

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL WHITE

FOR THE
VETERAN'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY
G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
BRANDI WILSON

ATHENS, TENNESSEE
JULY 20, 2000

TRANSCRIPT BY
BRANDI WILSON

REVIEWED BY

BRAUM DENTON
MARK BOULTON

KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Bill White on July 20, 2000 in Athens, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

BRANDI WILSON: ... Brandi Wilson.

KURT PIEHLER: And I'll let Brandi begin since this is her, in many ways, her project for the [University of Tennessee's] Normandy semester.

BILL WHITE: Alright.

BRANDI WILSON: I just wanted to start off by asking you to tell us a little bit about growing up in Athens. And, you said your family—your father was born here. Just tell us a little bit about your family growing up in Athens as a child, where you went to school, things like that.

BILL WHITE: Well ... my father ... was originally from Monroe County, uh, Monroe County a while. He's a direct descendent of James White of Knoxville. And he come down—his people came down here during—before this was a country. In other words ...

PIEHLER: When the British were still here?

WHITE: ... the British were still here. And ... some of them went this way and that way from the old fort in Knoxville, and they settled in the Little Tennessee River up here in Monroe County. And ... they—my father got a job for the Tennessee electric power company back during the Depression, and ... he worked in Knoxville for a while. And I was born in Knoxville. And ... he got a job in McMinn County running the ole sub station, which ... administered power to Athens. And ... I was six years old. So I went to North City School. And ... being a new person at North City School is pretty rough for a boy. I had to fight my way home. I had to fight my way to school. I learned to fight early. And ... I didn't get along too well in school. I resented mostly the pressure that they had in those schools at the time. I thought that you were more or less a convict than you was a student. They lined you up outside whether it was raining or snowing or whatever it was. And you stayed out there until the bell rang and they marched you in. You wasn't able to talk in line, you wasn't able to communicate. You stood there at attention and ... you went on the inside then, and you sat down.

Well, the teachers wasn't all that good back then. Mostly they were appointed by political appointment. And a whole lot of them wasn't really able to read and write good themselves much less teach us how to read and write. Well, I never did learn to read or write in school. I went all the way through school, and I had problems in school not only with the North City boys, but I had problems with the schoolteachers and things too. I was an outspoken person, and if I thought something wasn't right I told them that it wasn't right. And there was a whole lot of things that wasn't right. And—well anyway, I got through grammar school and ... started high school. I done pretty well in high school, but I still couldn't read and write very well, just barely could.

And then World War—the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. I was sitting there at home. Right after the attack I told my mother I said, "I gonna go down and join the Marines." I said "Bout

time I get out of here anyway.” I was seventeen years old and that was long enough to stay at home, I thought. Seventeen years. So ... I went down two or three days after Pearl Harbor and went up to the post office and met some of the Marines up there taking them people into the Marines. And I talked to them and they said, “Yeah, we’ll take you.” And they gave me a physical. Of course, I was healthy and big and stout. Said, “You’ll have to get your parents to sign ... papers for you to go in.” I said, “Well I’m eighteen years old.” I said I was born in 1923, but I wasn’t, I was born in 1924. But they said, “Yeah, well you are still going to have to get their permission. Get them to sign it.” And they gave me something for them to sign. And I took it back home and they signed it. And ... then they said, “You’ll stay at home for Christmas and stuff, you know, and then we’re gonna accept you in the Marines.” So ... I stayed at home until after Christmas, until January. And then I was accepted into the Marines.

So I went to San Diego, California for my boot camp training. And ... it was pretty rough that boot camp training. I didn’t know it would be that rough, but they were pretty rough back then on their boots. They marched all day and half the night and you run problems, and “you done this, and you done that.” You never ... walked anywhere. They made you run everywhere you went. And they shot you through there pretty good. And the DIs [Drill Instructors] were rough. They’d whack you across the head with a swagger stick if they didn’t like what you said or what you did, you see. But I didn’t get along too well with them. But I made it through with them because of authority. I kind of bucked authority when someone had too much authority. I thought they had too much. That was the same way I was in school, you know. I kind of bucked authority because I thought they had too much authority. And they did have too much authority. They had ... you where they wanted you, and they could do whatever they wanted to you. And they also did in the Marines. They’d just do about whatever they wanted to you and there wasn’t nothing you could do about it. Well I went through that all right. Then I—they asked me after boot camp was over, said, “Now we’re forming Special Forces groups.” Said, “The first, ...” said “Here we’re going to have a Raider Battalion.” And said, “We’re going to have the Second Marine Raiders, and then we’re going to have a Special Airborne troops,” infantry, which is another Raider Battalion that’s not called “Raider” because Special Airborne troop offensive. Said, “Now we want volunteers for these groups.” So I volunteered with the Special Airborne troop infantry. And ... we had some—I thought boot camp was rough. But they really threw it on to you in that Special Forces. They had you doing everything. They had you running up hills and shooting at your hind legs with live ammunition and everything else. It was pretty rough. So we trained. We were down hard and physically fit as anybody could be, you see. And we was ready to go.

And—though soon they said, “Well we’re going to leave out on convoy. It will be the first convoy to go to overseas in World War II. We’re going to go over there and set the Japs back.” Said, “They’ve got the land, air, and sea superiority.” Said, “We’re going to put them on the defensive.” Well we was like young tigers! We wanted to go and we could not get there fast enough. We thought that war was going to be over before we could get there. And it was still the first of ’42 and ... boy we was raring to go. I told them, I said, “Man this war may be over before we can get over there and do any fighting.” They said, “Yeah, we are afraid that it might be too. We want to hurry up and get over there and get in that first bunch.” I said, “Yeah, I’m ready. I’m ready for it.” They was all ready for it.

Those boys was out right out ... of the Depression, still had a little depression going on. They was stout, worked hard, physically tough. They haven't got boys like that anymore. We walked everywhere we went. If we were going ten miles, we walked ten miles and we walked back ten miles. We didn't have no cars. We didn't eat no candy or cake. We didn't have no money to buy it. We even didn't smoke because we didn't have no money to buy no cigarettes or tobacco either, you see. We were pretty well muscled up and in pretty good shape coming out of that Depression because nobody had any money. We was lucky to get all we could eat much less have money for anything else. When I went in the Marines, I had two pair of run over brogan shoes, and no socks, and no underwear. That's all I had. And whenever I got in there they gave me three or four pairs of shoes. They gave me a dozen socks. They gave me a dozen pair of underwear, undershirts, and all the clothes that I could wear, and the best meals I had ever ate. I had never gotten full until I got into the Marines. They passed the beans and chicken and everything right down the line you got all you wanted to eat you see. Well that was heaven. I thought, "Man this is something else! This is something good." But that boot camp, when they started running us to death—but we was tough, we could do it. And ... everything got down to the nitty gritty.

The convoy left San Diego, California and ... we was on our way. We met up ... we were the Second Marine Division, we met up with the First Marine Division about two weeks out at sea. And then the Special Forces attached to the First Marine Division. First Marine Division was going on to Guadalcanal. Well, we sailed about two months at sea and then we came into the side of the Guadalcanal. So they come up and told us that we were going to land an hour before the attack started.... The Special Forces was going to land on an island called Florida Island overlooking Tulagi. Said, "The Japs were supposed to have some five-inch guns up there." They wanted us to go up there and scale the bluffs and knock them out. Oh, we was ready to go. So we slipped in there before the air force started. We scaled the bluff and went up there, wasn't nothing there. And ... we were standing on this bluff looking down and the Higgins boats were coming in on Tulagi, the First Marine Regiment. Well, we got mad about it because some of them First, [were] fighting first you see. And we said, "We believe that they just done that on purpose to get us out of that fight because we were wanting to fight." We were doing a little cursing around and finally the radio come in and said, "The First Paratroopers landed on Tanambogo were having a hard time." Said, "They're killing a lot of them," and wanted us to go in and reinforce them. So we got in our Higgins boats and away we went to reinforce these people. They were the First Paratroopers.

Well, we landed in there and they had the little beachhead, the little beachhead there. We got in without any problem. But, they was fighting a little piece in. So the thing that struck me about when I first saw the battlefield, I noticed them Marines shot right between the eyes laying there. Well they told us that the Japs couldn't see very well and they couldn't shoot straight. And I thought to myself, "Man," I said, "They're shooting these Marines right between the eyes, in the head. If they can't see too good how come them doing all that?" I told myself, "Man they told us they weren't very good fighters. We thought we'd come in there and run them down and shoot them like rabbits." That's what we thought. That's what they told us about the little people, "couldn't do this, couldn't do that." But it seemed like to me that they were putting up a pretty good fight to me, killing a lot of Marines.

And ... they was—so we fell in and started fighting. And I thought, “Well, my gosh we’re having a tough time with these people. They’re tougher than I thought they was. And this is not going to be no picnic.” We thought it was going to be a picnic. Thought it would be over in two or three weeks or a month. But it wasn’t. We seen right off that we was up against a vicious, cruel enemy, and [they] fought to the death, and that wasn’t what we’d been feeling. But we had to fall in there and get with them. So, we learned how to fight them. They killed a lot of us, but we still learned how to fight them. And ... then we cleared out Tanambogo.

There’s a causeway running from Tanambogo to Gavutu. There’s still a lot of Japs over there. So they told us to get in the Higgins boat and make a landing over on Tanambogo. Well we went out there and got in the Higgins boat. It was late in the afternoon. And ... we were going to make a landing over on—well we started over there, and the Japanese put high-test gas and oil all in the beach and in the water. And just as we started maybe fifty yards from the shore they set it on fire. And it was a wall of flames. Well some of the boats got in it. Then the Japanese machine guns opened up. And I got up on the motor in the Higgins boat to sit in the middle of the Higgins boat. They had a stand up there. You know it was a cover motor. I got up on that to try to shoot me a Jap. And they were running every which way. Them Japs was over there, and I’d get one every now and then. They’re hard to hit. They run fast. And ... after while I saw the Jap’s with sabers run out there and start whacking on them. Some of those Marines got wounded, and they’d come through and got on the beach. And those Japs took sabers and went out there and chopped them up. Then they’d run and grab one ... and they had great big bonfire there on the beach and took the Marines and threw him in the bonfire. And they’re screaming and hollering. There wasn’t nothing that we could do about it because we had that wall of flames with us. And they’d throw their machine guns at them. Those machine guns were really blaring all over the place. Finally our boat got caught on fire in front. There were several boats that got caught on fire and were burning. That’s where those wounded Marines and things were coming from out of them boats that were burning. They would get ashore and that is what those Japs did to them. Well we sat out there and watched it. Well we hated them. We wanted to kill them all.

Finally we eased back and we went under that causeway. And then we went on back over to the other island and I got out. I did not know this until I got out, there was seventeen men dead in the bottom of that boat. That was it. Those machine guns were trained at these wood boats—like this [gestures]—into the side of them. Well it killed seventeen in the boat, the big Higgins boat. And I was standing up on the wide open trying to kill me a Jap, and they never even touched me.

PIEHLER: But if you had been lower down ...

WHITE: If I had been lower down I would have ... yeah.

PIEHLER: That’s a close call.

WHITE: Yeah, of course that’s a close call. That’s just one of those close calls. So we decided—they got two tanks in there on that island where we were, small jungle tanks. We decided we’d take them two tanks and go across that causeway there and get into them Japs over

there that way. Well, we started out well. We were behind those tanks, started out [behind] them tanks, and those Japs run out over there with big bottles of gas and oil mixed and threw [them] on them tanks. Burned them tanks up. Those boys in them tanks tried to come out of there and they shot them as they come out. Japs shot them, killed them. And so we went on in behind the tanks, and then when we got there we started killing Japs. We killed all them Japs on that island. And we also killed every Jap there—we also killed every Jap on Tanambogo. And when we got through there wasn't no enemy left ... and so they said, "Well there's still fighting over on Tulagi. Second Maine Raiders went in on—First Marine Raiders went on Tulagi ... and we're going to have to go over there."

