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AN INTERVIEW WITH MELVIN CARR

FOR THE  
VETERAN'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY  
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INTERVIEW BY  
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AND  
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PITTMAN CENTRE ROAD  
SEVIER COUNTY, TENNESSEE  
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PIEHLER: ... This begins an interview with Melvin Carr on December 19, 2001, in Pittman Center, in Sevier County, Tennessee, with Kurt Piehler and ...

VAN HOUTS: Nashwa van Houts.

PIEHLER: We just want to begin by asking you to tell us a little bit about your parents and your ancestry. Which, if it is anything like Cynthia's, I have a feeling it goes way back in this country's history?

CARR: Well, about as far as I know, is John Carr in Sugarlands was my Papaw. We got a book on it, but I think they took it from the telephone directory or something. (Laughter) But anyway, they lived in Sugarlands, and my mother was Reagan Pearl she married my dad, Lee Carr, and then—our family was seven children, two full brothers, four sisters, and then I have a half brother and a sister after dad died. But early—they came from the Sugarlands originally, and when you trace our ancestry back, we are Scotch-Irish. And I probably look more like the Reagan's, and I forget which side they come from. But they told us way down the line somewhere we was a little related to President Reagan. And the Reagan's were big people, and strong people and, of course, Dad was too but he was—got gassed in the Argonne Woods, and he didn't live longer than 37. And then, when I was born in Virginia, we was just up there for a while, and we would come back before I was a year old. I don't know about that. But I grew up 'til six years old in Sugarlands, and then I went to school there and one year—you go up to six, you know, and come over here and we went to school here where we are, Laurel Branch, 'til I was in fifth grade, then went to Pittman Center. About fifth grade I went to sophomore there and went back Gatlinburg a year. And in my junior year, I got behind—I'd worked some and I volunteered in the Navy.

And January 7 '43, I thought the war was about over and all my buddies were calling me out to go too. But I volunteered for the Naval Air force and in my training in San Diego ... and I got set back a month. And then when I graduated, the Disbursing Officer said, "You're in the Navy now," and we got to man the Pennsylvania. So, that is how come I was there—they tried to transfer me back to the Air Force later, but after I saw what that was like I didn't want to. (Laughter) So, I think the Lord had a hand in that I was on a battleship, the battleship Pennsylvania, and that's probably the safest place you could be in a war is on a battleship. You have so much firepower, hardly anybody is silly enough to bother you but they would try. (Laughter) And well, I went aboard the Pennsylvania in Los Angeles, we ate supper in a prison camp. And I'll never forget, I'd never seen a battleship, you know, and we got out there in a motor launch, the back of the prison was converted into a naval receiving unit. And we must have went for fifteen or twenty minutes out to sea in the motor launch with our gear and everything, and I thought, "man, what's going on?" And we pulled up beside a big shadow like a mountain you know, and chief said, "Lads, here's your new home. The battleship Pennsylvania, probably the most expensive one you have ever lived on." (Laughter)

So, we went aboard, and the main battery was turned out over the gang plank, I glanced up a tad, but it never entered my thick head that there was ever a gun that big in the world, you know? So, next morning got up and looked around and I thought, "Wow! What will these

sound like when we fire them.” And we went out for a shakedown cruise, and I learned how to stand, and how to breathe when they go to fire them, you know—lean on your toes, keep your teeth apart, you might chip em, and uh, quite an experience. When you learn how to stand it is not that bad, it’s not that bad. There’s some kind of split fraction of a second and it’s just a big bell of a roar, you know. The ship rolls and moves about ten or twelve feet in the water and rolls about thirteen to fifteen degrees if you fire to one side. And uh, I worried about that for a while, but then I got used to it. They found out I could shoot, you know. As a very young lad, I went squirrel hunting with five short-range, twenty-two shells. Rather than walk so far to the store to get some more [ammo], I killed three squirrels and a quail and I had one left. (Laughter) You can stop there just a second.

(Tape pauses)

CARR: Then we head out for the Aleutians, our first operation, and we went to Attu in the Aleutians and we shelled the gun positions and their fortifications and wrecked all that we could. And their planes bombed, and we shelled, and in a few days they come and landed on Attu, there wasn’t too much opposition, we about took everything out, nearly. But then, after that Admiral Langley was our boss then, and we went to Kiska. And the Japanese had a sub base there, and he left the ship standing off and took three destroyers and we sheer ran in that bay like it was ours, you know. And I looked at that water, it was so beautiful and clear it was scary, you could see so far down in that clear water, and I looked at those snow capped mountains and, you know, just a kid of seventeen, I thought, “Man, if we get in here and fire these main batteries, by fall we’ll be in here.” (Laughing)

But then we got through that narrow channel in which they said there was thirteen torpedoes thrown at us. And the skipper turned to take two and they went between them. And then our destroyers forced up two submarines and they sunk them. And we caught one tied to the pier at the base. Now after you got through that narrow channel, it opened up, it was a big bay, you know, big, so—something looked about like an eight inch fired on one of our destroyers off the sub base, there was a big splash right close to it, and we turned starboard-to and they said, “Stand by for a twelve gun.” And they fired two twelve-inch salvos on the sub base, and nothing else come off there. So, we come out, and the biggest booboo, I guess, we made in the whole war we was looking for four transports of soldiers to show up to make the landing. Well, four transports showed up, but little did we know that they were Japanese and we didn’t challenge them and they left right under our nose, four transport loads, and when they landed they found some food still hot, you know, where they hadn’t eaten it. The next day, you know. That was really something that was quite an experience.

And then we headed out for Hawaii to join the South Pacific fleet. And on the way the next day, after we had had all those torpedoes thrown at us, the Japanese reported sinking us, because they didn’t see us, you know. And, we left in the night and another ship relived us, and, well, the report got out that we were sunk, and Cate Smith confirmed it. My sister heard it, but she didn’t tell my mom (laughter), and we went on to Hawaii, and of all the things in the world we had an epidemic of mumps. And I got stuck there for about a month up on Diamond Head in an isolated ward. So, I just thought, “Now I’ve lost my ship, you know, they left.” But I didn’t know they had come to the States to pick up a piece of equipment—

something about the radar or computers or something. We had 'em then, you know, but nobody knew it. And then—well, the day I got released from the hospital I saw her coming in, I was proud to see her. That's when I was offered a transfer to the Air Force and I thought I'd better leave well enough alone, and I stayed on the Pennsylvania.

And then we headed out from there. And according to the book we made every amphibious operation in the Pacific war. We was the first battleship to go in to the Leyte Gulf, and that's where we first met the suiciders. And that was quite an experience. I believe—now we had four destroyers dead in the water, and I forgot how many sunk—a little CB carrier sunk, and we was pretty close to it. The plane hit it coming in from an opposite way, we couldn't shoot for it and—well, that was a tragic sight. It went down the stern first. That huge battle flag was trailing down from the main mast, you know. And you felt so helpless. But the one that picked us—we was going full speed, and turned 180 degrees and rolled our guns straight up. And there was one, he was coming a little from the port side, and I'm on the starboard side. I was director-operator then, and I couldn't train that far back, you know. And it looked like he was going down the stacks all you could see was a fuselage coming straight down, you know. And, I guess, that's the only time I have ever just thought "Well, this is it," you know. And I hit the deck behind some shields where I thought he was going to hit in the stacks when he missed us, splattered us. We was full speed and turning as hard as we could turn. Maybe someone killed him before. I had a marine director-operator opposite to me I had a lot of confidence in—he may have hated me. (Laughter) But anyway, that was a kind of a touch and go moment.

We went to Luzon and we got our—we got three people from off the Cradle Rock and the death march in Bataan. We didn't have hospital ships, and we divided them with the big ships that had doctors. And when they shared what the Japanese had done with them, they looked old and they were maybe 25, some of them 30. And they would talk a little bit then cry. They told us that the Japanese said they was fighting in California, but then they got on the radio together it was some kind of a joke. And he said they picked up our station on Guam. We had Guam back and we had—Peleliu was the next step. Then he said, "When we saw you all come in, we saw the battleship. They said Japanese wasn't scared of nothing, but they headed for the hills, screaming you know." Well, that was quite an emotional thing to hear what they had done to 'em. I guess, it made us a little less careful. But they told us that we never killed anybody with friendly fire, and we fired over our men time after time when they hit opposition targets, tanks and whatever.

I'll never forget on Peleliu they called for help once. We fired a three gun salvo, and somehow everybody—they give us the exact coordination, and it was maybe three seconds they said, "Hit five tanks," they said, "Target demolished, target demolished." It was three big shells got off fine, but there were times, I was told, we had seventy-six air attacks in the Philippines. And we had been there a month when [Douglas] MacArthur came, and when he waded ashore he said, "I've returned," some sailor said, "Where's he been?" (Laughter) It was kind of a chuckle, you know, sometimes some silly something helped break the stress a little bit. Then after Luzon we'd come back to Leyte and we had the Surigao Sea Strait Battle that I have never seen on TV or nowhere. And it's bothered me, because I'll tell you off the record what I think.

PIEHLER: In some ways you should probably tell that on the record, but that's okay.

CARR: Well, anyway, it started on October 24<sup>th</sup> a PBMC plane come in, flashing, finally dropped our message across the bow. We had Admiral [Jesse B.] Oldendorf. In a few minutes we had pulled away from troops and the battleships lined up. This book said, I believe, four, but there were six, and there was about eighteen cruisers and twenty-something destroyers, twenty-one or two. And we pulled up in formation, the battleships in a row, the cruisers on each side, and the destroyers on out. And we circled Leyte Gulf 'til 2 o'clock in the morning of October 25<sup>th</sup>, I believe. Then the Japanese admiral challenged Oldendorf to come out and he said, "If you want me, come after me." Their planes had reported having us in pretty bad shape, you know. Well, he didn't go out, and he draws them into the Surigao Sea Straits. The last range reading I heard was 18,000 yards. And it was pretty dark, and that's the most excitement I saw in the whole war, because they was running a T formation, the first time the Navy had the opportunity to do that. The way it worked out: two battleships was firing at the same time and sometimes a whole row of cruisers, you know, and, I guess, some of the destroyers made runs and launched torpedoes. So, we got thirty-five PT boats.

When we first heard that they were coming in [they] was ninety miles away. He called everybody for help, and a fleet of PT boats, about thirty-five, started their way in. And [William F.] Halsey was too far away to get to us he was up in the Yellow Sea looking for the Japanese fleet. And when Oldendorf told him what happened, [he] broke radio silence [and] told him "That's what we have looked for two years." Halsey said, "For God's sake don't let them get away." Thirteen major ships come in the straits, and when they got in the straits. I think we threw everything at them but the cook stove. And it was kind of a Fourth of July celebration. I never saw nothing like that, because—don't guess anybody else did, but we was told after an hour and a half that we had used more ammunition than all of the North African campaign. Even though we the Pennsylvania never fired a shot. (Laughter) When it come our time, the California turned 0-1-5 instead of 1-5-0, and we had our big guns leveled down. Everybody was tense, and she was right in the line of attack.... Somebody got chewed, I don't know who, but somebody did. But in all this excitement, you know, you kind of freeze up. Everybody was—we'd willed our stuff to each other earlier, you know. (Laughs)

So, there was an Indian man on the Pennsylvania by the name of Bertram Mayhaw, we all picked on him, called him Big Chief, he was a great sport, and kind of liked that. So, I looked down from my directories on the quads right beneath me kinda, and he was sitting there and all that flashing, you know, it's like daylight. Nobody's saying anything. I said "What's the matter, Chief, you scared?" And he was sitting up there he looked like a statue, you know, just froze. Everybody just got a bang out of that, you know, kind of broke the tension a little bit. But when the California pulled out of line. They got in the wrong place, we had to pass them, come back around, by then four had made their way back out of the Straits. Four got away out of the thirteen, they told us, major ships. And the next morning, our Air Force got them. We had the best Air Force in the world. Had to be some of them in the other air forces thought different, but to land on those carriers, and—when I watched them practice, I was kind of glad they were on our side. When we were out of danger, we

would pull a sea sled, and let them shoot at it, and stuff. Torpedoes, and bombs, and this and that, and I was kind of glad they were on our side. But anyway, we come home after the Philippines to get new guns, ours was burnt up. The book says here we probably fired more ammunition on Guam than any single ship in history, in about three weeks, but that kind of took us up 'til we got a leave, our first leave, after three years in the service.

And we'd been out almost like from, I believe it was, March till May of being out two years, and that was a record ... a naval record. Our pennant flew way back to the stern way back from the main mast, a foot long for each day, a red, white, and blue pennant. But anyway, we got our first leave, but we was told after the Surigao Sea Strait Battle not to tell [anyone] the Japanese fleet was destroyed. That's never made sense to me, I don't know why. And we had air power. Their air power was very limited by then. And even though—they kept one somewhere; we was celebrating the war being over then after that at Okinawa, and just at dark, a Japanese Betty, a torpedo bomber, came in around Buckner Bay. We was sitting outside, and, I guess, they saw that big silhouette of a big ship, you know. I was sitting on the quarterdeck with three other fellows playing Rook. And I saw the thing, and I said to myself, "Well, the war's over, we've got that won, but this was the next day." And they was going crazy on the island, shooting guns and everything, and everybody was celebrating, and we was talking about what we was going to do. And I saw him come around the edge of the island, and—we had to know 'em in the anti-aircraft batteries at a glance—and I knew what it was, and I said, "Well, the war's over." (Laughs) But man, he turned towards us, and I was still arguing with myself. And I seen the torpedo hit the water, and it's not over! And I jumped up yelled out as loud as I could, "Torpedo to starboard!" I think it broke two or three of Admiral Oldendorf's ribs, he was down in Captain's quarters below the third deck, you know. And the old Pennsylvania—the end of the blisters didn't come all the way around. He couldn't have beat that if they'd let him brought it aboard. He hit right at the end of that blister, and blocked everybody out, except my range setter. About five minutes after I was on the station, I had one shoot over the side, or somewhere, I never did find it. And he comes barreling over in the directorate tub with me, and man, I was proud to see him. "Where was you, fellow? In your department taking a shower, I had to hunt me some clothes!" So, that's just a sketch of a little bit of what took place.

(Tape paused)

PIEHLER: Let me first start off by asking a little bit more about your father. He fought in World War I?

CARR: Yes.

PIEHLER: Did he volunteer, do you know?

CARR: I don't—he was drafted ...

PIEHLER: He was drafted ...

CARR: Because my oldest sister was born in ... 1918, I believe.

PIEHLER: And you were very young when he died....

CARR: Oh yeah, I was seven years old, and going to school here. And I was on the way home, and a friend met us and told us that Dad had passed away.

PIEHLER: What did—I know you were very young, but what did he tell you about serving in World War I? Did he actually tell you ...

CARR: Not a whole lot, not a whole lot. He didn't talk about it much. And I couldn't talk about it at first, but then after I talked about it, I got to where I could talk about it. It releases pressure, or something.

PIEHLER: How did you learn about your father being gassed? Did your mother tell you?

CARR: Well, yeah, they told us, and then—they thought he died with TB, but I don't believe that was the case. They checked us every year, but nobody ever had it. And he lived in a little house by himself, and then he had a room to his self. But I'm prone to think, from what I've seen of other World War I soldiers that was gassed and their lungs blocked open, I kinda think it was something like that, and maybe a quick cancer, rather than TB. Because nobody ever come up with it, you know, none of the children, nobody. They'd test us every year for a lot of years.

