?

ARNETT: Well, those were very interesting days. First of all our standard of living wouldn’t compare with our standard of living now, and that was a big time deal—you know, to be able to go, for example, to Florida; for example, to Mexico. With Judge McAlister with us, we had entrée and access to a lot of other opportunities we wouldn’t have. And also, it was clear to us, because we’re talking about—what was it? September 1, 1939—beginning World War II?

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. Yes.

ARNETT: When Nazis came across the Polish border and so forth? And it was clear to us—it was clear to us that it was just a matter of time. And so, we—that last summer before Pearl Harbor is when we took the trip, because it was clear and apparent it was just a matter of time before the United States would get into it. And we were all of course highly vulnerable, but the ethos, the culture, the morality for good and for not-so-good was so different! Now, it would be *extraordinarily* difficult for someone of your generation to appreciate how it was then as contrasted with how it is now. But, we had a heck of a time in Mexico, I kid you not!

GOINS: Well, I know you went on to serve. Did they go on to serve as well?

ARNETT: Judge didn’t—our Federal Judge McAlister did not. No, Herbie Hessler, Assistant Head of the German department did not. Spears McAlister, his brother, did and then another individual who went with us—we had to have him because we needed one more person to kick into the pot—he did not go! He is not one of my heroes. But we had to have—you know, all kidding aside, things were really strapped! I’m talking about economically, that kind of thing. But ... I got commissioned at the end of my junior year at UT in the ROTC as a Second Lieutenant, and we’re talking about ’42. I was automatically deferred because I would graduate, or [was] scheduled to graduate from UT in 1943. And then, in November of 1942—well beginning really upon graduation—it suddenly occurred to me that it was *just possible* that we might win the war without me! (Laughter) Although, I was deferred to graduation, you know for June or whatever it was—1943—so I waived *myself*! I waived my deferment and went into the military in, I think it was December 15, 1942, and had a *heck* of a time! Like our commanding general once said, characterizing my colleagues, if I can call ‘em that: “The greatest men in the world to go to war with and the *last* people in the world I’d take home to date my baby sister!” He was referring to these paratroopers that I was with.

PIEHLER: We're going to definitely come to the paratroopers! Could you talk a little bit about your schooling in Knoxville, beginning with your elementary education? Did any teachers stand out, and where was your first school located?

ARNETT: First school, let's see. I guess I went to the first grade at Brownlow School, and I think there was a story in the paper, maybe today's paper about Brownlow School! And then they opened a brand new school up on Emoriland Boulevard, which is now to razed to the ground, called McCampbell School. And then I went to Park Jr. from there and then they had a new school much closer called Christenberry Junior only a part of which stands. And then from there to Knoxville High School; I graduated from Knoxville High School in the Spring of 1939, I guess it was. Knoxville High School was a remarkable institution. It was by far the largest or most heavily populated high school in this area, as we mentioned before. You know where it is; you've seen it! And we had a curious mix; this is long before West High School and the rest of 'em. The only one that could remotely compare with Knoxville High was Rural High, which was really not an accredited high school; it was kind of a junior high school. But we had people from literally from all over town—they had a big population of kids from all over town. It was unique; it was really special! We had—referring to your question a minute ago, we had a remarkable bunch of teachers who had a *profound* influence upon me and I think everybody else. One of 'em was A.L. Job who was an English Professor. And I say what I'm about to say with deep affection and respect but we had a very curious relationship because he was a marvelous, *marvelous* teacher—but he was a sissy!!! And I have never been—I've been known as a lot of things but not a sissy. But he and I established a *tremendous* relationship! As a matter of fact, he had *such* a reputation that when I entered UT in the Fall of 1939, I was excused for the first two quarters of English because I had studied under A.L. Job at Knoxville High School. And then another one of the teachers was Elwyn Bryant. Elwyn Bryant was one of the grandest people I've ever known and you could always tell when he liked or respected you, because he was on your case from the get-go! (Laughter) ... He had the history department at Knoxville High and he was a great guy. I never will forget my crew, my gang, little club we had. We had two boys clubs in Knoxville. Not....

PIEHLER: Fraternities?

ARNETT: Not fraternities but two volunteer boys' schools in the public—at Knoxville High School; one was Esquire and one was the Swanks.

PIEHLER: And you were a Swank?

ARNETT: I was a Swank, and curiously enough some of those guys have just done famously. You know, I mean in their careers and that kind of thing. I just got, for example, just this last week an autobiography from one of the most astonishing guys that Knoxville's ever produced, John C. Bollinger. If I showed you his c.v. it'd knock your eyes out! And he just published it [the autobiography]. Matter of fact, I just got a copy last week. But we had a wide mix, a wide range of people and it would be difficult if not impossible for you gentleman to understand how *different* it was then as opposed to what

it is now. In oh gosh—so many different cultural ways and value systems. And, I'm not trying to give *credit* to my generation. Have you read Tom Brokaw's book *The Greatest Generation*?

PIEHLER: I haven't read all of it. I've started to ...

ARNETT: Well, you might do that. [Turns to Goins] You, you have, sir? I mean, just totally different; in some ways not nearly as wonderful as it is now. In other ways, I argue that the present can't compare with those days.

PIEHLER: How many Swanks were there? How many were in the club?

ARNETT: I'm guessing—it would be an educated guess. I'm guessing thirty. And we would—whiskey! No *nice* girl ever drank whiskey and as a matter of fact no Swank ever drank whiskey. I mean, just—*verboten*, you didn't do it! And we would have a long weekend over Labor Day up at Sunshine and Elkmont up in the mountains. I never will forget we were up there over Labor Day for that Labor Day retreat when the Nazis swept across the borders into Poland and it became clear and apparent to us that we were on the line; we were on the line. But, we had a hell of a time; we just had some remarkable people that were inspirations to be with and so forth. And those were different days. I'm not suggesting these are not great days but the whole focus of our culture was different then as compared to now. We would never—for example, in having a date you never took your date in a car just the two of you. More likely than not, there would be three couples in a car, at sometimes a minimum. I've got a picture somewhere of one of our Swank summer outings up at Sunshine. It was a 1929 Packard Phaeton. Do you know what a Phaeton is?

GOINS: Mm-hmm.

ARNETT: Okay. Boy it was something else! I *had* it; I had it! (Laughter) And we would pile I'll bet you twenty, twenty-five kids in that Packard to go up to the Sinks, you know, to swim; from Sunshine. It was—you'd have to be there to appreciate the difference.

PIEHLER: What was a typical date like? What were some hotspots?

ARNETT: Well you know where Andy Morton's is? The gift shop down here [inaudible] plaza is. Off to the left—Andy Morton's. We would go there, and I'm trying to remember the name of the place. It was an eating place at that time. And then, back to where—a bit, big deal was to go to the movies, which probably cost about fifteen cents—and to share a Coke together. You didn't have the money you know for boys and girls to—but you'd share a Coke together. And Saunders drug store was in the immediate area and that was a very popular—very, very popular hangout for kids. And we really, for a lot of reasons we really didn't create a problem. We were really not a societal problem among other reasons because we were so damn poor that we couldn't get—we couldn't *fund* outrageous behavior. But I never will forget my fraternity house, Phi Gamma Delta

which was right across from where the Law School building is now. And that fraternity played a very, very important role in the lives of my contemporaries and me. It was not perfect, but it was really kind of special. Really, kind of special!

GOINS: What kind of ... what was the process of getting into the Swanks or the Esquires? Or, was this sort of by invitation—and how different were the two?

ARNETT: Well the Esquires basically were....

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

ARNETT: The basic constituency were West Knoxville guys from well-to-do families. The Swanks, of which I was a member, were more broadly diversified and not focused as much in Knoxville. The Swanks were representing a bigger cross-section; I'm not saying they were *better* than the Esquires, but they came from different backgrounds. If you were a rich boy, more likely than not, you would be an Esquire. If, you know, you were—and we had some terrific guys [who] went on to distinguish themselves—if you didn't have those societal or “society” credentials you would more likely be a Swank as opposed to an Esquire. Incidentally, all kidding aside—and this is remarkable in retrospect—but alcohol was not a problem nor was smoking ... with my generation as I knew it.

PIEHLER: When did you know you were going to college—or did your parents expect you to go to college?

ARNETT: Oh yeah! ... That begs the question, “How do I go to college; how do I get there; how do I get in; how do I survive?” But that was an absolute focus of Mother and Dad and my brother and I. That was a *given* that whatever, as long as it was honorable, whatever it took we were going to college. That was the door through which we had to pass in order to escape the privations of the Depression. And incidentally, remember put the Depression in process. We didn't have Social Security! We didn't have a *heck* of a lot of the societal apparatus that we have now! We had—I never will forget a favorite uncle and aunt of mine could not have children and they adopted a child from the children's home which was on Cecil Street in North Knoxville, which I think is now a public housing unit, as I recall. Another impression—and I think it's true—another impression is that—something that you that you rarely see now, which was very common and that is multiple housing. You would have two or three, sometimes four, generations of a given family in a given house. And because of transportation limitations and so forth—and this is kind my impression, I may be way off base—the houses were built very close together, you know in order to get to town ... to make it accessible. Curiously, if you'll go out in some of the swanky suburbs in Knoxville now that have built within the last five or six years, you will see that same phenomena coming together. So many now, few of the houses are on great big lots like our house. You know they're close together side by side and that's kind of curious how we've come ... 360 degrees away! But the culture, the atmosphere was in many respects far better than we have now but in other respects, I wonder how since we've become softened by you know by money and

all that kind of thing whether kids can now survive at least not at their present level that kind of thing. But ... it was not debatable: my brother and I were going to college. If there had been any debate on that subject, why, little five-foot-tall stone-deaf mother would have killed us both.

PIEHLER: Did you know you wanted to be a lawyer?

ARNETT: Yeah, for some odd reason, some odd reason that was my ambition since I was a little boy.

PIEHLER: Why a lawyer? At the time, when you were a child, did you know?

ARNETT: Well, I think that within reasonable parameters that I'm pretty much aware of my shortcomings and my *alleged* strengths. I knew that the only way out to live the kind of a life that I wanted to live was to try to be real good in a chosen field of occupation. And I knew damn good and well that it couldn't be, for example engineering or teaching; I was a poor student in mathematics (Laughs) and things of that sort, you can imagine. I was realistic about it. And ... the culture of the legal profession was so different then as compared now; I mean, in many, many, many, many ways! And Knoxville, when I came to the bar in 1948—and I can make this case and persuade you that I'm right—Knoxville had percentage-wise more outstanding lawyers than probably any other place in the United States. I'm talking about Jack Doughty and Clyde Key and Herb McCampbell and Ray Jenkins and Herbie Jenkins. I can go right down the list. And I tried to be objective in making a judgment as to my future, my career, by being realistic about my own strengths and weaknesses. I knew, well, I felt that I had the potential of being a very good lawyer where I didn't stand a chance in hell in you know some other avocation or profession. (Laughter) And that's kind of curious for this reason: I went to one of the greatest law schools in the country historically: ... University of Virginia School of Law. I had a pretty good college record, you know Torchbearer and all that kind of stuff, Scarabbean [Senior Society- a leadership organization] and so forth. Had a pretty good college record, and I went to work in 1948 at twenty-eight years of age for one hundred dollars a month. Now, I had better offers than that but I thought my opportunities were *greatest* by doing what I did. But now, and if you read—I should have brought it with me! The brand new issue of the *Tennessee Bar Journal*, published by the Tennessee Bar Association—and I should have brought that with me—it's the darndest thing you've ever seen, got it day before yesterday. Where they're starting kids right out of law school—and most of them have never been out after midnight, you know, sheltered and this kind of thing—but starting off at *eighty* thousand dollars a year and up! I should have brought that with me.

GOINS: And you started at a hundred dollars a month?

ARNETT: A hundred dollars a month! And all I wanted was an opportunity. That's all I was entitled to and I have said to myself privately, "God, just give me the opportunity and I'll *try* to take it from there."

GOINS: What was your position? Were you a clerk or [what]?

ARNETT: No, no I was a neophyte lawyer; brand-new lawyer. And as I said, I had a reasonably good undergraduate record and reasonably good law school record at one of the truly great law schools.

GOINS: And that was 1948?

ARNETT: 1948.

GOINS: Well then, you started your firm here in Knoxville in what, 1950?

ARNETT: ... I think I'm correct about this and if my colleagues criticize me then I will apologize to them but I think I was the first of the so-called "young lawyers." I'm talking about my generation of lawyers, who went out on their own and made it stick. Some outstanding lawyers in Knoxville, whose names I will not mention but whose names that you would recognize—my generation had gone out on their own and couldn't make it—couldn't make it. And I was the first of the so-called quote, "young lawyers," close quote, to go out on my own and make it stick. And we're talking about—I guess I did this about in 1954, opened up my own office.

Now, you're *entitled* to know this. We had with this old firm that I was with, which will be nameless and which no longer exists. They employed a woman by the name of Gertrude Large. Her name was Gertie; everybody called her Gertie. Gertrude Large was a product of the Great Depression; she grew up the hard way. She had had two unsuccessful marriages; she had had a drinking problem and—strictly, I guess as a matter of economic necessity—why, this firm which I started with and left employed her. Why, she was an astonishing woman! Later, and I'm jumping way ahead, later she was recognized as one of the top three legal secretaries in the United States of America. But in any event, she and I became great friends and she became *great* friends with my Jean, my wife. And when she heard that I was leaving this firm to hang up my shingle—and hopefully you'll edit this carefully because I don't want to step on anybody's toes! But when she was informed that I was leaving that firm to open my own shop, she said, "I'm coming with ya!" And I said, "Ms. Large, no you're not coming with me, because this is a big, big gamble and I can't! You know, that's a responsibility that I can't take because if I make it I'll be the first of my generation to make it." She said, "I'm coming with you," and I said, "No you're not." So she found out one night I was attending an army reserve meeting—I stayed in the reserves after the war. She told my Jean, she said, "I'm coming down to see you," and she did while I was at the reserve meeting. And I'm summarizing, but she said, "Mr. Arnett tells me that he's leaving to open up his own office, and he will not talk to me about me going with him." Well, I wouldn't do that for two or three reasons. First of all, it's one thing for me to take a gamble another thing to make her take a gamble, among other things. And Jean said, "Well, it's a big gamble that Foster's taking—that I'm taking and you got a good job with an old established firm!" She said, "Well, I'll start drinking again if he doesn't take me!" (Laughter) So, they were great, great friends. My Jean and I always called her Ms. Large; everyone else called her Gertie, Gertrude Large. So, I announced in December that I was leaving but ...