So we gathered up our stuff and everything and got in the Higgins boat after we buried our dead. We dug a big long trench and buried our dead, a hundred and fifty of them, and ... headed out to Tulagi. Well, the Raiders had gotten most of those Japs on Tulagi, but there was still a few Japs left on Tulagi, you know held up in caves, first one thing then another.... And the Raiders said they were going to pull out and go to Guadalcanal, that we could take care of the rest of it, because it was just probably a few here and there. We said, "Alright." We were standing—the Raiders got in their Higgins boats and they left. And there was a big dugout there. And I was standing there looking at it, maybe twenty or thirty more Marines standing there with me. Somebody popped a white flag out and we kept waiting on them to come out. And they weren't Japanese, they were natives, half-natives. Half-English or something else you know. Anyway they weren't full-blooded natives and they wasn't—they were wearing ... those natives over there just wore a little old skirt of a thing, you know. These had on full dress, you know, clothing, and a shirt, and pants, and everything. We knew he was—must have been English or something or half-English. Anyway he came out and he got to talking. He spoke English. And we asked him if there was anybody else in there. He said, "Yeah," and put his hand up and motioned. Here come two women and about seven or eight kids out of there. And our orders started with: to kill everything there, hogs, chickens, everything, kill everything! And some of the Marines brought their rifles up, you see. And we had an old sergeant was there by the name of Lew Diamond. He said, "Wait just a minute." He said, "We don't make war on women and children and old men." He said, "Don't no man pull a trigger on them. We're Marines. We don't fight nothing but warriors and people who can fight back. Don't even attempt to shoot these women and children and this old man." He said, "Marines could walk down the street in any country with their heads up and not be ashamed." Well, they survived. Probably that was the only thing that kept them alive, I don't know. I just don't believe Marines would kill them. Marines don't do that. We don't make war on women, and children, and old men. Well they took them all off and interviewed them.

And old Lieutenant Grout said, "We'll have to go around and go in these dugouts here," and we went up to the dugout. He said, "Bill you go in there and see if there are any Japs in there." I said, "Alright." I threw a grenade back up in there and it went off. He said, "Let me tie this rope around your leg here in case you get killed in there. I can drag you out and give you a Christian burial." And he tied a rope around my leg and I crawled up in there. And there's another opening in the top, went up through the top. And there's a Jap scrambling up through there. And I shot him. And that's all there was in there. So I went on to three or four more and done the same thing, you see. Wasn't too many there, we'd find them in there. We'd take DNT and TNT and put it on a ... long pole and wrap barbed wire around them so they couldn't get it off.

And we'd take it and shove it into back into the cave and hold the end of it ... and let it blow them out the front. And we killed a lot of Japs like that. And ... we cleared that island out. There wasn't no more Japs left alive, we killed them all.

And then we started making raids, Tulagi to Guadalcanal. We'd take those Higgins boats and get in them again and go behind enemy lines and make a raid on the enemy over there. Well one day we got in the Higgins boats, and it was nighttime—we'd go across at night. Japs had the land, air, and sea superiority over us. And we're going along in those Higgins boats and then the big searchlights came on and those Japanese destroyers, they spotted us out there. Well they started shelling us. Well, a shell hit the front of my Higgins boat, [it] dove down, and out in the ocean I was. I was be-bopping around out there in those big swells. And we had five or six more Higgins boats behind us coming. And I was trying to wait—and a lot of men, you know, were wounded there. They was in the water, and here came the sharks. Sharks, you know, were bad over there. And a shark brushed my britches leg, but they were going after the wounded, you know. Probably if I hadn't gotten out of there I would have been next, but we'd had training, you know, from Seals, and they were Navy Seals. They taught us how to pick up men. We'd pick up our arms like this and lean over and go by and they'd hook their arms in yours. And then we'd throw them aboard. Well the first boat went by, I couldn't get hooked on. And the swell took me way out this way and way back this way. And I thought, "Well good God, I don't believe they're going to get me." Finally, a swell took me right in next to one of those Higgins boat and I—[they] had them arms way down there. I hooked into one of them and onboard I went. So that saved me.

Well we went on and made a raid, slipped up on the Japs on the Tenaru River. They were in there, you know, having their meals and we eased up on them. And the Jap guards [were] standing out there looking at a bunch of them swimming there in the river. They were cooking whatever they had, rice and stuff. And they were coming by getting something to eat. We stood there and watched them a little while. Finally we started throwing grenades down there on them and shooting them. And probably we killed three hundred of them, and we left. They had us so badly outnumbered we couldn't afford to stay there, because they had us outnumbered about twenty to one. So we eased on back and got in our Higgins boats and went back to Tulagi. [We] had to get the Higgins boat up the ocean side there and then we made five or six raids like that. Caught the Japs every time, killed two or three hundred, maybe three or four hundred sometimes. Then we slipped back. We never got a man killed. We got so good at slipping through the jungle that couldn't nobody hear us. And we got so good at firing and disrupting them and killing a bunch of them that they did not have time to shoot back at us. And we left. We just—hit and run thing, ... you know. And we got awful good at it.

And then the Japs landed 80,000 Imperial Marines against us, you know, on—we thought they might land some of them on Tulagi, but they landed them all on Guadalcanal. They sent for us to come over, to fight on Guadalcanal. Well, we went over there and went on in there. And, of course, we'd been fighting. Some of them boys thought we was ... new Marines coming in there, but we'd been fighting before they were fighting. See, they didn't have no fighting over there for about two weeks. And Japs run off and let them have it, you know. And then they counterattacked. We went on up through there. We headed out over on the Tenaru River, and I was be-bopping along there, going up there, and the Jap machine guns opened up. We dove in

this way and a little old hut of thing there they'd made out of coconut limbs and leaves. I jumped over it ... I never smelled such an odor in my life. There were about four or five dead Japs laying in there. My hands went all in that stuff you know and everything. And I mean it stunk, but them machine guns were just raking. There wasn't no way I could get out until the machine gun quit. And it was just knocking limbs around there and knocking the roof off that little makeshift thing, you know. So I had to stay in there. Got that goo all over me. Then finally the machine gun stopped, you know, and we started killing some of them up there and I was glad of that. And I got out. And [despite being] next to the river I never had a chance to wash that off from me until a couple of days later. And I stunk. Finally I got a chance to wipe it off. We had a battle with some of those Japs up there and shot up a bunch of them and run them back. And ... I got off in the ocean side down there and got sand and tried to scrape that off, that goo. That sand dug that goo just right in there, couldn't get it off—nothing else. And I just had to wear it off.

And ... so we fought battle after battle on Guadalcanal. We ... fought the Japs. We were pushing the Japs back and ... we're in the jungle. The Japs had us outnumbered quite a bit. We learned sleeping in the jungle—when it rained we got wet. When the sun came out we dried off. We slept where we fell. We got so good fighting those Japanese that our sense of smell got thirty percent better. Our sense of hearing got thirty percent better. Our sense of seeing got thirty percent better. We could hear a Jap a quarter of a mile [away]. We could smell him a quarter of a mile away. And if he made any kind of a move, we could see him a quarter a mile away. And that was something unusual. We never could do that before. Our senses came to us. And that's what killed the Japs on Guadalcanal. It was our superiority in seeing and hearing and smelling. You think that you can't smell another human being? Yeah you can. We'd smell and tell before we got there that they was there. We could hear them way before we got there. They couldn't walk in the jungles around us ... without us hearing them. And I was that way with those sense years after I got back. A cat could walk around my house or a dog at night and I could hear it. A rat could gnaw on anything in the basement and I could hear him. I lived two blocks from town, I could hear people walking in town. Now that's the kind of senses you get ...

PIEHLER: It also seems like ...

WHITE: ... fighting in them jungles.

PIEHLER: It also seems like you sometimes had a hard time going to sleep because you could always hear things.

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Was that the case?

WHITE: The what?

PIEHLER: Because you could always hear all of these things it was hard to go to sleep. Was that the case?

WHITE: Not really. If you smelled them you couldn't go to sleep. That's for sure because you knew they was there. And you was going to have to kill them. Yeah, that's true there. But, if we'd smell them, we knew they were less than a quarter mile from us ...

PIEHLER: When you said there was smell, what kind of smell was it?

WHITE: It was a sweet odor. Japs got a sweet odor about them. It's just like a—we fought there nearly seven months and lived in them jungles for seven months. And like [nearly] starved to death, and everything else. And there wasn't no medical equipment or anything.... We went in there [with] the same clothes on, when we came out we still had the same clothes on. So you can imagine. Our Navy ran off and left us without any food or ammunition. We had what ammunition we brought with us, and equipment without any supplies. They got scared and left us there on Guadalcanal. Left us high and dry and bare-assed as we called it. (Laughter) Well that's exactly what they done! They got scared of the Japanese fleet—going to sink them, so that old Admiral pulled his fleet out and left us there. Well, Washington give us up for dead and lost. But we decided this wasn't going to be no Bataan: we was going to kill them people, and we did. We learned how and we was good at it, what we were doing. We were the best of the best and the bravest of the brave. Nobody could be any better or no braver. And so we fought our way out. And killed our way out and ... the food was scarce. And we had very little medical equipment. If you got shot and got shot bad you died, there wasn't no question about that. There wasn't no way to save you. There wasn't no way to get you back to any hospital or anything. You just laid down and died. The most amazing thing about these people that done that fighting over there was that they never even whimpered, never whimpered, just laid down and died, hundreds of them. And they—well Guadalcanal, the Japs call it the “island of death.” And they had a good reason to call it “island of death” because there was a lot of them killed there. And they outnumbered us, far outnumbered us. But anyway it lasted—that fight lasted almost six months before we got a chance to leave in there. And the Japs had the land, air, and sea superiority over us all the time. Our bodies were so tense. It was like pulling back a bowstring. That is how tense you were because you was on alert all of the time. You never slept much. You—never at anytime did all of us do—just half of us did the sleeping. The other half stayed awake because if you didn't they'd kill you. And they was vicious, mean, cruel people to fight. Our motto after we got off Tanambogo and Tulagi was “Never surrender, never retreat, and take no prisoners, and fight to the death.” That was our motto.

WILSON: In your book you talked about when you took one Japanese prisoner and the lieutenant made you kill him. Did that happen at Guadalcanal or ...

WHITE: Well they didn't have to make us kill them. We'd kill them right on the spot. No lieutenant made us do anything, we killed them. We seen them—they tried to give up and we killed them.

WILSON: So you didn't take any prisoners?

WHITE: No prisoners. Some of these Marines over there took prisoners on Guadalcanal, but that wasn't us. The Special Forces didn't take no prisoners. Yeah, we killed them all, and killed

all we could, and wanted to kill more. We couldn't kill enough of them because they badly mistreated us. So we're going to badly mistreat them. You don't win wars by being good people. You have to be as cruel and as vicious as that enemy or you don't win. It's just that simple, no in-betweens. You just fight to the death and let it go at that. That's hard for people to understand, but that's the way I liked it. Do you think for a minute that I'd give up to them people, let them abuse me, and torture me, and then kill me? No! That's silly. You kill all of them you could kill. And then let them kill you if they can. That's the way it is. And most Marines thought that way. That's just the way American boys think. At least those American boys thought that way.

Well, we left Guadalcanal. We went to ... New Zealand. So we started training again there in New Zealand for another battle. Well we got some liberty and we got some stuff, you know. Out on the town drinking a little and trying to go with the girls, first one thing then another. Well ...

PIEHLER: How successful were you going with the girls?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: How successful were you going with the girls?

WHITE: Oh, I was fairly successful, you know. Just girls, you know. You go after them. They're there. And—no, I had two or three, no wait—I wasn't, you know, a bad looking fella ...

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

PIEHLER: You were saying that you did have some dates.

WHITE: Oh yeah, yeah, in New Zealand. There were a lot of women in New Zealand. All of them New Zealanders had gone off to fight too and left all their women folks at home. (Laughter) We slipped in there on them. They went in the British Eighth Army. And ... some of them came back. And we had a fight with them. They blocked off seven blocks over there and the Marines and the British, English Army had a fight and over there in that ...

PIEHLER: Auckland?

WHITE: Auckland, New Zealand.

PIEHLER: Who won, the Marines or the Eighth Army?

WHITE: Well, ninety of them—Marines killed ninety of them. They won't tell you all that stuff, but we did. They killed three or four of us. We killed ninety of them, those ... South Africans and the British Eighth Army. We had blocked off seven blocks, wasn't nothing they could do about it but let us fight it out. And then the Eighth Army took their bunch and moved them further out and let the Marines hold on. What started the fight? I was there in the fight. Well, they had this big movie. So we was in the movie and the British National Anthem come

on, you know, playing their song and everything. And we stood up to it. We honored it. Then the American National Anthem came on playing the national anthem. They booed it, and when they booed it they was in trouble. The fight started there in that theater when they booed the American flag. Before it was over, we'd killed ninety of them, and they never did boo our flag anymore. That was the end of the booing of the American flag. That was in New Zealand.