PIEHLER: How was your mother able to, in a sense, make a living after losing her husband?

CARR: Well, if you remember, at that time, it was kind of the Depression time, and Dad was public sixteen. He drew about one hundred dollars a month, and a schoolteacher made fifty, on account of our big family. And actually, that was pretty good back then.

PIEHLER: So, your mother was able to get a pension?

CARR: Yeah, she got his pension when he died. She give that up and married again, but I had a good step-dad. He taught me how to work. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: When did your mother remarry?

CARR: Let's see, around late '34 or '5.

PIEHLER: And how old were you, roughly, when your mother remarried?

CARR: Let's see, I believe I was nine years old, so it had to have been about '35, I guess. I'm seventy-six now. He had the farm next to us, and mother had a little money. She paid his farm off, and we had the two places there about two hundred and something acres, a lot of it was hill land, woodland, and there was enough cart land for us to work on, you know. We growed tobacco, beans, apples, just, you know, things like that.

PIEHLER: What would—because neither one of us grew up on—you never grew up on a farm ...

VAN HOUTS: No, I never.

PIEHLER: What—and I think a lot of people, even from this area, now are very distant from farming.

CARR: Oh, I love to garden. I had four years of vocational agriculture, and never got to use it. And I love to garden. I've got the prettiest greens out you've ever saw out there right now, turnips, mustard, kale, and all that.

PIEHLER: I get a sense, from what I've read, that growing up, even as a young child, when you grow up on a farm there is a lot of chores.

CARR: Oh, yeah ...

PIEHLER: Could you tell us the kind of chores you would do?

CARR: We walked a mile and six-tenths one way—that may account for some of my education. But anyway, we'd go home in the evening, and work in tobacco, or pick apples, or put up hay. We'd just go home, and turn around and hit the field, you know, and that's the way it was. And, I guess, tobacco was our biggest cash crop then, and sometimes beans brought good, sometimes they didn't, you know. I remember my brother-in-law having a ton-and-a-half truck loaded with beans, and I believe they brought fifty cents a bushel. (Laughter) You know, sometimes you'd hit it, and they would bring five or six dollars, you know, and we thought that was money then, you know. And, dad had our farm in pretty good shape. He had about three or four people working for him. He paid them about two dollars a day, and they thought that was good then.

PIEHLER: Did your farm have electricity?

CARR: No.

PIEHLER: When did electricity finally—did it ever come?

CARR: Oh, let's see. It was ... in the '40s before we got electricity up there, and I'm going to say about '45. And right at the end of the war it spread on out everywhere, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But growing up, when you went off to the Navy ...

CARR: Oh, we didn't have it then. No, just kerosene lamps and things like that, you know.

PIEHLER: So, did you have radio, I guess ...



CARR: Oh yeah, we had radio, that was about it.

PIEHLER: And how did you power the radio?

CARR: Batteries. And all my buddies got drafted, and I thought, "I'd do just as well to go," so, I volunteered. And we got the word the war started at school, and I was a sophomore. We walked all the way home from Pittman Center, about three mile up the road, that's about four miles for us, you know. And we played and talked along the way, just like high school kids would, you know. Then when we went to the movie, we saw how they'd done our people on Corrigedor and the Philippines, and it looked so terrible. And when I joined, I thought, the way the radio sounded, the war was getting pretty much along, you know, and wound up on the first offensive operation. (Laughter)

VAN HOUTS: Bad luck.

CARR: Well, you wouldn't want to do it again, but it was some experience, growing up under those circumstances. One time when I—we had a good bakery, we did, and we had a good place to sleep, if, you know, we wasn't hit or something. And I remember we had lemon pie, that's one of my favorites, and they could make one good as anybody. Well, that day I tried to get through the chow line, third time I got in we'd have another air attack. All right, and I got through, and got in at the table and the casemates, and everybody filled this table up and had a piece of pie. Here went air defense again! (Laughter) And, while everybody is running, I know they are gathering up all that food in the garbage to make a battle dressing station. That's what happened, and then they'd have to do it all over. "Wow," I thought, "Well, maybe we've got a few minutes while everybody is running, I grabbed me an armful of pie (Laughter) from that table, went up to my directorate. And this lieutenant with me on the directorate in the time of battle, he stuck my helmet on, and got a couple pieces of pie. (Laughter) Then my range setter, he threw my life jacket around, and everything loose hanging around, and he got a couple of pieces. And I looked up, we're right at the super structure, and there was the exec standing right over us. (Laughter) Oh my, he gave us a pretty wild look, and then he turned around and I seen him laugh with this other guy.... But then we got a pep talk after that by Captain Moses. But Captain said; "Now some of you lads are going up there like you're going to a ball game on a hot Sunday afternoon." Talked just like Roosevelt. He was a Georgia boy, and he said, "Hereafter, when air defense is sounded, that means we're coming under attack." Before that, it sounded if we had some bogies on the screen, and he said, "Hereafter, it means we're coming under attack." I shrunk a little each time he said something. I knew what brought that on. The exec is bound to have said something, you know.

PIEHLER: But you didn't get, say, Captain's mast, or anything for that?

CARR: Oh, no, no, no ...

PIEHLER: No, you just got a stern talking to.

CARR: I thought about it later, I ought to have offered him a piece. (Laughter) Maybe that's why he looked so hard. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I want to ask you—you mentioned going to the movies, where would you go to movies?

CARR: Sevierville.

PIEHLER: Sevierville. Because I've seen old pictures that ...

CARR: Or Gatlinburg.

PIEHLER: So, Gatlinburg also had a movie ...

CARR: Yeah, by then.

PIEHLER: And how often would you get to go?

CARR: Oh, it was far between. But when the war started, we started listening to the radio, and checking on different things. But anyway, I'll never forget some of this. Never entered my thick head I'd be on the welcoming party to get some of them back, you know. But that was some experience to hear those boys tell what they'd done to them. But by then, the Philippines, and after the Surigao Sea Strait Battle, I don't know why they didn't want that told, or whatever. If I could do it over, I'd have told it if they'd hung me. Back of my mind. Japan was whooped when the first atomic bomb exploded, actually, before it exploded. I don't think there would have had to have been a landing. We had the biggest navy the world had ever seen, you know. Five hundred warships, and we had about 1,500 of the best pilots in the world, and then we had B-29's that could reach them then. I really don't think an atomic bomb ought to be used on human beings nowhere, no time.

PIEHLER: Because, in some ways, you're alone among—most of the veterans I interview say—in fact, there is one veteran I know, he's even written—he wrote a piece that said “Thank God for the atomic bomb,” and you just don't think—[but] you didn't think at the time it was necessary?

CARR: Actually, I wish it was somewhere else and had never been invented, because now then look who's got it. What, twenty-something nations have capacity. Ten years ago, Iraq, not Iraq, Iran, bought three atomic submarines from Russia. I don't know if they got what went with it or not, but that'll make you have nightmares if you'd think about it. But anyway, I really think after the Japanese fleet was destroyed, that was their pride. I really think that in a couple of weeks, we would have got the same thing. And I get aggravated when some of those admirals didn't speak up. And they didn't. They was outranked, you know, with MacArthur, and well, Nimitz was equal him, wasn't he, five-star? But, I'll never forget the British Admiral, head of the British Navy, forgot his name, senior fella, I guess, but anyway, he come aboard our ship.

PIEHLER: Lord Mountbatten?

CARR: At Eniwetok. I heard them call his name, but I forgot.

PIEHLER: Oh, ok.

CARR: Anyway, at Eniwetok, the third and seventh was lying there, and he come aboard, and I was on the bridge. I was on watch on the bridge. He comes up, and he wanted to look through all these binoculars at different ships. He was like a little boy in a dime store. He said, "It's amazing. It's unbelievable. It's remarkable. How could anybody build a force like this so quickly? Oh my." And when the war was over, and we come home, I really didn't think there would be a war soon. I didn't think there would be, because of the force we had. There wasn't—I don't think there would have been if they had kept a little more of the fleet in operation.

VAN HOUTS: So, was, in that case, you know, the Korean War, was that a shock to you to hear it, because it was only five years later?

CARR: Yeah, I wouldn't have dreamed there would have been one then, because I never did think Russia was a threat to us. I got acquainted with one of their chief petty officers, about the same rank, and they had children on their ship. They were loading locomotives in Portland, Oregon. They had bought thirty-some from us. Well, more than that, I've seen more than that loaded. Some of them could hold nine, some of them five or six. And I talk to him, and he said, "We just want to get home, like you do."

PIEHLER: How did you meet this chief petty officer? Where were you?

CARR: I was in Portland, after the war. I was in the regular Navy, and I had a little time to do. And they sent me down there.

PIEHLER: And you met ...

CARR: And we had ... three-hundred boats to look after in Swan Island, in Portland, six of us, and as long as two of us was aboard, the rest could be on leave, or whatever. I think that was a trick to get us to sign over, you know. (Laughing) So, then I got acquainted with this longshoreman, where we had come back. We had—our barracks was a floating barracks, you know. And, it was tied up right next to the pier, where they would load it. And, you know, walking around there I got to talking with him, and he could speak English, you know.

PIEHLER: So, it was sort of just—it wasn't part of your official duties, it was ...

CARR: No, no, just casual, and that 300 boats—I think they had an agreement with General Motors to take them out and pull the plugs when they was through with them. But I told my Chief one day, I said, "I'm thinking about taking this rig home." We had one fixed up, it was made for turrets in the front, you know, and it's a Captain's gig. And all this lace around the front, you know, brass stern wheel and all. And all we had to do to get fuel is go up to one of

the ships, the Navy ships, and tell them we're from the boat crew and need some fuel. (Laughter) They'd fill us up, you know. Oh man, we had it made there. Then it dawned on me that they were trying to get me to sign over, and that's not in my plans.

PIEHLER: Well, I want to—growing up, you mentioned your mother remarrying, and that meant giving up the pension, which was hard money.

CARR: Yeah, at that time, that was a lot of money.

PIEHLER: That was—yeah, I mean that was ...

CARR: A lot of money.

PIEHLER: Did she—did it work, I mean getting married, financially.

CARR: Yeah, well, we made it, but we all worked hard and everything, you know. And then we had quite a bit of timber, and they cut out timber when I was fifteen.

PIEHLER: Who did cut it, do you remember?

CARR: Charlie Blalock, and at the time, he just had the sawmill. He started out working on the mountain for thirty-five cents an hour, but he was—started at a quarter, but now it was thirty-five. And he hauled some other workers in on it, I don't know, or something. But anyway, Charlie ran the sawmill, and I was the off-bearer, putting this lumber in the stacks it belonged in different grades and kinds. We were cutting 10 and 12,000 feet a day. And I had a fellow helping me, and he got sick. And I done that for a week by myself, fifteen years old. I wonder if—kids couldn't do that now. You know, I don't believe they could do it now. And, well, one day later, when Charlie wanted the latter—you know, they got—they build roads in other countries. I have no idea what he's worth, but it's been good for him, it's always been—done real well.

We was talking one day, and I said, "Charlie, if you hadn't have busted me when I was a boy, I'd have made a man." (Laughter) Oh, he laughed, you know, he laughed. Well, but there have been times he's asked me to go in with him on his building ... the second Holiday Inn. We just got it started, and they took my superintendent back to Memphis, and give me the plans said, "Here you are." And we were kind of strung out. We did the second Holiday Inn across the creek there, 128 units, swimming pool, swimming pool, bridge, and whatever, wall to hold the mountain. And I thought the superintendent had it made—that was my first time as superintendent—only if he's got some good men that know what they're doing.

PIEHLER: Otherwise it's not a very easy ...

CARR: No! No! (Laughs) There's nobody to go to, you're it, you know. But then I learned that Mr. Angel had come around and said, "Get it right preacher." And John Weedemon, the superintendent, would come by from Memphis and say, "Get it done." And that dawned on me. I got checking, and he's a big stockholder in Holiday Inn, and he was big in Memphis.

He had a lot of jobs that somebody wants him, but Blalock asked me to go in with him in commercial building. I couldn't leave my church. I had an opportunity a time or two, I could have made it big, but I felt that I ought to stay with my church. For forty-seven and a half years I've pastored in Baptist churches, and had one vacation. Got started on another one and got called back. (Laughter) But it's been a great life, you know, until Vietnam came around, and I lost my only son. That's the hardest thing to live with—I'd rather go through all the battles again as to think about that, you know, and he was a great athlete. This ain't on record ...

PIEHLER: I can put it—I can—I just want ...

(Tape stops)

PIEHLER: Since you brought up a good story off the record, which I won't allude to, but could you talk a little bit about the schools you went to growing up? You mentioned going to several different schools. Could you talk a little bit about the schools you went to and the teachers ...

CARR: I went one year in the ...

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

CARR: Well, it wasn't National Park then ...

VAN HOUTS: Right, just the Sugarlands, Right?

CARR: Until about '32, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

CARR: Everybody had to move.

VAN HOUTS: Yep.

CARR: And then we moved over here, and I come to this school here, Laurel Branch, 'til I was in fifth grade, and Pittman Center to sophomore. And my third year, I worked in Gatlinburg and went to Gatlinburg High School. Then that summer—that next January, I went into the Navy from school, and—no, I worked a while. I shouldn't have told them that, but I was a big boy and real strong, and I worked for TVA for a while. (Laughter) Yeah, and I went to check out. I said, "I'm checking out," the lady in the office said, "You can't, they'll put you in the Army." I said, "No way." We argued a while, and I showed her my papers that I was in the Navy. (Laughter) I didn't know it, but they would have had to give my job back when I come back home, but I didn't know that. So, I should have went back to school, but when I had pneumonia in the Navy it hurt me a lot. It—I just about lost it, you know. In fact, the doctors said, "Son, we thought we'd lost you," and, you know, for a few days I didn't know which world I was in. Then I come back, and I went to Washington D.C., and

got part of my building trade training. I come back here, and built bridges, and commercial buildings. Then, I went to Oak Ridge and worked security for years. That gave me a little start, and I bought the home place, and then went back to building, you know, bridges again. Then, I left there when they changed the scale, the carpenter's scale, of the bridgework. I went to Alcoa, and helped build the south plant. I was better on commercial building than I was on bridges. People don't realize it, but bridges are hard work. And it's lot of technical work that you wouldn't think about. You're building the wrong side of it, you know, for concrete. But anyway, I got to where I was pretty good at that, but I went to commercial [building] and stayed with that. And then pastored the churches that were—I did secular work and pastored quite a few churches for a long time, and then I got into full-time ministry until about a year ago.

VAN HOUTS: Could we go back to your—when—it says here that your mother was a missionary Baptist, so, how much were you going to church as a child? How big was church in your childhood?

CARR: Oh, I remember going to church in the schoolhouse in the Sugarlands, and preachers would just come by and preach to us once and while, you know. When we got over here, we pretty much went full-time. My sister and me went, and my mother didn't go that much. My family didn't, you know. Well, I guess, it was while I was in the Navy, you know, I—there was a group of us. We'd meet in the casements, and have prayer meetings. Government property, but the ACLU wasn't around. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: How often did you see a chaplain?

CARR: We had a full-time chaplain.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and how often did you go to services? The sort of official service ...

CARR: Oh, pretty much every Sunday when we wasn't under attack or something. (Laughter) And believe it or not, we never had an attack while church services were going, and we were flying our church flag full mast, the cross. We lowered our national flag, and then after church we'd put it back up, took it down. I don't think the Japanese would have respected us that much, but I don't remember an air attack while we was having church. One time, Catholic mass was taking place and we had an attack, but you know, that's kind of unusual. Well, a lot of good boys on the Pennsylvania, most of them were southern boys. Most of the best rifle people, and whatever, were southern boys. One Lieutenant asked this young man, "How come you can shoot so well?" (Laughs) He told him, "I used to shoot before I eat." (Laughter) Oh my.