[paragraph omitted per Arnett's request] ... it was February—February!—before I was able to leave and open my own shop. And Miss Large would come after five o'clock and we worked in those days Monday through Saturday after five o'clock and she and I would work until ten or eleven or twelve and then she would go back to her job with this firm and I *emphasized* to her that I wanted, at all risk, for her to leave in good standing, as opposed to you know turning in her notice and coming with me. So it was quite an interesting time but ultimately, why, she came with me and we had a heck of a shop! I tell you, she was astonishing! Very, very bright! The tragic thing about it is that because of societal and economic reasons she could not have gone on the college route and that kind of thing. But, [she was] just an amazing, just an amazing, remarkable woman, and I still go out to her grave site and, you know, take flowers and make sure everything's alright. She was just tough, tough as hell. One of these famous lawyers we had, they were generally on Saturday morning because while we worked on Saturday we, you know it was time to take half a day and Ray Jenkins and Jack Doughty showed up on a Saturday morning and (Loudly) "Hi Gertie! How you doing, Gertie?!" She said, "Fine, fine!" (Makes a knocking noise, presumably on the table) And [they] came knocking on my door, getting ready to push it in. And she said, "*Where* are you *gentlemen* going!?" They said, "We've come to see Foster." And she said, "You sit down and I'll *see* if he can see you." (Laughter) Now these are very aggressive, very, very high profile types! So, they sat down, and she said, "Mr. Arnett, Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Dowdy are here to see you." I said, "Well, bring 'em on in." So she did. And, if you're going to edit this thing carefully I'll tell you something.

PIEHLER: You can tell us; if you'd like to tell us something off the record ...

(Tape stops)

PIEHLER: I want to bring you back a little, back to UT, and I guess before talking about UT. How well did your Knoxville Public Schools prepare you for college, when you think back on it? It seems like you knew you weren't going to be an engineer?

ARNETT: No, I think they did a good job! A lot of the frills and froth and that kind of thing did not exist then as it exists now. And, really I'm not qualified to comment on the current status of Knoxville Public School System, but I think by and large they prepared us well. I mean, if you wanted to take advantage of your opportunities you had those opportunities. And, you know, in a sense that's all you can ask. ... The culture though was so totally different. You gentlemen at your age could not possibly conceive of how different it was quote "then" close quote as opposed to quote "now."

PIEHLER: When you look at it, what are some of the biggest differences—particularly for people even younger than us who, say, in thirty years when they read this interview it will be the hundredth anniversary of when you were in high school?

ARNETT: Well first of all, I don't think I can authoritatively speak to how the schools are now; I really don't think I'm qualified. But I *can* tell you that it's my strong sense, my strong, strong sense that there are massive differences between the ethos and the

culture now as opposed to what it was then. One over-simplified observation is that you just drive by high school now and you'll see parking lots full of cars. I would bet ya that out of my class, the Class of 1939 ... out of that big class, and I think we had over five hundred, I bet ya we didn't have over two cars. You know, student-owned or student-operated cars out of that five hundred and something; I think I'm correct at five hundred and some-odd students. It was just totally different! And, of course, the thing that has enormously shaped my life and I think my contemporaries' are those two terrible events that I mentioned before: the Great Depression and World War II.

PIEHLER: I wanted to ask you because you were growing up, in many ways just becoming a teenager when they happened but they're very important for this era. One is the Park.

ARNETT: What is it?

PIEHLER: The Park, the Smoky Mountains Park. When you were born that park didn't exist as a park.

ARNETT: No, and curiously my grandfather was one of the leading people who led to the establishment of the park. And, as a matter of fact, mother and dad courted up at Elkmont before they were married in 1915. ... I've got, of course, a number of regrets in my life, but maybe the thing that distresses me most is the fact that Elkmont no longer exists. It's sitting up there; I don't know if you've ever been up there before recently but it was—well, back up. I've got a picture down at home; I don't know whether I showed it to you or not ...

PIEHLER: You did.

ARNETT: ... of my grandfather and Colonel Spence. Spence Shoe Company was the leading shoe company in town, with you know, the deer hanging with a—not a guide, but whatever he was. But the women, the womenfolk [of] Bud Deaver and Kerry Spence, wondered why Kerry and Bud and their contemporaries [were] spending so much time up off the Little River Railroad, which was a narrow-gauge railroad. And they went up and found this idyllic place which subsequently became known as Elkmont. And Elkmont was established—I'm talking about the first cabin—*right* after the turn of the century. And it's one of the dearest—outside of our home, the *dearest* place that I can remember; it was *quite* an institution. Then the folks that—Colonel Spence and Colonel David Chapman and Bud Deaver, and so forth—were *largely*, largely responsible for the dream that became known as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They were the civic leaders who led that charge, if I can coin that phrase, and put it together. Then of course the Park Service acquired what we now know as Elkmont, Tennessee, and we retained the rights as lessees, as tenants to continue to use those cabins that had been in our family for many years, until about—well, until after the park was formed. And then, we entered into a lease and the lease ran out and we tried to approach the Park with a *significant* contribution, you know, to permit us to continue to stay there and the park said “no.” You know, that's egalitarianism: if I can't drive a Cadillac it's not right for you to drive a

Cadillac, you know, that kind of thing! So, it was very, very simple I mean nothing ornate; nothing portentous about it. So the Park then declined to renew our leases for the initial ten years, and those cabins are just sitting up there rotting. ... That's one of the few true regrets of my life: that our grandchildren, for example, don't have an opportunity there. Very, very simple—nothing fancy—we had the Appalachian Club and the Wonderland Club. Those are the clubhouses for each of those communities which were adjoining and adjacent to one another. It's just a marvelous, marvelous way to grow up; particularly, I think, in light of the youngsters.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. You were a teenager when they came here—but, what about the Tennessee Valley Authority? What are your childhood memories of the TVA coming to town?

ARNETT: Well, of course it was a profound change! But, I don't think as I look back on it that it was a particular—it was considered a *boom* for this area because they brought a lot of new people in and spent a lot of money here and they brought a lot of outsiders, quote "outsiders" closed quote, but it started off as, you know relatively modest. I think I told you I ran the boat dock at Norris, as I remember the first dam in the TVA system.

PIEHLER: You were there when it was a brand spanking new dam? The concrete had just been poured!

ARNETT: I think they finished Norris Dam, what, about 1936?

PIEHLER: Yeah, somewhere in there.

ARNETT: Somewhere in there. Of course now TVA is so much larger—immense in contrast to what it was there. And it was a great boom and we had new blood and new ideas, gifted and talented people, you know, who came in with it. And Norris, the little town of Norris was a very especially attractive place. But there—and I'm not an expert on this in respect to this remark. But there is no comparison to TVA now as opposed to what it was then. I mean just numbers of people, for example. And then other outreaches, like the Agricultural Experiment Station, and that kind of thing.

PIEHLER: Your family was pretty Republican. I mean, they were flanked with East Tennessee. Was your father a Republican, too?

ARNETT: Oh yeah, *oh* yeah!

PIEHLER: Was your father ... active in politics at all? What did they think of Roosevelt in the '30's? I mean, they were Republican, but there's a range of thinking.

ARNETT: This is my take on it and it's subject to challenge. Merely because I give you my impression doesn't mean I'm right, but Mr. Roosevelt was not one of my heroes. Obviously, he was an unusual and remarkable man, but I think I liked him less than about

anyone other than Eleanor. (Laughter) But, Tennessee is kind of curious because in those days East Tennessee was a *bastion* of Republicans.

PIEHLER: Yes, I mean, even in the thirties!

ARNETT: Oh yeah! And in the forties! Middle and West Tennessee were heavily Democratic. And now, of course it's pretty much the other way. I mean, Republicans I think are—I *think* its fair to say that Tennessee is in the Republican column, you know, as a state. But in those days, the days of "Boss" Crump [Memphis political boss] and others there was a *vast* difference in the political culture of East Tennessee as contrasted with that of Middle Tennessee and West Tennessee.

PIEHLER: No, I was struck by when I first moved here how Republican it was because I came from a very Republican area in New Jersey, but I was stunned that even in the Great Depression it was consistently Republican. It never lapsed, say in 1932?

ARNETT: What part of New Jersey were you from?

PIEHLER: Morris County.

ARNETT: I told you about my experience.

PIEHLER: Yes, I wanted to ask you about your brief time with the New Jersey unit.

ARNETT: Just this last week a remarkable character by the name of Mattie Pike from "New Joisey" called me! He's one of the greatest guys I've ever seen, and he's one of my great, great friends from "New Joisey." (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... Before we move on to your college days and then the military—when we went to your house, you showed us a copy of the incorporation of the Cherokee Country Club and you have a great story about how your father played an instrumental role?

ARNETT: No my grandfather; that was my grandfather.

PIEHLER: Your Grandfather? Could you tell the story on the record about how your [grand]father played a key role in the creation of the Country Club?

ARNETT: Well, he was one of the charter members, one of the founding members of what we now know as Cherokee Country Club. And interesting, not interesting just as a matter of comment, my family has had a member of Cherokee—at least one member of Cherokee Country club ever since it was incorporated. And I've forgotten—when was it incorporated? 1904?

PIEHLER: I can't remember the exact date; it was a while ago, as they say. And you have a great story, because I've seen it on your wall—there are names crossed out. And you were saying?

ARNETT: They passed around this subscription contract saying that “We pledge X numbers of dollars.”

PIEHLER: I think it was fifty dollars?

ARNETT: I think it was fifty, too, and I could be as wrong as could be, but “provided you get X number of signatures raising Y number of dollars we agree to pay fifty dollars to found a new country club.” So, they got the required number of names, and you’ve seen a copy of it down home on the subscription contract. And then they went around and said, “Okay, we got the required number of names.” And as you will remember, a number of those names—not many, but some of those names were stricken out because when they went around to say “Hey, you promised to give fifty dollars or whatever it was to start this new country club” then, they welched on it. (Laughter) I am delighted to say my grandfather’s name was still on it; it was not scratched out.

PIEHLER: One of the things I commented on when we looked at both subscriptions but also at a picture of the old Country Club is I think it even on tape it sort of amplifies. I mean, it would be great if we could drive you around town with some cameras, but how compact Knoxville was. Because, I commented on the picture; I almost got the impression the first country club was miles from Knoxville but in fact when the Cherokee Country club was founded that was really ...

ARNETT: That was the site! That was the site as then and that’s the site as now.

PIEHLER: But then it might as well have been, it was distantly—it was way west!

ARNETT: For a lot of reasons; the principle mode of transportation from the members downtown. My grandfather, for example, up on Melrose, was to take the train to the Bearden Station; there was a railroad station at what we call Bearden. Then and you’ll remember in that picture there a picture of two lorries. Hard rubber-tired, chain-driven truck station wagons who would meet the ladies and gentleman at the Bearden Railroad Station and then transport them to the Country Club. Of course, conversely, from the Country Club back to the Bearden Station and then back downtown.

PIEHLER: Because now the country club is surrounded by buildings and there is so much past it, but that was literally the country when you were growing up.

ARNETT: That’s right! And curiously, I don’t know how well informed you are about this but we just went through a traumatic thing: Dr. Dennis Coughlin offered his house for sale, catty-corner adjoins the golf course. The Cherokee Country Club, which badly needs to expand its facilities, accepted his offer. And then, I’m exaggerating, but all hell broke lose! A number of people said, “No, we don’t want to acquire the Coughlin property; I don’t know what they are going to do with it!” And so we had a meeting and a vote and so forth and the Board was upheld in its decision to acquire and possibly tear down the Coughlin residence—which as I said is catty-corner across from the Club—for

necessary and appropriate, I think, expansion, because Cherokee is really locked in geographically.

PIEHLER: Well, you can't expand into the river!

ARNETT: Beg pardon?

PIEHLER: You can't expand into the river!

ARNETT: That's right. And, course that picture that you saw—with the rubber-tired chain-driven lorry—that was the original clubhouse which burned, as I remember in 1927, and was replaced with the present building. It wasn't as large as it is now, but replaced with the masonry building. Can you imagine the ideas now, everybody just pops in! And that's one reason we need the Coughlin House, and that is for parking. Because, the way it's crowded now, I mean you darn near have to park in front, in the middle of the street to go there. So, it was a very, very important acquisition in my opinion.

PIEHLER: Were you ever a Boy Scout growing up?

ARNETT: No, I wasn't. Primarily, I think because of the pressure of the other entrepreneurial activities: (Laughter) carrying papers, selling magazines and that kind of thing. And you know, I just couldn't do it. I was very, very active in a lot of things. And my uncle Danny Deaver, Lester W. Deaver, was one of the *original* Boy Scouts. So we had a strong Boy Scout instinct! And you talk about a great guy, Danny Deaver [was a] tremendous guy. So I had every reason to be oriented toward the Boy Scout movement. But for all kind of reasons, you know the pressure of the times: the economics, the competition with my work and that kind of thing, I was never a Boy Scout. And incidentally, notwithstanding that, I was a pretty damn good scout for the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

PIEHLER: Were you active at the Y [YMCA] at all?

ARNETT: Not really; they had a small program in those days. Now remember, the original YMCA was down on State Street. Commerce and State: that was the original YMCA. And a *little* bit, but not that much for the reasons that I've explained; I had neither the time nor what small resources I had, which I wanted to direct in a different way for example buying that 1937 Dodge Station Wagon.

PIEHLER: Yes! (Laughs)

ARNETT: I was never [a member], although I have great respect for the YMCA, I really do.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you boxed. When did you start boxing? When did you referee? When you were actually not just boxing for fun but when you actually compete?

ARNETT: I started off in junior high school; they would have pick-up, intramural type boxing. The environment in which I survived, some of which was splendid and some of which was tough, and ... I don't want to mislead you—the environment in which I existed consisted of different components, some of which were the toughest places in town and others were darn nice. But the nice thing about boxing was that it required very little investment of resources! All you had was, you know, a set of boxing gloves, that kind of thing! And in those days you, it had the excitement and culture of Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. Plus, the fact that in some of the places in which I existed, you know to survive you had to be able to take care of yourself! I never will forget a fellow by the name of Qualls used to make a regular rite of passage with me by pounding on me until I got pretty good! (Laughter) I never will forget when that changed! (Laughter) We really had a knock-down drag-out. I had no trouble with Qualls from that point on. The only—I enjoyed sports. I mean, not the sexy sports like you know tennis and polo and that kind of thing, but I enjoyed sports! But I wasn't very good at anything except boxing, and I was pretty good boxer.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you also followed boxing when you were growing up.

ARNETT: Oh yeah!

PIEHLER: You listened to the fights?