Well we trained and got ourselves whooped into good position again, got plenty of good food. That New Zealand fed good over there. Dairy country, steak and eggs, and milk, butter. It was a good, good country. We liked New Zealand. And plenty of women. That went along with that steak and eggs. (Laughter) And—well time was growing near for us to move on. Well, when the time come, they said we were headed out to the Gilbert Island. So they said we were going to make a landing on an island by the name of Tarawa—Betio, they called it Betio, Tarawa. Well, Tarawa was just like another fight to us, you know. Well we was onboard the ship and the Marine officers come and said, “We won't have no fights here.” Said, “We've got bombers and shellers. They've shelled that island. They've bombed that island. That did all that, you can just stand up and walk in.” And I said to myself—of course, I was a squad leader, I had the sixteen-man squad—well, I said, “I've heard that before.” I said now, “Now you just figure on a good, strong, good fight.” I said, “I've heard all that stuff before about how the Japs couldn't see, wasn't too strong, little bitty people, couldn't fight.” I said, “I'd heard all that stuff from you officers, you so-called officers we've got.” Which I did. Then, “Now we're going in another fight and we're just going to walk around?” And, I said, “Now I just don't depend on it.” Well, the day comes to make a landing. Well, they had these, what we called Alligators, you know, it wasn't Higgins boats. They were Alligators. Something they'd invented you know to make a landing on.

Well, we all got set—started. Those Alligators got hung up out there. Fifty and a hundred yards before we could go in. Those Japs had that thing so well fortified that it seemed to be impossible for a man to live through their fire—firepower. They had a ramp built out there. Boy, I mean machine guns all up and down that ramp out to the left—left of them. Then there was an old tanker been beefed way on up there out to the right. It had machine guns all over it. Then the beach had machine guns like this on that beach. Pillboxes, one right after another. Machine guns in these pillboxes. Well, we caught fire as quickly as we got up within a hundred yards. They started opening up machine guns. I just rolled off the side of that tank glider or Alligator and hit the water. Well I was looking, and I saw them start falling all around. And I thought, “My God!” I said, “hell, these machine guns, the machine guns.” There were so many bullets hitting the water it looked like raindrops. You had a hard time getting through the raindrops. And I said, “Oh my God!” And I didn't know if we were going to have any squad at all left or not. They were knocking them off pretty fast. So the dead started [floating] on top of the water, going backwards and forwards with the tide, you know. So I just played dead right in there among the dead. I eased my way up next to that shoreline. The tide was coming in pushing them up a little bit. I got up. I'd take my foothold down at the bottom. I was going back out on the tide and then the tide would come back in and scoot me up a little further. Finally I got up there far enough where I could reach down with my hands hold into the sand and hold on so I wouldn't go back.

First thing you know I was up maybe five or six feet [next to] that seawall they had there, that big seawall they had there. It was about waist high, maybe about four feet high. Some of them places might have been five. Anyway, I saw that and I just dashed out of the water and up above behind that seawall a little bit. And I looked up the beach and there wasn't a Marine to be seen nowhere up that beach. I looked down the beach and there wasn't a Marine to be seen nowhere down the beach. I was the only dude—Marine there. And I thought, "Oh my gosh." I looked out there—here they was trying to come in. They were being cut down with those machine guns right and left—hundreds of them. I seen those tank gliders knocked out, three or four in a row there. I seen a hundred Marines around those tank gliders trying to get out of that vicious machine gun fire. They would go from side to side behind those tank gliders. Every time they would come around on this side they'd open up on them. Every time they would go around on the other side, it would open up. First the—you know, out of that hundred, there wouldn't be any left. Killed them all. That was on several of them tank gliders out there. And I thought, "My God there ... ain't none of them gonna get in here." And I said, "You're in a hell of a shape White. They ain't gonna get nobody in here." Well, I was just doing some thinking by myself, you know, laying there and watching them kill them. I didn't get scared, I got mad, I was mad, oh heck I was mad! First thing you know I was looking at them dead Marines washing back and forth next to the shore, one of them didn't wash back with them. I looked at him, I said, "Oh, he just done the same thing I done." First thing you know, bam, up he comes in there with me ... two Marines. Well, you have two Marines you could do some fighting, you see.

Well after a while two or three more come out from under them dead people [and] come in there. Next thing you know I had a dozen ... and I said, "Heck this isn't gonna get it ... (Tape Paused) We're gonna have to do something. Do something bad, we gonna have to get something done." Talking to myself again. Finally I jumped up on the seawall, I don't know why I did, but I did. That was the most dangerous place in the world to be. And I said, "Stay here and die, move out and die, but let's move out and take these damn sons of bitches with us." And then I jumped off that seawall. About that time a machine gun just cut that place in two ways, [where I'd] been standing on it. And I said—they didn't move. They just looked at me like I was a fool. I said, "Oh God!" I said, "Start shooting them trees and knock out some of them snipers out of them trees up there." I didn't know if there was any snipers in them or not, but I just wanted to get them started. I said, "Start throwing grenades at these pillboxes in front of us here. If we don't knock these pillboxes out we ain't gonna get nobody in here to help us." And they started shooting in them trees and throwing grenades at them pillboxes, knocked that pillbox in front of us. And then we went over the wall, knocked out the pillbox on both sides. And then, finally, I looked out to sea there and the Marines was coming in. We knocked out a dead place in the lines, Japanese lines. Marines were coming in, and we got a bunch of Marines in there. Then we started killing Japs.

Well, I had—I got me a squad together, some of them were my men, a lot of them wasn't my men. I had about sixteen men, maybe more there, maybe more, I guess. So we started moving out, and one ole boy got shot in the jaw. Had his whole lower jaw shot off. I took him in that dugout ... we had got through knocking out—we knocked there. Then I had another boy, I said, "Bill get up and let's go." He said, "I can't." I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "Looky here." I raised his blouse up and he had four machine gun holes across his belly. And his guts were sticking out those holes. I said, "Now I see you can't go." I said, "Come on, I'll put you

down there and I'll put some morphine to you. I know you're hurting." And I helped him get in the dugout and had a corpsman in there put the morphine to him. He probably died. I don't see how he lived, I don't know if he did or not. I hope he did. Anyway I went out and started off again. And another Marine was laying there and I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "My kneecap is gone." He said, "They shot my kneecap off I can't walk." So I helped him back in that dugout. Well, I was standing there and these Japanese officers was laying up against the side of the dugout. I looked at him and I seen his eye get barely open. I said, "Uh, oh." So I turned and picked up my rifle that I laid down there and I wheeled back around and I shot. He was coming up, had a pistol in his hand, [I] shot him through the hand and into the chest plate. Then I bayoneted him in the throat and he went down and he was still breathing, I put two holes in him. Corpsman said, "Oh my God. I'm glad you done that he'd have killed every one of us in here." I said, "Yeah, he might have." I said, "I'm gonna make sure the rest of these are dead in here." There was about eight or nine of them in there. So I went around with my bayonet sticking them, you see. And one of them, on the far end up there of the dugout—it was a pretty good-sized dugout, had bunks built up on one side of it, for the Japs to sleep in. And I—wham!—stuck him in the rear end sticking up there. And blood stuck out of it, and I said, "Uh oh, got me another." So I took the bayonet and stuck him in the back with it. And he jumped there and tried to climb the wall. So I shot him down and killed him. See, I learned when you stick a man and blood spews out he's not dead. If he's dead, ain't no blood gonna come out him you know, your heart's not beating. See a lot of people don't know that, you see, but I'd stuck enough of them to know whether he'd dead or not. And ... so I went on out and the corpsman was thanking me for saving their lives, or thought I did anyhow, I don't know if I did or not. The Marines still had arrivals in there, so I went on, got my squad.

We fought our way to the airport. When I got to the airport, I sent someone across the airport. And an ole boy that—a big ole boy, tall, had two boxes of machine gun ammunition and he had a couple of bandoliers, long bandoliers around his neck. And he was with my machine gun helper. He was the last to go across. Sent them across two at a time. Across that airport, them machine guns were just knocking that airport up when I seen them going across there. Shooting at them with a machine gun, but they made it on across there. I said, "Go ahead and I'll follow you." He started out be-bopping across there and trotting. I seen that machine gun start up behind me. And he was maybe four or five feet in front of me. First thing I was looking at the back of his neck. I saw blood spew out the back of his neck. He just kept going! That machine gun hit my rifle ... like to knock it plum out of my hand. And I made it on across, and he did too. He said, "Boy that thing hit me in the ..." It didn't hit a vital space in his neck, it just went through the back of his neck a little piece, you know, all the way through. The blood spewed out, but he was all right. And ... we didn't have no corpsman or nothing there. We just bandaged him up ourselves. He said, "I'm still good to go, still going." Because we had several of them wounded there still fighting. And I was wounded through the hip myself, got a bullet through the right hip. But I was still mobilized and going, you know, fighting. But I seen them going, some of them pretty bad, still fighting, you know, on in that battle. Didn't have nowhere to go, might as well stay there and fight. And, you know, they was a long way from where that corpsman was back in the dugout. And so we bedded down that night.

Well, the lieutenant come in that afternoon—one of our lieutenants, wasn't nobody else. The next morning we got up there and our old captain had come in. I don't know where they'd been

hiding at, but anyway, come be-bopping in, him and his orderly. And it's funny about some of them people where they hide through a battle. Kind of decide to go down a little bit then just kinda show up. But, you know, that happens a lot. Ain't nothing to it, just happens a lot. Anyway the captain said, "White, take a bunch of these men across there into that big ditch over there." The Japs had a big long ditch. And, I guess, it was one hundred yards long—deep. What it was was a tank trap. A tank could go over off in there, but he couldn't get out, you see. That was one of the Jap's tank traps. Well got off in there, wasn't no Japs in that ditch not more than I could see. And we'd been fighting them pretty good and you ain't gonna go in with a Jap ... Well, we all got what was left of the company that was there and man they were, you know, a company's got four platoons in it. And a platoon has four squads of five, sixteen men each, forty or fifty of them. I guessed in a platoon there'd be two hundred. That's all we had there. And ... the rest of them was either wounded or killed.

And the old captain—I looked up through there, I was where they was throwing a lot of dirt on, I was looking up through there and I saw a Japanese officer's old sword hanging out like this. Had about seventeen or eighteen men behind him. He was going across over there in a little thicket up ahead of that ditch. And I just took aim and I shot him. He went down. Then I got two more of them out of that bunch before they got that little thicket. And the lieutenant said, "What are you shooting at? What are you shooting at? You quit that shooting!" He was down in the hole, he didn't see it. I said, "Lieutenant I'm shooting at Japs what do you think I'm shooting at?" He said, "They might be Marines." He was just a new man in that first battle. I said, "Lieutenant, if they're Marines there's three dead Marines laying up there." He didn't like that at all. (Laughter) Ole captain down there looked at me like he could kill me. He said, "Lieutenant, you take half these men go up ahead to that ditch there." Lieutenant said, "Alright." I said, "Lieutenant you want me to kinda throw up a barrage up here in that—in that place for you?" "No, no, you're liable to hit some of them." I said, "You think I will?" He said, "I don't know, but you might." I said, "Well I can't cover you if you won't let me do no shooting. I'll get some men up there." You know, that machine gun would spray that thicket out for them, you know, I knew they was there. But he didn't want me to. So he went be-bopping all up through there with a bunch of men and first thing I know they had fight up there. Boy they was fighting up a storm. Machine guns, everything up and going. He had a couple machine guns with him. And after while here I saw four men come bearing a fellow down through there and the other guy there said, "It's the Lieutenant. They'd shot him through the hand and then the stomach." And there he was, shot. I don't know whether he died or not, he might not have died, I don't know. But he killed three or four more of them Marines up there. And I believe I could have saved them, but you know, cleared out what Japs were there at least getting them down where they couldn't shoot them, you know, so freely while they were walking up through there in the open. But they didn't want me to, so I didn't, but that was their problem.

Captain told me to take the rest of them men down to the other end. And I got them together and took off down there and, of course, we went down through there knocking out pillboxes and stuff. We had about three more pillboxes we had to knock out and I had one pillbox that had a bunch of Japs in it. And we couldn't hardly get them out. They'd killed a machine gunner down there and three or four other boys. And I told them, "Let's see if we can't get some high test gasoline we gonna pour through the barrel-hole up here in the top, and burn them out of there." So they got a five-gallon can of gasoline over on the beach. Brought it back over and I poured it

down in there and set them on fire. Had men out there coming out, some of them coming out there on fire, you know, we just killed them. But then we'd burn up in there. That was about the end of the fighting, that was on the third day there, you know, doing that.