PIEHLER: Could you—Sugarlands wasn't a very big place, in terms of people. Could you talk a little bit more about...

CARR: Sugarlands—mostly people had a garden cleared. And there was a time when they fenced the garden in and let the cow go loose, and usually had a milk cow or two, hogs,

maybe a little cornfield to feed the hogs, you know. Just a small patch would make more potatoes than anybody could eat, and that Goodrich Saw Mill. I guess I ...

PIEHLER: And you didn't have a church ...

CARR: Oh no. No, no.

PIEHLER: So, it was the school that ...

CARR: It was when I was working security at Oak Ridge that I felt the call. It was the only job I ever had where I had my own work picked out. Of course, I had things to check, you know, that had to be checked, and I had a special patrol in my—I drove a patrol car most of those years. Never scratched it, I was pretty kind of proud of that, you know. But people liked their job, and there they didn't get out of line too much. The thing I noticed was the higher the rank the people was in the plant the more pleasant they were to talk to. Plant shift supervisor, wasn't a better man anywhere. He'd stop and talk with us, "You see anything out of the way, let us know, you know." He was interested too, you know, Bender, he was a great guy. One night I seen some steam, and it was kind of foggy, and I thought it was smoke, but it wasn't, it was steam. He says, "It's alright. We'd rather make a miss-leak than not get it." We enjoyed that pretty much. In 1952, the head of AEC made a speech and said, "I believe Russia has the atomic bomb, but I don't believe they've built it. Upon this I offer my resignation." That's pretty just joking. That's what is so sad about our country. We'll come up—be way ahead, and first thing you know everybody else has got it. But you know, early in the war we had computers and stuff like that, radar, and that was pretty well kept [quiet]. Somebody said that's the only place you can keep a secret: on a ship, you know. (Laughter)

VAN HOUTS: That's right. So, I'm interested, though, just to go back to your early church. I mean, with your mother remarrying, was she still welcome in the church, and things like that?

CARR: Oh yeah, but you know, yeah. Let's see, we went to church, and then—occasionally.

VAN HOUTS: Occasionally?

CARR: Yeah, and one of my sisters and me went pretty regular.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

CARR: Yeah, and well, I was a deacon four years before I was a preacher. I come up that way, and the Lord was dealing with me in Oak Ridge, and I thought maybe I could stay on. I was making good money. I'd hate to leave there, you know. But after a while, I got kind of puny, and I went to a lot of doctors and they couldn't find anything wrong with me. (Laughs) And then when I said "yes" to my conscience and to the Lord, I was well ever since. We've pastored several different churches. I was at Bethel longer than anyone, over here on the

East Fork, they got a different church now. It's—I was there about fifteen years. Then I went to school on evangelism, and I learned how to teach EE, Evangelism Explosion. Then I felt like the Lord wanted me to move around to little churches and teach people how to share their testimony, and how to share the Gospel. We did that for a while, and churches blossomed everywhere we did that. You see that was where people would go out one-on-one, you know. Usually a team was made of three in that, and two men and one woman or two women and one man, for a lot of reasons. You could knock on the door, tell them what church you were from, and “We would like to visit a while, if we may.” Meet our neighbors, and see where everybody is and stuff. We'd gain the right to share our testimony and the Gospel, you know. The Gospel is made up of five subjects, and memory work helps you with your hand, you see. Grace, Man, God is over all, and Christ come to our level, it takes a little faith. (Laughter) That's a pretty neat way to remember how to share the Gospel. Of course, you have to memorize all the scripture in those areas. Took a while.

VAN HOUTS: How long ...

CARR: But the Lord has been good to me. I've had judges, funerals, and Mr. Huskey, a county judge. And I had my teacher in the eighth grade's funeral. He went to Alcoa, and was some kind of welder there 'til he retired. He built a big sign for a community, and he had been over to see his sister. And was coming back, and there was a camper coming down the road like this. But on the other side of that camper was a speeding, what do they call it? SUV? He didn't see it, and he seen he could beat the camper. But this SUV hit him right in the door, and took him out. And that was the first funeral that they had in the big funeral home there on the—next to the college back towards Townsend. It was the first funeral in that new sanctuary they had built. It was a big round—and your voice carried all over that, just the same. Now they had put some money into that, but—had Raymond's funeral, Mr. Huskey [the] principal here, his funeral, and sometimes as much as—some of the Mayor's people. We had one of a dear friend Monday night, Fred Whaley. He ran a grocery store, and he retired, real fine man. We used to go up into the park and go fishing. If I go to the convention, they'll say, “There's a picture of him,” you know. I learned to catch trout when I was a little boy, and I always went back to the mountains to trout fish. Raised them and studied them, and when I get a chance that somebody wasn't looking I'd slip off and go trout fishing. (Laughter)

VAN HOUTS: How do you trout fish here? It's very vogue in New Zealand. How do you do it here?

CARR: Oh, flies ...

VAN HOUTS: You do it—as a child you make flies?

CARR: Yeah, and then ... spinners, you know?

VAN HOUTS: Right.



CARR: A spinner, I don't think a fish tries to eat that. I think they just grab it to see what it is. Some kind of movement, you know. Well, I learned—I started out fly-fishing, dry fly-fishing, but then I learned that if you catch the big one you got to go down pretty savvy. And I went to wet fly-fishing.

VAN HOUTS: Who taught you?

CARR: Well, I learned from some of my uncles, and then friends, my schoolteacher here, he taught me a lot. In later years I taught him a lot. (Laughter) Mr. Audley McCarter, he taught in Greenbrier, and up at Forks of the River they had a school with 200 and something children registered. You look at that and say, "Where in the world would they have come from," but if you know the backcountry, that used to be fields, you could figure it out. They went from the cove back up there. We fished together. I thought so much of him. He—his daughter and me went to school together, and I was kindly struck on her, you know, for a long, long time. We got to fish together, and in later years I taught him a few tricks too. One day I got a four-and-a-half pound brook trout.

VAN HOUTS: Gosh.

CARR: The river was up, and I got it out. He said—I pulled him up like that, and kind of got him in the mouth, you know, "The first thing, preacher, they don't get that big." (Laughter) He was thinking about a little brookie, but what people don't know about the brook trout is there is an Eastern New England that gets big. They look alike, except the Appalachian brookie has five rows of red dots on him, and he's a real big one if he's twelve inches. I've caught thousands of them, maybe ... that many of them twelve inches. And they are the best fish the good Lord made to eat.

VAN HOUTS: They are very tasty.

CARR: The little brookie. We raised our own here for a while. We grew 40,000 a year and put them in the creeks, you know, our little club. One time, we had a little clout with Federal and the State, and we'd get some help from them. At that time, you could go out here and catch one, the trout you wanted in twenty or thirty minutes. But you can't now. It's fished out, and the park—man, they go to Auburn a few years and think they know all there is about a trout. But our—Bob just now told me, he said, "Preacher, any more, these things are worse off than I am." (Laughter) But they tried to push the rainbow out, and give it back to the brookie. Nobody wanted that, and I feel responsible, because I asked them to close the season on the brookie, we was losing them, they're so easy to catch. They'll never be a sport fish. Then they, then not only just close the season about twenty years ago, but also now they're trying to push the rainbow and brown out. Nobody wanted that. They're a real good fish too, sports fish, you know. I got two on the wall there you might look at, a ten-pound, and a six-and-a-half over there on the other end, that's a brown trout. I had a big rainbow, but I didn't mount it. I had one that weighed fourteen pounds, but I couldn't claim it because I had raised it. (Laughter)

VAN HOUTS: It's frustrating in New Zealand. You'll get heaps of people in the river fishing. It's a real community thing. Is that the way you guys fish?

CARR: Well, I go back in the mountain, and like to get back where there is nobody.

VAN HOUTS: There is no one? Okay ...

CARR: After my boy was killed, I fished that creek plum out. (Laughter) Run out after dark, nearly. Run those rocks like a rabbit. Not now, but I used to. I was coming out one evening, and almost stepped on a big black snake. It scared me. And down a little ways, there was a path that went out to a trail, and there are little hemlocks, about as high as your head, pretty thick. And I've got that on my mind, and I'm pushing through there. A grouse flew out right under my feet. It's hard to get your heart back, you know. (Laughter) Oh man, we got way off subject here, didn't we?

PIEHLER: No, no it's been—what about hunting, did you ...

CARR: Oh, we hunted, we coon hunted, we squirrel hunted ...

PIEHLER: Did you hunt after the Navy?

CARR: Oh yeah, I hunted grouse. I was a director operator where I would shoot moving targets, and I got pretty good on a grouse. One time now, I kept up with it. I was killing a grouse the second shot. I had an old Remington pump, and I got to thinking about it. I was hunting by myself without a dog. And I had learned their habits, and I could find them, you know. I killed one, and I'd seen what it eat, I'd known where to look. I killed seven, one time, on the wing without missing. I'd never do that again, will I? (Laughter) Not just one day, just kept count, and I'd go seven before I missed.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you had the same teacher in elementary—in school from, if I understood you right, from first grade to eighth grade ...

CARR: Well, no. We had several teachers.

PIEHLER: Several teachers ...

CARR: But Virgil was my last teacher here, and I had his funeral too, Virgil Whaley.

PIEHLER: How old was he when he passed away?

CARR: He was eighty-one, I guess.

PIEHLER: And he was your teacher, your last teacher in eighth grade?

CARR: He was about fourth of fifth grade, before I left here and went to Pittman.

PIEHLER: Before you went to Pittman?

CARR: Yeah. He lived next door to me.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned, I think, that 200 people went to ...

CARR: Oh, up in Greenbrier up at ...

PIEHLER: Greenbrier.

CARR: At Forks of the River.

PIEHLER: Okay, but here, back in Laurel, how many people went to school?

CARR: Um.

PIEHLER: How many were—say how many were in your class?

CARR: Um ... about four or five.

PIEHLER: Four of Five?

CARR: Yeah, and sometimes a few more. In the whole school about thirty or forty.

PIEHLER: And were you—was it a one-room schoolhouse?

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you had ...

CARR: Yeah, this was a hallway right here, this was a cloakroom, we'd put lunch in here, you know.

PIEHLER: And you—all the grades were together?

CARR: Yeah. For a long time, we didn't have hot lunches, you know. We brought our lunch. There were all the grades back in that way.

PIEHLER: And, I assume, that you didn't have electricity either at the school?

CARR: No, no, no.

PIEHLER: And, I assume ...

CARR: I remember he had a '34 or '5 Ford pick-up, and it run so quiet you had to listen to see if it was running when you cranked it. Yeah, that—we lost something there. They ought

to have brought that on up. Here come a big snow, and we didn't take out for snows, we just come on. (Laughter) Some of the boys got out there and packed his exhaust full of snow. He turned that on, you know, you'd have to listen to see if it run. After a while, it popped great big. (Laughter) He'd have cleaned house, but he didn't know who it was. Oh man, it used to be that they would get you for this or that. I got my last whipping as a freshman in high school. Good friend of mine come along, and I was actually studying in biology. I was sitting there studying, really studying, and he just rung a piece out of me, just mischievous. I just come around like that, and caught him and brought him across that desk and he scooted. Boy, this big old guy was our biology teacher. He worked out with those stretching things, you know. He come back there, didn't say a word, and just whipped us both. It didn't hurt. It embarrassed me more than it hurt, you know. (Laughing) It was good when we had a little discipline in school, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: How often—how long did the school year run, when you were going to school? Was it ...

CARR: About nine months on the last.

PIEHLER: Was it—did you start in August and go 'til May, or ...

CARR: It was—when did we get out? We got out before May, we got out in April, didn't we? They had to have us work then, you know.

VAN HOUTS: So, you would actually stop school to go work?

CARR: Oh yeah. Well, no. School stopped, see, on account of they kind of worked with the people.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

CARR: See, they needed the children to work. We was out from about April to ... late August, I guess, or September. Nine months. We had nine months of schooling.

VAN HOUTS: Right. And so, your holiday you would be working every day.

CARR: Oh yeah, holidays we got out.

VAN HOUTS: Right. Oh, you had holidays as well?

CARR: Yeah, because we didn't quit when it snowed, we just come on. We walked, you know.

PIEHLER: How common were—you mentioned this one teacher with a Model T ...

CARR: No, it was a '35 Ford

PIEHLER: '35 Ford ...

CARR: '34 or '5 Ford, and it didn't make any noise. You'd crank that thing, and it would (whistles). We lost something there. Them boys crammed it full of snow, and it popped, you know. Oh, he got mad.

PIEHLER: How common were cars ... up this way?

CARR: Well ...

PIEHLER: Did your family have one?

CARR: When I was six years old, Dad brought a '29 Chevrolet, the best one, four-door and it cost 695 [dollars]. The best Chevrolet, accordingly. Well, Mother drove it, he got sick, you know, and she drove it. We'd go from Gatlinburg down to Pigeon Forge in them big high banks in just two tracks there, you know. Wow! That scared me to death. I was just a little dude, you know, standing up to look out the window, you know. Dad went to put it in the garage, us in the Sugarlands, and he knocked the back end of the Garage out. (Laughter) About this time, I was pulling around my golf cart, and I come around the corner, you know, and my daughter's car was sitting there. She's got a Lexus, and I didn't much want to hit it, you know. (Laughter) And it was kind of tight getting it into the garage, and I stopped, and I was going to back up a little and turn. I backed up a little, and I must have hit that gas a little hard, and that brake is about that wide. Man, I went to hit the brake, and hit the gas, and just run back into that ditch. But I can pull it out really easy with a truck. I'll just put a rope on it, put it out of gear, and just ease it up there on the level, and stop. But that's a handy little critter. I hurt my leg last year when I was spraying apple trees with a backpack with a little motor on it, and had it full of fluid. I went about thirty feet through some weeds, just stumbling, and I ought to just went ahead and fell, groaned, and got up. But I think I pulled a ligament or something. It bothered me a long time, and it still bothers me a little. But when you have seventy-six birthdays, you'd better start watching about.

VAN HOUTS: Without complaining.

CARR: Without breaking a leg or something.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, how did you feel about the [Great Smoky Mountains National] Park coming? You obviously lost your home ...

CARR: Well, we loved it a lot. We'd go back every year. My uncle lived next door, and he stayed there 'til after the war. And he sure enough Irishman, you know, kind of blond, curly headed, you know (laughs) had the temper and all. And he had bees. He had like 150 stands of bees. And before the war, we was selling like 3,500 dollars or four or five thousand dollars worth of honey a year. That was big money then, you know. A dollar was worth ten or twelve now, wasn't it? The bears got to bother him, and he'd just shoot them, and haul off, you know. Then he killed one too big to move, and he got an hold of the department, asked them to move it, and they moved him. (Laughs) They made him move. He was kind

of stubborn. He had a gun, and they wanted it, he wouldn't let them have it said, "No, I'm not going to be up here with my family without a gun." And he wouldn't let them have it, and they made him move. He moved over there at Yellowbird's Creek. But until he did, we'd go back up there every summer, and visit, go fishing and everything. Oh, that was so wonderful. They had some Guernsey cows, and they had a big old spring about like this table about knee deep, you know, pretty gravel, and it was just cold as could be. They'd put that milk in that springhouse, and butter, and that best honey in the world. Oh my. (Laughing) And when we'd want a mess of fish, I don't know if there was a limit way back there or not. They'd just go catch a mess, you know. What they caught they'd eat. They didn't waste them, and there was plenty. Oh, there was plenty. I bet you all got fish there, don't you?