ARNETT: I never will forget as a matter of fact the Dempsey-Tunney fight. Now just two blocks from here in my grandfather's home, he had a radio. We at our home did not have a radio. I never will forget, I think it was the second fight—that was big time! That was *big* time! But, one of the things that I've enjoyed most of my life—the War really interrupted my personal participation, but I formed and became coach of the boxing team of the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment and we won the New Guinea championship! And you talk about a bunch of *tough* guys! We had five classes. Class one were the professionals, class two semi-professionals and so forth down, to five which was rank amateur. And I have been very, very fortunate I think in contact with a lot of those people, particularly those who still survive; most of them of course are now dead. ... Did I tell you: ... the old man, well he had a couple of people – they're both dead; I won't mention their names – who were boxing coaches. Two, and including his regimental executive officer, [Lieutenant Colonel] "Dink" Roller, was a very historic West-Pointer and a boxer. And our boxer was just getting beat up like whiz, and the old man called me in, Colonel Orin D. Haugen the way ... to New Guinea and he said, "Arnett!" [I replied,] "Yes sir?" He said, "You're the boxing coach." I said, "Well Colonel, that's very, very flattering. I appreciate it, but you've got Colonel Roller and you got "Po" Carter!" And I named a couple others who were *outstanding*, you know outstanding careers and he said, "Arnett, I didn't ask for your comment. You are *now* the boxing coach, number one! Number two, you're going to keep me from being embarrassed anymore! You understand that? And number three, you are to start winning some championships!" I said, "Yes sir!" And if you knew "Hard Rock" Haugen, well, you could understand that. (Laughter) But I took over the team and became great friends with some of 'em and we just

absolutely just flourished. As one of the incentives, and you can't imagine this cause we're talking about New Guinea, 1944, which was about as far back in the chain of command or whatever as you can imagine! And I had gotten in a fight with another officer there and he had made me regimental – and this was humiliating – regimental mess officer. And the other guy, he made him prison parole officer. He was supposed to go around and, you know, clean up the area and that kind of thing. So as regimental officers, beg your pardon, Division Officers' Mess Officer, when my team would win—and when we started rolling why they won ninety-five percent—I would take them over to the officers' mess after the fight and feed them the officers' food! Well that was a tremendous popular thing; I had recruits just falling out the door to get on the boxing team and so forth! That worked out fine until General [J. M.] Swing called me in and said, “Arnett, I've got a problem. You've got a problem. I've got a problem in that most of the fine food here I have for my division officers is disappearing! You've got a problem because I think *you* are responsible for it.” I said, “I don't know what the General is saying.” He said, “Arnett you're not happy as division mess officer, are you?” And I said, “Frankly, General, as I mentioned before I am not. It's humiliating.” He said, “As of now you're reassigned to your regiment and you keep your damn boxers out of my mess hall.” (Laughter) But it was really a—because you can't imagine the food! K-rations and C-rations—food in New Guinea was awful, just awful!

PIEHLER: Going to UT ... I guess one question is why the University of Tennessee? Had you thought of any other colleges?

ARNETT: Oh sure. You're talking about undergraduate right?

PIEHLER: Undergraduate, yeah.

ARNETT: I respected the university. It was a dominant force in this community and I was proud of it! I was as proud of it then as I am now. You know, I'm the past president of the national alumni association. But I guess if you had to narrow it down to one reason, it was UT or nothing! There's no way, for example—I simply could not have gone to Carson Newman nearby and survived because I did not have the resources. So it was sort of—and I was delighted because I have then, as I have now, a lot of respect for the University of Tennessee. *A lot* of respect, but it was that or nothing in terms of a college education.

PIEHLER: In terms of the friends in your club and then in the other club the Esquires, in high school, where did they go to college?

ARNETT: Well, they went a little bit of every place. Ernie Brown, who was an Esquire, very bright guy, later became a highly distinguished surgeon; he went to Johns Hopkins. But the vast majority of us went to the University of Tennessee—the vast majority. And incidentally, it would require us to get up and get around with a map. The university for example didn't look like anything like it looks now, like it looks now. Tyson Alison was a lovely old home, you know with grounds and servants' quarters and stables and that kind of thing. But in all sincerity there is—and that brings me back to Ed Boling and

Andy Holt. There is *literally*, literally no comparison between how the University looks and obviously functions – I don't want to overlook that – in contrast to what it was when I entered it in the Fall of 1939. For example, almost all this area which we said was rooming houses, boarding houses. The first dormitories were under what we now know as Neyland Stadium! The first university dormitories!

PIEHLER: Did you live in a dormitory? Where did you live?

ARNETT: No, I lived at mother's house which still stands up here! It still stands at the corner of Fifteenth and White. My first year we lived right across the street, which is now part of the university's School of Law grounds, and then moved over to that little house which is boarded up.

PIEHLER: You showed us a picture; that's still on the grounds!

ARNETT: Yeah, you can look at it! It's right up there at the corner of Sixteenth and White!

GOINS: Did your brother attend UT as well?

ARNETT: Yeah, sure did.

PIEHLER: ... [And what was] your brothers name ... because we've referred to him?

ARNETT: William Spencer Arnett. Tremendous guy! Very, very, very gifted guy—he was the one with the smarts in the family. He was, I think I'm correct, was the youngest Chamber of Commerce Chairman of the Board in history! I *think* I'm correct about that, but I'm very, very proud of Bill. Bill died very prematurely. Our family apparently has a tendency towards diabetes and so forth, and unfortunately Bill died some years ago. But he was the smart one of the two, and he was mother's favorite! (Laughter) He established, as a matter of fact, Dealers' Warehouse, which at the time at the time he established it—and we're talking 1950—was the biggest facility of its kind in this community. Building supplies and all that kind of thing.

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Foster D. Arnett on July 7, 2000 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN with Kurt Piehler and ...

GOINS: Johnny Goins.

PIEHLER: Now, I just—as the tape broke off I wanted to ask you about some of the professors who had a real impact, and you mentioned to me and Johnny several times Ruth Stevens, who was in the history department?

ARNETT: Let me try to respond by saying that I could spend the rest of the afternoon—and your patience and my endurance wouldn't permit that—in talking about them. But, a couple or three really stick out, and on that point I give your arm of the profession due credit. I think, and I'm *serious* about it, I think that education has *got* to be one of the preeminent and important values in the country. I'm a great believer in organized education *et cetera, et cetera*. But a couple—and I will undoubtedly do a disservice to others—but one of them was, you mentioned a minute ago, Ruth Stephens. Ruth Stephens, if she had not been a woman would have been Chair of the History Department at UT. Ruth Stephens was a rough, tough gal! As I remember, she was unmarried – never married – but she was Professor of History and she was just outstanding! Everybody knew quote “Doc” closed quote Stephens. Everybody knew her, and everybody loved her. And she was tough as hell! In those days, the university Athletic Department was similar to but quite different from what it is today. I can remember when some of the—I'm talking about the stellar stars on the UT football team would be in one of her classes, where I was in one of her classes. And you talk about someone being in charge—and I'm talking about ... [Bob] Suffridge and [Marshall (Abe)] Shires and some of those you know very, very famous [players]—Doc Stephens was in charge! She was a great, great, great lady and a superb teacher; she was an inspiration. You would leave her class and just instinctively, you know, what to read something or get into something or explore something! Another outstanding—and I'm doing a disservice to you and everyone just picking on two or three—but Dr. John L. Kein, Dr. Kein was the chair of the German department. I think I told you, I took three years of college German to keep from taking one year of college math or some such thing. (Laughter) But he was a very, very, very elegant person. I never will forget one day – I don't know whether I told you this or not – one day where he was teaching. Incidentally, his classroom was in old South College, you know where old South College is?

PIEHLER: No, I don't.

ARNETT: You know where Ayers Hall is?

PIEHLER: Yes.

ARNETT: You know the oldest building on campus is as you face the back of Ayers Hall? That old building, two story building—that's old South College.

PIEHLER: Okay.

ARNETT: But I never will forget, I was sitting in the back of his class one day and he was speaking and he was very, very articulate and very, very attractive but he had a German strain in his accent and so forth and I was doing this, waving my hands, trying to catch his attention and finally he looked through me several times and he said, “Mr. Arnett!” I wish I had his German accent. “Do you have something to tell me?” And I said, “Yes sir.” I said, “Can you step out here a minute?” And so he stepped to the back of the room where I was. I said, “Dr. Kein, your trousers in the rear are split!” (Laughter) He said, “What did you say?” And I repeated it. And he said, “*Mein Gott!*”

He felt around and sure enough, the seams were cut! “*Mein Gott!*” he said. He later thanked me for telling him. (Laughter) He was a great one. We had a number of others in, and one of them was Jimmy Walls. Jimmy Walls was in Geology, and Jimmy Walls was a heck of a nice guy—he was not one of my favorites, but he was a very collegial kind of a guy. And he was quite a golfer, and that’s the reason most of his class consisted of golfers that kind of thing. But we, I think particularly for that time and that period and that place we had a very good faculty; I’ve always been proud of being a graduate of the University of Tennessee.

PIEHLER: You were a history major?

ARNETT: Yeah, History and Political Science.

PIEHLER: But you sort of—I remember we met the first time because you had gotten a mailing from us because you were on the history majors mailing list.

ARNETT: Beg your pardon?

PIEHLER: Because you were on the history majors mailing list. You’re viewed as a history major by the Alumni Office, and that’s how you got your initial invitation from us.

ARNETT: Well history has always been a real favorite of mine. I had a split major, as I remember; History and Political Science as I remember, and we’re talking about oh, fifty years ago, okay? But, I’ve always enjoyed reading voraciously, which I continue to do. And history and things related to history have always been a special, special interest to me and I think it’s—you gentleman have a chalice before you to continue to articulate, you know, real history as opposed to phony history, which I’m sure you would agree sometimes happens.

GOINS: You have such a strong background here in the Knoxville area and, of course, UT and your affinity for the University of Tennessee itself. And I’m not familiar exactly with when the Law School itself began, but what as you approach graduation and begin to make choices for Law School what caused Virginia to be so prominent in your decision?

ARNETT: Well the University of Tennessee law school had a long historic [tradition]; well over a hundred years I think, well over a hundred years and it is now and it was then a darn good law school, and is so recognized. I guess a small part of my answer would be because of my Virginia roots, but the major part is that the School of Law at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville has historically always been within the top five, six or seven law schools nationwide. And, that is not to demean, that is not to demean the University of Tenn—because, as a matter of fact, I think practically all of the lawyers in our firm are University of Tennessee law school products. It’s a darn good law school and they have every right to be proud of it! But have you ever been to Charlottesville?

GOINS: Indeed I have, yes.

PIEHLER: Yes I have.

ARNETT: Well, we'll have to meet up there sometime! I'll show you around ...

PIEHLER: It's really a lovely area!

ARNETT: It is an astonishing place. What's the description over the door of the law school, "That goes along servants of the law, learning courage and something to preserve—to promote justice and to preserve liberty." But, of course it's one of the very, very early law schools and the culture there is so different! So different from Harvard, Yale, Columbia some of the other great law schools; and that's not to suggest that those are not *fine* law schools, but it's the ambience, the culture there is really quite special. And I guess it's because of my focus on that that I'm the past president of the law school alumni association at UVA.

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier joining a fraternity on campus. When did you join and what fraternity did you belong to?

ARNETT: Phi Gamma Delta. Which was right where this law school stands today: 1517 West Cumberland Avenue!

PIEHLER: And did you ever live ... in the fraternity?

ARNETT: No I never did! I lived less than half a block from it, (Laughter) number one. Number two, I couldn't have afforded it!

PIEHLER: Would you eat some meals with them? How often would you eat with the fraternity?

ARNETT: That's kind of interesting, and I'll tell you. I'll respond directly: not often! And on December 7—gosh almighty, my mind—the date of Pearl Harbor? December 7th '41!

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ARNETT: '41. It was a Sunday—on this continent it was a Sunday. A bunch of guys were there with their dates having lunch at Phi Gamma Delta, and I was back in the study. And the reason I was back in the study is because I didn't have enough money to eat lunch there! Much less take someone to eat lunch! And I never will forget it: I was back in the study and one of the ancient radios and so forth came over the air that the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor. So I immediately rushed into the dining room where everyone was just finishing up having lunch and said, "The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor." The only reason we knew about it at that particular moment was because I didn't have enough money to have lunch there! (Laughter) I was just killing time until they finished eating.

And incidentally in that regard, I won't get into that, but you talk about a change in culture as I perceive it and I've been to Japan, so there is the most remarkable change in culture in my opinion, in my opinion, in my opinion, between the Japanese culture of that time and the Japanese culture of today! Now excuse me.

PIEHLER: Oh no, no! That's a very interesting observation. Do you remember your initiation at all into your fraternity?

ARNETT: No, not specifically. I think I remember the folks that were initiated with me and not specifically ... Incidentally the Phi Gamma Delta, especially Kappa Tau [chapter of] Phi Gamma Delta have been a great resource for me. I think I've been a fairly loyal member and it's been an influence of good. I was the first winner of the William Wylie Kreis Memorial award, and that's an interesting story. Bill Kreis from Morristown—Talk about a tremendous guy, tremendous guy! Bill Kreis of Morristown was president of Kappa Tau when I was invited to join as a freshman. Bill Kreis was an elegant guy; very, very bright, very, very handsome—not large but very, very handsome—and had a marvelous bass voice. And at our social events, I'll never forget Bill Kreis. “Come on Bill, come on!” And among others he would sing—the big bass drum in a deep, deep bass voice. Well to bring the story up to date, in ... December of 1944, Christmas Eve, after being cut off for about six weeks, we got out Humboldt Bay, 51st General Hospital. I was badly shot up and damned near starved to death! And I knew that Bill Kreis was with the 77th Infantry Division which was four or five miles from where I was on Humboldt Bay. And I, because I had great respect and affection for him, I wanted very much to run him down with the 77th Infantry Division, which as I say was close by. Literally, literally we were almost starved to death and I could only eat once an hour in order to—my stomach had shrunk and I just said to myself “Well, I'll see him tomorrow; for gosh sakes I've got to eat good now.” Well, tomorrow was fine except that was Christmas Day and I was shipped out on the hospital ship to go around the Island way up to the Eastern shore and thence back to the 51st General Hospital in New Guinea. So I never saw him again, *and* he went on and was killed on Okinawa. Very elegant guy, and one of the things of which I'm proudest: his family, marvelous family from Morristown – just grand people – established the Kreis Memorial Award for the outstanding member of Kappa Tau. And I was there first winner of that and that was very moving and touching for me because if there was anyone that I had greater respect for than Bill Kreis, I don't know who it was.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because you mentioned where you were in Pearl Harbor.

ARNETT: Did I say Pearl Harbor?

PIEHLER: Yeah, where you were at Pearl Harbor.

ARNETT: Oh, yeah, on the *date* of Pearl ...

PIEHLER: On the date, yes. I'm curious, before Pearl Harbor, how much did you discuss the war—the impending war? You mentioned saying in September of '39 you had a feeling that you were eventually going to be in this.

ARNETT: Oh yeah, there's no question about that. As you know, Labor Day of '39 is when the big war broke open, and it was clear and apparent to us from a non-academic, kind of sense of the matter, it's just a matter of time after Germany invaded Poland. Just a matter of time until the war spread. And so we lived in an interesting period of time between ... Poland and Pearl Harbor, but it came as no surprise to us that the Japs would have a sneak attack, which of course they did. And one of the big important influential components of the University of Tennessee was the ROTC program, which my sense is and I don't know – I speak from ignorance – not near now what it was then. ROTC was big-time then and ... all of us were – the guys and I'm sure the gals – were very much focused on what—now we did not obviously anticipate the sneak attack of Japan, but I think all of us were committed to the proposition that it was just a matter of time until the United States was brought in to that war.

PIEHLER: I'm assuming then—this where I don't know as much about the University of Tennessee's history yet but I hope to learn more. ROTC was mandatory the first two years?

ARNETT: Yeah, and then you can take advanced ROTC, and then if you had had a full course of ROTC in high school you were forgiven one year.

PIEHLER: Now did you have ROTC?

ARNETT: Yeah. The ROTC was a big component of Knoxville High School. I kid you not! A very, very, very important part of the culture of this big, big, big metropolitan high school.

PIEHLER: How many were involved in the program in high school?