But, my machine gunner was sitting out there on an ammunition box. I'd been in this dugout and they had some Japs socks stacked up there. I got me a pair of Jap socks, I got three or four other pairs, walked outside, and I just set my helmet down and sat down on it and leaned up against that ole dugout, that big dugout. And I thought we had her cleaned out, but we didn't. Anyway I said, "Swede, you want a pair of clean socks?" He said, "Yeah." So I pitched him a pair of clean socks. He pulled his shoes off, you know, he was putting his socks on and I heard spat! I saw the Swede bend over across his machine gun. And I was watching the Swede. I saw his helmet fill up with blood and brains. And it overflowed, came right out over the top you know. And I got so mad I thought I'd just blow a stack. I wheeled and went back in that big dugout. You could see all the way through it, daylight all the way through it. Boy they had, seemed to me like they might have had tanks or something—open both ends, you know, where they can run them through there, do work on them, do stuff like that you know. Well about middle way, it was a long way through there. I went in there and was looking every which direction. Couldn't see nothing, nobody, but I was sure that bullet come out of there. It just spat up by my ear, in that opening there. And finally I saw a little hole on the side—a little doorway about halfway up on the left side. And I said, "Uh, oh."

So I went up on the side there, got a grenade out, threwed it in there. Grenade went off in that little ole, that room. And I went on in. It was real pitch dark in there. I hit a steel table, so I just bent over and go under the steel table and was listening. And I heard this something like someone was dragging a foot or something. And I kept listening there. Then I heard this, "swish, swish." I knew what that was. That Japanese was swinging the sword in that dark room you know. I just laid there, hunkered down in there. I was looking at the gray spot in that door, there was a gray spot there. I said to myself, "Well, he'll make a mistake in a minute. You get me and him between that gray spot there and I'll kill him." Well a few minutes here he comes swinging that sword and he got between me and that gray spot. And when he did I shot him and then I rushed out behind him and bayoneted him in the throat. Down he went, but on the way down he managed to strike me with that saber. And the saber run down the barrel of the gun and cut my thumb here about halfway off. And, uh, but he was down, dead. He started breathing the air out though those holes I put in him so I knew he was dying, you know. He had what you call a "death rattle." And when they get the "death rattle" they don't last long, just a few minutes.

And I decided to look at him. That place was littered with paper in there. So I piled up a box of paper set it on fire, had a lighter in it got a candle, had the candle in there, that candle was lit, found a candle in there. I was looking at this Jap I'd killed. He was the best manicured and his clothing was neat and starched and he was a big Jap, had a big head on him. I reached down and got his sword. Had his scabbard there, that was the fanciest sword I had ever seen—nice. I said, "Oh my heck, this dude's somebody." Wasn't nobody in there but me. But the Marines, I had left them on outside there. So I decided, I reach down to see how heavy he was. He was pretty heavy, he weighed 200 pounds. But anyway I put him on the table I wanted to get a good look at him, you know. I knew he was a high-ranking officer. That's how I knew that, because he was too well manicured and his saber was too fancy. He had a lifetime watch on him, I got his watch

and a few other gadgets, you know, off him. Of course, I was gonna get what he had and I took his saber and walked out of there with it. And I said, "Oh my God." I never thought much more about it him, you know. Anyway he was just another Jap, I'd killed a lot of Japs. He was just another dead Jap.

So I went on to Camp Tarawa in Honolulu getting ready for another battle. And this old corpsman I saw walking down there ... between the tents there and he came running out of there to me and he said, "Bill, Bill! Look here I want to show you something." He run over there to me and he said, "Looky here." I looked in the dugout. He said, "This damned sergeant here." Said "the captain's orderly," said, "Looky here I want you to see this." Had done the same thing—they give him a Silver Star. Had [done] the same thing that I done in that dugout back there and give him the credit for it. He said, "I want to go to the captain and show them—I want to know where this come from." I said, "I'll tell you exactly where it come from." I said, "That ole captain up there wanted to find him a way to give him a Silver Star," he was his orderly. He got that pistol off of that dead Jap and I said, "he told them that tale." And I said, "He got his self a Silver Star out of it. It won't do no good to go to the captain because he's already written him up." He's the one that written him up for the Silver Star without even proving this stuff.... A lot of that goes on, you know. Every battle a lot of them come out wanting to be heroes, they hid in those dugouts, you know, like high-ranking officers and they get out there and they'd make them heroes. They never fired a shot. Now that's true. They do that all the time. Not only in the Marine battles, but they do it in the Army battles and every damn other battle. And it's ... a lot of people deserve the medal they get, half of them don't. They just give them to them. Another lieutenant arrived and another lieutenant left, and a big lot of hogwash and they give him a Silver Star ... Ole Colonel Shoup was sitting in that dugout that we the first dugout we knocked out. Come in the second day and sat in there until the war's over, the battle is plumb over. And then they wrote him up for the Congressional Medal of Honor—he got the Congressional Medal of Honor.

They wrote me up for Congressional Medal of Honor for coming over that seawall you see. I didn't get it, but they get it. See how they work them things, it's all politics. Don't think you [haven't] got politics in that military you got plenty of politics. It's unusual I'm just going to tell you that to let you know. You know about some stuff a lot of people don't know about, but I know several men who got Silver Stars and things like that. And maybe one out of five that I know got it earned it. You know, you say you earned it. You didn't do no more than some of the men around him who really done the work. But he got the credit because he's an officer, you know. But that's the way it goes. But that's the way some of that goes in all of these battles. And you're talking about people [who] likes to get publicity and glory. And they'll go after it. And if they can get it they'll get it whether they did it or not. And they do. I don't blame them, I guess. It's alright with me if they get it. You know, if they want to go around and punch their big chests out you know with medals hung all over that they didn't earn that's all right with me. But every now and then you'll see one that really earned them and that makes it better.

PIEHLER: Before you go on could you just talk a little bit more about Colonel Shoup.... You mentioned you were in a dugout with him.

WHITE: I wasn't with him. He was in the dugout.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

WHITE: Yeah I'll tell you about Colonel Shoup. Colonel Shoup came in the second day after the first wave and landed right there where I was telling you we come through and knocked out them pillboxes and pushed on. We killed what Japs there was in there, but there was two or three Jap snipers come back in there after we moved on. How come me to know all this? I went over to get this gasoline to burn these Japs out and there was a reporter, a Marine reporter standing up there and I went up to him asked him where I could get some gas. And he said, "You might get it down on the beach." He said, "Where'd you come from?" I said, "Across at the airport." He said, "You want to see the Colonel he's in there. You know there's a Jap around there tried to kill him." I said, "The Jap around there where trying to kill him?" He said, "Well there's one buried out there beside that dugout." I thought to myself there might be a lot of Japs buried around here. But I didn't say nothing to him. He said, "Gosh he's scared." I said, "He is?" I said, "He's in the same place sir." I said, "He's in that big concrete pillbox all these people around him. He's got nothing to be scared of.... If he's up there fighting on the front he's got something to be scared of.... They'll kill him there." There was two tanks out there around this place, going around and around. And every now and then there's this Jap sniper with an automatic weapon that would open up on them tanks. I knew those snipers had moved back in there, couple snipers with automatic weapons. I said, "I'm going up here to see if I can't—you got any cigarettes?" He said, "Yeah, here's you a pack." He gave me a pack of cigarettes. I went over there to get my gasoline, and over on the beach, there was a boy sitting up there broad open. Just sitting up there. I thought, "God dang. There's sniper still in here. He's just sitting out in the open here." And all at once I heard crack. The sniper got him in the leg and he peeled off from there. And I said, "Marine, this damn war's not really over yet. You've got snipers around here and they're gonna shoot some of you. You better get under cover here get behind something anyway." I took my gas went back over there ... poured it down the hole and killed the Japs that was in there, you see. And they ask how come they know where Colonel Shoup was, and I knew when they put him up for the Congressional Medal of Honor, he hadn't moved out of that place there. And he couldn't have earned it. How could a man have earned it in a pillbox somewhere, you know, concreted in. (Laughter) They told they wrote Colonel Shoup up for the Bravery Medal of Honor. Ah well, that's all right. He didn't do nothing for it, but he got it. And that's good enough he can walk around and make people think he done something. You think I'm awful don't you?

PIEHLER: No, no, no. In fact I wanted to ask you—I get the sense from some of your descriptions you didn't have a lot of tolerance for—the phrase, I think, was used in World War II, was "chicken shit," it sounds like you got your fair share and didn't like it.

WHITE: Yeah I did. I got a lot of my fair share of "chicken shit." And the same happened in the Battle of Athens down here, a lot of them. I'll tell you something. We got back over here reorganized. That's the end of my story about battles.

PIEHLER: What happened to you after Tarawa? I mean you were wounded ...

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... and then what happened?

WHITE: Yeah. I went back to Camp Tarawa in Hawaii, big Hawaiian island. And I was training with another squad for another battle. Got replaced ... and I was out there with them training them. And ... the medical officers come down. And they said, "Where's Bill White at?" And they said, "He's out there training." They said, "What squad's he with? Get him in here." And I went over there and they said, "We're sending you back to the States." They said, "Listen you had malaria fever—hospitalized with it a dozen times." And said, "You've been wounded twice." I've got a wound down here in the leg here, you see, two. And they said, "We're sending you out of here." Well there wasn't nothing else I could do, but leave. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to take that squad back into another battle anyway. I done got a lot of training with them. And they was good. They was the best of the best and I wanted to see what they could do under fire, you see. But they took me out of there.

WILSON: When was this?

WHITE: Huh?

WISLON: What month and everything was it when you got sent back? Do you remember?

WHITE: I don't remember it's in that ... in that thing there. You know ...

WILSON: Okay.

WHITE: Now these days, that's been years ago, I can't remember the dates and stuff, but I've got it in that thing there if you want to look at it. So anyways, when they shipped me out, they didn't ship me back to the States. They shipped me to Pearl Harbor. I stayed there about ... five or six months and then they shipped me back to the States. And then I went into down in Parris Island, South Carolina and started teaching jungle warfare. And then I got discharged teaching jungle warfare when the war was over. And all them dates is in there if you want to look them up, you know. And then I went home on the bus. And when I got off the bus there was four deputies standing there flipping over all the service minutes. I thought that was kinda odd. If they found a man was drinking just a beer or two they'd grab him and put him in jail. Took money off of him. I asked one of these boys flipping through the service records, they said, "Yeah they'll get everybody." I said, "They do?" He said, "Yeah." And I said, "Hellfire." I said, "Them boys go over there and fight that war and fight them battles come back here and they can't do nothing." I said, "My God. That's awful. Got a bunch of thugs in here I reckon." That's just the way I thought, you know. And so I went on back down to Parris Island. Then I got discharged. I come in here and those deputies and things running around all over the place. A lot of boys getting discharged [were] getting the mustering out pay. Well, deputies running around four or five at a time grapping up every GI they could find and trying to get that money off of them, they were fee grabbers, they wasn't on a salary back then.

PIEHLER: They got fees by arrests.

WHITE: Yeah, fees by arrests. And I watched a lot of that going on. And the more I watched it the sicker I got. And then they killed a GI or two. Shot him and killed him. And they'd been killing people long. And we decided that we'd get together—an election's coming up, you know ...

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Bill White on July 20, 2000 at Athens, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

WILSON: Brandi Wilson.

PIEHLER: And you were saying you decided ... to run again, to form a GI ticket in the next election.

WHITE: Yeah. Yeah, we decided to form a GI ticket in the next election and kick them out. Well, we formed a ticket, got candidates to run for every office in McMinn County. And we had meetings and they put up Jim Buttrum head of the GI ticket. And they put lawyer Dougan as a publicity agent and a lawyer that got a ticket. And they started off that way. And they started putting up signs and things. Those deputies went out and beat up them GIs putting up signs and tearing them down. They had another meeting and they thought about what the deputies were doing and I got up and said, "Listen, ... do you think they're going to let you win this election?" I said, "Those people been taking these elections for years with a bunch of armed thugs. If you never got the guts enough to stand up and fight fire with fire you ain't gonna win." They said, "Naw, we don't want to do that, we don't want to do that." I said, "You better do it or you're wasting your time" And Jim Buttrum got up and said, "Well Bill, I'll recommend you to be the GI leader. Organize to keep them from taking the election." And I said, "That suits me." And they voted me in as the GI leader to organize a fighting bunch to keep them from beating up GIs and keep them from taking the election. That was right down my alley, I liked that. So I got out and started organizing with a bunch of GIs. Well spirits—I learned that you get the poor boys out of poor families, and the ones that was frontline warriors that's done fighting and didn't care to bust a cap on you. I learned to do that. So that's what I picked. I had thirty men and ... I took what mustering out pay I got and bought pistols. And some of them had pistols. I had thirty men organized.