VAN HOUTS: Oh, we've got lots of fish. New Zealand, yeah.

CARR: And trout?

VAN HOUTS: We have trout, and we do a lot of snapper fishing. My husband is a big, big snapper—on our honeymoon, he was out fishing, fishing, fishing. (Laughter)

CARR: Well, don't hold that against him. (Laughter) Hey, when he's fishing, his mind is in the right direction.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah, it is ...

CARR: Somebody said they wouldn't hold that time against us, you know.

VAN HOUTS: When your family left the park, why did they choose this place ...

CARR: This area? We had some friends who had bought places over there next to the Smoky Mountain Academy, and then promised to join this place. They had told Dad about it. I believe there were two renters living on it, when we come over there, and Ruth fixed the old house up that I grew up in. Took the ceiling out, and went up with a cathedral ceiling, and paneled it out of a light grade of paneling. It was pretty. She's got to put a roof on it now, and fix the outside. If you had time, we could ride up there and see it. Hey, have you all eaten?

PIEHLER: Whenever you want to break. I'm fine for now, but if you'd like—I don't want to ...

CARR: Eunice will fix us some sandwiches there, will you? Or cut up some stuff and we'll make them ourselves.

VAN HOUTS: Lovely.

CARR: And she's probably got a pie hid there. (Laughter) I don't know, but somebody told me I have the best cook in the world. (Laughter) The Attorney General went around to

something, you know, Al Smutzer, we come in, and we was going to go up to Big Wally's over on 321 and eat. And Eunice's sister was here, and she had had a gourmet meal fixed, you know, and she'd had dumplings, and chicken and all. Old Al got to turn on those dumplings. He made about three helpings, didn't he? He liked that, and he'd call Eunice later and thanked her.

I sneaked one over on her once. I was working, and I was working as the head of the fish hatchery, sent Bill Toms, he's head of the Texas Instruments Institute—at the time, it was the fastest growing in the country, you know, had his driver and everything. He convinced him to take him fishing. He'd been up and checked our place in Kingsport, and came back, and stopped. I took him back on an evening, and we went up to Greenbrier, and we caught a few. Coming down, he said, "Preacher, where's a good place to eat in Gatlinburg?" I said, "well, to be honest with you, I've not eaten up there enough to know, but if you want to take a potluck, just eat with me, and we'll talk about where we're fishing tomorrow." (Laughter) I took him the next day. He comes, and Eunice had, oh, a meat or two, and all kinds of vegetables, and everything. And boy, he just eats and eats and eats. I guess, he had been just eating at these fast food places a lot, and this home cooked stuff he was, oh, we enjoyed it. I didn't tell Eunice who he was 'til he was gone. He was the head of the Texas Instruments Institute. (Laughter)

I took him fishing down on the Little River, we had lots of fish then. Put him in a good place, and, I don't know, just fish. I took his driver, and we walked on down the stream a little. I told Dana, his driver, I said, "Now rainbow this time of year, it's hot. They'll hang around the white water for two things; it can breathe better, and watch for food, you know." Just like we were talking, I threw up there, and caught a keeper that was twelve-and-a-half inches. I said, "The brown's different. He'll go to the bottom of the pool when he gets a little size on him to watch for other fish, and he'll eat the other fish, you know." I threw down there and caught one just like we were talking, in just two throws about. He came unglued. He runs back up to where Bill Toms was, and they talked. I come up, and Bill was setting on this rock, fly-fishing, you know. I said, "Bill, you may be fishing too long in one place. You care if I throw in there?" "No." I had a crow fly on there, that's black with white streaks, and you sink it. I threw it in that white water, and crossed the ripples from me, and he couldn't see us, you know. And just like that, I caught one. (Laughter) And I said, "Let me show you Bill," and I put him one on. And I throwed it up on this side of the hole, where a little fall was, and caught another one. He said, "You ain't been here too long. I want to know how come you're catching fish, and we're not." I said, "Bill, you can't beat a man on his home ground." (Laughter) It was so funny, I went outside once, and I got a brown. It was four or five pounds, and I was sort of glad I lost it. I didn't tell him, because you know, he said, "How come you're catching fish, and we're not?" That fish wouldn't open its mouth. You know, usually you run one down, he'll have his mouth open. I must have hit a nerve or something, and its mouth was closed. I was too far out in the stream to jump to the bank, and then I fumbled that a long time after a while. I decided I'd lift it with a four-pound line, and I got about two feet high, and he popped that line. That was a fish. I've got two on the wall that you might want to look at.

PIEHLER: I definitely do. I'm just curious, because, particularly people reading this interview maybe a few years from now, or reading it—say somebody reading this interview in Chicago, or Atlanta—when you were growing up, it sounds like, you literally raised much of the food, or hunted much of the food you ate.

CARR: Oh yeah. We raised it. There was ...eleven in her [Eunice's] family. They were on up the river from here, and their farm wasn't near as big as ours. And her mom canned so much stuff that sometimes she'd have to empty out a bunch of cans and fill them again, next time around, or two or three years up the road. But she was a cook. Wow, they ate like kings. Makes you feel sorry people the people who come up in the city, you know. They didn't get all the good things like hunting grouse, catching trout, and bear hunting. We used to—they got to killing our cattle, we just made war on them. We didn't waste them we'd eat them. (Laughs) And if someone knows how to fix them, they're delicious, but you got to know the tricks. The same way with some of wild game.

PIEHLER: How much would you depend on—how much would you store food, general store food would you eat growing up?

CARR: Oh, we'd can like 3 or 400 cans of beans and corn and vegetables, you know.

PIEHLER: That you'd actually can on the farm.

CARR: Yeah, we'd have our hogs, and our smokehouse.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't really buy—I mean, it sounds like, you bought like salt or coffee ...

CARR: Yeah, just a few little things, you know, is all you had to buy.

PIEHLER: Now did you have an account at the store? Where would you—your father had a store up in ...

CARR: Up in the Sugarlands.

PIEHLER: But when you moved down here ...

CARR: We had an account with Leonard when we first were married, didn't we? We'd buy things, and they would write it up, you know.

PIEHLER: What about your mother, when you were growing up?

CARR: I don't remember if ...

PIEHLER: You don't remember.



CARR: If they did, I don't know if they did or not. They had a little money at that time. I guess, they just paid as they went. But most of the people up in here had an account at the store.

EUNICE CARR: We'd pick blackberries and sell them to buy clothes with..

CARR: I remember picking up chestnuts with my uncles. I was just a little bitty dude, and we picked up a bushel under a big tree one morning, a bushel basket full, you know. And they used to—they'd go to Bays Mountain in a day with a wagon, and then onto Knoxville the next day. And back to Bays Mountain and spend the night, and then home the next day with horses and wagons, you know. I took an old man's tobacco in that hadn't been to Knoxville in about, I believe he said, about twenty years. Mr. Billy Cantrell, he was the custodian at the school, you know. I had a new truck, and he asked me to take his tobacco, and I said, "Why sure thing." We put that on. I drove a little pure on account I knowed him, you know, and knew he hadn't been over there hardly since they went with wagons, you know. He told me how long it took him. We went to Western Avenue with that load of tobacco, and that took us about an hour. He was amazed at the likes of Knoxville. I never forget as I began to get out and see the world, I'd come to Gatlinburg there's a wide place in the road and five or six buildings, and then Sevierville had a few more. (Laughter) Knoxville had a lot more. I flew over Knoxville one night, and I thought, "Man," and then I flew over Chicago, and that made Knoxville look like a burg at that time.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, when you were growing up, how often would you get into Knoxville, say?

CARR: Oh wow, when we was taking beans or tobacco, or cattle.

PIEHLER: How often would that be a year? That doesn't sound that often.

CARR: Four or five, six times maybe.

PIEHLER: And would you do anything else in Knoxville, besides go to market? Would you ever go shopping?

CARR: Once in a while, you know, once in a while. But most of the time we'd go to the market and back, and we'd shop in Sevierville.

PIEHLER: So, Sevierville was the big center?

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: That's where you would go to town?

CARR: And I've done a survey for our Baptist people, in '95 in Sevier County, and listen to this. Seymour had 18, almost 18,000. 17 something. Sevierville had 7,000 something. This is resident members. Pigeon Forge had a mountain had 3,019. Gatlinburg had 4,200, I

believe, and something. At the time, Seymour was bigger than all three, and they're not a city. Oh man, people would run over there, and get out of taxes in Knoxville, didn't they? I think they did that. You wouldn't think that going through Seymour that there were many people there, but drive up old Sevier Highway, or out 411 and see those big subdivisions. Well, 1,000 of them were in Blount County. Now then, we've almost doubled since '95. That's hard to realize, isn't it? We've got, what now? 6 or 8,000 Muslims here now? In the United States ...

PIEHLER: I'm not sure.

CARR: I saw some figures here once; here a few years ago, they had like 5,000,000 in their churches. We have a lot of Spanish people here now. They come up here and work, and then go back. Thirty years ago, I think, Billy Graham said that, "My fear, greed will destroy us." And we're seeing all these big plants move to other countries so they can build their product cheaper. You wonder what that means, you know.

PIEHLER: I want to ask you before—I guess, because, it sounds like, lunch is almost here, but I want to ask you before we break for lunch. Could you—what did your family think of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, when you were growing up?

CARR: Well, the people around here thought that it was the most wonderful thing that ever happened. And some of our dyed in the wool Republicans thought, "Man, they're loaning us these horses and this thing to work with," and they'll wind up on their farm, you know, and some was slow about things like that. But people really respected the President then. He comes up to Newfound Gap to dedicate the park, and people were lined on the road, you know. In his speech, how'd he say that? 'Something for Kentucky and dam Tennessee,' you know, building these dams. And that really got us started, you know. These big dams. We went over to Douglas Dam on a picnic from Jones Chapel, and we got there and were playing softball. I was real strong then, I was working construction. I got them to throw me a good one in there, and I just put it over the woods. (Laughter) They lined up next time to get me out, you know, and I just turned a bit over the other way. I just killed it, you know. I used to like to play, but never got to play football, but just a little.

PIEHLER: But you played baseball growing up?

CARR: Yeah, and basketball a little bit. Our boys—going to Pittman, we'd have had some of the best football players ever that never got to play. We had some big strong boys that was real agile, and everything.

PIEHLER: And they didn't get to play because of the war?

CARR: Well, somebody broke an arm up at Pittman playing football, and that, sort of, put a wedge in that wheel. But we'd go to Sevierville, and win everything, just about, you know, on field day: tug-of-war, hundred yard dash, and pole vaulting and all that stuff, shot put, you know. We had some big ones.

VAN HOUTS: I just want to just clarify, maybe just for myself. So, when you left Sugarlands, you came here.

CARR: Yeah.

VAN HOUTS: Did you immediately start farming, and start growing?

CARR: Well, when I was seven years old, I would carry water out in the field for them to drink, you know.

VAN HOUTS: And you started from scratch?

CARR: Yeah, and when I wasn't carrying water, I would help pull corn, or whatever it was, you know, chop the weeds out. Seven years old.

VAN HOUTS: Were you—did you need to clear your land to start, or was it already cleared?

CARR: Well, most of it was cleared, but we cleared some places that was better, you know. It—we had some land up there that would grow tobacco, beans. We grew 3,000 pounds on eight-tenths tobacco. That's really good, you know. The average is about 2,000 pounds an acre. That's pretty much above average. Those top leaves would be about this long, and the stalk was about that big around. You'd put them up, hang them all day, and you'd be ready to hit they hay. (Laughing)

VAN HOUTS: I can imagine.

CARR: If it rained, we'd get to go fishing. (Laughter) You know, sometimes it'd rain, and if we didn't have enough sticks already cut, we'd go fishing, but if we didn't, we'd have to cut sticks. I'll never forget that's what started me. I went across the hill there to Little Laurel Church. My brother and two big boys come around this way. I was catching hornets, and I had a big cane pole. It just bit like one of those hornets, and I brought up a big rainbow about that long. Beautiful size.

VAN HOUTS: Wow, that's beautiful.

CARR: I had to—that was too much, I had to come up this way ...

VAN HOUTS: And show them?

CARR: The river was kind of dingy, well, actually just a little bit muddy, you know, washed down from the fields. I got nearly to them, and I held that up, and dropped it in the river, and they was coming up pretty close to me. My brother, bigger than me, he saw it, and when he got down to it, he made a jump, and got that fish, and went under. And this older boy said, "Just Carl would jump a fish not thinking about what's on the other side." (Laughter) But he

got the fish, you know. So, we had, we about argued over whose it was. (Laughter) Jess was a real active boy. He had long arms, kind of skinny, broad shoulders. He boxed in the three C's [Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC]. He won over the three camps up here. In the service, he got out-pointed and lost, chipped a tooth. But if he had had someone to train him, he would have been something. Middleweight.

PIEHLER: Well, we're almost out of this tape ...

CARR: I didn't know we was taping this, and me just a blabbing away!

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Melvin Carr on December 19, 2001 in Pittman Center in Sevier County, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

VAN HOUTS: Nashwa van Houts.

PIEHLER: And I want to ask you a little bit about—you mentioned, sort of, earlier about enlisting, but I want to back up a little bit earlier. When did you know that there was a World War? I mean, because we entered in 1941, but the war started in '39. How much did you know about sort of the war, and what was going on?

CARR: Oh, not a whole lot, until the Pearl Harbor attack, and then Roosevelt declared the war. And they let school out that day, and we walked home, four miles.

PIEHLER: Do you—you didn't hear ...

CARR: That was '41 wasn't it?

PIEHLER: Yes.

CARR: December 7<sup>th</sup>? Well, I guess, I don't know what day it was on.

PIEHLER: Well, December 7<sup>th</sup> was on a Sunday, and then Roosevelt's speech was ...

CARR: Well, it was probably Monday, you know, when they let us come home.

PIEHLER: They let you come home early?

CARR: Yeah, and I was just a big boy. Never thought about being in it, you know. (Laughing)

PIEHLER: So, you thought—it still was somewhat distant for you?

CARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: When did you actually start—when did you think that this might be your war?

CARR: Well, when I had my seventeenth birthday, they were telling us if we wanted to volunteer we could pick our choice of service, and I did that. I was seventeen, and well, I figured before that, I would probably be in it some way. That's—I was sworn in, I believe, January 7<sup>th</sup> of '43. January ... [by] May I was in the Aleutians.

PIEHLER: And so, you weren't even eighteen when you ...

CARR: Well, yeah, I guess, I was eighteen then.

PIEHLER: But just barely.

CARR: Yeah.

VAN HOUTS: What did you think going into it, I mean, what did you think was going to be time for fun, time—you know, were you frightened, what did you think?

CARR: Well, I think everyone is scared, you know.

VAN HOUTS: You were scared?

CARR: Yeah, kinda, you know, but after we had a shakedown, and tried out all of our guns and stuff, I thought, "Well, unless there's a lot of them ..." (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned going to Knoxville, as a kid growing up, had you traveled anywhere else?

CARR: No, not knowingly, you know ...

PIEHLER: So, you'd never say ...

CARR: I guess, I was about ten years old when I remember going to Knoxville.

PIEHLER: Had you ever seen the ocean before you enlisted?