ARNETT: Gee, I don't know! We had a battalion and four companies that I remember – the army's changed so darn much, but as I remember we had the equivalent in the battalion of four companies. But it was highly respected and highly regarded. It was something that most of the kids ... were attracted to.

PIEHLER: ... I'm curious if you have any memories, there was quite a debate both on campuses and in the general public in '40 and '41 over how much aid we should give to the Allies, well, Britain and then later the Soviet Union. This whole ordeal of lend-lease, do you remember?

ARNETT: No I don't and I think that that perhaps is, ... if my memory serves me correctly, is the difference. Dissent and protests and all that kind of thing were essentially unknown for my generation. I mean the dissidents, the hotheads, *et cetera, et cetera*, you know that you've scene in the last—the protest generation, that was a

phenomena that my generation did not confront. I mean, you know, if you didn't like it why okay that was your right, but you don't go down and burn someone's house down or hold a protest. Matter of fact if you'll excuse the expression—well I better clean that up; the relationship between faculty and the student body was so much more different than what I sense it to be now. I mean, the academics were in charge and they should have been, in my opinion ... as opposed to some curly-headed kid out there you know messing up. Forgive me; I'm trying to cleanse my language. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: No, No. Please go on! Please go on.

ARNETT: But no. Kids do things now in the school process that we would never *dare* to have done! If I had, for example, been kicked out of school, you know high school or college, I would have to face this five-foot stone-deaf mother and she would have killed me! She would have killed me. (Laughter) But no, all kidding aside the focus, the emphasis, the culture was so different in my generation with some of the succeeding generations. And you didn't, you knew the difference between your teacher and you and the different roles. And incidentally, I guess this is the play it threw—but I'm very, very proud. My generation maybe wasn't as smart as the other generations, my generation undoubtedly has its flaws and shortcomings, but we had some remarkable, just remarkable and astonishing people as a whole. As a whole.

PIEHLER: You uh ...

ARNETT: I want you to read that book though, by Tom Brokaw.

PIEHLER: I've read part; I haven't finished it, but I have it on my bookshelf. In terms of the campus life, one of the questions is, what was the relationship between the fraternities and the non-fra—and the independents?

ARNETT: Well, first of all there was not that clash as you may have assumed or been informed or told there was. I think most of us who were fraternity men or sorority girls were grateful for the opportunity and the privilege, but there was no economic schism. We had, there was within the fraternities for example, we had a difference—we had ... fraternity houses were all over here. West Clinch Avenue, the whole bit; Laurel Avenue and so forth, converted large homes, you know that kind of thing. But I don't think, as I remember, and I'm pretty sure I'm right, there was no hostility or resentment between the fraternity and non-fraternity people. Now, we had our haters, for example of all the men's fraternities on campus we had quote "the big four," which I guess then and now where, you know, they were "the big four" of the fraternities but it's a world away from what you gentleman and your heritage would be familiar with or could relate to.

PIEHLER: What were the big four fraternities?

ARNETT: Phi Gamma Delta of course, ATO [Alpha Tau Omega], SAE [Sigma Alpha Epsilon] and Sigma Chi. Now, maybe I should have put Kappa Sig[ma] in there; I don't know. My cherished uncle, Danny Deaver, was a Kappa Sig and he never, ever forgave

me for not going Kappa Sig! (Laughter) I tell you what, now I'm serious about it, if we had more Lester Deavers we wouldn't have a million lawyers right now. We'd probably have about a hundred thousand lawyers at that moment. Tremendous guy.

GOINS: In a conversation you and I had earlier. You were telling me about being part of another society on campus: the Scaribbean Society. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

ARNETT: Well it's a senior society, which I say senior—actually you were not announced until your senior year. L.R. Hessler, I should have mentioned his name—he was Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Vick Davis, who was the first director of the Alumni Association were the founders of it. It's the same or the equivalent to the – goodness gracious – the Raven Society at the University of Virginia. And the focus – and I can assure you that I'm not overstating – the focus is *service* to the University as opposed to, you know, recognition for yourself. We used to meet when—I was very fortunate at the end of my freshman year; I was invited to join Scaribbeans. And we used to have our meetings in a cave on the Tennessee River! (Laughter) Now you know where the sewage disposal plan is? You know those cliffs on the other side?

GOINS: Yes.

ARNETT: Alright. The water of course has been damned up, and those caves are no longer accessible; they were on the far side, and we would have secret meetings and the whole focus was service to the University. I mean as opposed to, you know, personal recognition or that kind of thing. We had no women—I think we were right. (Laughter) It was strictly male, but it was a very, very elite and very moving place. And as I say, to repeat myself for the third time, the whole focus was to serve the University and its mission and its role. And firstly, we had L.R. Hessler and Vick Davis, who were both just remarkable people.

PIEHLER: What were the important social events on the school calendar at UT? More?

PIEHLER: Yeah ...

GOINS: I'm not ...

PIEHLER: I'm not familiar with it.

ARNETT: Nahheeyayli was a big dance weekend when they would bring in Tommy Dorsey or so forth—a big, big weekend. And over at the old UT gymnasium was where we would have it, and you know, accompanying social events. And you've hit cold me on that one! Carnicus was always a big deal—that was where each of the, well non-fraternity as well as fraternity and sorority groups would put on a skit. It was, you know, lighthearted and so forth.

PIEHLER: See that tradition I've never heard of.

ARNETT: See that was big time, I mean really big time! And incidentally some of it was very well done. Some of it was very well done, and damnit if you would told me in advance you were gonna ask that question I would look through one of my old Volunteers.

PIEHLER: Was there a military ball?

ARNETT: Oh yeah! You had a military ball. Military was really, really, really important. Really important and it's very fortunate that it was because it played an immense role, you know very soon. And, I don't know how to say what I'm trying to say but it was, it was very, very fine and yet it was not fancy and pretentious. We didn't have the money, for God's sake! But you know the guys in their uniforms with their sabers and their sponsors and that kind of—Scabbard and Blade, I was a member of Scabbard and Blade, which was the honorary military society. That was—yeah the military Ball was a big event.

PIEHLER: Was there a mandatory chapel on campus at UT when you were at school?

ARNETT: The answer is – I'm not sure, but I am almost positive the answer is no. We had, what did we call it, we didn't call it Chapel?

PIEHLER: Did you have Convocations?

ARNETT: Well yeah, we had a kind of—where some outstanding speaker, a minister would come in but, what the devil was the name of it in those days? We didn't have mandatory chapel.

PIEHLER: But the class would periodically ... meet as a group? Did you have class-wide meetings?

ARNETT: Class-wide meetings?

PIEHLER: Yeah, where the entire class of 1940 or '43 ...

ARNETT: Well I was class of '43, but elected in '42.

PIEHLER: Well whenever the Class of '43 met together as group, did you have any of those?

ARNETT: No. Well the Alumni Association ...

PIEHLER: Later would do that?

ARNETT: Um, yeah every ten years and all that kind of thing, like I guess most other colleges do too.

PIEHLER: But not when you were in school?

ARNETT: No, not to my knowledge. Actually, we were confronted with the requirement that we ought to eat occasionally, and eating occasionally was sort of inconsistent with attending so many meetings. I wish—what I should have done is flipped through my old Volunteer there.

PIEHLER: You mention where you were during Pearl Harbor. And um ...

ARNETT: I was at the Kappa Tau chapter of Phi Gamma Delta right across the street.

PIEHLER: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

ARNETT: Oh sure, you could not have survived around Ruth Stevens – Dr. Ruth Stevens (Laughter) – without knowing where *everything* was! And we were all, I think it is fair to say that 99 and 1/2 percent of us were very, very conscious that we were on the lip of some great catastrophic event. I don't think there is any question about that.

PIEHLER: When you were going to school, how did you get your information? Where did you stay abreast of current events; did you read the newspaper?

ARNETT: Oh yeah, I've always been a voracious reader. Of course television didn't exist, but uh radio and a lot of reading. A lot of reading! To pull the fact that for the example, I have three fantastic grandsons that are undoubtedly exposed to a lot more television than they are books or magazines. And my Jean and I, my four-foot ten- inch wife and I regularly subscribe to *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, or a book or this kind of thing. And I should have brought a book over that our oldest grandson, who is fourteen, sent to me. I don't know where the hell he got it! (Laughter)

GOINS: You mentioned being there at the chapter house when Pearl Harbor took place. What was the sense, I mean, was it that America was going to be drawn into a war somewhere, or was there a sense that war was here now in America?.

ARNETT: You're talking about Pearl Harbor?

GOINS: Pearl Harbor, yeah.

ARNETT: Oh we knew it, we were all—that's one reason we had such a huge ROTC regiment! We had a battalion in Knoxville High School, we had a regiment here at UT! Dr.—Colonel [M.P.] Schillerstrom was the PMST, Professor of Military Science and Tactics. We were all very—I don't think there was any question that were all surprised and shocked that Pearl Harbor happened at that time and that place but we were all very, very much focused in; it was just a question of when. But the Japs, of course, had sneak

attacked, at the specific time and date that was a surprise no one could have predicted. But were at all *I think*, all of the opinion: just hold you're breath—it's just a matter of *when* this is going to break out. And that brings up another subject; it's very interesting to see how people react to an event of that type, the reaction we'll talk about that later. The reactions run the whole scope—the whole scope.

PIEHLER: Did you have any sense that you might want to go out there and enlist right away, when you [heard about] Pearl Harbor?

ARNETT: As a matter of fact I was entitled to deferment ...

PIEHLER: You had mentioned that.

ARNETT: ... until June of '43 to graduate.

PIEHLER: And in fact you did eventually decide it was time for you to go?

ARNETT: I got antsy as hell! You know there was a good possibility, as I said before, that we would win the war without Arnett! (Laughter) So I just took it as long as I could, and waived my deferment and went in December of 1942, December of '42.

GOINS: What was your parents' reaction?

ARNETT: Oh, they were great! They were, you know—whatever. And as a matter of fact, I think that they were very proud. I think, but you aren't playing with nickels and dimes; you're standing a darn chance of having your rear end shot off.

PIEHLER: Did any of you're classmates enlist right away after Pearl Harbor?

ARNETT: Gosh I don't know—we're talking about over fifty years ago!!! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Yeah. No, I know! But no one—anyone in your fraternity that you knew of that you were close too, just joined right away? Or were people trying to finish up?

ARNETT: No, I guess, and this is not intended to be self-serving, but I *guess* that maybe of those qualified, I was probably certainly among the first. Of course, as you know the day Pearl Harbor why ... there was a big rush the following month or two and so forth.

PIEHLER: Oh, yes.

ARNETT: Some time, off the record, I'll tell you how one of our great political figures responded to Pearl Harbor. (Laughter)

GOINS: What was your brother doing at the time?

ARNETT: He was at UT.

GOINS: He was at UT at the time?

ARNETT: He was a freshman. Tremendous guy, I might say. I'm trying to remember the 41st Infantry Division I think that their nickname was the "Butchers of Biak." Biak, you know was an island in the Southwest Pacific. In that regard there was enormous difference between the Central Pacific, which was a Navy theatre, and the Southwest Pacific which was MacArthur's domain.

GOINS: Did you have conversations with him about the war, that maybe you got into some details about it that maybe you wouldn't have been comfortable with your mother or father?

ARNETT: Conversations?

GOINS: With your brother; about the war?

ARNETT: No, we just more or less took it for granted! You know, by golly we—I think it's fair to say that we were very, very proud of being citizens of the *greatest* country in the history of the world, and it was *expected* of us! You know it was a fact of life. And "Hey, is this private fight or can anybody get into it?" (Laughter) You know that kind of thing.

PIEHLER: I am curious ... you would be in Knoxville for basically a full year before going overseas; how had the war changed Knoxville and changed the campus?

ARNETT: Well, remember, I wasn't here! Well ...

PIEHLER: For a year you were—1942.

ARNETT: Well yeah, of course during the war I mean, it was almost totally female and 4-F's. I just popped in and out when I was in the service. You know—two days of leave here, three days' leave there; that kind of thing. But my sense is that it was focused primarily to coeds as opposed to guys. Most of the guys who were here had a valid, good reason for being here, but we had a few who in my opinion did not have a valid reason for being here.

PIEHLER: You were here in 1942; were there any subtle changes? And one of the things I've noticed at some schools is that students started to work more because there was a need at factories for workers. Do you remember any?

ARNETT: No I don't; I don't know about that, about the impact of industry on the war effort. Of course we had—the draft was very much in place, and we had a number of guys who were in the military as enlisted men. And that's one reason why there was a focus on going to ROTC. You know, if I'm going I want to go or don't want to go, or

whatever. Everything else being equal, it would be better to have a commission than be an enlisted man.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you were locked into the Army pretty early, I mean going back to high school you were in Army ROTC. Had you thought any of the other branches at all?

ARNETT: That should show the naiveté, of which I am guilty—I think I told you about trying to get in the parachute infantry. I immediately volunteered and they shook my fanny from Camp Wheeler down to Fort Benning! I got back and volunteered again and they shipped me to the “Hundred and Thirteen Fifty” Regimental Combat Team on Long Island. And I got up there, immediately applied again for the parachute infantry and was rejected and I left ... to Camp Upton on Long Island. And this time I told you, I think, that I showed the arrogance and stupidity. I wrote the Secretary of War a letter said, “Under pursuant to A.R. so and so, Army Regulation so and so, I understand that priority is to be given to anyone who volunteers for the paratroopers, and this is it!” (Laughter) As a result I was required to answer by endorsement. Do you know what answer by endorsement is?

PIEHLER: Yeah, I ...

ARNETT: That’s where senior officer instructs an enlisted man or a junior officer to write a *mea culpa*; in other words, an apology! “Look, I know I shouldn’t have gone outside of channels; (Laughter) I’m sorry; give me another chance!” (Laughter) But I, by golly, I got into the parachute infantry which was where I wanted to go. And they were a great—by and large, the only time that in all those years that I saw something that bothered me was right just before the Philippine invasion we had seven of our men and I am talking about 1,950 who flaked out in view of combat. And I am not expert on what I’m about to say, but my guess there were a lot of other outfits that had a heck of lot more people get off, flake out one way or another.

PIEHLER: I am curious ... looking back when you were in the military, when you actually were on active duty, how effective was your ROTC training?

ARNETT: Oh, I think it was darn good; I think it was very helpful. But I also would emphasize that talking about the infantry for the Army, the infantry for example we needed badly to have it supplemented by additional training, that kind of thing. It was a good threshold and I think most of them did damn well, but it went as I say unreinforced. The Army probably at that point in time was the greatest educational institution in the nation. I am talking about in terms of—and one of the things, just to comment or illustrate, is that I think my old CS—I went to the Army Command and General Staff College of Fort Leavenworth. That’s a five year course, one year if you’re on active duty, five years if you are in the Reserve over the summertime. But, you talk about something that will stress, you talk about something that will require the best in you, the Command General Staff School! And that’s second only to the Army War College. The Army has done, by and large, I think a *superb* job in the educational field.

PIEHLER: You volunteered, you mentioned, to go in early; where did you initially report to?

ARNETT: Camp Wheeler in Georgia—Macon, Georgia. No longer exists.

PIEHLER: Now how long were you at Camp Wheeler?