Well, when the election come off, Pat Mansfield had 200 deputies armed and paying them \$50 a day to help him. He was going to take that election. So they started beating up—deputies started beating up the GIs we had as poll-watchers. If they objected to anything they was doing, beating them up and putting them in jail. We had a GI headquarters down there and I come in down there about 8:30 [to the] GI headquarters. And Jim Buttrum was in there, the head of the GI ticket, you know, the campaign manager. And I had those men with me. They already had him scared to death. He locked the door on me. And I was hollering through the door at him. And he said, "My God! You gonna get us all killed, you gonna get us all killed." I said, "Well." Wham! I just kicked the door, took them on in there. I said, "We might do it, but what you can do Jim, if you don't like what we're doing, you can just leave out of here." Well that's what Jim Buttrum done, he left out of there. And ... in the meantime we got together. All those men that

we had running for office joined him and they all left. And just left me and my gang there. Well, that was all right with me, they didn't want to do no fighting. No way, they wasn't warriors. And ... they had been in the military, but they wasn't frontline warriors. But I had them, and I said, "Boys, get out. Get in touch with every GI you can now and get them back here. We're going to organize big."

So they took off and every GI they could find in McMinn County they got the word to. And the first thing you know there was about 200 of them there. And they was milling around out there and Pat Mansfield sent some deputies down there to see what we was doing. Well they come down where we was, but they didn't go back. We grabbed them and captured them and put them in an old tire place over there and made prisoners out of them. And we got seven of them down there, coming down there. Beat up some of them, because naturally that went with it. We whooped around on them a little bit. And took—disarmed them, just to give us that many more guns.

And, so Otto ["Bull"] Kennedy was the chairman of the Republican Party, he was helping them put mail ballots out. He came in. We were using his place over there, he had the tire place, to put our prisoners. He said, "What are you gonna do with all these men?" I said, "I don't know Otto we might just kill them." "Oh Lord, oh Lord, oh Lord! No! I'm not having nothing else to do with this. Me and my brother and son-in-law is leaving here." I said, "Don't leave, you might cause some of these GIs to leave off." He wasn't a GI you know, he was just giving moral support—the Republicans was. He wasn't giving no real support, no fighting or nothing. He didn't want to do that. And ... he said, "Bull, J.P., J.B. Adams, let's get out of here. We don't want to have no part of this." So he left and went across the street to the car, they had their wives over there in the cars. I walked over there and said, "Hell don't leave right now, we ain't got started yet." "We're leaving here." So they took off and went home. Got home, they pushed all the furniture up against the door and everything. (Laughter) Well, anyway I got some boys and we took them deputies out way back, out in the country, and stripped them all and whipped them, you know, tied them up and whipped—you know, with hickories and an ole club about the size of your thumb and, you know, give them a good whipping. Some of them out of Georgia, three of them was out of Georgia. And they thought we were going to kill them. They begged us not to kill them, and all that stuff. And ... they thought we were gonna take them out there and kill them. But we didn't. Thought about it, but we didn't. Ha! So we come on back. Then they shot a black man down there. We went up there where they'd shot him through the hip.

PIEHLER: This is Gillespie?

WHITE: Gillespie. And they said they was gonna take him to the hospital. They put him in the car. Didn't none of us have any cars. We'd borrowed a car and an old truck to take them deputies out from a hardware [store] down there, he let us have his car and a truck, big hardware [store] there on the corner. So they took him over by the jail and told the sheriff they'd shot a nigger. And they told him to take [him] on to the hospital. They took him on over to the hospital, old man Gillespie. And so they come out there with their guns up, those deputies ... hollered and said, "You damn GIs." They wanted to cuss us. I was standing there listening at them. I said, "Yeah, you won't be cussing us long." So I got them together down there again,

the GIs, I said, "Listen boys, they got all kinds of guns out there in that armory." I said, "Edsel," Edsel Underwood, he's the kind of playing my lieutenant you know, I said, "Take five or six of these men out there and break in that armory and get them guns." And I said, "Alright, here's the old man that's head of that armory. We'll see if he's got the keys." I got on one side of him and Hexel got on the other and I said, "Where's the damn keys to this armory out there?" He said, "You're playing with the government. You're playing with they government now." I said, "Where's the keys!" "In my left pocket, I ain't got the keys to that ammunition and them guns in there now." Well we got the keys to the front door off from him. (Laughs) And what was his name? His name was, uh, ... I can't think of his name right now. But, anyway he was a major out there. Anyway ... he gave us the keys to the front door and went out there accidentally opened the front and then busted in the rest of it and got sixty thirty-ought-six rifles—Enfields, and two sub—Thompson machine guns and all the ammunition we could carry.

And they brought them back down there to the GI headquarters in a big two-ton truck we had all that stuff in. And he said, "Bill here's all that stuff. What do you want to do with it?" I said, "I'm going to pass them rifles to these GIs here." I got up in the truck and passed the bandolier, ammunition, and, you know, and a rifle. I passed out all sixty of them and a bandolier of ammunition apiece. And still had some ammunition left over. We got the word then they was taking ballot boxes out of them precincts and they was talking them into the jail. I said, "Boy." I said, "Boy, they doing something. I'm glad they done that. Now all we got to do is whip on the jail." And they had two or three precincts they took up there to that jail. That was their bad mistake.

I got those sixty men, I said, "Boy let's go." And I led them around up towards the college and split them up there and had one take—Buck Landers take half of them, or almost half of them through the alley there to meet us up there up on that bank up above the jail, behind the Post Office. I took the rest of them around behind the college and around by the Post Office. And Buck got his [men] up there and lined them up there on the bank overlooking the jail. And I said, "Boys, ... I'm going to tell them to bring the ballot box out of there, and if they don't we're gonna open up on them." I hollered in there, I said, "You damn thief grabbers, bring them damn ballot boxes out of there." That's just what I said. He didn't make a move down there and finally one of them said, "By God I heard a bolt click." Down there—one of them grabbers did, you know—they started scattering around. And I had a pistol in my belt with a shotgun. I had a shotgun and a rifle. And I pulled the pistol out and started firing down there at them. Well, when I did that, all that whole line up there started firing down there in there. A lot of them got in the jail, some of them didn't, some of them got shot laying outside. And the battle started.

They began to shoot out of the jailhouse at us. And every time they'd shoot we'd open a volley of fire. You wouldn't believe how them sixty men with them thirty-ought-six rifles—and man, that scared them people to death down there in that jail down there, a lot of them. And the battle went on—raged on. And they was trying to slip out. But before, I'd sent six men down there on the corner to open fire in the courthouse to scare those deputies down there, lot of deputies down there, to keep them from joining the deputies up at the jailhouse. And they sat down there and fired several rounds through the courthouse. Held them all down at bay down there. Then I had sent some scouts behind the jail to see what they were doing, slipping anyone in the jail. Well one scout come back and told me some of them were coming out of the jail and running off. I

said, "That's good. Don't fire on them if they're running if they're not armed. Let them go." And he said, "Okay," and they went back around there and they didn't fire on them, they just let them go. But they was throwing their arms down leaving that jail behind.

And the firing kept on, and about every hour I asked if they were about ready to give up. And they wouldn't say nothing. So I had some boys go out and get some dynamite out of the old—well, the county had a place out there where they kept dynamite. I knew where it was, and said, "Go out there and get a case of dynamite." They went out there and got a case of dynamite. Some of the GIs went down and got some gasoline and oil mix and made Molotov cocktails out of it. They was throwing Molotov cocktails and they was hitting on top of them cars and burning them, first one place and then the other. And ... they couldn't get them all they way down there. They were big ole bottles, you know, they couldn't throw them that far. Anyway there were sitting out there next to them cars. And then we got to make dynamite, uh, bombs. We'd put two or three sticks of dynamite together and tape it together and put a cap in there and a fuse. And we'd rear back and throw them. Well, we couldn't get them all the way to the jail, but we got them out to them cars. They'd blow them cars up in the air and turn them over and land them back on the top. Several cars down there were blowing up.

I ... said, "We're going to have to get some charges up there on that jail." I said, "Make a couple charges there.... We'll go down there and we'll place some charges." So I made up a couple charges and I crawled up and put a charge on the jailhouse porch. Crawled back behind the building there and it went off and blew the porch up. I didn't get no answer out of them. It was getting long, we'd been fighting there, you know, for about four or five hours. I had this other big charge so I went up and laid it right up against the jail. It was a bigger one than the one I put on earlier. When it went off it jarred that jail. Woo! Like that. First thing I know here come a bunch of white flags out the door. (Laughter) They'd given up! So it was about sixty of them in there. They come out there with pistols hanging on their fingers and everything else. And we come off the bank up there and we'd take their pistols off their fingers and throw them out there. We beat up some of them, you know. One that shot the black, you know, we pitched him out there and they liked to kill him. They beat him almost to death. Then they cut one ... throat out there in that crowd and beat up several of them, you know. Some of them [were] beaten up pretty bad. Marched them down round the courthouse, marched them back, and put them in jail. All but twenty were beat up pretty bad, and they put them in the hospital. The one they'd cut the throat, they took him to the hospital. And they'd picked up a bunch of men whose arms were shot off, legs shot off, shot through the belly, you know, first one thing—there was several of them hurt pretty bad. But they all lived, you know, it was miracle. But they all lived, we wasn't trying to save their lives they just ...

PIEHLER: They were lucky.

WHITE: Got lucky. They got real lucky. I mean bad lucky. That's all there was to it. But we butchered a lot of them.... So it was over. Well, all these fellows that I told you, the one we had to run for office and their leaders like Kennedy, which was the Republican leader, you know. Jim Buttrum and Ralph Dougan and the little gang I had was the one that done it. But they come be-bopping back in there and they had a national hookup in there from the news. So uh, you want me to stop?

WISLON: Yes, for one second please.

WHITE: Alright.

WISLON: Alright.

PIEHLER: So you were saying about the leaders, Kennedy and others.

WHITE: Yeah, so they come in and said, “Your boys done it! Your boys done it!” I said, “Yeah we did do it, Otto.” He had Ralph Dougan the lawyer with him and Jim Buttrum. And me and my boys were sitting back there in the kitchen in the old jail. We were talking it over there. Ralph Dougan came back there and he said, “Boys listen. You boys broke in the armory out there and got all them guns. You wounded a lot of people out there and hurt them bad. You blowed up a lot of these cars. They’re gonna be in here trying to prosecute you, but if you don’t say nothing, they can’t find out who did it. I’ll get Otto and Jim Buttrum in here and some of you boys get up here and make statements in the newspapers.” The newspaper reporters were getting in there. “On this national hookup here on the radio, we’ll make them, make all the entire—let them make all the statements, let them get some credit, give them some credit. They got sworn affidavits they wasn’t even here in this. And they can get by with it. You boys can’t....” I thought that sounded pretty reasonable. I thought he was trying to help us you see. I said, “Okay. We’re not gonna say nothing to those newspaper reporters and that hookup there anyways.” We already made our minds not to say anything. I said, “The FBI and everybody outta be up in here,” which they was. And if they can’t find who done it, wasn’t nothing they could do about it.” But shoot, they knew who done it.

Anyway the papers gobbled up all our tale and made heroes out of them. That’s what they wanted because they were connected with the Republican Party. The GIs did it but they wanted some credit for it you see, so they could run for office. And they did run for office and they were elected. The ole boys that done it never got a bit of credit. They never got anything out of it. Things happen that way. That’s what I say about them battles. Happens that way in them battles too.

PIEHLER: What about the deputies? Was there a problem with the deputies after the GI—after the battle of Athens?

WHITE: What about what?

PIEHLER: The deputies. Because that had been one of the things that had caused ...