CARR: No. Oh yeah, I went over to Wilmington with a friend that went over to work in the Naval yard, and wanted me to go with him.

PIEHLER: When was that?

CARR: Well, I was about sixteen then, I guess.

PIEHLER: So, really not until sixteen did you really leave Tennessee.

CARR: No, I hadn't left Tennessee unless ... I guess, I was almost seventeen. And in the summer, I guess, I shouldn't have lied about my age, but I was in the three C's [CCC] for a while.

PIEHLER: And actually, thank you for reminding us, we wanted to ask you—so, you lied about—and where did you ...

CARR: Gatlinburg, and I was there a week, and Sergeant Reese come around and said, "I believe you'd make a good first aid boy," and I worked with a doctor, and we had a little office, and about six bunks, you know, and medicine and stuff, you know. He'd be with me two days, and the other camp two, and then he'd come back around.

PIEHLER: And so, you were like the medic, in a sense?

CARR: Yeah, and somebody got skinned up on the mountain at that first tunnel. They'd had a slide there, and I went up there and took my gear to patch them up, you know. I got up there, and they'd moved a big rock about like this table, kind of flat, and there was six rattle snakes under it. You talk about—they scattered like a bunch of quail, you know. We laughed about that, you know. If I see one first, I'm not scared of them, but if you're just right on one. I jumped up in a bunch of water snakes fishing, and you don't have time to figure out what they are. There were piles of them. They mate in early June, you know, and oh, just bunch of them. They'll get the best of you, if you're not careful. I've seen that two or three times: just big bunches of snakes, water snakes. After I jumped backwards into the creek, I realized they were water snakes, and I was all right. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, the CCC, how old—what years was, do you remember—you were still ...

CARR: That would have been in 1942.

PIEHLER: And you shouldn't have been working?

CARR: No, no, but I was a pretty big boy, and they couldn't tell if I was eighteen or not.

PIEHLER: And this was the Sergeant who had ...

CARR: Was over the Sugarlands camp.

PIEHLER: How did you know the Sergeant? How did he know you?

CARR: Well, some of my people lived up on the mountain there still after the park, before the war, and my name—I guess, he'd known my uncle probably.

PIEHLER: And so, you—but he hadn't known you before?

CARR: No, no, he just come along, and told me to stay down that morning, and talked to me and said, "I believe you'd make a good first aid boy."

VAN HOUTS: And so, when you were doing the first aid, you had the doctor two days a week, and the rest of the time you ran the place yourself?

CARR: Yeah. If it were something pretty serious, I'd call him.

VAN HOUTS: Okay.

CARR: We had a boy go to sleep up on top of one of the barracks, and he had sunstroke. Oh man, that give us a scare. You know, them were different—and the one that was the first aid man before me, he got moved up, he come over and said, “Just try to get some coffee in him.” Now they would try to ice you down, wouldn't they?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

CARR: And the doctor said that was the right thing. He comes along, and he was poorly for a long time, but that give us a little shake. We called him as soon as we could, you know, and he come.

VAN HOUTS: And the ... CCC, how long were you there, and did you only do the first aid?

CARR: When? In fifty ...

VAN HOUTS: In '42.

CARR: Oh, in '42, I went over there in the summertime, out of school.

PIEHLER: So, it was just a summer job for you?

VAN HOUTS: A summer job?

CARR: Yeah, and, of course, I was supposed to have stayed, you know, but I came back to school, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What about the people who were in the CCC? Were they from around here, or were they from ...

CARR: All over.

PIEHLER: They were from all over?

CARR: Yeah, and at that time, they was building trails, and doing a lot of things like that. The rangers were kinda with us, you know, and some of them was—they'd point out stuff that we needed to fix, and all that. I was going to be a ranger when I come back, and I got into security at Oak Ridge. I went up there after I come back from Oak Ridge. The chief

was trying to get me, I'd had my public relations training, and they said I'd have to work Sunday, that's our biggest day. And I thanked him, and that's why I left Oak Ridge.

PIEHLER: It's the working on Sunday?

CARR: Yeah. I didn't like that.

PIEHLER: And so, if it hadn't have been for the Sunday work in the park ...

CARR: I'd have probably been a ranger there, instead of construction. They didn't pay as much as construction, but it was easier, a good life, you know, pretty good insurance and whatever. Construction is the hardest work there is, and I was strong all my life, and enjoyed it.

VAN HOUTS: You say in your form, Melvin, that you did four years of farm training, where did you put that in?

CARR: After the war.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

CARR: Yeah.

VAN HOUTS: And you ...

CARR: When we first got married, before I went to Oak Ridge.

VAN HOUTS: Okay.

CARR: And there wasn't any money in farming, just wasn't any. And I put in an application over there, and I got my calling over there. Let's see that was in '40 ... that was in the '40s. And in that time—I worked for about six months with TVA—I was farming. I had my calves and crops fixed to where I could go on the job, and work in the evening, or whatever. TVA—I was in shape then, ooh I was in shape. I could swing a bush axe, and lay it down and eat, and then swing it the rest of the day. Yeah, and these poor fellows would just cry that they'd take on that wasn't in shape. (Laughter) I got to just helping them along or pecking along with them, you know. We'd cut the bushes out in front of the power line through Cosby. Big and little Cosby, we counted where there was and where there had been twenty-seven stills. Twenty-seven stills.

VAN HOUTS: Stills for ...

CARR: They'd been blown up, or still operating, or still there. We counted where there had been twenty-seven. One day, we were cutting around to a big hill, and this big old rough boy was with me. He was from Newport, he had gotten in trouble, and he had a big scar on his face. There was a little brown cardboard box run under a pine tree up on the hill, and I said,



“Hey, look here Newman, what’s this?” He said, “Get away from that right now!” He said, “That’s a dynamite, and when the Revenue men come through, somebody down there would set it off.” (Laughter) And they told a good story about that. This fellow was running a store over there in Cosby—you might have heard it, he would set the dynamite off, go to the back of the store, and pitch a piece of dynamite out to let them know that the Revenue was coming. And they decided to catch him, and he had hid in these big weeds. And he came out and threw that stick of dynamite in there with that deputy. Said, “he come out of there fighting the wind.” (Laughter) Okay, that’s enough rambling.

PIEHLER: Well, I guess, just since you raised it, how common was it to have still around here? Without naming names.

CARR: Well, I just knowed of one, when I was growing up.

PIEHLER: Just one. Now, did your family drink at all, did anyone in your family ...

CARR: I think everybody drank a little in the Sugarlands. It seemed like it, you know.

PIEHLER: So, it wasn’t dry then?

CARR: No, not dry, no, but they kept a little for medicine, you know.

VAN HOUTS: Getting back to growing up, when you’re, just to backtrack, when your father was ill, how did that affect your day-to-day family running?

CARR: Oh, um ...

VAN HOUTS: Did your mother have to ...

CARR: He stayed in a room by himself.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

CARR: When we come out of the Sugarlands, we had tobacco and that stuff growing. We’d come home when I was little, little. I was seven when he died. We’d work a bit then. Sometimes we’d go and talk to him, you know, and he taught me fractions. I was about the second grade, and I made two or three grades that year. My teacher said, “Now if you don’t know your arithmetic, now Melvin, I’ll help you.” She was a beautiful lady. She was just, I guess, right out of college, Murphy. She went to Washington D.C. in the war, and her husband and her were accountants. And he got pneumonia, and they gave him a penicillin shot, and it killed him. This was when it first come out. Hit a vein, I guess.

VAN HOUTS: Gosh. And was your father heavily medicated when he was sick?

CARR: Well, yeah, they had him on medication. And they would come to see him just every once in a while, I forgot how frequently.

VAN HOUTS: Is “they” the doctor?

CARR: The doctor, and sometimes a nurse would come. They didn’t have oxygen back then, you know. I remember in the Sugarlands, before he got sick, riding on his back, he was big and tall, and I thought, “Man if he was to fall, I’d be hurt.” I’d see him swim across the river. We had a big pool down there in the river we’d swim in, it was cold, you know. He got him a rock to hold him down, you know, and would walk across that cold water. That rock would hold him down, and he’d wade across under it. That’s where he got sick. Dad didn’t last too long after he got sick.

VAN HOUTS: Was it ...

CARR: We quit the store, and lived up there about another couple of years, and then bought over here.

VAN HOUTS: During that time, did he nurse himself, or did your mother nurse him? Who looked after him?

CARR: He would live in a room by himself. Up there, he lived in a little house by himself. She would cook for him and everything, you know. Then we could see him sometimes, but I never knew a dad, really, until she wed my step-dad. He was good to us, but he taught us how to work.

VAN HOUTS: And he became a real father for you?

CARR: Yeah. Yeah, he sold me the home place, 125 or 30 acres. I paid for it when I was at Oak Ridge. That place now would be worth 1,000,000 dollars. It’s got about a mile of top of the mountain that overlooks the park, you know, you can see the ski lodge up there. You could have all the rentals you wanted to build. And this piece across and behind us here, across the river: seventy-four acres, sold this summer, 1,110,000 dollars. Seventy-four acres. So, that made my little spot here worth 250, but I wouldn’t price it. I wouldn’t price it like that. (Laughter) There’s people coming in here, you know, that would just pay any price. There’s no more land on the river for sale.

VAN HOUTS: That’s right.

CARR: They—I wouldn’t price it, because I like to live here. Like my school here, played around here. We had a playground below the road there, by the river. We’ve got three hundred feet there. I’ve got a table down there. If it ever gets too hot over there in Knoxville, just come over and make yourself at home, a picnic, stick your feet in the creek.

VAN HOUTS: When your father—when your mother remarried your stepfather, was that—did he have children?

CARR: No.

VAN HOUTS: So, it was quite a big thing for him to take on a family of five children?

CARR: I guess it was, you know, he was a soldier too, World War I ...

VAN HOUTS: World War I?

CARR: Yeah. He worked for my dad. He died, and, I guess, about two years after that they got married. I'd hear my mother pray, "Bless the children," you know. She was pretty much alone. They said—George Truett's mom, when his dad died, George told about seeing her leave the house crying, and come back laughing. One day, he followed her, and she went under this apple tree to pray. He heard his mom pray for him, "Help me raise these boys." George Truett was one of the greatest preachers us Southern Baptists have ever had. Powerful man. They said one night in the service, he didn't come out when he was supposed to, you know, and one of the deacons went to check. He was praying. He came back, and said, "Sing another one." Two or three times, you know. He heard him say, he was lying prostrate on the floor. They heard him say, "Lord, I'm not going if you don't go with me." The story is that when he came into the auditorium, they said, there were people screaming in the balcony and all over the place, and people got right by the Lord. That's something you hear about, but you never see, do you?

My sister-in-law called this morning. She was crying, and said—her son's a big boy, he's about six-four or five, real fine boy and Christian boy. He got to drag his foot, and it started bothering his arm. Some of the doctors here thought it were his back. And they went to this specialist, and he found a thing on his brain. It was on his left side, and I believe he was dragging the right side. Your nerves cross, don't they? He said it wasn't attached to the brain, they didn't think. And they thought that they could get it. They did a biopsy, and if it didn't look too scary, they were going to go ahead and take it out today in Knoxville. It's too bad they didn't send him to Nashville, and wait a few days. She lost her husband about two years ago, real fine man. He was—he done the buying for the Sevier County Electric Company, and he was a real good boy.

We hunted together one day, and he scared up a grouse up on top of the hill. I was down on our place, and I was down this hollow. I heard it and looked up and seen it. It looked too high to shoot at, but I shot at it anyway. It went up on the hill. I seen it land, and it turned around and started right back towards me. There's a page fence there. He come down to that fence, got hung up on that fence, and I just reached down and got him. One shot. He comes out, "Boy, I had seen a big one up there." I put it behind my coat, you know. You did? He said, "Flew down this way." I said, "I got it." Oh, he didn't know what to say. I pulled it out, you know, a big, pretty rough little grouse. They're pretty.

VAN HOUTS: Are you close to your brothers and sisters, Melvin?

CARR: Yeah, I got a brother that lives up here about a mile up the road, and about a half mile across a hill on the edge of Webb's Mountain, my older brother. Then I got one that lives down this way that had gall stone surgery the other day. My youngest half-brother died.

They found him lying on the couch. He just had a heart attack. He was a big stout fellow, you know, just went out. He was a mechanic. You could just throw a car out there in a pile, and he'd build it. Man, I never took any interest in them, you know. I knew a little about them. It was like a preacher friend of mine that said he just knew that you put the gas in the back, and the water in the front. He was in evangelism. He'd be stopped on the side of the road with the hood raised. Somebody would stop, and ask that sixty-four dollar question, "Are you having trouble?" He said I felt like saying, "I just stop at about this time everyday and rest a while." (Laughter)

VAN HOUTS: One of your brothers, in this form you said, has a learning disability?

CARR: No, he's partly disabled now ...

VAN HOUTS: Partly disabled?

CARR: With emphysema.

VAN HOUTS: Okay.

CARR: He smoked too long.

PIEHLER: Did you smoke growing up?

CARR: I did. We'd steal mom's cigarettes, you know. Camels, and Lucky's and smoke. Man, I was seventeen years old when I got double pneumonia in the Navy. It tastes like a weed, so, this is the time I quit.

PIEHLER: You quit in the Navy?

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Because cigarettes were pretty, relatively easy to get a hold of in the service.

CARR: Oh yeah, they were everywhere, you know. Advertised, and you could count on them. In case you missed everything, there would be the cigarettes. I smoked cigars for a while when I worked construction, but I got over that. One day I was trout fishing—I wouldn't smoke around children, you know. I got to thinking, if it's wrong to smoke them around children then it's wrong to smoke them around anybody. And I was fishing—my excuse was to keep the gnats out of my eyes. Used to have these little grey mountain gnats that would just eat you up. I must have swallowed some of the juice or something. Boy, I got so sick. I was catching fish like crazy, and I really got sick. I said, "Thank you lord," and that was the last of that.

I was up in St. Roberts, Missouri at a revival. I ate lunch with this Methodist preacher. He told me about this old boy he had smoking, couldn't get him to quit. He got emphysema, couldn't get him to quit. "Well," he said, "we got him. We were taking off through the hills

there in Southeastern Missouri, and that casket worked loose. Right in front of a shopping center, big steep hill, they poured him out, and he went sailing across through there. Went through a drug store window and propped up by this druggist. They turned around and said 'may I help you?' You got anything to stop the coffin? I'm not sure how you would spell that." (Laughter) Of course, that couldn't have happened, but I got choked telling it to you. Don't it bug you to see someone smoking and just coughing, and have a cigarette hanging from their lip and just coughing.... This many people now smoking, I guess, it hurts our pollution a little more, doesn't it?

VAN HOUTS: Certainly does, certainly does.

CARR: I believe these big liners are the worst thing we got, and nobody's said something, because there's too many dollars. What do you think?

PIEHLER: Which a ...

CARR: Airliners, so many big ones. That diesel, you pour it on a plant, and it will kill it. I don't know what it does if you refine it, and let it go up in the air there after a while. Sometimes you count a dozen or twenty streaks. That's got to have an effect someway, but, I guess, in this fast age we got to get there.

PIEHLER: Had you thought—why the Navy? Had you thought of the Army?

CARR: Well, I just thought about the Naval Air Force was impressive.

PIEHLER: So, you really wanted to be an aviator?