ARNETT: I'm guessing ... I was there—between writing letters to the War Department, I'm guessing I was there about three months. That was an IRTC infantry replacement training center. That's where when you were drafted ...

PIEHLER: That's where you learned how to actually ...

ARNETT: Well, that's for the enlisted men; it was primarily infantry replacement training center. It was primarily for enlisted men—draftees.

PIEHLER: So, what was your mission?

ARNETT: I was a platoon leader there.

PIEHLER: So they didn't send you to any advance training once you were called up from UT; once you volunteered?

ARNETT: Oh yeah I ended up ... in the Infantry Officers Basic.

PIEHLER: But not initially?

ARNETT: No, I had my gold bar.

PIEHLER: You had your gold bar, and what was that first experience like of being platoon leader?

ARNETT: Well I had a knack—a gift would be too strong a statement—but ... it was a result of instinct and conscious determination. I always had, I think, a very good relationship with my men, or at least I tried to. Unfortunately, we had some *asses* (Laughter) that did not, but I always got along fine. As a matter of fact, I think I showed you that rifle down home didn't I?

PIEHLER: Yes.

ARNETT: When I left that Yankee outfit ...

PIEHLER: Yes!

ARNETT: They gave me that ...

PIEHLER: We'll come to New Jersey in a little bit. But in your first experience in Georgia—at Camp Wheeler?

ARNETT: Except for Christmas Eve of 1942, when I was Officer of the Guard. I had just come in you know ten days, eight days whatever it was before that.

PIEHLER: And what was that experience like being Officer of the Guard on Christmas?

ARNETT: Oh lonesome as hell and no fun! You know you could hear the chimes and tinkling bells and so forth and here's ol' Arnett out there, who's a brand new shave-tail—an Officer of the Guard for my, I guess it was, battalion.

PIEHLER: You wanted to be in the paratroopers, or the paratroop infantry?

ARNETT: And that was primarily—well it was due for a lot of reasons—but one of the reasons because of Billy Hagin. Billy Hagin was a Knoxville guy. He was in the original flyable one when he was training in Panama. Billy Hagin was a hell of a guy! He's been dead for many, many years, but he was the one that for example at Carnicus or something where we would have an occasion, a fraternity dance at the old gymnasium over here. Billy Hagin on more than one occasion would put a rope around the roof, the rafters and swing out from the upper deck down to the stage! (Laughter) He was kind of a hero; it was that, and you would have to know the culture of the professional paratrooper to understand what I am imperfectly trying to say.

PIEHLER: Because you mentioned earlier that you eventually write the Secretary of War (Laughs) which is—that's the most ...

ARNETT: The name as I remember and don't hold me to it, I think it was Patterson, if I remember correctly.

PIEHLER: That could have been the Secretary of the ...

ARNETT: No, we didn't have a Secretary of Defense then.

PIEHLER: No, but Henry Stimson was the Secretary of War at the time; but Patterson was I think an Assistant Secretary for Manpower.

ARNETT: Well, my memory is fuzzy on that.

PIEHLER: But nonetheless, you not only went outside the ...

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

PIEHLER: After a brief break, we talked about your first assignment in Camp Wheeler, which you were none too happy with. You wanted to be in parachute infantry?

ARNETT: Yeah. Let me say, that was stupidity and arrogance on my part. I am not criticizing myself for my ambition to be a paratrooper (Laughter) but you know walking around sense would suggest here's a brand new shavetail, a Second Lieutenant who had—that's why I had gone to the Infantry Basic School anyway. You know, applying for an elite group like that! But, the blood was pumping I guess, and that's my excuse or justification.

PIEHLER: Because after Camp Wheeler, where were you sent next by the Army?

ARNETT: I was sent to, as I remember, and forgive me, we're talking about over half a century ago—I was sent to Infantry Basic at Fort Benning. And got back and said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Now I'm qualified!" I applied again that's when they sent me to Fort Hamilton, you know where Fort Hamilton is? You ought to know that?

PIEHLER: It's on Long Island.

ARNETT: Yeah, it's on the near end right across the river there from New York—very, very historic old fort—and from there to Camp Upton out on Long Island. And then, once again, that's when I wrote to Secretary of War Patterson or whoever it was. (Laughter) I'm glad that they—that we had that tremendous fire at the Army Repository in St. Louis, because they've destroyed, you know we lost, that's a great loss!

PIEHLER: No, it is a tremendous loss. But I have a feeling a lot of your immediate commanders were not too pleased with you. Because you were—in a sense you were wanting to ...

ARNETT: Well no, and none that I had respect for. Actually I had—and it was not due to me, it was due to them—but, with rare exceptions I had a marvelous relationship with my fellow officers, my commanding officers, and my men.

PIEHLER: But in terms of trying to get out, I mean these initial ...

ARNETT: Well with respect to me trying—you know—get out Camp Wheeler and Camp Upton and so forth the reaction of most of those people was, "You're nuts! You're Crazy." You know, "You should stay here and guard the rest of the war; are *you out of your mind?*" (Laughter) You know that kind of thing!

PIEHLER: So, in many ways ... at least by Army terms, you would be there a while?

ARNETT: Mm-hmm, sure. Sure, but ... you would have to know, we're having later on this month, Colonel Robert S. Beightler and his wife as our houseguests. And we're going to Nashville; you ought to come over there to the reunion of the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Bob Beightler and I served together during the War; he was West Point Class of '42 I guess. We're having a reunion—there are damn few of us left—but this is in Nashville later this month. And there are some astonishing, remarkable—well most of them are dead—but astonishing, remarkable exemplars there. And for Slick Willie [President Bill Clinton]—and I am depending on you two scholars to find that article for me (laughter) when he awarded, what? Seven or eight Medals of Honor this past week as I remember. That just makes me want to throw up but, from a biased point of view what would you expect from him. Until that Mr. President ...

PIEHLER: (Laughter) Going back to camp. What were your duties? What was a typical day like, for example at Fort Hamilton and then later at Camp ...

ARNETT: Well I was at Fort Hamilton just a short time and then after that short time—a week or so and then went out to Camp Upton to this Jersey guard Outfit. This Jersey Guard outfit was scheduled to go to the ETO and then an unforeseen thing happened! Uh, German saboteurs landed off Ponte Vedra [Florida] and—what's the name of the place off Long Island? German Saboteurs [came] from a submarine ... or submarines I should say. So they pulled the 113th Infantry Regimental Combat Team out of the Jersey National Guard Outfit and shipped them out to Long Island. Amagansett [Hamptons, New York] and Ponte Vedra [Florida] is where the German saboteurs landed. And so, it was—its mission was changed from going to the ETO to be out on Long Island—because, that was a highly, you know highly at risk area there; particularly in response to the saboteurs. All we did was patrol the beaches, and as a matter of fact that's the first time—and I think I am correct—that my company was the first unit to have dogs patrolling the beach—the first time that dogs were utilized in patrolling. But I am so proud of that rifle I've got down home that they stole out of their museum I'm sure (Laughter)! To give it ...

PIEHLER: So you served with the New Jersey men out on Long Island?

ARNETT: Yeah!

PIEHLER: At Camp Upton?

ARNETT: Yeah 113th Infantry Regimental Combat. They're the ones that gave me the ...

GOINS: Rifle!

PIEHLER: No, I've seen it ... How long were you with them?

ARNETT: Oh gosh; gee, you're stretching my memory! I think I was with the 113th until I wrote the Secretary of War! (Laughter) Think about it, a Second Lieutenant!

Incidentally, my commanding officer said, “Arnett, I just put you in for First Lieutenant, but in due of what you’ve done with the Secretary of War, you’re still a Second Lieutenant.” (Laughter) Which is true! But, I guess with the Company D, 113th I guess with them until, five months. But um ...

PIEHLER: But you made some lasting friendships, you’ve mentioned?

ARNETT: Oh sure!

PIEHLER: Yeah. And they took something out their museum to give to you? So you had ...

ARNETT: They stole it—I’m sure! I am sure they didn’t ask the commanding officer. But ... I had a marvelous relationship, I think, with ninety-nine and a half percent of the officers with whom I served and the enlisted men with whom I served. It’s a camaraderie that is really unique and astonishing. You can’t experience it any other setting or scenario or environment.

GOINS: What happened that they honored you with this gift? You’re ...

ARNETT: (Laughs) ... I’m not sure! I like them, I did with them as I tried to do throughout my life; I never ask anybody to do something that I haven’t done, can’t do or won’t do. And I was, as I say, the only Southerner in the whole darn outfit, and I *liked* them; I really *genuinely* liked them! And apparently they liked, and maybe respected me as witness to the fact that they gave me that. And that rifle, I wouldn’t take anything for it; I am serious about it! If you said, “Ten million dollars,” [I’d say,] “Thank you, buddy—no way.” That rifle means a great deal to me; a *great* deal to me; it’s important.

PIEHLER: Prior to the war, had you ever been to New York—New York City?

ARNETT: No.

PIEHLER: What did you think of New York?

ARNETT: I liked New York then, and I of course have been there many times since, but it’s a different world. And it’s a *hell* of a lot different world *now* (hits the table for emphasis) as opposed to forty years ago; now that’s for darn sure!

PIEHLER: No, it’s a very ...

ARNETT: It’s more different *now* as opposed to *then* (hits table again for emphasis)—do you understand what I am trying to imperfectly say? I wouldn’t live in New York if they gave me Manhattan Island! (Laughter) I enjoy going there.

PIEHLER: You finally—after leaving Camp Upton where did you go next?

ARNETT: Back to [Ft.] Benning.

PIEHLER: Back to [Ft.] Benning?

ARNETT: Yeah and the nickname for Fort Benning is quote, “Benning School for Boys.” But, have you ever been on the ...

PIEHLER: I’ve never been on the base; I’ve heard a lot about it.

ARNETT: It’s not a *base*, that’s a Navy term! On the *post*. (Laughter) No, all kidding aside, it’s an astonishing place. It’s where most of our senior commanders went to school about three or five years before World War II. But it is an astonishing place; it really is remarkable.

PIEHLER: I’ve interviewed a number of people who’ve said that they really appreciated their infantry Basic [Training] at Benning or their advanced; or if they were an officer, their advanced training. But that—I’ve had Generals who say that was the best course they’d ever had in the military.

ARNETT: Very good, very good. It’s not the highest, I mean you’ve got Fort Leavenworth, which is next highest and then—where the hell ... is the Army War College?

PIEHLER: Carlisle.

ARNETT: Carlisle! Carlisle Barracks, yeah. No, Benning is really quite—oh, talking about Benning! (Laughs) I’ve got a lot of great, great memories of things done, I did or shouldn’t have done or whatever. But my most vivid memory is on V-J night; I was Shoot Patrol Officer, did I tell you about this?

PIEHLER: No.

ARNETT: It became tradition among paratroopers that the only thing worse than being a traitor, the only thing worse than being a traitor was (Laughs) to be arrested by an Army MP. And you could see the Army MP’s because paratroopers were always—Phoenix City—right across the river—always in trouble! You know, “Is this a private fight, or can I join in?” You know that kind of thing. So in response to this tradition or culture where a paratrooper—the greatest shame he can have would be to be arrested by an MP. The airborne—in those days it was known as the airborne—but primarily paratroopers; that’s a big change, different terminology. In response to the fact that paratroopers were very prone to misbehave and not to resist being arrested, why the airborne, the paratroopers, established a chute patrol—short for parachute. The Chute Patrol, consisting of senior sergeants and junior officers, was to undertake—for example, in Phoenix City when we came in contact with a paratrooper who was probably, more likely than not, drunk and raising hell and trying to whip everybody in town—why, they would go, they would submit to the parachute officer or senior Non-C.O., but would fight to the

death with an MP! Guess who was chute patrol officer on V-J night in Columbus, Georgia? (Laughter) Me; me! And, of course, they had open posts for the first time in five years—in other words, you didn't have to have a pass. Everybody went to Columbus, Georgia! I will never forget, I was in this Jeep. I had a driver and a first three-grader, a sergeant, a senior sergeant with me. And those paratroopers went walking off, *literally* carrying that damn Jeep!!! (Laughter) That was something else again.

PIEHLER: So ... you got your wish at Benning ...when you went back to Benning, you were in—what was the school you were?

ARNETT: Yeah, you're talking about as I was transferred to the parachute infantry.

PIEHLER: Yeah the parachute infantry.

ARNETT: I was shipped to Camp McCall, which is a small post adjacent to and maybe included in Fort Bragg, and that's where I was shipped to; that was my first assignment at Camp McCall or Fort Bragg.

PIEHLER: Where did you do your first jump, was it ...

ARNETT: At Benning.

PIEHLER: At Benning.

ARNETT: Well, that's a funny kind of a thing. I knew ... I was absolutely certain that I would jump! You know stand up, hook up, stand in the door, and let's go! I was *positive* I would do it, but I couldn't be sure until I had done it! So, I never will forget my first jump, of course I jumped and I shouted out an obscenity and for that reason everything was fine! A matter of fact, I had to subsequently jump out of an L-4. Did you ever hear of an L-4? Little old parachute artillery—not a parachute, but a little artillery plane, L-4's and L-5's. And I jumped ... behind the lines out of an L-4. A fellow named Captain McCloud was the pilot and he took that little sucker—it had a Maytag washing machine engine (Laughter) and just stood it on the nose so we could have enough prop mass to be sure that my parachute would open. (Laughter) But kind of interesting—and I know I'm rambling, and I apologize just charge it up to longevity or age—but I don't think seriously that we'll ever see—I am not sure it's not a good thing—ever see again that generation with their maybe distorted views, sense of values and so forth. Something else, and that's the reason when Colonel Beightler and his wife come this next week to be our houseguests, we'll just have a hell of a time and then go to Nashville, and probably misbehave, shamefully. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: In reading your history—the history which was done in the Fall of '99 which was very well done—one of the things that struck me ... and a number of people writing in said, "How many people were killed in your unit ... in the liberation of the Philippines?" Did you have any sense when you were going into the paratroopers how

risky your [assignment would be]? There's a lot of danger in the military at war but some places are more dangerous than others.

ARNETT: Oh sure, and that was part of the glamour! That was part of the elite spirit, sure. And, of course, I guess secretly in the back of our minds, we'd say, "God; sorry for Joe here, but I am going to be all right." That was the part of the culture, part of the impetus. I am not expressing myself very well.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so in a sense the danger of it made it glamorous in part. But, you also thought the bullet ... doesn't have *my* name on it?

ARNETT: Well, after I got hit the third time ... (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Then you knew, well yeah, but I am talking about more when you were in the States still.

ARNETT: Personally, I didn't think a hell of a lot about it. I mean, it's like a fight! Like a fight, you don't go in and say, "Am I going to get clobbered?" You go in assuming you got the right instincts that "I am going to take this guy out."

PIEHLER: Didn't anyone, when you were trying to get into the paratroopers so badly, didn't anyone say to you, "Don't you know in the Army you're not so supposed to volunteer for anything?" I mean ... no one tried to talk you out of that?