WHITE: They put GI deputies in. They put me in as a deputy. Because, one of the reasons they put me in as deputies was to scare them GIs. (Laughs) They wanted me to control the GIs. Which they did—they fired into them people’s houses and everything else. And that was my job to get out there and keep the GIs straight. And I did. I had sixteen fights in one weekend. Fighting GIs, keeping them from shooting them people’s houses and beating up people. My fists got so sore I couldn’t stick them in my pocket. I had knots on my head just like a seed potato.

Couldn't hardly lay down at night fighting them GIs. If you fight them with your fists, they had respect for you. But you didn't use blackjacks or guns on them. If you did they'd gang up on you and kill you. But I had enough sense to know. But I was stout, big, strong, and stout. They couldn't whip me noways. I whipped two or three of them each time. So, you know, they respected me.

PIEHLER: How long were you a deputy?

WHITE: I was deputy about eight years. And finally got tired of it and quit it. Bought me a lodge in the mountains and went to the mountains.

PIEHLER: Now were the deputies, when you were a deputy, were they still paid by a fee-basis?

WHITE: Fee basis.

PIEHLER: That continued after '46.

WHITE: Yeah, it did for four years and then they got on the salary. The last four years I was on salary.

WILSON: Before you left to go to World War II, had Paul Cantrell already—had he been in office?

WHITE: Yeah, he'd been sheriff. They'd picked Paul Cantrell up to run against the GIs because Paul Cantrell was a well-known popular ... man in the country and he was a Democrat too. And that was a Democratic administration. And he'd won three elections in a row for deputy and then he was a United States Senator when this was going on, they run him. He was a United States' Senator—I mean not a United States, but a ...

PIEHLER: State Senator.

WILSON: State Senator.

WHITE: ... state Senator. And he was very popular. And they thought if anybody could beat the GIs it'd be him. So they run him against the GIs. Now, Paul Cantrell didn't have anything to do with them thugs and things like that because that was Pat Mansfield. He was the one that brought the liquor and the gambling and the thugs and the things into McMinn County. He was out of Georgia. So ... he was the man we were after, wasn't Paul Cantrell. We didn't even know Paul Cantrell, he was a State Senator and he hadn't been around here. He wasn't around here none. GIs didn't even know him. They wouldn't have known him if they'd seen him. But they knew Paul Cantrell—I mean Pat Mansfield, but they didn't know Paul Cantrell.

WILSON: When Pat Mansfield was in office before you left, were they stealing the ballot boxes and stuff like that then? Or did that start while you were gone?

WHITE: Oh yeah. They'd been doing that for a while. They even said Paul Cantrell done some of that. I don't know if Paul Cantrell did, you know, but some of them Republicans said he did. Of course, they'd say he did whether he did nor not.

PIEHLER: You'd mentioned, you know, after coming back from the war you had problems with the deputies, but what about before the war? Did you or your friends ever have any problems with the deputies, growing up, being harassed, being arrested?

WHITE: No.

PIEHLER: No, so you didn't have any run-ins before?

WHITE: No we was too young. See, I went in when I was seventeen. I'd been working in Alcoa ever since I was fifteen. I was a steel rigger.

PIEHLER: When did you leave school?

WHITE: When did I leave school? I left school the first year. I couldn't—barely could read and write. I didn't learn to read or write good until I got out of the Marines and got to studying. Before I couldn't read and write.

PIEHLER: Did you take—did you use any of the GI Bill?

WHITE: Yeah! I used part of the GI Bill.

PIEHLER: What did you use it for?

WHITE: I went up here and took a test and went to college. I had to study on my own to take this test.

PIEHLER: So did you go to Tennessee-Wesleyan?

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: For how long?

WHITE: A year, and then quit.... I didn't seem to be getting anywhere. (Laughs) You know, you take a man that's been through all that. I was out of place up there, you know, with all them kids.

PIEHLER: Because, didn't it seem—it sounds like you didn't fit in with the younger students.

WHITE: No, I didn't fit in with the other students.

PIEHLER: What else do you remember about your year in college?

WHITE: Well, I started to play football, then I decided not to. I just remember taking a test and I couldn't pass. And I remember trying, but I just didn't have it.... (Phones rings –Tape paused) I told them I'd like to get some gas and go to my grandfather's funeral. And the fellow that owned the ration board said, "Boy don't you know there's a war on? You can't have no gas." And I still had wound in my side that wasn't healed up. I looked at him funny and said, "Well I just want five gallons." He said, "You can't have it." I said, "Alright, that's alright." I just turned around and walked out, you see. Well, I walked down there and I met a fellow down there on the street and I said, "I tried to go up in there and get some gas, but that ration boy wouldn't let me have it." He said, "Well that's easy Bill." He said, "There stands the chief of police over there selling gas stamps [for] rationing. Go over there and give him five dollars for one and he'll give it to you." I said, "Well I'll try that." I went over there and asked the chief of police and said, "You got any gas rations?" He said, "Yeah how much gas you want?" I said, "I'd like to get about ten gallons." He said, "Well okay that's five dollars." And he gave me a ration stamp. So I went and got gas and went to my grandfather's funeral. That's the way it worked you see.

WILSON: Who got that money? Did the money go to—did he just put that in his ...

WHITE: He put it in his pocket.

WILSON: And so that—was that happening all over Tennessee?

WHITE: Yeah, that was happening all over the place, yeah. Them politicians getting them gas stamps and selling them to you. Shoes stamps, gas stamps, sugar stamps, all kinds of stamps, any kind of stamp you wanted. See it was something else, I'm telling you, about the way they was operating. They had ... liquor houses, they had whorehouses, had gambling joints all over the county. Selling gas stamps and sugar stamps and every other kind of stamps to GIs that come back over here out of the service and wanted to come in on furlough. You didn't get no free ride. Don't care how much fighting you done for them, no free rides. You couldn't even drink a bottle or two of beer without going to jail. It was awful.

PIEHLER: Now when you went to other parts of the country during your service how were you treated?

WHITE: We were treated nice. That's what blew our minds. We were in New Zealand, Australia, and over here in the islands and stuff. They didn't do that to us. They was civilized.

PIEHLER: Because a lot of veterans I've interviewed said they'd be in different parts of the country and people they didn't know would invite them to dinner.

WHITE: They did! They did us.

PIEHLER: People would buy drinks for you in the bar.

WHITE: Buy drinks for you in the bar and there wasn't no ... waiting on you to come out and put you in jail or nothing else. Only place you had anything like that was right here in your own

country that you were fighting for. The people you was trying to save. And you had that. We knew that there was something bad wrong when we got back over here. And what was wrong [was], we had no freedom. We were over there fighting and being killed every day for freedom and we didn't have none. We didn't have no freedom. So we had to make us some freedom. Had to come back and fight another war to get a little freedom.

WILSON: You said in your book that people in Athens—when you all came back, that wasn't publicized in the newspaper and the DPA what was going on people just had to talk, and that's how they found out what was going on. Was it because Mansfield had taken over the DPA?

WHITE: Yeah. Mansfield had complete control of everything, schools and everything else. You couldn't even get hired as a schoolteacher without the their okay, or any other job.

WILSON: Did the DPA start publishing when you started having rallies and meetings and stuff at all, or did that not ...

WHITE: No, they didn't help us none. No.

PIEHLER: I want to back up a little and ... ask you more about growing up, because it sounds like you didn't want to leave Knoxville when you were six, that you reluctantly left Knoxville.

WHITE: Yeah, I did.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about Knoxville? I know it was very long ago ...

WHITE: I remember I had a nice boyhood up there. I didn't have all this harassment and stuff that comes with this place down here. I'd go to school up there and didn't have to fight my way to school and fight my way back home.

PIEHLER: What part of Knoxville did you grow up in before you moved, do you remember?

WHITE: I remember it was kinda North Knoxville.

PIEHLER: I'm ... curious about you parents. You mentioned your father worked for the electric company. What about your mother?

WHITE: She was a housewife.

PIEHLER: Do you know how your parents met?

WHITE: They met, gosh I don't know in church, I guess. Up there in one of those little old churches up there on Toccoa, up there on the Little Tennessee River.

PIEHLER: What church? What church did they go to?

WHITE: First Baptist Church. One hundred percent Baptist, hard-shelled Baptist. And ... my daddy was Scotch-Irish, my mother was German and Cherokee. So I've got a bad mixture.
(Laughter)

PIEHLER: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

WHITE: I have three sisters and two brothers.

PIEHLER: And your brothers went into the service?

WHITE: Yeah, all my brothers went into the service, World War II. My daddy was in World War I.

PIEHLER: Was your dad—did your dad see overseas service?

WHITE: Yeah, he was overseas.

PIEHLER: What was his unit?

WHITE: He was cavalry.

PIEHLER: Cavalry?

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What did your father tell you and your brothers about the war?

WHITE: Didn't tell us anything. Didn't even talk about it. I'm the only one that will talk about it.

PIEHLER: Your brothers didn't talk about the war—don't talk about it?

WHITE: No, they wouldn't talk about it. They wasn't in it like I was in it.

PIEHLER: Where were they?

WHITE: Well, one of them was in the Air Force and the other was in the Army. Marine, Air Force, and the Army. They wasn't frontline warriors. I was the only frontline warrior in the whole family. My daddy was over there in it, but he wasn't a frontline warrior.

PIEHLER: Did your dad join the American Legion?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: Did your dad join the American Legion or the VFW?

WHITE: Oh yeah, he was in the American Legion. And I believe he was in the VFW too. But I was in command of the American Legion and in command of the VFW post.

PIEHLER: Your dad, was he able to keep working full-time during the Depression.

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like he didn't make a lot of money.

WHITE: He didn't. He made less than five dollars a day. I'd say he made three or four dollars a day.

PIEHLER: Now, he was an electrician?

WHITE: Yeah, he was an electrician. but he ran a ...

PIEHLER: A sub station. You said a sub station. What kind of training did he have for that?

WHITE: He went to the University of Tennessee. Yeah, he was educated. But didn't none of us go up too far in school, but my sisters did. They graduated from high school and I got a brother that graduated from high school, but I just started and didn't go. I went on in the service.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned that you didn't have a lot of money growing up during the Depression.

WHITE: Didn't have any money.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned you didn't smoke, when did you take up smoking, because I noticed you did smoke during our interview?

WHITE: I took up during the service. They issued us cigarettes in there and told us to smoke. That, that—they said it would settle our nerves, and it did. And I learned how to smoke there. (Laughs) That's government! Now the government's trying to take them away from me.

WILSON: You said you enlisted in the Marines after Pearl Harbor. Why did you decide after that? Were you angry, or was it because ...

WHITE: I was mad, I was mad because they attacked Pearl Harbor. And I wanted to go in the service. I wanted to get in there and fight. I did. I knowed I made a mistake when I got there, but I did.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because—I mean, Pearl Harbor was December 7, '41, what did you know about the war before Pearl Harbor?

WHITE: Didn't know anything about it. I was just a dumb hillbilly, East Tennessee hillbilly was all I was. I was just plumb dumb, couldn't hardly read and write or nothing else. Couldn't

write a letter home. Couldn't do nothing else. And that's one reason they didn't give me nothing. Who's gonna give an ole dumb East Tennessee hillbilly anything? You know, and especially one that'd talk back to you. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned in terms of being in boot camp and the power of the sergeants, what do you remember about your first drill instructor?

WHITE: I didn't like him at all. I hated him. My drill instructor, I hated. I almost got into it with him two or three times. They called me up there and told me they were going to kick me out of the Marines if I didn't straighten up. I didn't like that now. I straightened up a little bit, not much.

PIEHLER: ... Why were you fighting with them and why were they against you? What would be—any particular story you recount of it?

WHITE: Well, I was an independent. I was a real independent. And I didn't like authority. And I was bad about expressing my opinion and bad about telling whether I liked it or whether I didn't like it.

PIEHLER: So, you—if they said—you would answer them when they didn't expect an answer, I get a sense?

WHITE: That's right. Just like I answered that old captain when he said something. That lieutenant when he said something I didn't think was right and I didn't think it was the way to go.

PIEHLER: Did you do a lot of KP duty and do a lot of guard and ...

WHITE: I done a lot of that, yeah. That still didn't break me. I was just who I was, that's all I was. Nobody else.

PIEHLER: But you were a drill instructor.

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How were you different from the drill instructor you had? Or were you different?

WHITE: I wasn't much different. I was really brainwashed (laughs) into being a drill instructor and stuff like that, you know. In the Marines, you know, after so long they start trying to break you down a little, but they never did actually really break me down the way I thought. But—but they put me on bread and water and everything else, the brig. Thirty days of bread and water and everything else you know.