CARR: When I got in there and took my GCT, I had pneumonia. That goes with you the whole way. I filled about half of it out and threw it in. Then I didn't care about earning a commissioned rank. They found out I could shoot, and made me a director operator. Then as a seaman, they sent me over and tied up a cruiser, tied the thing up, you know. Boatswain would give you his lanyard, and said, "Tie that up, would you, I don't got time." We went over to the pier, and tied this cruiser up. One of my buddies was on it, and saw me. I said I was proud I went. Twelve of us that went to school at Pittman got together in Hawaii one time. That's the truth, twelve of us. The more—my best friend got in, and they wouldn't sign my papers. I banged on them for about a month, and they signed them.

PIEHLER: So, your parents didn't want you to go?

CARR: No, and I didn't know any better. My buddy served his time on a submarine, and then he was stationed in the torpedo storage there at Hawaii. I come home, he was first class. I went back and he was second-class, just as the war ended with Germany.... I said, "Just what happened to you feller?" And he said, "Well, these dummies wanted the keys to the torpedo juice, and I let them have it." That bunch of sailors strained that through bread and drunk it. If it were anybody else, they would have thrown them out of the Navy. Oh, by the way, the other day, I heard this, and I didn't hear any more; my preacher friend said, "What's

this about this skipper of one of our big carriers, that they had done some kind of survey on him, and moved him?”

PIEHLER: Yes, there was a Captain that got relieved because he didn't pass inspection coming into port.

CARR: How long had he been out, do you reckon?

PIEHLER: He had been out for a while.

CARR: Somebody wanted his position, didn't they?

PIEHLER: I don't know much more about the story ...

CARR: I didn't hear it either, but there is something pretty wrong, it seems like. We come into Pearl Harbor once, and we had Oldendorf—the uniform of the day was whites, he said, “No, my men will wear their dungarees.”

PIEHLER: Where did you report? You enlisted—you had to get your parents to sign. Where did you actually report to be sworn in, and get a physical?

CARR: I reported to Knoxville, about a half dozen of us went on in on the bus to Nashville. We got sworn in Nashville.

PIEHLER: And where did you have your physical, and get your uniforms and all?

CARR: We got—they just gave us a quick run over there in Nashville. Then, we went on to San Diego for our final inspection and got our clothes and everything.

PIEHLER: So, that's—where did you do your basic training?

CARR: San Diego.

PIEHLER: San Diego.

CARR: They send you the farthest place from home they can. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, you hadn't, you really hadn't gotten past Knoxville. You'd been once to Wilmington. And now you were going to Nashville, which was very different then across the country. What was that all like?

CARR: Oh, they give us a Pullman. Oh, we had a full carload on this Pullman. Part of the time on a troop train, sometimes hooked to something else. Seemed like it was three days and two nights across from Texas from Little Rock to El Paso. We'd wake up, “Where we at?” “Texas” (Laughter) Oh, it was a slow train, you know. Northern Texas, you know that desolate to look around. Now that Eastern Texas, down next to Arkansas, is beautiful.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but parts of Texas can be pretty.

CARR: Oh, those rocks and sagebrush. Man, there ain't this kind of place in the world. That's where the atomic bomb ought to have been built. Then they goofed up and put it here, didn't they? They wouldn't have hurt a thing out there, would it? (Laughter) Then we went on through El Paso, and dropped back down, going to San Diego. We got on the edge of Mexico a time or two. We had a big time, you know, bunch of kids. You know, most of the people on our ship were teenagers, most of them. We had—Deets was a coach at UCLA. He was our division officer. One of the finest men you ever saw. Big, broad as a barn door, you know. One day he comes through the ranks, and we were having an admiral inspection. "You're looking sharp lads." He walked down in front of this—our ship's diver was a first class gunner's mate, big boy. He got off the Oklahoma when it sunk, you know. "What are you grinning about Burke?" He said, "If anybody doesn't like the way I run this, we'll pull these bars off, and we'll get together." (Laughter) Burke grinned, and he said, "What are you grinning about Burke?" Burke was as good a man as him, you know, maybe better. He was a dandy. He'd tell us when an air attack was—we'd been on station a long time. He'd say let one at a time go down and get a drink, or go get a pot of Joe if there wasn't anything happening. He was a good one.

VAN HOUTS: To think that there were mostly teenagers on your ship, did that mean that there was a lot of fun, a lot of ...

CARR: Oh yeah, we'd wrestle, fight, and play, you know. Not really fight, you know.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: We had a big time, that way, and we had a ring to work out in. We had, at one time, I believe, we had nine or ten middleweight boxers who had been champions of where they come from. All—the funniest thing in training, we had one from Arizona, Morago, Indian. He was a middleweight champion of Arizona, but our recruit CPO didn't know it. And they got into it, and he'd run him around the ground. He ought to have thought something. He wasn't even breathing hard, you know. Well, one day they signed up to fight in a smoker. The company that won got free ice cream, you know. Oh, he whooped that chief, woo he whooped that chief. He'd back up, and let him revive, and then whoop him again. (Laughter) After the fight, he said, "I appreciate you not killing me Morago." He said, "Chief, don't feel too bad about that, I'm middleweight champion of Arizona." (Laughter) You didn't know whom you were fooling with in there, you know.

PIEHLER: What—going back just a year, you got to San Diego for your training. What was that like?

CARR: Hot, sultry weather. I was kind of homesick, you know. We got to play in the snow in the Rockies, and I had a cold. It just kept getting worse. That's when I got pneumonia.

PIEHLER: So, you ended up stopping briefly in the Rockies? You had enough time to have a snowball fight?

CARR: Yeah, we stopped for one to pass or something.

PIEHLER: And you all got out and ...

CARR: Yeah, fight in the snow, and this and that. (Laughter) Just a bunch of kids, you know, really.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: But they say that that makes the best kind of soldier or sailor, whatever. Not enough sense to know how dangerous it is.

PIEHLER: What do you remember ... about basic training before you got sick? Does anything stick out, in terms of ...

CARR: I was pretty sick. If I hadn't have been sick, I could have took that with flying colors, you know, just no strain.

PIEHLER: But because you were not feeling well ...

CARR: Yeah, I wasn't feeling good, you know, and it hurts your breathing and hurts your endurance and everything. Boy, I—one morning, I woke up and I couldn't get out of bed. I was shaking, chilling and shaking the whole bed. Chief come in there, "Carr, what's going on here?" I said, "I'm sick Chief." "Why didn't you go to sick call last night?" I said, "I did." And they were all gone on liberty, and they didn't have time to see me. He hit the ceiling, and he said to some of them, said, "Dudes help him, let's go." Took me down to sickbay. He talked to that doctor like he was a dog. He knew, and that scared me. "He's liable to kill me." Chief was tough.

PIEHLER: Chiefs can be tough, I've been told.

CARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Chiefs were very protective ...

CARR: He said, "From now on, if one of my men comes in here, I want you to see him. That don't mean tomorrow sometime." Boy as soon as they examined me, they sent me to Balboa hospital. They sent me a bouquet about that tall of the prettiest flowers I ever saw. That made it worse than ever. You know, I knew I'd lost them. I was weak. The nurse said, "Boy, somebody thinks well of somebody." (Laughter) And one of our old rough chiefs, he took us up to L.A. to get on the ship, and he ate with us that prison that was converted into a receiving unit.



PIEHLER: Alcatraz? What prison was converted?

CARR: In L.A.? It was—I don't know which prison it was, but it used to be a prison.

PIEHLER: Okay, in L.A., it wasn't ...

CARR: It wasn't Alcatraz.

PIEHLER: No, no, I was confusing San Francisco ...

CARR: Yeah, but anyways, he said—you know he'd give us a rough time, but we won first place in the whole base in everything. Oh, he was proud of that. When he went to leave, we bought him a bunch of white shirts and stuff, you know. He had to cry a little, you know. He was a big rough guy, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But this really meant a lot to him?

CARR: Yeah. Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: So, chiefs really, particularly in the beginning, really stick out?

CARR: Now I've seen Marines march, I've seen all kinds of servicemen march, but that bunch of drill chiefs in there—it was about forty or fifty of them, you know, you ought to have seen that. Boy, every move was perfect. Every count, nobody missed a step. There was just perfect coordination. That's what they'd done all the time. They had put them together as one outfit. That was something to watch.

PIEHLER: A lot of people when I've asked about basic training in the Navy, firefighting really sticks out in their memory. Does that stick out in yours?

CARR: Well, not ...

PIEHLER: Was there anything else about ...

CARR: Not really. One time, there was a big Spanish boy. We weren't supposed to have a knife, and he had a knife. He and Goodrich, who was a golden glove champ. They got into it over something, and boy, Goodrich just lay low, but you know. We had to pull them loose, you know. I believed he would have killed him. He was just—his temper had just got away. They won't let you fight aboard ship, you know. They'll just gang up and pull you apart and go get the gloves, take you up to the boat deck and let everybody see it. (Laughter) Well, that little old kid had come in there—he was just sixteen, he had stretched his age like I did sometime.

PIEHLER: There were a lot of kids?

CARR: Yeah, and he was—he'd grown up in the slum area. I guess, he had fought a lot. One of the boatswains got into it with him. They just took them up to the deck. The Boatswain was bigger than him, you know. The kid's had grewed up a lot. He was growing, really making a man, you know. Boy, he whooped that guy. He really got the best of him. That Boatswain was from Nashville. He just cleaned his plow, you know. He'd bob and hit him, you know, threw, just smash. He was just a little too good.

VAN HOUTS: Apart from having a good relationship on board with your chiefs, were there other superiors that you had a good relationship with?

CARR: Oh yeah, they wasn't no problem at all.

VAN HOUTS: No problems at all?

CARR: No, I never noted any. Once in a while, some of the sailors if they'd been onto the beach during recreation, where they had a place on those islands, you know, would get looped, and come back and somebody would get into it, you know. It didn't amount to nothing. When they got over it, they felt bad about what they'd done. I was just acting crazy. This Polack kid would, Kuwinski—had the prettiest hair, you know, and when we was cleaning up, I came along and just kind of run my hand through his hair when he was down scrubbing. He raised up and hit me with that scrub brush in the back. Ooh it smarted. He just set back down to whatever he was doing. We were a little nervous, I guess, I went over there and just got him by the shirt and pulled him up, you know. By the time I pulled him up, my division officer stepped in, "What's going on here?" I looked at him, "Nothing." He comes around—I went to apologize to him, and he come and apologized to me. Boy, I felt bad about that. It smarted, you know. He knocked the whale out of me.

PIEHLER: I get the sense that the Pennsylvania—people have used this term—was a happy ship?

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Is that a fair characterization?

CARR: Yeah, pretty much, yeah.

PIEHLER: And that your captain—another person said that a captain had a lot to do with the way a ship ultimately ran? The way the Navy ...

CARR: I would say so.

PIEHLER: That some captains could really make a ship an unhappy ship.

CARR: You know, we lucked out. We had Captain Chraron first, and then—Oh, I don't remember his name from Georgia, but he was a doosey, big tall lanky guy. Then our last one

was a little short wide shouldered fellow that lit one cigarette off of the other. (Laughter)  
They were just plum different, you know.

VAN HOUTS: Is there any particular Captain that sticks out?

CARR: Well, um, most of them were good. They were good. They were good.

VAN HOUTS: Mm hmm.

CARR: And one of them—lets see, that was the one from Georgia, I can't think of his name right now, but anyways, one of our boys went to the Red Cross, his mother died. They wouldn't let him have to money to go home. And our Skipper after he heard about it—we was a day out, and he launched one of our observation planes to bring that boy back, and gave him money out of ship's service. And when we come on leave that time, our ship's service had a pile of money. They rented the Scottish Rite Temple in San Francisco for our recreation, you know for a month. We'd been out for two years, and then he made a speech before we come home. He said, "Now lads, if you get into trouble, don't go to the Red Cross. You call me." That was pretty good, you know. The ship's store had a man, two year's supply of money, for our little needs, you know. Had a lot of money.

PIEHLER: Since you mention leave, I always got the impression, starting with World War II movies, old World War II movies I used to watch growing up, and then interviewing sailors when I first started—going on leave could be a very raucous experience for a lot or men?

CARR: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Do you have any recollections of ...

CARR: Well, when I got home to Sevierville, well, in Knoxville, I got a cab over to the bus station in Chattanooga, come there by train, and we got talking. I told him where I'd been. We come over, part of my family was there to pick me up in Knoxville, and my sister come out. I had my decorations on, you know. Ten battle stars, for a nineteen year old. Boy, they were all a crying and everything. I looked around, and the cab driver was crying. He didn't know. And then they got to Sevierville, my step-dad came and got me in the truck, you know. We were just riding in the truck. He'd get gas, couldn't get it for the car, you know. I stepped out of the truck, and one of my girlfriends about smothered me to death. (Laughter) Happy to see me, you know. To be out that long, you know, it's quite an experience.

PIEHLER: What about when people hit San Francisco, 'cause you mentioned you'd rented the Scottish Rite?

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How many people had a little too much to drink, or ...

CARR: Oh, quite a few drank, but most of them could handle it. One of my boatswains, he—the drunker he got, the squarer his hat would be. The straighter he'd walk. You could see him coming. You'd know if he had had it. But they'd come back to the ship kind of looped too much, and they'd put them through the cold shower.

VAN HOUTS: What about when you were in Australia, and you had your leave in Australia? Was that a raucous time too?

CARR: Yeah, the people were all nice to us, and I remember something about the most they could charge us for a meal was, it seemed to me, like two dollars and eighty something cents in the fanciest places there was. There would have been a cover charge here, you know, but for the servicemen—it was some kind of deal they had. I remember, I was with a nurse, and we got a salad, you know. We hadn't had nothing like that in a while, you know. She was set aback. "I want to watch you eat that."

PIEHLER: This is a nurse you met? An Australian nurse?

CARR: Yeah, and we were just there a short time, and two or three got married. Can you believe that?

VAN HOUTS: They married Australians?

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How long were you in port?

CARR: Just a short time. A couple of weeks, and a couple of them got married, and one on this ship. And uh ...

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

PIEHLER: So, he got some break time ...

CARR: Yeah, because he skipped ship here, that could be really serious in a foreign country, you know.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: But he got on this destroyer, and a few days later we rendezvoused and he got back aboard. But the people were nice to us in Australia. They are more like our people than in any other country I was at. They were good people for the most part. It was good to get fresh food, but the only thing we stocked up was sheep.

VAN HOUTS: Sheep?

CARR: I don't like mutton.

PIEHLER: Well, Mutton—I've been told that mutton was—people in the Pacific were not particularly fond of the mutton.

CARR: No, we weren't. There was a little quarreling over that. You know, I got to where I liked Navy beans and cinnamon rolls, you know. The seawater in the air, I guess, made you hungry.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: I was going back for seconds. Yeah, for breakfast? Navy beans? That doesn't sound right, but they got to be good.

PIEHLER: How was, overall, the Navy food? Because I've been told that Navy food was fairly good.

CARR: We had the best. I think again that depended on the skipper. He kind of looked out and got the best.

PIEHLER: Did your ship have ice cream?

CARR: Oh yeah, for a while, but not long.

PIEHLER: No, yeah ...

CARR: And when we got into port, we had the best of everything, just really good. We brought, I believe it was 1,000 Marines back with us when we was coming on leave from Guam—that was after we was torpedoed. And those Marines said, "Man, this is the best food we've had since we've been in the service." We did have some good cooks. Our food was fixed—it was decent. Some of it was plain good, or we were young and strong and hungry. It was good.

VAN HOUTS: Do you think it had anything to do with the fact that your ship was a flag ship that you had good food, or was it just ...