ARNETT: No, because that would have been demeaning to them. You know, that's my philosophy in contrast to you're philosophy. Not to my memory. But really and truly, they were just great guys, just great guys. As I said – I know I'm repeating myself – last people in the world you'd take home to date your baby sister, but they were just great guys. Y'all ought to think about going to Nashville this next week and talking to what few of these legendary characters we got left. Curiously, we had a colonel, a battalion commander, a lieutenant colonel, who—and you are going to have to be careful about Ed, because I don't want to damage you know, the dead or survivors so you are going to have to be careful about being too specific on what you ask. But he was one of our battalion commanders and he flaked out on Leyte. And incidentally, I say flaked out—he did not distinguish himself on Leyte. And he lost leg, or would—I've forgotten whether he'd lost the leg, or had a very, very bad leg on Leyte. And he came back to one of our earliest reunions forty-five years ago, whenever it was, and was just shunned by everybody and never, never came back. Never came back, and here he was the battalion commander! But we had some legendary people, we also had a handful, because the weeding out process had gotten rid of most of those people, you know, down stream or upstream.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, paratrooper training from what I've heard was very rigorous.

ARNETT: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: And it was intriguing how people sometimes go eliminated. I mean there were real ...

ARNETT: The jumping was the least part of it! The training was incredible! ... Running was one of the things we were most focused in on. And your greatest fear was, “Am I going to drop out, or am I going to embarrass me and my buddies?” That kind of thing—I am talking about five and ten mile runs and that kind of thing. It was extremely demanding; of course that’s one reason we did so darn well! They were, first, primarily hand-picked people. Secondly, they really were put through the ringer! I just wish that it were possible to get my two or three of my surviving friends to have them sit in these chairs here and fill in. I think that listening to them, you would be enchanted. They’re just remarkable folks—just remarkable folks. But we never—but we did have someone who went bad! Why that person was *verboten*, like the way I told you our former battalion commander—I don’t want any part of him. He’s now dead; that’s one reason I don’t want to see him ...

PIEHLER: When did you join 511th? Did you join at the base—I forget the name of the base near Fort Bragg?

ARNETT: Base is a Navy term!

PIEHLER: Yeah I keep forgetting ...

ARNETT: Post is an Army term!

PIEHLER: Yeah post!

ARNETT: I am going to have to sit down and talk with him. (Laughter) A Camp McCall, which is adjacent to and a part of Fort Bragg. Now, what was your question?

PIEHLER: Is that where you joined the 511th?

ARNETT: Yeah, and its kind of interesting that looking back on it—It was not apparent to me at the time, but we have a *number* of young second lieutenants join at the same time. Because I guess – and I think I’m right – I guess it was a part of the thinking process of the senior officers: “Let’s get more than we’ll need and wipe out those we don’t want, and retain those that we want.” I was not aware of that at that time, and that’s my ...

PIEHLER: But looking back on it, there were people who were eliminated?

ARNETT: Yeah, yeah. Uh, it was a fun experience; a fun experience.

PIEHLER: Any memorable days, or any memorable marches? You mentioned a lot five and ten mile runs.

ARNETT: Oh gosh, well all that was a daily thing. That was not something we did occasionally. We ran. Boy, we were in fine shape! We had to be, or we would have dropped out or *died*!

GOINS: Quite often there's a recounting some sort of march or a hike of some sort that becomes a competition between groups ...

ARNETT: Oh yeah, the competition was fierce, and I never will forget one of the distinctions my regiment had – and don't ask me for numbers cause I don't remember precisely – but we were at Camp Stoneman getting ready to embark for the Pacific. Camp Stoneman is on the interior of the San Francisco Bay; [it] no longer exists I don't think. But we had a ten-mile hike and some other outfit held the record for ten miles. My regiment went out there, and we *destroyed* that record and, to my knowledge, we still hold the record for covering that ten miles through those damn mountains out there (Laughter) in the least possible time! And while we were at—and you'd have to know—and I just wish I had a magic wand that could bring back some of these dead guys. I really am serious about it; you would be enthralled and enchanted by 'em. But, damndest thing, we were at Stoneman and we were supposed to be under the tightest security and no one was supposed to know we were there; no one was supposed to know where we were going. And we had primarily junior officers who would disappear for a day or two days at a time going into San Francisco, you know, raising hell—that kind of thing. But to have the—I don't know what the term to use is, but to have the mystique—that's not the right term or—you would have to know those guys to appreciate what a special breed they were. And as I say, they were not all the ultimate gentlemen, but they were damn good folks to have in a fight, I'll tell you that.

PIEHLER: Could you speak a little bit about your sergeants, the sergeants you encountered in your units?

ARNETT: Oh, gosh darn, the sergeants insofar as the infantry, and the airborne infantry, and the parachute infantry—they were really the core. And as a matter of fact, although we lost a lot of people in the Leyte Campaign, that did not create a stress problem, because we had so damn many sergeants that would be eligible – you know, qualified – for a field commission. In a small highly foot-mobile elite outfit like the paratroopers, sergeants were, I mean just, absolutely just—with the exception of the regimental commander and company commanders, like Pat McGinnis for example, the sergeants were just extraordinary. Hell, they *had to be* or they would have been wiped out back in the States or at Camp Polk where we went on maneuvers!!! And that was interesting—early in the war, we had field maneuvers in Southern Louisiana and that was quite an experience. But in any event, we were processed through Camp Polk on the way to port of embarkation. And the farmers were distressed; I mean, by golly, our guys cleaned out their chicken pens, their hog pens and everything! (Laughter) And that's a miserable place to have maneuvers, Louisiana maneuvers. Everything, including the top of your car, is wet.

PIEHLER: No, I've [talked to] people who have said they were even glad to go into combat compared to going to maneuvers, because it was such a miserable existence in Louisiana in maneuvers.

ARNETT: It was not much fun, Camp Polk. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: How did your unit do in maneuvers?

ARNETT: Did fine! Oh no—something that apparently I have not articulated well is that our outfit was elite. *Elite!* And we didn't want to be, and don't misunderstand—we weren't perfect ... as I said earlier on, you wouldn't take 'em home to date your baby sister. But they were just extraordinary, great people to go to war with; *great* people to go to war with. And we had, as I said, from time to time on rare occasions a matter of humiliation; we'd have someone flake out or that kind of thing as I mentioned before. But no, no, no, no, I mean we weren't interested in being good—we were interested in being *great!*

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. Where did you sail from?

ARNETT: Oakland; Camp Stoneman. Went out through the Golden Gate Bridge, and zigzagged all the way. I am trying to remember; I think the ship was the *Matsonia* – I think – the flagship. Let me see, oh gosh almighty—so many darn ships! Bu, we went out from Camp Stoneman, right at—underneath the Golden Gate Bridge and zigzagged. I think, and I am probably going to mess this up; I think we were twenty days at sea or some such thing before we hit Buna, New Guinea. Buna, as you may or may not remember, was one of the first engagements primarily involving the Australians, among others, in the Southwest Pacific. But I'll always have very, very keen memory of the Golden Gate Bridge because, as I said before, I was pretty badly shot up in the Philippines and set back to Papua New Guinea—Hollandia, New Guinea, 51st General Hospital and then from there back to—once I got in shape—back to the States. As I remember, the ship was the Hospital Ship *Marigold*, as I remember. And I don't think I have ever been as moved as much in my life – and I've had a pretty exciting life – ever as moved as much in my life as on that hospital ship coming back stateside passing underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. I was really, really moved. I got back and got in Letterman General Hospital in Presidio. I had about six months' back pay. I went out and bought all new uniforms – I want to mention that – all new uniforms and got an overnight pass to go into town. An overnight pass—I came back *five* days later! (Laughter) Boy ... and it's a tragedy that I can't demonstrate this for you, but you would have to see these paratroopers. I am not kidding you—they were all just *superb* physical specimens, and they had the sharpest uniforms of any outfit. You know the trousers bloused around the top of the jump boots and so forth?

PIEHLER: Um hmm.

ARNETT: And they were just a remarkable, remarkable group of men. And incidentally, coming back from New Guinea to the States I had another moving

experience. There were four or five nurses on board that ship who had been captured on Bataan and been Japanese prisoners for three years, whatever it was. And they were the most beaten-up women you have ever seen; it was just a very, very moving experience. Very moving experience. The Japs of those days were so different from now—I mean, they were heinous. They were—cruel is not, not an adequate word for it. But, those four or five nurses I mean, that—that really grabbed you.

GOINS: Was you're trip over fairly uneventful?

ARNETT: Yeah. We were on a fast ship, and she zigzagged, and as I remember—and I think I'm right—because we were on a fast ship, we did not have escorts on the way over. Plus the fact that the Navy—you know, the Southwest Pacific was won by the Navy, it really was—the Navy, we'd just zigzag. I think, and I could just be wrong as can be, it took something like twenty-one days to go back, to get there—Dobadura, New Guinea.

GOINS: What was your initial reaction when you got there? Was it anything like you imagined it would be, culturally?

ARNETT: New Guinea?

GOINS: Yes, uh-huh.

ARNETT: You cannot imagine—that was the last home of the aborigines. No I'm serious about it; we were in the Stone Age. We were in the Stone Age! We came in and I think I'm correct, not too long after the 32nd Infantry division and the Aussie Divisions took Papua, New Guinea—that portion of New Guinea. And it was just as primitive—I'm serious about it. I am not talking about comparing with the founding days of this nation. I am talking way the hell back; you know, bones through your noses and all that kind of thing. They were astonishing physical people. They were all small—they were all small. I'm talking about four-eight, four-nine something like that. They had *immense* endurance—*immense* endurance! They could survive where the white man wouldn't stand a chance. And we had—I've forgotten the phrase, but it was boring as hell there. All we got was an occasional tiny, tiny USO show. And some of our men set up a "Jungle Juice" factory. Did you ever hear of a "Jungle Juice" factory, and boy they were good. By that I mean, they put them underneath the tent, you know. You couldn't find the damn thing underneath the floorboards and so forth. (Laughter) And occasionally, one of them—hyped-up on jungle juice—will holler out in the middle of the night, "Japs! Japs!" Everyone would run out for their life and start shooting in the air, that kind of thing. But really, I'd like to—and gosh knows that the jungle has taken back over—but I would like, if I had a magic carpet, to go back to Buna, New Guinea.

PIEHLER: I was reading in your *Winds Afloat* ...

ARNETT: *Winds Aloft* ...

PIEHLER: Excuse me, *Winds Aloft* ...

ARNETT: We're going to have to get you straightened out! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: *Winds Aloft*. There was a little incident with a generator when you were in New Guinea?

ARNETT: I don't remember.

PIEHLER: There was a generator misappropriated?

ARNETT: Oh, good Lord in heaven! (Laughter) I'm serious about it! We were all in the interior at Buna, New Guinea. We were back inside—I guess they figured we could do less damage there—and the Navy and the other units were on the shoreline there, and you know, they had hot and cold running showers and everything. And we were back in the boonies, really in the boonies, and uh we kind of evened it up because my regiment had only been there I guess a couple of weeks. Well, essentially the units based on shore I'm talking about the Navy and the other Army units had no vehicles—our guys had gone out there and stolen every damn Jeep they had—every 4x4 two and half ton! (Laughter) I'm serious about it, everybody, every private had a Jeep! Matter of fact, when we left New Guinea for the Philippine invasions, a captain came on and said, "Now hear this gentleman, now hear this!" said, "I got Tokyo Rose and I'm going to turn her on." So everybody hushed up, and I never will forget the way she started out, "Well, well, well my friends I see where Colonel [Orin D.] Haugen and his two thousand BU's are on their way to the Philippines to be killed tonight," talking about that kind of thing (Laughter). And you know went on, and she was quite an astonishing person; of course this came on the speaker. But, I just—and I am serious about it, I just wish it were possible. I'm asking for the impossible: to ... use a magic wand to bring some of these people back, because some of them were just absolutely remarkable. And there was a camaraderie of bonding between officers and enlisted men that I don't think has ever been replicated before. I don't think.

PIEHLER: I guess, the way you've described New Guinea, it makes the boxing really—boxing was pretty important for the unit?

ARNETT: Oh hell yes. We had nothing to do except make illegal "Jungle Juice" or pick fights. I never will forget coming back from a boxing match one night where all of us streaming back and someone said to a lieutenant there, who shall remain nameless, he said, "Arnett says that your wife is running around on you and that you're a chicken kind of a guy!" Next thing I knew, I was on the ground; (Laughter) he had hit me from back! But we had a hell of a fight, the men standing around going, "Come on there! Let him have it!" (Laughter) That kind of thing. I did not lose the fight, but I came out pretty well battered up. There was nothing, literally nothing to do except a rare very, very small USO show.

PIEHLER: It begs the question because I've read that in the magazine they talk about ...

ARNETT: Oh, really?

PIEHLER: Well they just mention very small—what was the USO show? They don't go into any detail.

ARNETT: You know, I really don't remember.

PIEHLER: But it obviously wasn't Bob Hope.

ARNETT: Oh no! No, it was extremely primitive anyway.

PIEHLER: What about mail, how much mail did you get and how regularly?

ARNETT: Well I don't know. I do know this: one of the things that was most distressing was the "Dear John" letters. I mean literally, because we were right at the lip of the end of the world. And you know, some guy deeply in love or thought he was deeply in love got a "Dear John" letter—that kind of thing. Our mail, of course, was—we didn't have daily delivery and that kind of thing, but it depended upon what you're relationship was with the writer; your family or your girlfriend or whatever.

PIEHLER: While you were in New Guinea how often did people go to chapel?

ARNETT: Um, that's kind of interesting. Listen, I am depending upon you to edit this carefully; I'm about to tell you something that needs to be edited out!

PIEHLER: Well we can put it off the record if you'd feel more comfortable.

(Tape stops)

ARNETT: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You were talking, you mentioned while you were off the record ...

ARNETT: Are you on?

PIEHLER: Yeah I'm on now.

ARNETT: Chaplain [Dr. Lee E.] Walker, tremendous guy—a Presbyterian. As a matter of fact, he taught just before World War II, if I remember correctly, at Carson Newman, I think. But he was just a marvelous guy. Of course, chaplains were not supposed to be armed, you know—not carry weapons. As I said to him and in his presence before he died many times, he was the most heavily armed man in the outfit! (Laughter) He had .32, he had .38, and he had a .45! But, ah, he was quite an astonishing guy. And, for whatever reason I don't know, we did have more than the population ratio of Roman

Catholics to Protestants or Jews or whatever. But I don't know why; I guess they were more devout than we were. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you do any additional training on New Guinea, or what type of training did you do in New Guinea?

ARNETT: Oh, jungle training. I mean, we were acclimated to an entirely different environment, and I mean it really was. I mean, we were—as I've told you about the Aborigines—and that's what they were!

GOINS: Yeah?

ARNETT: Well, inchoate—if I can use the term correctly—that characterization was the character of the terrain in which these people operated.

PIEHLER: Did you have any contact with any Australians while you were?

ARNETT: Well, not many. Um, not many—but I'll tell you this! The Australians had a well-deserved reputation for being terrific soldiers. My Jean and I have [been] back there. When I was president of International Academy of Trial Lawyers (drops something and bends to get it) we took them to Australia and the Aussies were—I mean—[they] were our favorite people. They were great people. And it was very much prized—they occasionally would send a C-47 back to Australia to pick up, you know whatever—medicine or whiskey. I never was invited to go on one of those trips; I would have gone! The Aussies are great people.