PIEHLER: So that helped, that worked, that was ...

WHITE: Yeah, that helped a little bit.

PIEHLER: What about the Marines you first met when you were in boot camp—what were they like?

WHITE: They were about like myself, you know. Some of them were different, you know. Some were from up North, Texas, and everywhere. But they was all people like myself just went through that Depression. And a lot of them didn't get fed real good. They didn't get all they wanted to eat and all that stuff. We got enough to eat, but they didn't get no candy, no nothing like that, you know. They were just old hardcore people.

PIEHLER: When you were growing up did you ever go to the movies?

WHITE: If I could ever get a dime to go on I did.

PIEHLER: What—do even remember ...

WHITE: I would pick berries all day to get a dime to go to the movies. Pick blackberries all day and then go out and sell them [for] a nickel a gallon.

PIEHLER: That's a lot of work.

WHITE: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: That's a lot of berries for a gallon.

WHITE: That's a lot of berries for five cents a gallon.

PIEHLER: What type of movies did you like?

WHITE: I liked Westerns. Shoot 'em up movies, that's all I'd go see.

PIEHLER: Did you ever see Tom Mix growing up?

WHITE: Oh yeah, I watched Tom Mix a lot. All them old Westerns.

PIEHLER: What about any war movies, did you ever go to any of the war movies?

WHITE: They didn't have no war movies I knew of.

PIEHLER: You never saw, say, All Quiet on the Western Front?

WHITE: Yeah. Most of them were Western movies.

PIEHLER: You really liked Westerns?

WHITE: Yeah, Westerns and ... shoot 'em up movies. That's all I cared anything about. But I didn't see no war movies. Only thing I saw like a war movie was Gone With the Wind.

PIEHLER: So you saw Gone With the Wind when it came out?

WHITE: Yup, I saw Gone With the Wind when it came out?

PIEHLER: What about the radio, did your parents own a radio?

WHITE: Yeah, they had a radio and it had the Green Hornet and "Hi-ho Silver"—The Lone Ranger, and all that on it. We just sat there glued to it all the time when that was on. And I'd have rabbits set out in rabbit boxes. Caught rabbits and squirrel hunted for meat and picked berries—hoed the corn, put in a big garden. I helped fatten a couple of hogs, had a cow with milk. And that was our living. Plus what my daddy made, you know, three or four dollars a day. That was just enough to buy food and stuff we didn't raise and maybe a few clothes for the kids. We didn't have all that much clothes. We got one pair of shoes a year and we wore them out. We had to walk sideways before we got another pair. And you had maybe two pairs of pants, two shirts. And you didn't take no baths in the winter because it was too cold. Went all the way without taking a bath. All of them did. And the only time you took a bath was when you could draw enough water out of the spring or out of the old faucet outside and put it in a tub and let the sun warm it up. And then you got in there and take a bath. You didn't take too many baths in the winter. So you're taught about hard times.

PIEHLER: Now, did your house have indoor plumbing?

WHITE: No indoor plumbing.

PIEHLER: So you had an outhouse.

WHITE: Yeah, had an outhouse. Yes sir.

PIEHLER: 'Cause it's a very different world than Brandi who grew up in Athens—I mean, this is ...

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

PIEHLER: When you were growing up, what was the furthest from Athens you had traveled?

WHITE: Oh, three miles, four miles.

PIEHLER: So ... had you ever been to Georgia?

WHITE: No, never was in Georgia. Never was out of this town. But my daddy had ... an old car. We'd go to Madisonville to see some of his people, brothers.

PIEHLER: So probably the furthest north is Madisonville and Knoxville before you went to war?

WHITE: Never did go back to Knoxville.

PIEHLER: You never went back for visits?

WHITE: No.

PIEHLER: And did you ever make it to, say, Nashville?

WHITE: No, never went to Nashville. We didn't go nowhere, except Madisonville. He had some brothers and things up there and kinfolk, and that's the only reason we went up there.

PIEHLER: What about going to Chattanooga?

WHITE: We didn't go to Chattanooga either.

PIEHLER: So Athens was the world.

WHITE: Yeah, it was the whole world. There wasn't nothing else.

PIEHLER: So when you went into the Marines you—this—even traveling to Parris Island is a real—that was the first time you'd ever seen the ocean?

WHITE: Oh yeah, when I went to San Diego, California.

PIEHLER: Oh your boot camp wasn't Parris Island?

WHITE: No, it was San Diego, California. Camp Lejeune.

PIEHLER: So what was the trip like out to Camp Lejeune.

WHITE: We was just riding a train all the way out there and back, just peeping out the windows, that was all there was to it. Didn't see nothing a whole lot. You got out there you saw the ocean and everything you had to stretch your neck to see the ocean.

PIEHLER: I once did an interview with someone and he said—he remembered—was a New Yorker, but he was in Atlantic City for training with the Air Force. And he said that when the Nebraskans came to Atlantic City, even though they were in ranks, they broke ranks and just stared at the ocean because they were so—they had never seen the ocean. What was your ...

WHITE: No, I'd never seen the ocean.

PIEHLER: What'd you think of the ocean once you saw it?

WHITE: I just thought it was a great big pile of water. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So you were ...

WHITE: As far as you could see was water. Biggest thing I'd seen was a pond.... That was a lot of water out there. It was unreal, you know, that much water and them waves coming in and all that. It was something else to see it. But I didn't want none of the rest of them to think I was a dummy and that I'd never seen that before. You know, you kept that to yourself. But I hadn't, hadn't ever seen anything....

PIEHLER: You mentioned you had a hard time reading and writing. What about your fellow Marines?

WHITE: Oh, a lot of them could read and write. But, a lot of them—some of them couldn't.

PIEHLER: Did anyone ever write letters for other Marines home?

WHITE: Write letters for them?

PIEHLER: Yeah, some who couldn't write letters ...

WHITE: I had them write my letters home. Some other Marines that had maybe a high school education or something.

PIEHLER: Did you ever get—I know in boot camp they never let you out, but after you finished boot camp, did you ever get out to do any travel, any sightseeing in California, any passes?

WHITE: No, they just kept training me all the time.

PIEHLER: So after your basic where did you go next?

WHITE: After boot camp?

PIEHLER: Yeah, after Lejeune.

WHITE: I just went into this Special Forces and started training, night and day.

PIEHLER: Now, I'm curious, Special Forces—I mean you'd been a troublemaker it sounds like, I mean, they gave you thirty days bread and water ...

WHITE: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: ... which they don't do for the average recruit.

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: Why do you think—did you volunteer for Special Forces?

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Why did you volunteer?

WHITE: Because I wanted to. I wanted in there. I wanted in where it was the roughest. I was wanting the roughest thing I could get into.

PIEHLER: And did you have to do any convincing for them to let you in?

WHITE: Any convincing for them to let me in?

PIEHLER: Yes.

WHITE: No, they wanted me! I was the kind of man they wanted.

PIEHLER: How did the people in Special Forces you were training with differ from the people in the Marines you were in boot camp with?

WHITE: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Were they different?

WHITE: They were tough, mean and tough. Yeah, sure was.

PIEHLER: What about the officers?

WHITE: Well, they was kinda rugged type people too. You take our commander he'd fought with the Japs against the Russians. And he'd been in the ... Chinese Army. People like that. Listen, when you got in there you were with a bunch of professionals.

PIEHLER: So he really had seen ...

WHITE: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Do you remember his name?

WHITE: Colonel Feller was his name. Called him Old Silvertip.

PIEHLER: And he was the real thing. Because you've said some less than complimentary things about similar officers, but he on the other hand was the real ...

WHITE: Yeah, yeah, he was the real McCoy.

PIEHLER: What was he like in battle?

WHITE: I don't know. He was pretty well, you know, knew what he was doing. He was one hundred percent professional soldier. But we had sergeants and things in there that was professional soldiers, you know, that had fought in other wars and things. Uh, they were made up of a lot of professional people. And we went in a while and we was trained like they was.

PIEHLER: What about your sergeant when you were in Special Forces? Do you remember his name?

WHITE: I don't remember his name, but I remember him well.

PIEHLER: What was he like?

WHITE: He was just a big old tough sergeant that's all. That's all you could make out of him. He'd been in a long time and knew what he was doing. We didn't give him no back talk because he knew what he was doing. We didn't. We listened to him. We didn't give him no back talk. They wasn't the kind of people you back-talked, no ways.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you learned things—stuff in combat. One thing was that if you bayoneted someone if the blood was still coming out he wasn't dead. What else did you learn, in a sense, what didn't they teach you in boot camp and even in Special Forces about combat?

WHITE: Well, we learned that we had to lay down and sleep in rock piles, swamps, and everything else and foxholes full of water. We learned that ... we had to be especially alert all the time.

PIEHLER: You mentioned smell.

WHITE: And smelling, and eyes—seeing with your eyes and hearing. All got thirty percent better. And you learned to kill. And you learned to be good at it. Be better than the enemy or you didn't survive.

PIEHLER: ... It sounds like you saw some Marines who didn't learn the lessons quick enough.

WHITE: They died.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

WHITE: They died. It's awful, but that's what happened. If you don't learn the lessons quick enough you die. If you don't learn to get up behind something whether you see anything or not, you die. They're always out there lurking for the man that exposes himself. And when they see him, they kill him. You don't expose yourself anywhere you're at.

WILSON: When you came back did you keep in touch with any of your fellow Marines?

WHITE: No. No I didn't keep in touch with any of them. I done already seen all I wanted to see of them.

PIEHLER: So have you ever run into anyone you served with?

WHITE: Nuh huh. Most of the people I served with, you know, wasn't from around here. They were from Texas and New York and other places. Them people from New York, they made pretty good fighters. Kentucky, they made pretty good fighters. And Texas made pretty good fighters. And ... Arkansas, Georgia, they was good fighters.

PIEHLER: Any part of the country that didn't make good fighters? I don't want to pick out a state but ...

WHITE: I don't want to pick out no state, but I'll tell you the best ones. I told you the best ones. Southern boys were the best fighters. New Yorkers come in second. New Yorkers were just about like Southerners, ain't much difference in them.

PIEHLER: Because you hadn't met many New Yorkers, or Texans, or—so there must have been a lot of funny accents.

WHITE: There was funny accents. Those New Yorkers.

PIEHLER: Yeah, New York you could have a lot of different funny accents because there's a difference between a Bronx and Brooklyn accent.

WHITE: Yeah, I know there are. Most Irish were from Brooklyn. Most Irish are from Brooklyn. And some Italians you know. They made pretty fine soldiers them Italians did, you know. I mean they'd kill you and that's what you wanted. (Laughs) I had a lot of fun out of them old Italians.

PIEHLER: Did you ever see any chaplains when you were in the service?

WHITE: What?

PIEHLER: Where there any chaplains?

WHITE: Yeah, most of them Catholics. I went to Catholic church while I was on Guadalcanal, believe it or not. The Catholic priests, you know, had ...

PIEHLER: Had mass.

WHITE: They had a mass I went to.

PIEHLER: Your parents were pretty hard-shelled Baptists, what would they have thought of you going to Catholic mass?

WHITE: They wouldn't think much of it. But I'm about a half Catholic now. I like Catholics. There's nothing wrong with them Catholics. Don't care what you say, there's nothing wrong with them. They're good fighters, good people, and I liked them. Those Baptists don't like them, but, you know, that ain't got nothing to do with me.

PIEHLER: So are you still a Baptist or ...

WHITE: No. Part Baptist.

PIEHLER: ... part Baptist.

WHITE: ... and part Catholic.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like those priests left quite an impression on you.

WHITE: They did, they did.

PIEHLER: 'Cause I've been told that Catholic priests really looked after their own.

WHITE: They do, they do. Yeah, they left an impression on me. I've got two daughters that are Catholics.

PIEHLER: When did you start talking about the war? Was it easy for you to talk about the war when you got back?

WHITE: Not very easy. It was a long time before I started talking about it. I was a different person when I come back. I was—I was bitter, real bitter. Man didn't talk to me much. He couldn't say much to me when I first got back because I'd hurt him. Took me five or ten years to get over that.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have a hard time going to sleep when you were first back?

WHITE: Yeah, couldn't sleep on that bed, had to get on that floor and sleep. Bed was too soft. I'd get down on the floor and sleep, ha ha!