CARR: Well, I don't know. Now the skipper might have gone a little overboard thinking, "Well, I've got the Admiral," you know. I don't know. It could have a little to do with it. I don't know.

VAN HOUTS: And what did it mean—I mean did you have extra duties when the Admiral was on board, or was there any extra curiosity?

CARR: No, we just did the same thing. Oldendorf was one of the most down to earth people you ever saw. When his foot hit the deck like on the quarterdeck coming up from down below, just as quick as his foot hit the deck, he'd say, "At ease." Some of them would let you stand there a minute like they enjoyed it, you know.

PIEHLER: He wasn't—you also told me he gave the order specifically that there wasn't going to be dress whites coming into port, that it was going to be dungarees.

CARR: Yeah.

PIEHLER: He didn't buy this 'spit and polish,' it sounds like.

CARR: No, he was more of the uniform of the day from the naval base there. Well, we'd been on the front so long that we needed some rest, and he knew it. And he helped us out all he could.

PIEHLER: Because, I guess, from interviewing Navy people, some people could really—I won't use the slang they use, but there could be a lot of really ...

CARR: Oh yeah. They did use a lot sometimes. I remember one day when one of my officers—I forgot now what I was telling him, he said something and I said, "I reckon ..." (laughs) He said, "You so and so hillbilly, get out of here." (Laughing) When I said, "I reckon."

VAN HOUTS: What about when you went in battle, your ship was in battle almost constantly between '43 to '45. Was there a time when you just got to be weary of battle?

CARR: Oh, sometimes. You know, like you would have to wear silk gloves that come up over your arms, you know, like for flash purposes, some of that. Sometimes I had to wear one of those helmets that fit over your phones, one of those big heads, you know. Well, that thing would get to weigh a ton after so long in hot weather.

PIEHLER: How hot would it get below deck?

CARR: Umm ... not as hot as it would on top. See, we had air down there, not air-conditioned. I guess the water cooled the hull of the ship, and they'd pump air through and kept it all circulating. But on deck sometimes, you'd have to move over to a black spot, 120 degrees or so. They give us shots going down into the South Pacific to thin your blood. But coming back, we didn't get any. We'd come to the states, and come home. It was in the fall, I believe, when I come home, and man. I liked to have froze to death. When I got to Hawaii it was cool.

VAN HOUTS: What about the August bombardment of 1945—the torpedo that—you know, when you thought that the war was over—was that—how did you feel after that ...

CARR: Well ...

VAN HOUTS: Anger or—and that was the first time that you ...

CARR: That's the first time that we got major damage.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: And we'd been through the whole war. And those boys come so near to making it. We lost, the book said, nineteen, but we lost at least twenty. That's a bad feeling, you know. We couldn't get some of them out. But sometimes we had a burial at sea. That's hard. You think—you know, they put them in a big heavy tarp bag, put two five-inch projectiles in it, and sew them in. They put them on this chute, wrapped them in the flag after they put them on the chute. After the memorial service, the Captain and everybody stood at attention. He saluted each one, and pulled that string and let them go in the water. That's hard. That's one of the worst kinds of things you know, experience at sea, but the Bible said the sea would give up its dead. So, it's not really the end. In the Philippines, we had quite a bit of losses, and they were infested shark waters, with tiger sharks, you know, and that was bad. There was this little carrier that sank there. There were a lot of men in the water, and there were lots of sharks. One day there was a whaleboat alongside ...

(Tape paused—friend enters)

CARR: This is a friend from down in the valley. Where were we?

PIEHLER: We were talking about the sharks ...

VAN HOUTS: You knew that when you dropped them in the water that they were going straight to the sharks.

CARR: Oh yeah. There was a bunch in a whaleboat one day, and I looked down there and there was one of these sharks, full grown. What are they about fifteen feet long? He was turned crossways on that whaleboat, and one of these marines had his rifle. He just stuck it down there like that, and plugged him. It shook that plum good. Yeah. And then one day we had a fellow over the side to cut the screw off after we were torpedoed. It was too much trouble, too much vibration. And old Burke, our ship's diver had radios on deck so we could talk to him under the ship, you know. He was down there with a torch cutting the big propeller off, and somebody let some food go out of the galley. Sharks come out. There was a young fellow on shark watch he had a .50 caliber machine gun, and that thing laid it's head up, you know their mouths are so far back, to get that food. He raked that with a .50 caliber. It was a full sized shark. He cleared the water, and went down with a blood torrent and he never come back. They say they eat each other when they get wounded.

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: Old Burke said, "What's going on up there?" (Laughter) Deck said, "Oh nothing, just a few sharks." They had this big old hood on. They had to raise him up with a winch, you know, it was so heavy. But he had a torch, and he'd turn that on, and they'd back off in a hurry. I don't know how they kept that thing going under the water and cut that off. That was something, wasn't it? Burke was from Arkansas, big guy. He was a good one. We had one that was a bar operator before he come in the Navy. Big heavysset guy, Bellamy was his

name. Sometime in the Surigao Sea Strait Battle, he come wobbling up the gangplank you know, the stairs. And he was saying the words, “Whose a winnin’ the war?” (Laughter) He was out of it. If it was anybody else, they would have gotten the brig, but I think they expected that of him. I know he had an extra locker, and I wonder what for, and now we had found out. He might have passed that around, you know.

PIEHLER: Do you remember any of the black stewards that were on board?

CARR: Yeah, there were officer’s stewards.

PIEHLER: How much contact did you have with—because they mainly served the officers?

CARR: Yeah, but they’d come up, and talk with us, you know. Come up topside, and look around. They’d get fresh air and stuff. That Greene boy was a steward I was telling you about. He’d come up and bring us sandwiches and coffee in the night. In the Aleutians, he said, “If she goes down, old Greene is going with her, I aint going in that water.” He was a big black boy, a good one. Most of them were real fine. The Marines did live aboard ship. It was usually they’d stand color guard, or they’d be the Captain’s orderly. And one of the—I’ll never forget, he was so spiffy this Marine Sergeant. He was a little rough on his men, you know. He comes up on the bridge one day, and all these sailors were around there. The Captain came up, and he said—picked up a coffee pot, we called it a Joe. “No Joe?” “No.” All these sailors were on the phones you know. He turned around and said, “Here Sergeant, go get us some Joe.” “Yes sir,” and he went and got it to him and went back. I come through the Marine compartment for something, and he was giving a couple of lads there a pretty rough time. I walked up and said, “Sergeant, what about some coffee?” (Laughter) I could outrun him, you know. (Laughter) That didn’t go too good, he was so angry with a couple of the privates, you know.

PIEHLER: They also ran the brig?

CARR: Well, when we’d take stores on, sometimes we had an extra locker. Somebody would maybe put a ball of cheese or something in there to make sandwiches with. And an old boy got caught of doing that, and he got three days in the brig. We all felt bad about him being in the brig, but we ate the cheese! (Laughter) About three days, and they gave him a haircut, cut it off like boot, you know. Oh, crossing the International Date Line was fun sometimes.

PIEHLER: So, you had to cross ...

CARR: Oh yeah. And I’ll never forget this lad that had beautiful curly hair, you know, blonde, good-looking boy. David, or whoever was the master. If you got mad, that’s what they wanted. They’d make an example out of you. They’d run you through the red line and all that kind of stuff. David reached up, took a big lock of that hair and a big scabbard knife whacked it off there said, “Man, that’s pretty.” He held his cool though. He knew what was coming. I kinda sneaked around the crossing of the 180<sup>th</sup> meridian, ... just quiet, you know.



There weren't many that hadn't crossed it. I didn't get to serenade it. I got back pretty good, that way it worked out pretty good.

VAN HOUTS: When you started as an apprentice seaman, what did you come out as?

CARR: Um, BM 3<sup>rd</sup>, Boats Mate 3<sup>rd</sup>. I should have been a gunner's mate, but I didn't try for a rank after I didn't—I just kind of went along with what I had to do.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

CARR: They found out I could shoot, and put me on directorate. I had three quads of 40mm's. I was a Mark 63 director. One day we was at Kwajelein were at general quarters, and it was getting dark. They reported planes approaching from the starboard side. No identification. They were B-24s, and that was one of the bad experiences of my life. They were coming straight at us. They didn't know we was down there, their radar wasn't as good as ours. They were coming straight at us, and that's a no-no at a man-of-war in wartime. So, we were at command action, and I had that B-24 square in my reticule, and he was coming straight in. I had twelve barrels of 40mm point blank. And they said commence fire when on the target, and I closed that key, and the fire control officer yelled, "Cease-fire, cease-fire!" The target—the planes had been identified. They'd turned there—they found out we was there, and they flipped their ITEP on. Oh Lord! If those gunners had mashed their keys when I did, there would have been no way I could have missed. Zero target angle, just straight. I thought it was a Japanese [bomber] in my mind. They look just alike in the dark. Four low-slung engines, you know. Whew! I walked around for a day or two just—that tore me up, just really tore me up. I believe there are nine on the B-24, nine crewmen or something.

PIEHLER: That's about right, I think.

CARR: That's a terrible feeling, but part of the book there. We never killed anybody with friendly fire.

PIEHLER: But you came close. That's pretty close.

CARR: Yeah. Ain't no way I would have missed him. Twelve barrels. Boom, boom, boom, Twelve times that many. You know, we were off in a peninsula, and I laid down a barrage for the Marines to land.... We was firing rapid fire, and a young pilot come by and called in that the Pennsylvania has been hit and she's blowing up. (Laughing) I bet it looked like that from the air. The firepower from rapid fire, the big guns, and the 5-inch, and everything, it probably looked that way to him. Then after they landed and got in, we fired over them, and give them support as far as we could. I saw Jimmy Roosevelt land on Kwajelein. He was aboard our ship in the Aleutians for about three months. He went off, and then he was in the second wave that hit the beach there at Kwajelein. The colonel with him got killed, but he was a one star general then. He was Colonel on our ship, and he'd come by and they'd sound attention. The colors on his boat coming by—and pulled up along side, and pulled that old hat off, and waved, you know. Turned around and went straight in.

He didn't have to do that, but he did it. I wouldn't think he had to as a general, and the colonel on his boat got killed. But that's—a lot of things along the way—I think we more than a hundred air attacks in the whole thing, you know. When they ended up shooting in the Marianas, they got pretty close. They was dog fighting, and they told us don't shoot unless they make a run at us. So, we just watched them. Man, that was something. They were about one hundred that got in there, and that was a lot.

PIEHLER: So, you watched the Marianas—it's been called the "Turkey Shoot?"

CARR: Yeah, yeah we saw it, first hand. We were setting there with the guns loaded and the motors running, just watching it. The Mississippi had a Japanese plane make a run on them, and the pilot didn't turn back some way, and they shot him down. They said he was pretty mad. They didn't hurt him, just got his plane. (Laughter) He bailed out, and they picked him up. They said that was the maddest pilot you ever saw. But he shouldn't have followed him that close to a battleship, you know. One of my buddies on the Mississippi Vaughn Fisher, he lived up here, we went to school together, he comes over to see me in Guadalcanal. We hadn't seen nobody much we knowed in a couple years. We had a good visit, but he had a speech impairment. When he got excited, he couldn't say anything. We stood there and held each other a while. Then we'd go back and forth and see each other when we're being re-supplied or something. It'd be a day or two at anchor in some places. And then in the Philippines, I saw a plane hit his battle station. That took the wind out of my sails. About a month later, I had a friend of mine call over there, and he was there. I went over to see him. I said, "Gosh, I seen your battle station get blown away. Where were you?" One at a time, they were going down to get a drink, and he was that one. It was hot, you know, and one at a time they were leaving that station to go down and get a drink. He come visited us at church, and I told that story, and I said, "Maybe Vaughn would like to say something." He had tears rolling down his face, and he said, "I'm just proud to be here." That's pretty close, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: When you were in the Navy—I feel obligated to ask this question of people who were in the Navy—how much gambling was there aboard ship?

CARR: ... A lot. When you were out a long time, we didn't have nothing to do much.

PIEHLER: You also didn't have a lot of places to spend your money either?

CARR: No.

PIEHLER: Did you ever gamble, or ...

CARR: Umm ... I never gambled, I was a Christian man.

PIEHLER: But you watched a lot of gambling ...

CARR: Oh yeah, I was back in front of my locker pitching some dice and catching them, you know. A full commander come by, he wasn't in our division. He chewed me out. Man

he chewed me out. He talked to me like I was a dog. He let me tell him that these are not mine that I've never gambled in my life. He went on for a few days, and for some reason, I was standing in the officer's quarters. He was sitting there reading the paper. Some lieutenants were over there gambling. Oh man. I ought to have cleared my throat or spoke to him or something to made him know that I had noticed that. (Laughter) I never ...

PIEHLER: You never gambled yourself, but ...

CARR: No, I never—I left well enough alone.

PIEHLER: It also sounds like ...

CARR: I told my division officer about him cussing me out that sort of upset me. I was about ready to tear into him. I was a little nervous up there sometimes, and that wouldn't have worked either. You'd have been in the brig from now on. Tore a commander up pretty good. Old Deets, he said, "Well, you can get him in trouble." He said, "But we got to be out here together." I said, "Yeah, well forget it then." He was a good one. Old Deets, he was a big dude. I believe he was a coach at UCLA when Tennessee went out there and got whooped so good. They hadn't lost a game, and they went out there and said they got on a bender, spent the night, you know, and come out to play the next day, and they weren't ready. I worked on the job where Bob Suffridge was, and when I went on this job, he said, "Welcome aboard preacher, we're glad to have you." Something hit him. As big as he was, his arms went out of whack some way, the muscles and everything, but he was a real nice man. He was pretty famous when he played at UT. George Cathigo was another one. He passed away, didn't he, sometime back.

PIEHLER: I think so, but I'm so new to UT that I ...

CARR: Well, I've bent a few nails around there, lets see. I was carpenter on the Life Sciences building and the bridge right by it. Student parking garage, helped do that. Built the two bridges over Neyland Drive. Quite a few buildings there. I told them I spent more time there than anybody without a degree. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I'm curious, when you were in the Navy, what did you think you wanted to do when you got out?

CARR: Well, I meant to just come back, and be a ranger.

PIEHLER: That was your ...

CARR: Yeah. Just get away from everything.

PIEHLER: Had you thought about going to college at all, and using the G.I. Bill?

CARR: Well, I thought about, and I lost so much when I had pneumonia that I was scared I might have trouble making it, and just went to work as a carpenter. Went up and worked up in Washington, D.C. and worked a while, and Manassas, Virginia.

PIEHLER: Did you ...

CARR: Before I went back to TVA.

PIEHLER: Did you use the G.I. Bill at all?

CARR: I did, that's when I was foreman.

PIEHLER: Foreman? So, carpentry?

CARR: Yeah. And I run a heifer farm for a fellow. Wasn't much money, but I learned a lot. I could throw a calf up to 1,000 pounds when I was twenty-eight years old. Yeah.

VAN HOUTS: How ...

CARR: Well, no, I guess, I wasn't twenty-eight then, I was about twenty-two, I guess.

VAN HOUTS: How relevant was the farming you'd done as a child? Was it useful, what you'd been doing as a child?

CARR: You mean like during ...

VAN HOUTS: When you worked on a farm for your father as a child. Did that help you ...

CARR: Oh yeah. I learned a lot about being around cattle and horses and mules and stuff, you know. These were just purebred heifers, and we were raising them for show and sale.

VAN HOUTS: Okay.