PIEHLER: Any other remembrances of New Guinea before talking about Leyte and the invasion of the Philippines?

ARNETT: Oh gosh, there isn't, not sticking out—except for the stills underneath each bribable tent. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How was ...

ARNETT: Incidentally, I'm talking very seriously. In the 511th my boxing team was legendary; I kid you not. They were something else! They were the best of the best of the best. Everyone recognized ... excuse me?

PIEHLER: Oh no, no. Go ahead, because I read your article in the magazine and it was very comprehensive and very interesting. What about the journey from New Guinea to the Philippines, what are your remembrances of that?

ARNETT: Very—nothing significant. We had the typical bomb runs, you know that kind of thing, depth charges and so forth. But we didn't hit Leyte until ten days, maybe two weeks after the initial invasion. But, I do remember this: when we got to Leyte, I had never before nor since seen the number of ships there, I kid you not! ... You know,

this is before the big naval battle off the southern end of Leyte. But I had—you could almost sense that you could just walk from ship to ship to ship to ship! Tremendous, tremendous. But, it was uneventful; zigzagging, occasionally depth-bombing, that kind of thing.

GOINS: How soon was it that you knew you were actually going into combat?

ARNETT: Well we knew that when we got ready to gear up to leave New Guinea; we knew that. We were in MacArthur's command and we knew MacArthur had the Southwest Pacific and we knew that the Philippines—you know, "I shall return." But ... it's very, very difficult for anyone who wasn't there to understand the ethos and character, and I don't know how to describe it! Just, the unique characterization of those men and most of the officers.

GOINS: You mention Tokyo Rose and I'm sure you had *Stars and Stripes*; you had all the ways of hearing ...

ARNETT: You know, I don't remember whether we had *Stars and Stripes* or not. I don't remember.

GOINS: How aware of were you what was going on in other places, and was there sort of a scuttlebutt that drifted down through and you heard the reports and such?

ARNETT: We generally were informed about what was going on in the theatre and, you know, outside the theatre, not—I'm sure—not well-informed.

PIEHLER: ... A number people have told me that the Army is rife with rumors?

ARNETT: The what?

PIEHLER: The Army is rife with rumors.

ARNETT: Well sure; oh sure, yeah! It's almost like a WAC reunion (Laughter). Not quite as bad. (Laughter) Not quite as bad. But, in a sense your inquiries bring memories coming back. In another sense, I feel very, very uncomfortable because there a lot of things I *should* remember that I don't remember! I just—and it's too bad, and I am very serious when I say this. Fifteen years ago, you guys couldn't have attended our reunion; that was before we lost so many. You see, my generation, my age—we are highly vulnerable. As you know, there's no secret about that. We've lost—but Mattie Pike will be there, Mattie Pike is something else to get! It'll be fun.

PIEHLER: I wanted to ask you ... a very open-ended question about your first experience of combat, and what are your memories of that?

ARNETT: Well, actually on the way into the Leyte invasion the old man made me a pathfinder, the regimental commander—Hard Rock Haugen. So, I went in with two or

three of our units on foot. In other words, I was liaison; I was not assigned to a combat unit. So I went in and came back out in connection with pushing from east to west across the island of Leyte. I was engaged in several firefights but nothing of significance. However, I then undertook, well undertook—I didn't take undertake, I was ordered!

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Foster D. Arnett on July 7, 2000 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

GOINS: Johnny Goins.

PIEHLER: And you were—just before the tape cut off, you were talking about your first jump was as a pathfinder. You were ...

ARNETT: Well, first *combat* jump.

PIEHLER: First combat jump.

ARNETT: Right, was as a pathfinder. I was Captain McCloud's L-4, L-5 or whatever it was. And by that time, I was so far in the interior that it was unacceptable to try to get back to the coast so I ... stayed with the regiment from that point on as we forged to the western shores of the island of Leyte.

PIEHLER: If you had to pick a memorable experience on Leyte, what would it be?

ARNETT: I guess the night of December 12th, just as dusk was setting when the Japs had tremendous banzai attack; when one of our junior officers pulled out my old platoon and left a gap in the line and I took them back into the line. Because you can imagine you dug in on the perimeter and if you got a gap there, why, they'd come flooding through and shoot everybody in the back! So I was there, and obviously I was the pathfinder ... the liaison officer, and obviously it was my old platoon and I was at the right place at the right time! I took them back into the line; that's when I lost my right elbow, in that banzai attack.

PIEHLER: And in fact there's a wonderful article in terms of describing what had happened. Because it sounded like there was a lot of confusion?

ARNETT: Oh yeah, you can imagine! You can imagine: Japanese, little people, fanatical, *tremendous* foot soldiers—no question about it—coming with Samurai swords yelling "Banzai! Banzai!" You know? Oh did I—yeah, I showed you a copy of that didn't I?

PIEHLER: Yes.

ARNETT: Or, you made a copy?

PIEHLER: Yes, that was in the law.

ARNETT: The *UVA Lawyer*, ok. But as I say, the Japanese were—well, they were fanatical. The one way, according to my understanding, the one way they could *ensure* or assure that they would get to heaven was to die for the emperor. Now, someone with that motivation—if I'm correct and I think I am—what the heck do they got to lose!? They were great foot soldiers, and they were the heirs of a feudal society. I mean, none of the values that we are accustomed to—or, indeed the present day Japanese are accustomed to—were it in place at that time. And we were all starving to death, the Japanese as well as us. I mean literally starving to death.

PIEHLER: Well, I read—and, if you could talk a little bit about it for the record, you really didn't have very many rations? I mean you weren't even sort of getting the standard K-rations?

ARNETT: *Oh, gosh no!!!*

PIEHLER: You know which ...

ARNETT: I want to emphasize the “Gosh no,” ok!!!

PIEHLER: No, no, no, I ...

ARNETT: No, no. We—and it seemed like—and you know this after all a self-characterization—but it seemed like that we lost a lot of K-Rations, D-Rations this stuff on drops that missed the area. In other words, we would be ... in a circular, perimeter-type area and our planes would miss 'em and drop 'em in the trees! So, you know, we didn't get to eat what they did not drop for us. And there's no question about it; I mean we were in—and the Japs were *probably* in worst shape then we were in terms of nutrition. But as I've said before I think, and I have a bad habit in my old age of repeating, when I got out I was ravenous! [When I got to the] 51st General Hospital ... I was just ravenous. But I couldn't eat ... because my stomach had shrunk. So I'd, you know eat five minutes, and five minutes later I would take another bite and so forth. But I think I mentioned the cannibalism, didn't I?

PIEHLER: No you didn't.

ARNETT: I may screw up on my numbers, but I think we found convincing evidence on Leyte—and I'm almost positive I'm correct about this—where the Japs had been engaged in cannibalism involving five bodies. Now, I was in the immediate area, according to my understanding, but did not actually see it. But it was commonly accepted as reliable, responsible fact that happened. Which leads to a personal comment—which has no value whatever because I am not trained or experienced and so forth—I think we were probably just as hungry as the Japanese, but remember they were from a peon culture and so forth, and to the best of my knowledge and information believe that none of the Americans—

none of the Americans—descended to that ... level. But that's pretty dreadful, you know! Cannibalism—that's I guess the ultimate, I would imagine.

PIEHLER: I also had read in your magazine, the magazine of the unit that someone who was actually the first casualty of your unit was from an air drop, someone was hit by one of the ...

ARNETT: Excuse me, what I should've done but I've been so darn busy I haven't—I should have reread all this stuff, some of the stuff you're referring to I haven't read in a long time.

PIEHLER: Yeah, no I am just remembering ...

ARNETT: No, no, that was not a bit uncommon—about someone being killed by something parachuted out. Because among other things, you couldn't see 'em. And then you had the matter of accuracy and all that kind of good stuff. So, you know, that was just a necessary incident of that kind of jungle warfare. When planes flew over anything and pushed stuff out that if they didn't hit the right place that, you know, they could or might kill somebody! That was not unusual at all.

PIEHLER: You got to know Army medicine much better than the average (Laughs) average officer or soldier. How good was your medic, and what do you remember?

ARNETT: I am so glad you said that! We had Charlie Van Epps and [Dr.] Matthew Platt, Tom—good God, I'll think of it—[Captain] Tom Nestor [M.D.], Wallace Chambers. We had twice—a parachute regiment, remember we were small. We were half or less than half the size of a regular infantry regiment, but we had twice as many physicians as a regular army regiment. One of those a physicians was a fellow by the name Tom Nestor; Tom and Mary as a matter of fact have been our house guests two or three times. Tom Nestor was in the fourth year of a residency at John Hopkins. H was married, he had four children—Roman Catholic, devout Roman Catholic. And, notwithstanding the fact that he was plainly deferred, not only because he was in a six or seven-year residency—which would you know, abort—but also because of his family, he volunteered. He was the second oldest man in our regiment, second only to our regimental commander. Tom Nestor was not only one of God's great creatures, but a highly, highly, highly competent and skilled surgeon! He actually wrought miracles under the most *primitive* conditions. I'm talking about a slip trench—you know, a foxhole, and with a couple of his medics holding a poncho over him while he is doing abdominal or brain surgery!!! *Tremendous* guy, that, which I've just shared with you, plus the fact that we were where no warm-blooded animals had ever been before. In other words the potential for infection was very, very real. He's the only reason I'm here today! Because, we were cut off—I was hit on I think December 12th [but] didn't get out until December 24th and if I had been in Europe or any other populated area, why I would have had gangrene which would have quickly spread from my arm throughout my body. I wouldn't be here today, but thinks to that aseptic environment and thanks to Matt Platt, and George McSwain, D.D. McSwain—and they've also visited, but he's long gone

too—but most especially Tom Nestor. He was just a miracle worker—just a miracle worker! I have talked with others, for example George McSwain who was also with us. D.D. McSwain comes from a very, very historic medical family in Tennessee—Vanderbilt Med School—but, he had never seen anyone with the competence that Tom had. I never will forget, about two nights—and this is of Leyte, Tom was absolutely—I mean just shaking. He had been doing, you know, everything from brain surgery to abdominal surgery just constantly; just constantly! And I was in pretty foul shape too; I had lost a lot of blood and lost my right elbow and so forth. So, it was clear to the men, that Tom particularly, and Arnett, needed some attention! So, they got an empty ammo bag – an empty ammo bag! – and they inserted the two of us in this empty ammo bag to sleep away the night. It was the first night sleep we’d had. First of all it was warm, secondly, it was dry. And Tom and I were inserted, you know, like children in this bag—and I never will forget, it took me along time to acknowledge it—I was constantly cursing. I mean just cursing like hell because I was uncomfortable and ashamed of the fact that I couldn’t stop crying, and Tom was doing the same thing! I mean we were just out of—figuratively speaking we were just *shocked*, I’m talking about in every way! But ... I never will forget that night, which was the first dry night we had, and with Tom Nestor. He was really—I wish I had one, one thousandth a chance of seeing God as he; tremendous guy.

PIEHLER: I mean, you were wounded on the 12th and not evacuated till the 24th?

ARNETT: That’s right.

PIEHLER: What was a day like? I mean, you had a very serious wound! And, your unit was still ...

ARNETT: Hell we were cut off!

PIEHLER: You were cut off I mean ...

ARNETT: We were fighting our way to the West Coast, West Coast of Leyte, and I was engaged as best I could be. Sadly, it was my right arm and I’m right-handed. But I never will forget, during that banzai attack that I led back in, according to the literature, why I killed ten of the twenty Japs; I wish I had killed all twenty of them. But, what was I going to tell you? Oh yeah, as the men were pulling out and I was taking them back into this whole in the line, one of them, one of my boxers—and I was just chewing them out! I was using everything except the King’s English. You know, “Get you’re tail back in here!” this, that, and the other. And everybody had nickname in combat; are you familiar with that?

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm.

ARNETT: My nickname was “Punchy” because I was boxing coach. And I was yelling at this guy and I said, “Get your fanny back up there come on, come on, Goddammit!” He said, “I haven’t got a gun, Punchy!” And I pulled out my .45, which I still have, and

tossed it to him. Then we finally expelled the break in the perimeter there and expelled the Japanese. And it was about seven or eight days later where I was really, and I am cleaning up my language, I was really *upset* because my .45 had not been returned to me. So I ran across this sergeant that I tossed it to; he said, “Hey Punchy, I don’t have any gun!” I said, “*Gimme* that .45!” And he reached down into his belt and pulled it out and I stuck it in my empty holster. He said, “Punchy, I didn’t figure you’d need it anymore.” (Laughter) And you can imagine what my response probably was about my .45. Incidentally, curiously my brother—that .45 was carried by Dr. Neal ... A.B. Neal in World War I. ... I let my brother take it back when he ... went to the Pacific after I was back. And I wouldn’t take anything—I’ve got a lot guns down home, but I wouldn’t take anything for that .45. If you’re ever in a tough position and you need a friend, I’ve got .38 specials, a Japanese—damn get the .45; it’ll knock ya down.

PIEHLER: After being wounded, were you able to walk?

ARNETT: Well sure, we had nobody except litter-bearers ...

PIEHLER: So you didn’t ...

ARNETT: ... and I sure as *hell* was not going to, you know, impose upon the litter-bearers—you know, [they were] for someone, you know, shot in the belly or shot in the leg that kind of thing! Sure! And as a matter of fact, I was still involved; by that I mean obviously with limitations. It was do or die; it was for real.

PIEHLER: After the day you were wounded, what else sticks out in your mind in terms of particular incidents, combat or non-combat?

ARNETT: Hunger, hunger, hunger. And, of course, obviously, the continuing losses that we had, but—hunger! I mean, we were literally starving to death. And the only difference between us and the Japanese was that we had a veneer of civilization in respect to eating.

PIEHLER: ... Also, I read an account that you had taken a prisoner very early. I believe it was your unit that had taken a prisoner—Japanese prisoner. Do you have any remembrance of that?

ARNETT: Oh I know that we did that many times.

PIEHLER: Yeah but it ... I think it was even after that banzai charge, but I am just ...

ARNETT: I don’t; I honestly don’t remember. But, I thought I’d tell you that there was 360 or 180 [degree] – whatever, I’m bad in geometry – difference between the war in the ETO [European Theater of Operations] and the war in the South [Pacific], as I’ve said several times before. For example, we—the ETO I mean—they had aircraft and sophisticated weapons. We did not have that, we had the sum zeroes of war. But it was a totally different nature of war. And if you’re ever at Fort Leavenworth Kansas you ought

to go out there and take a tour; it's quite a place, the Command and General Staff College; it's quite a place.

PIEHLER: When did you finally get evacuated out?

ARNETT: The honest answer—I can't be precise. I know I was hit on the twelfth of December. I know I got out to the 51st General Hospital on Christmas Eve. I know that I was back in New Guinea at Hollandia. At Hollandia, New Guinea on—I never will forget that! Because, we were on the hospital ship on the way to Hollandia and the captain said, "Now hear this, hear this!" And I'll mess these facts up, but the captain said, "We got the Rose Bowl Game on!" And the Rose Bowl announcer came on and he said, "And in respect to this Rose Bowl Game between," I think it was the University of California, "And the University of Tennessee, we're about to have you a play-by-play description." And Stupid – that's my middle name, Stupid! Stupid went around—I was just loaded with money because I hadn't been paid (Laughter)—to bet on the game, and of course California beat Tennessee! (Laughter) I paid out a good part of the money I had in my hand! And then, I was at the 51st, aw was it 51st? I'm getting some little things screwed up. Remember, we're talking about more than ...