PIEHLER: Because veterans have also talked about the loud noises that came at the wrong time.

WHITE: There was. Lot of loud noises come at the wrong time, hard to sleep. Listen, I'm going to tell you something. I didn't think much of her when she first said that, old Lady Roosevelt, she said people like us, me, should be put into a camp and be re-evaluated before they turn them out on the public. I was mad at her because she said that, but as the time went on after I was out, I seen she was right. That we would kill. And we didn't take no crap from nobody. And I knew that she was right.

PIEHLER: I interviewed a Marine, actually Army, that fought in the Pacific and he described that when he had been back at college his first semester, he had been there one year, first class the professor started picking on him and he threatened to slug him.

WHITE: Oh he would slug him. I would. I'd slug you in a New York minute if you even said howdy to me. Just according to how you looked me. You better not look at me wrong, because you would have to pick yourself off the floor or off the ground. And I was bad about that. Wore them out, fighting.

PIEHLER: You had had the GI Bill and it had gotten cut off. You had mentioned you had taken the "fifty-two and twenty club," the mortgage and tried to go back to college. Did that make you feel any better about the country?

WHITE: Not really. I mean you'd have somebody in there that didn't—well, you had these young students in there and you'd say—like I made a statement in English class, talking about—I said, "Well," I said, "You're talking about foreigners. They don't have any background in this country so they don't think all that much about this country. You have to have a long background before you love this country and respect this country." Hey, some of those students wanted to jump down my throat because I said that. But I was right. They didn't know what I was talking about. They said, "Well they're citizens. They've got as much right as you." But that wasn't what I was telling them, you know. So stuff like that, you know. You—I don't know where their problem was coming from, but they had a problem, I thought. Because I know those people don't have as much respect or love for this country like I loved it. They wasn't willing to give their lives up for it, but I was. And they wasn't in there in that room either. And I knew it. I was a different kind of animal than they was. And they didn't understand me and I didn't understand them.

PIEHLER: Do you think people now understand you or the World War II veterans?

WHITE: No. They don't understand. And they won't understand. They never will understand them. They haven't been through what they went through. How can they understand something if they haven't had any contact with or been through it? People—people ain't gonna go out there and say here I am, I'm gonna kill or you're gonna kill me, and let it be like that. They don't do that. But they did. They did. They was the best of the best and the bravest of the brave. That's what they were. You ain't gonna find no more like it. Never.

PIEHLER: Did you stay in the reserves?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: Did you stay in the reserves with the Marines? Did you join the reserves?

WHITE: No.

PIEHLER: So you didn't face the chance of being called up in Korea?

WHITE: No, I didn't care if I was called up, but I didn't join the reserves—go to Chatanooga and back and forth with it, you know, I didn't do that.

PIEHLER: What about when Korea came along?

WHITE: What about it?

PIEHLER: Did you—did you think you might go?

WHITE: Well, no, I didn't think I'd go to Korea because they done already kicked me out of there. They ain't gonna have me back in it, you know. They said I was, they said I was gonna get back in it, which was a lie. They said I had battle fatigue and I'd want to fight all the time. Well, so what? That ain't battle fatigue, but that's what the doctor said it was.

PIEHLER: Before you got out of the service, he said you had battle fatigue?

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What about when Vietnam came along, obviously you weren't going to get called up, but what did you think of the Vietnam War at the time, not now, but back in the 1960s?

WHITE: I thought they were wasting their time.

PIEHLER: Back in '64-65?

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Why did you think we were wasting our time?

WHITE: Because I knew we couldn't whip them. I knew they weren't gonna run them out of there. There was too many of them. Not enough of us. And they wasn't fighting right. You don't just go in there, just to run a few skirmishes, you go in there to fight. If they went in there to fight, had a front line, fought those people the way they fought them in World War II they might have won. But they weren't gonna win doing what they were doing. I knew that. I had enough sense, you know, to know that.

PIEHLER: So you had the sense in '64-65 that this wasn't going to work out?

WHITE: I knew it wasn't gonna work out. I knew that when it started. I don't know why they didn't know it. But I knew it.

PIEHLER: Talk a little bit about politics. Your parents, were they Republicans or Democrats?

WHITE: Well my daddy voted for Roosevelt. He liked Roosevelt, but was a Republican.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. But he did like Roosevelt?

WHITE: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What did you think of Roosevelt?

WHITE: I liked Roosevelt because he brought us out of that Depression we was in. And we were in a bad one, it was a rough go for everybody. He brought us out of that and I liked it. But I'm a Republican, but I don't, you know—In fact, I've been into politics, politics all the way around. (Shuffles through papers) Now there's a list of those we got out of jail there, the prisoners—Pat Mansfield's—some prisoners. There's a little old article that's pretty good on that. That's the ones we got out of jail when they surrendered.

PIEHLER: And these are the ages of the deputies?

WHITE: What?

PIEHLER: The numbers here, this is their ages? It has, for example, "Garnett Rodin, 28, Athens."

WHITE: Yeah, that was ages, yeah.

PIEHLER: Looking at some of these ages, some of these deputies should have been in the service.

WHITE: Yeah. (Looks through papers and pictures) There's a lot of things and pictures and things in here that [President Ronald] Reagan sent me. I was on his staff.

PIEHLER: During his administration?

WHITE: Yeah, I was one of the main—I was on his staff to start with when he was first elected, governor's staff.

PIEHLER: In California?

WHITE: No, not the governor's staff, the presidential staff.

PIEHLER: What was your position?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: What was your position?

WHITE: My position? Well that was—what he had me do was report and stuff on an area whether it was right or wrong, you know, and all that kind of stuff. What you call a task force, presidential task force.

PIEHLER: Do you remember the name of the task force that you were on?

WHITE: Well he just had one task force. I'm trying to find this stuff here where I ... There are pictures taken in the Battle of Athens. Let's see. I've got them in here, I've just got so much stuff in here I've just overlooked them. Let's see what that Fort was. I got a lot of—there's the Battle of Athens. This is—most of this stuff is the Battle of Athens. I got a lot of write-ups from magazines and stuff in here. When you get all this stuff together you got more stuff than you need. That's about the Battle of Athens. (Shows article) Well, I don't see them, I don't know what I done with them. I had them in there. Surely I didn't—it's not in there, unless it's in with this stuff here. They sent me a whole lot of stuff. I got so much stuff on that task force he sent me. See I was with this task force all the time he was President. He sent me a lot of stuff. Gosh, I don't know where it went to. I got no idea where all that stuff went to in the—about the task force. Anyways it was a pretty big honor to be on it, you know. He sent me a medal and all that kind of stuff and I don't know where it is, medals and letters.

PIEHLER: Did you ever meet Reagan?

WHITE: Yeah.

WILSON: When he came to Athens?

WHITE: Huh?

WILSON: Did you meet him when he was in Athens?

WHITE: Yeah, and I liked Reagan, he was a good fellow.

PIEHLER: Brandi and I were talking before we came over and she said when she was growing up, particularly in school, she never heard of the Battle of Athens. She was never taught [it] in school. Why do you think nobody talks about the Battle of Athens? Now that may change if there's a movie that comes out, then everyone will talk about it.

WHITE: Oh, that movie's coming out, I got a letter on that movie. I was going to show you it to you—they wanted me to sign a contract on it. And I don't know what I did with it. I don't keep up with all this ...

PIEHLER: Do you know who was making the movie?

WHITE: Well _____ it was, but I think they turned it over to somebody else and after that ... see if that ain't it there. I knew I had it somewhere

PIEHLER: (Reading from a letter) "I am a screenwriter working with some producers that are making a movie about your battle. Dan Kaus." Do you mind if I write down his name?

WHITE: No, no go ahead. He's a historian. I got another letter besides that one. They called me three or four times wanting to know how I felt. If I felt the same way about guns I felt back then, that people ought to have guns and stuff. I said, "Yeah, more stronger than ever."

PIEHLER: I noticed you have two caps that are hanging here, "Arm the NRA." When did you have your first gun when you were growing up? How old were you?

WHITE: I'd say ten or eleven years old.

PIEHLER: Did your dad and you go hunting?

WHITE: Yeah, he was—when he was a boy a lot. But after he got growing, he didn't do much hunting. I've done hunting 'til I was fifty-five years old. I killed a lot of bear and boar, stuff like that you know. Spear them, I'd spear them with a spear.

PIEHLER: You mentioned that—before you got started, you mentioned a memory of the University of Tennessee, you really liked bear meat.

WHITE: Yeah, I'll tell you. I've got a lot of articles written about that. I've been in a lot of them magazines. There's Joe Foss, he's a good friend of mine now. Do you remember Joe Foss, World War II ace? I met him on Guadalcanal.

PIEHLER: (Reading) "Becomes a brigadier general then becomes governor of South Dakota."

WHITE: He was one of the greatest aces we had in our time. He was a friend of mine. Come up—used to come up and see me a few times, ole Joe did. He was something else. He was a governor of out there where they had Wounded Knee at—he came to Tennessee. Ole Joe was the governor of ...

WILSON: I think it said South Dakota.

WHITE: Huh?

WISLON: South Dakota?

WHITE: South? North Dakota wasn't it? Governor of South Dakota or North Dakota.

WILSON: South Dakota.

WHITE: Yeah, South Dakota. He was a jammed up good fellow, Joe Foss was. I liked Joe Foss.

PIEHLER: Can we take you to lunch today?

WHITE: Now, there's a good picture.

PIEHLER: This is a picture of you as, (reads) “Bill White, former Marine sergeant, one of the leaders in the active rights. Surveys campaign poster, GI reform ticket, which was ... declared Sheriff, declared elected.”

WHITE: Yeah.

WILSON: Can I make some copies of some of the newspaper articles that you have?

WHITE: Yeah, go through there and get what you want.

PIEHLER: Could we take you to lunch today?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: Would you like to go to lunch, we’d love to take you to lunch.

WHITE: Well yeah, I’d love to. And I can talk to you a lot longer.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, ... and you could talk off tape too. We won’t tape you during lunch.

WHITE: I wish I could see where that bear, bear and hog was. I had a big article of that in Outdoors [Magazine].

PIEHLER: Before we end the interview, I just want to ask you, when did your kids have a sense of what you had done in the war? When did you start to tell your kids what ...

WHITE: All their lives.

PIEHLER: So you did tell your kids growing up?

WHITE: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I told them.

PIEHLER: Because a lot of veterans—I ask them did they tell their kids, or talk to their kids, but ... [the children often] have no idea what their parents, their fathers did.

WHITE: No, I didn’t tell them what I did, I told them what WE did.

PIEHLER: Yeah, “we” did. But they knew what the war was like?

WHITE: Yeah, I told them what the war was like and everything?

PIEHLER: Did any of your children go into the service?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: Did any of your children go into the service?

WHITE: Yeah, I had one in Vietnam.

PIEHLER: When did he serve?

WHITE: Huh?

PIEHLER: When did your son serve in Vietnam?

WHITE: Well, he joined ...

PIEHLER: The Marines?

WHITE: No, he joined the Air Force in Vietnam. And was in there four years, a little over four years, in Germany and Vietnam. And he went in when he was 18. Well, I guess, twenty something years ago, but he was murdered and robbed.

PIEHLER: In Vietnam or ...

WHITE: No, here.

PIEHLER: Here?

WHITE: Yeah, three men broke in his house and killed him and robbed him. Yeah. They're in the penitentiary now. They got to go to the penitentiary because I didn't get a hold of them ... before they went. And they didn't—they had guards down there trying to protect them old boys. Every time I'd go down to the courthouse they'd check me down and everything else.

PIEHLER: Still today. Do they still check you down today?

WHITE: No. Back when they had the trial.

PIEHLER: Where was the trial? Was it in Athens? That trial for your son's murder was in Athens?

WHITE: Yeah, in Athens. There was three of them, you know.

PIEHLER: Is there anything you'd like to add before we finish on tape. We've asked you a lot and you've been very good about your time and sharing your stories.

WHITE: I ain't got nothing but time. (Laughter) Nothing but time.

PIEHLER: I think we both want to, Brandi and I, want to thank you very much for your time. And we're really hoping you can come up next spring to talk to the [University of Tennessee] Normandy semester about the Pacific.

WHITE: Well, I'll try to make that.

PIEHLER: And we hope you can come to Celebrate Freedom.

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

Reviewed by Braum Denton 10/10/2004

Reviewed by Mark Boulton 10/17/2004

Edited by Kurt Piehler 10/27/2004