PIEHLER: No, it's alright—we know it's been a while!

ARNETT: And, it's over half a century! And then from there, back to Letterman [General Hospital]. And I guess—I'm guessing that probably I got back to Knoxville on that emergency leave—you know, my brother leaving. I'm guessing it was the last of February when this picture was taken; the last of February '45. Things were still real and vivid! By that I mean the war wasn't over—predictions, and that kind of thing. And anyone who criticizes Mr. Truman for using the atomic bomb doesn't know what in the *hell* he or she is talking about, in my opinion, because it would have been a terribly – I mean a *terribly* bloody – bloody engagement. Or *engagements*, I should say.

PIEHLER: You have spoken very highly of Dr. Nestor and the physicians and the medics on the ...

ARNETT: Excuse me; let me interrupt at that point. You cannot imagine the primitive technology they had. We had a first aid package on our belt. Sulfa was brand new. I mean, you cannot imagine! I am serious about it—the primitive character of our health care providers' tools and equipment! Now, forgive me ...

PIEHLER: No, no, no it's a point. I think ... it's hard for people [to understand]. I mean, penicillin is a World War II creation in some ways.

ARNETT: It had only been out, I think, a couple of months.

PIEHLER: Yeah, what about the medical care you received after you got evacuated?

ARNETT: Oh fine, fine! But the only reason that I am here today and surely the only reason that I've still got my right arm is because of sterile environment we were in, plus the heroic and marvelous attention that Tom Nestor gave. If I'd been in Europe, the ETO, I wouldn't be here today.

PIEHLER: It's also—I mean, I have to just make an observation. It's also remarkable because you would think in some ways the jungle would be the worst place to have an open wound like that!

ARNETT: Well fortunately, and for what reason I don't know. Fortunately there were no warm-blooded animals—gangrene and so forth. But you might be interested, if I can get the darn thing unbuttoned; just sit there. (Makes a cracking noise)

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, I can hear that!

ARNETT: Can you hear that?

PIEHLER: You can hear the cracking of your ...

ARNETT: Yeah, that's Japanese steel.

PIEHLER: You can hear the cracking in your elbow that was wounded.

ARNETT: But Tom Nestor ... and Chappie Walker—Chappie Walker [Dr. Lee E. Walker, Chaplain]. I just wish—I'm serious about it, if I were the almighty I would call them back and call you back and say, "Hey, knock off an afternoon. I want you to meet." Because, I've had several reunions here and George McSwain, D.D. McSwain, and so forth ...

PIEHLER: When was your first; when did you have your first reunion?

ARNETT: I can't be sure, but I would imagine—well, I graduated from the law school at Charlottesville in '48, and I'm guessing it was about 1950. I'm guessing! Of course, in those days considering, you know, financial restraints and all that—I know what it is to be poor, I mean you don't have to describe it to me—but I'm guessing that probably the first reunion I attended was about 1951.

PIEHLER: So your unit—I mean, because some units, even units that were very close, they have never gotten together or it was very late. But your unit started getting together very ...

ARNETT: Well, you can't imagine the unique cult and culture of the parachute infantry! Which, incidentally, is different from what you now know as the airborne. I mean, they're the same, but they're different.

PIEHLER: What's different about them?

ARNETT: Oh the culture, the value system. Incidentally, our 101st and 82nd and so forth are just damn good outfits—no question about that, but our backgrounds were so different! The background of my generation is *different* from any other generation in the history of this country. I'm talking about, you know, the Great War and the Great Depression. I'm not saying that's good or bad; I'm just saying if you don't recognize that I think you're missing the boat.

PIEHLER: ... After being evacuated ... I'm curious, how did you feel about leaving your unit?

ARNETT: Oh, I was very much upset. Very much upset! Remember, we got out on Christmas Eve and I shipped out to go around the other island to get ready to go back to the hospital in New Guinea. I was very much upset, but I was also realistic enough to realize that I was in dire shape. I think I weighed about, maybe, 120 pounds, and you know, with this arm all messed up. And curiously, this arm was never set; all they had was a bandage over it. Immobilized the darn thing—not a cast as you would know it now. ... I guess the most poignant memory was, as I said awhile ago, was coming back under the Golden Gate Bridge while my guys were still back over there, and here I was, you know, coming into Letterman General Hospital in Presidio. Um, it's a unique period. I don't think—and I *hope* I'm right—I don't think we'll ever have its like again. I'm talking about those two events.

PIEHLER: I'm curious—after you mentioned your emergency leave when you got to see you're father before ...

ARNETT: My brother, before he went overseas.

PIEHLER: And your brother, before he went over seas. Then, what happened to you next, where did you go?

ARNETT: Well, I came back; got discharged. Oh, and something else that may be of interest to you: I could not go to the University of Virginia School of Law under the G.I. Bill. What I did when I came back—now if I'm repeating myself, because we've been here a long time correct me, hold up you're hand—but I had applied to eight law schools right as I was getting ready to be discharged from the service, and I was accepted by six. But two of them said “You don't have a bachelor's degree. If you get one, why, write us back.” Well, to make a long story short, I completed my bachelor's degree here on a rushed up basis at UT and there was no doubt in my mind. I wanted to go to the University of Virginia. So, I immediately applied and was accepted and was kind of curious because the population of—they were loaded with veterans who had a year-round law school. I think I had something like six or seven days off in two years. (Laughter) ... You asked me a question and I've lost my train of thought.

PIEHLER: Well, I'd asked you what happened after your emergency leave and that's—you were discharged.

ARNETT: Oh yeah, I know what I was going to tell you! I went—and this something you darned educators don't know. I went to law school under Public Law 16, not the G.I. Bill. Now what's the difference? [The] G.I. Bill arguably is the *greatest* piece of legislation that Congress has ever passed, in my opinion. I mean *generations* that it had an impact upon—generation after generation having an opportunity, you know, to go to high school, or G.E.D., or a college, or whatever. What I was accepted to the University of Virginia and immediately accepted that, there was no way—well, let me back up. I had waived my rights under Public Law 16. Now these numbers I'm not vouching for, but they are an approximate range. Under the G.I. Bill you have seventy-five dollars a month; under my rating, as a wounded veteran [under] Public Law 16 I got something like a hundred and fifty dollars a month. I immediately accepted my acceptance at the law school at the University of Virginia, and went to the University of Virginia Law School ... and graduated under the Public Law 16. In other words, which gave me almost double what I would have gotten under the G.I. Bill. I graduated from the law school there and *immediately* went to work; I think I mentioned this before, at one hundred dollars a month. I *waived* all my rights under the G.I. Bill – in writing – and under Public Law 16. Right funny—I said “Please terminate” and so forth. I got back a very interesting letter from the V.A. saying “Lieutenant Arnett, don't be hasty.” They thought I was hacked off and getting ready to, you know, write my congressman! “We'll review your file,” and so forth. I wrote 'em back, and if it was not burned up in the St. Louis fire it's there. But, I'm representing under oath I wrote them back I said, “You don't understand. First of all, the government didn't owe me a damn thing. Secondly, the government made it possible under Public Law 16 to complete my baccalaureate work and to graduate from the law school of my choice. Now it's up to me.” So I never drawn—I have never drawn a penny under the G.I. Bill or Public Law 16 since August, I guess it was, 1948. Because, what I meant then, I meant very sincerely. I was so grateful and appreciative for—because I could have gone to UVA Law School but, boy I tell you, I'd have been hanging out there. By that I mean, I would have to have had a least a job or something. But the government gave me twice as much there as I would have [had] under the G.I. Bill. So, that's the good part of being shot at.

PIEHLER: If there is a good—if there is such a thing as a good part. You stayed in the Reserves, why?

ARNETT: Well actually, I think one of the many mistakes I've made: I should have stayed in till I got my Bird. I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, and I should have stayed in, but I had a lot of pressures at the office, we were growing like mad, we needed additional people and so forth. But, I should have stayed in another year or a year and a half and gotten my Bird. I did not do that; I retired, which is fine. You know, I retired [as a] Lieutenant Colonel and all that kind of thing. But I'm a big fan—I'm a big fan of this country; I really am. I think we got a lot of flaws—one of them lives in the White House—but, generally speaking we are greatest nation in the history of the world, I think.

PIEHLER: ... Were you ever called up when you were in the Reserves?

ARNETT: No, but I was available! I guess maybe, and this is all speculation, because I had a pretty fancy specialist designation. I mean, you don't see too many pathfinders; I mean most of them are *dead*. (Laughter) D-A-I-D!

PIEHLER: So that was your Reserve ...

ARNETT: Yeah, I could have been called up in my Reserve capacity, and it would have been devastating to me professionally. Because, you know, [I had] to get things rolling in my practice and so forth. But, what the hell! You know, if you sign up and say "if you need me, let me know," why, that's my obligation; it's that simple. I cannot overemphasize the camaraderie that exists between me and, well, my friends. Uh, it's a crazy world.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you stayed in touch. You've been staying in touch with them over the years?

ARNETT: Oh yeah, the Beightlers will be here on—what is today the ... eight isn't it?

PIEHLER: Today is the seventh.

ARNETT: Seventh, yeah, okay. They'll be here the fifteenth, I think. Then they'll spend a couple of days here. Oh Bob Beightler—sweetest guy in the world, West Point Class of '43, graduated accelerated in '42—had as I remember eight of the members of the class of the accelerated Class of '42 in our regiment. Bob Beightler is the only surviving one. Bob Beightler also had an astonishing father. His father was Robert S. Beightler, Sr. His father commanded the 37th Infantry Division; that was the Ohio National Guard. His father was a Major General, his father was one of two ... National Guard Major Generals who was not relieved during World War II! Tremendous guy – tremendous guy – and you know, his son [is] my dear friend.

PIEHLER: Did you ever join any veterans' organizations?

ARNETT: No, I trenchantly, and I use that word as word of choice—at one a time or another I think I've been a member of the American Legion or the Disabled American Veterans or whatever, but I have never been deeply involved in them like I have in bar associations, trial lawyer associations and, you know, alumni associations, that kind of thing. And my sense is—and this has no relevance because my sense isn't worth a darn—my sense is those most of those AmVets, DAV, American Legion, most of those have withered on the vine haven't they? I never hear anything about them.

PIEHLER: They're having real problems in terms of keeping membership up for the next generation of veterans.

ARNETT: I have no criticism!

PIEHLER: Yeah?

ARNETT: I have no criticism whatever, but that was just—I probably tried to crowd too much stuff in, you know, in the available time, and that was just one thing that I couldn't manage.

PIEHLER: You'd mentioned first coming back to University of Tennessee then going to Virginia at the law school on an accelerated ...

ARNETT: Yeah I had to complete my bachelor's degree before Harvard and Virginia would consider my application.

PIEHLER: The campus had changed quite a bit. Could you maybe talk a little bit about what the campus looked like?

ARNETT: Oh gosh, we could spend—we could spend the rest of our lives in here! That does lead me to a little interesting story. As I think you know, I'm past president of the National Alumni Association; it used to be called the General—the University of Tennessee General Alumni Association. I got a call one day from Ed Boling. What had happened, Andy Holt had taken over from C.E. Brehm, I guess it was. And then he recruited Ed from state government in Nashville and Ed had said, "I want to stop by." And I said "fine," so we had lunch together and I knew there was something on his mind and I said, "Ed what's going on." He said "Well ... Andy"—talking about Andy Holt, the brand new president—"Andy wants you to be president of the General Alumni Association" as it was donned then opposed to National Alumni Association. So we talked a minute—a few minutes—about it, and I said, "Well, do me a favor. Call Andy and tell him that you and I want to stop by to see him!" And this is when the administration building was right up here. He said, "Why?" and I said, "Well, just call Andy and tell him that you and I would like fifteen minutes of his time." So Ed went to his office and had Andy called. He called me back and said that Andy could see us at such and such a date at such and such a time. So, at the appointed time and place Ed Boling and Foster Arnett showed up at the president's office. Did either one of you know Andy Holt?

PIEHLER: No.

ARNETT: Well I tell you what: you're the poorer for that! He was without question the most charming guy, just a *superb* gentleman, just great! So after we talked for a while—and Andy had great stories, he was a great *raconteur* and so forth—and you know exchanged out "How's Martha?" and "How's Jean?" and that kind of stuff, he said "Now Foster, Ed said you want to talk to me." He said, "What's on your mind?" I said, "Well Andy, it's like this. Ed said that you and he want me to be the incoming president, president elect and president of the General Alumni Association and what'd I like for you to do is just level me and tell me what you've got in mind. Does this involved kissing the homecoming queen at halftime and you know having the annual banquet someplace?" Well Andy, who had to be one of God's great creatures ... he was marvelous ... as Carolyn and Ed Boling, for that matter. Andy was taken aback! Because ordinarily—he

is president of the university, you know—[he] didn't have people ask questions like that particularly when he was offering what he thought was an honor. ... Andy said, "No, Ed and I have been talking and the General Alumni Association definitely, definitely needs a shot in the arm and the University desperately needs the alumni to come together behind it. Then he talked for ... maybe ten minutes ... about what they were planning to do. He said "That's what we're trying to do: restructure and reform." The General Alumni Association—first thing I did was change it to National Alumni Association or something. In any event, I said "I'm your boy." So, for two years Caroline, Ed, and Jean and I traveled around the country attending alumni meetings. [We] spent the night at Charlottesville, stole the ideas from other alumni associations—saw how they were operating, what they were doing well, what they weren't doing well. You know, stole the ideas at various luncheons and dinners across the country. So I spent a good two years of my time attending alumni-oriented things. In those days—and I think I'm correct, I want to be careful—we had John Smart who was Secretary of the General Alumni Association. I think he had two, maybe three employees and it was way down on the priority list. Now, if you'll check with the alumni association you'll contrast in terms of service, dedication, capabilities, and so forth. But Andy, with Ed following behind, rendered a great, great service to the University, because it's so totally different now as opposed to what it was in those days. Jimmy D. Hoskins stayed on too long—delightful, loveable old man—C.E. Brown. But it was due to Andy and Ed, and I want to emphasize Ed because he was very much involved. All these building that you see around here is the product of their investment. Each had tremendous credentials with the Governor and the Legislature and so forth. But forgive me for ...

PIEHLER: No, it's a good point, and we want to a full post '45 interview with you at another date.

ARNETT: Post '45—what's that?

PIEHLER: What happened to you after 1945, and your legal career?

ARNETT: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: One of the things the first time we met when you drove me through campus: the growth of UT is somewhat bittersweet for you. As you were driving me through campus, you were showing me where older buildings had been. There were things lost by the growth of UT's campus.

ARNETT: Oh yeah well I guess that's a tradeoff, you know one necessarily follows the other. Well, the whole person—not the whole personality, that's too broad—but a large part of the empathetic relationships has changed, in many instances for the better; in some instances not. Well, I apologize for imposing upon you.

PIEHLER: No, no—we really appreciate you, and this is probably a good place to stop.

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