CARR: And I saw the full brother to the national grand champion that in the '40's brought 57,000 dollars. They walked that animal around there, they was showing heritage it was bred to. A bunch of them started bidding on him, and they got it up to 10,000. He said, "It's not for sale," and all that kept him from being perfect was a little strip about that long on his eyelid that was dark, sort of darker than the rest, you know. Man, they grade right down to the last hair. Then the washer man buffed that flat hair, that beautiful animal standing there in straw about that deep. It looked like it didn't have legs, just a big body.

VAN HOUTS: Were you—how long after you finished the war did you get married?

CARR: I guess, I was home about six months before I got married.

VAN HOUTS: Right. And so, then you and Eunice were farming?

CARR: Yeah. I ought to get that picture and show you Eunice [of] when I come home. Did you see one in Celebrate Freedom where they had our pictures?

VAN HOUTS: No.

CARR: Let me get that picture and show you. No, let's take a short ...

PIEHLER: Actually, maybe after we break for the day, if that's okay.

CARR: Okay. That will be fine.

PIEHLER: Had you—how often did you stay in touch with family? Did you write often?

CARR: I got letters regularly. Especially—there would be times when we couldn't write or get mail.

PIEHLER: Mm Hmm.

CARR: When we'd get into port, or when a place was secure enough for a mail plane to come in, they'd bring us mail. We heard from home pretty regularly.

PIEHLER: Does that mean your mail survived? Did any of your letters home survive?

CARR: Oh yeah, they pretty well got through.

PIEHLER: Do you still have them? Did you save them?

CARR: No, I didn't. I had a, what would have been a record of the war. We got a little note sheet every day or so aboard ship they printed of what's happening, what's going on. I had a good scrapbook, and after we got torpedoed, I never did find that one. Our department wasn't hit, but somebody must have just borrowed it. I must have left it out, and someone must have seen it. There wasn't much of that going on either. People would hardly take anything, you know. You'd just throw something down, and it would be there if it weren't supposed to be moved.

VAN HOUTS: When you came out of the Navy, how did you feel about war, and how did you feel about ...

CARR: Well, I was so glad that it was over. When I looked at that vast fleet of ours, I thought, "There won't be no war soon." I was surprised when Korea took place. Really surprised. Then worse ever when Vietnam took place. Whoever was in charge of that—it didn't sound like war, you know, but it was real to those boys crawling around in the jungle. I thought surely we would have took the USS Alaska and Guam, and Hawaii, these three giant new cruisers. They could have patrolled up and down the shore there. They claimed they could hit anything within thirty miles. They were 12 inch 65s. In fact, they could

outgun a battleship if they could stay out of the bigger gun's way. Their range was much greater, 12 inch 65, the barrel was 65 feet long, 12 inch bore.

VAN HOUTS: Were you against Vietnam from the moment America got involved? Or did you become more and more anti as the war went on?

CARR: Well, I was against Vietnam to start with, and it bothered me more and more as it went.

VAN HOUTS: And did your boy get drafted, or did he volunteer?

CARR: Drafted, two out of high school. He could have played basketball for almost any college he wanted.

VAN HOUTS: So, would you have supported dodging the draft? Would you have supported him not going?

CARR: Yeah, in Vietnam, the way it was run. I wouldn't have felt hard against anyone who had dodged it.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

CARR: Because I never did believe it was on the level, because we didn't go about it like it was a war. We could put them three big cruisers up there and a few carriers, and had spotter people on shore, just like they're doing now, and told those people if you want to save your country, well, if you hit obstacles, we'll get them out of your way and you can get in there and do it. But to put our boys in those jungles half way around the world and a people that couldn't send a tug boat over here that's pretty far out, ain't it?

VAN HOUTS: How does that relate to your experiences in the Pacific, because the Pacific was far away, and ...

CARR: Well, I know, but the Pacific war involved our country. Vietnam didn't. They attacked us. You saw the Pearl Harbor thing and everything. I thought when we had it out with them in the final battle, sea battle, in the Surigao Straits. I never seen that on TV or nothing. And I wonder how come?

PIEHLER: Well, historians haven't forgotten. We teach about that battle.

CARR: Do you?

PIEHLER: Yeah, that battle is a very prominent battle.

CARR: Well, now this book I've got here said there were four battleships, and I know for a fact that there were six. We were straddled once. There was a shell that exploded short of us, and one past us. You know what you think? "That next one ..." Well, the next one

didn't come, and in a few moments they said the West Virginia scored a direct hit on the sister ship of the Oklahoma. It evidently broke her in two, about six 16s. I guess it would.

VAN HOUTS: And you took those troops on board didn't you? The troops on the Oklahoma, they came on board your ship. No?

CARR: Who come aboard now?

VAN HOUTS: The troops from the sinking ship.

CARR: Oh, no, we had destroyers out there and a lot of smaller ships. They wouldn't stop a big ship. It was too big of a target in a battle. If there were men overboard, they would get destroyers to pick them up or something, pilots or whatever. We had a boy wash overboard on a destroyer in the Aleutians. Three minutes later, he washed aboard a destroyer, and he was saved. There was a big write up about that. Just, you know, got washed over. Ordinarily, you'd think that that's it in that kind of water, and three minutes later, on one directly behind it, he washed aboard. That's unreal, ain't it?

PIEHLER: I want to ask—you were a carpenter as one of your many lives. You were also a union man in an area where there are not a lot of unions in comparison to other parts of the country.

CARR: Yeah, well, I was president of the carpenters' local [union] here for about twenty-three years, and I told my men, "Men, if we're not better, we don't have nothing to sell." And that kind of caught on. We had—over here in Gatlinburg, they went through about 500 men on that park plaza. We would have built that in about a year and a half and left with a crew that knew what they were doing. A crew that knows what there doing, it may not look like they're doing as much work as some of the others, but the job is done quicker.

VAN HOUTS: What led you to form the union back in—was the union formed twenty-three years ago?

CARR: It was already formed, and I joined it, because there was more money there than there was working outside it.

VAN HOUTS: So, it was a collective of carpenters?

CARR: Yeah. I think a union carpenter now makes about fifteen or sixteen dollars an hour, and a non-union makes about ten to twelve.

PIEHLER: Did you ever take part in any strikes? Did you ever have to walk out or picket?

CARR: Well, I kept one strike from happening. We were building Ideal Cement company's silos. I was one of the supervisors on that. We were about 100 feet high. It was about 220 to the concrete, and the metal on up is another five stories. We had a guy come in here with a set-form operation that run the motors that fixed these things that raised the platform every

so often. He jumped on an apprentice boy, and just called him all kinds of names. They about got into it, you know. They were pushing to get that thing done, and it was costing so much that we had to keep it moving. Some of the men just come around where this Southern boy was and was going to pick up this younger guy getting cussed out. Then they got their heads together in a little group here and a little group there, and they started a strike. I knew the rules where, and I said, "Boys, we have nothing to gain here, and everything to lose. These people done good, they've been fair. This is just a problem between the workers, and there isn't any way you can win." I kept walking around through them, and finally that got through to them. And they went ahead working. But boy the superintendents come up there on everybody, which was actually making it worse. But I kept that one from happening. I was so proud of that. We started on the ground. In twenty-one days, we were 220 feet high. Worked around the clock in three shifts. I had two engineers on my shift, I was so proud. (Laughter) And they told us—now this thing is unreal, we put in 1100 plates in there to hold the floors in. Steel plates in the walls, and they told us all of them worked.

PIEHLER: That's quite a feat.

CARR: Yeah, I felt good about that. See, this one engineer was smaller than me. I said, "You check the inside, cat walk, and finishers, and I'll check the outside." We had a zero marked, you know, a lay off for circles and put the plates on a certain elevation. We had a tape on the center to read how high you was. We had to make sure they were all in there, and they were. They had this accident in Indiana, I believe, where one of the reactors fell and killed a bunch of people. Man, they were up there in five minutes telling us about that. (Laughter) There's been a little different. Ours was straight, and theirs was set up like this, and the concrete didn't have time to set because they were going too fast. It fell, and killed a bunch of men. We got that up without killing anybody, and they was all pleased with that. We got paid for working high, and two or three things of that. So, it worked out good. Some of the boys at that time made 3,500 dollars, just working on that overtime, hazardous pay and that sort of thing.

VAN HOUTS: And at this time, Melvin, you were pastoring on the side?

CARR: Yeah. Our sheep put up with me, you know.

VAN HOUTS: So, you'd be working during the week, and then preaching on Sunday?

CARR: Yeah, and Wednesday night.

VAN HOUTS: Oh, Wednesday night.

CARR: And on Sunday, one of my other foreman friends took over for me, and let me off Sunday. I liked that.

PIEHLER: So, for—jobs were seven days?



CARR: Yeah, we just went around the clock twenty-one a day. That doesn't look that high crossing the Holston River on I-40 looking up there at those tall structures. But those power lines right there, those tall structures right there are at least four times higher than those power lines. You wouldn't think it, but that's a mile up there. See, a mile away makes it look different. That's a little bit nervous, you know. On the last, we were going up 250 feet on a first aid cage when we'd change shifts. We'd have to talk the operator in, he couldn't see up there. We had two-way radios, and we'd tell him what's there. If you stopped talking, he'd stop. Then you had to tell him what to do, but that's about the only way you could do it. The structure right next to us is about half or two thirds that high, and a guy got killed on it. He got tangled up in electric chords. We had a big old rough carpenter there he had formed an opinion of me, I guess, and when we went to strip the lights for them, took the walkway down, 220 feet up, I helped him do it. The last two boards were on some brackets 220 feet high, you know. I said, "Fudge, you're bigger than me, I'll just go down there and do that." Later, he said, "You know, I think a little different about that preacher now." (Laughter) For the most part, it worked out pretty good.

I was building at the University when Billy Graham came over. The contractor had us to come down, and we had fifteen minutes of prayer each day at noon. We had the worse man to swear I'd run across in all my life, you know, he quit swearing. I put a helper with him, a Christian boy, and he come to me, "Preacher, can you put me with somebody else? That man will be singing, and leave out a word or two and put some cuss words in." (Laughter) I said, "Well, maybe you'll rub off on him." He quit cussing, you know. It kind of got to him, you know. I had a man fall there in the parking garage at the university. Thirty-six feet and hit on concrete, there was just a few 2x4s down there. About half way down, he hit a 2x4, and broke it in two, big old stout boy. I heard them yelling, "Preacher! Preacher! We've got a man hurt." I went down there, and he'd hit his ear over something and it was bleeding. I walked over to him, and he looked up. And he said, "Preacher, call my wife." (Laughter) I'd like to fell over, you know. In six weeks, he comes back to work. He was a strong boy, and I thought that if it had been anybody else, I believe it would have killed him. That 2x4 broke his fall. They were taking a big heavy caisson off of about a four-foot column, and it kicked back and knocked him off. We had a—you all weren't there yet, I guess. We had a big crane to fall through the third story on that life science building. We had a big old fellow was our project manager, Big John we called him, and that thing—he was rough through and all get out. He would not take time to fix something on the rig ...

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

CARR: If he come up to a piece he'd need, and he couldn't find it, he'd just go make it. The machine shop would make it.

VAN HOUTS: That's the way to go.

PIEHLER: So, he found someone who could replace it?

CARR: Oh, he was proud of that. Big John was proud of that. His truck, I don't believe it had a place that long that wasn't bent. He'd wreck everyday somewhere near him. Oh boy,

he started to stick the steel in the firewall up top, and he slipped up and left it out. I said, “John, let me have that, I can at least catch if I was to fall.” He was a big heavysset guy. We got a long real good after that. I stuck that steel, walked backwards on the form on the top about that wide, you know. Put it on eighteen inches, about fifty feet down, you know. But I had a good nerve then, I could do that. I wouldn’t want to do that now.

PIEHLER: One of the things that struck me—I’m new to Tennessee, this area—Sevier County is so different from a lot of other counties around here. I’d be curious your thoughts—Pigeon Forge really embraced tourism in a way that other counties, I don’t think, have. Why Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg? Why not Cocke County? Why didn’t Cocke County become the Gateway to the Smokies, or there are other counties that could have ...

CARR: Cocke County, Pigeon River, Canton, let their waste go into that river, and they ruined that river. It’s just an old black river. If that river were cleared up, there would be another Gatlinburg out that way. That’s one of the things. Well, Newport used to have a name, Cosby.

PIEHLER: When I got here, it was sort of funny, one of my graduate students, who is a Methodist lay-minister, ... he started telling me about Newport. I locked it away in my brain. Then I got into a car accident in Cocke County this summer, and then as soon as the Sheriff’s Deputy took out the card, it was just like, oh, I was warned about this place. I just wondered, you know, Sevier County is very different ...

CARR: It’s the clean water, and we’re kind of the heart of the Smokies.

PIEHLER: But there is also kind of a ...

CARR: Townsend, now, would be just as pretty if people wouldn’t sell the land. And they didn’t develop like Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. For a long time, Pigeon Forge didn’t sell theirs, but when they turned it loose, it just, boom, went up.

VAN HOUTS: Well, what about the people? I think that the people here are willing to embrace the tourism a little bit more? Or do you think they are welcoming?

CARR: Well, a lot of them are in the tourism business. They make it as attractive as they can.

VAN HOUTS: Right.

PIEHLER: But I’m struck that Pigeon Forge is really open to outsiders. I guess, to give you a story, not to fink on Nashwa, but she was saying that she went up to Rugby and ...

VAN HOUTS: Jamestown.

PIEHLER: And Jamestown, and they weren’t very friendly.

VAN HOUTS: They were not friendly, but here the people are a lot friendlier. I don't know if they are used to seeing foreigners at Dollywood, or what but they seemed to me that—I don't know.

CARR: I don't know if they were mountain people were different or not. They were there—most of them are easy to get along with.

VAN HOUTS: Very welcoming.

CARR: Yeah. The people that have lived here all these years, like if you went fishing, they wouldn't say nothing to you if you fished in the front door, you know. But the people, who have come in, buy an acre and they want to post to a hundred. People that grew up here, they are, for the most part, friendly people. My son-in-law stuck some signs out in our drive out there. I wanted to throw them away. You know, people in town like to get out and wade in the creek, and picnic or whatever. That's what's formed our sportsman club up here. My thought was that if we give the boys some fish to catch and some game to hunt it will keep them out of these fast cars. And it did work. Boy, it's got so developed now that you have to go into the park to fish, or own a place or know everybody.

VAN HOUTS: That's right.

PIEHLER: What's striking to me, I've been really—I have to say on record for this interview because it will eventually go on the Internet that it has been a real delight to have Cynthia, your niece, as first a student and then as an assistant, and because of Celebrate Freedom. I've gotten to really know Sevier County. And it's so funny with Cynthia, because she's related to all the old timers, so whenever we have programs or we'll be talking about planning Celebrate Freedom, she'll start mentioning cousins and uncles and relatives. So, I feel I've gotten to know the county a lot better both because of Celebrate Freedom, but particularly because of Cynthia, better than I ever—I don't think I would have known to put you on the program for Celebrate Freedom without Cynthia.

CARR: Well, people in this area are pretty patriotic, you know, most of them.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, did you ever stay in touch with anyone from the Pennsylvania? Did you ever write Christmas cards, or ever ...

CARR: ... When we come in there, they done away with—the crew just went that way, and I don't even know if we have a get together or not.

VAN HOUTS: You do. There's been one in '96, '98, and 2000. That's what I was going to ask you. Would you—do you want to see the people?

CARR: It would be great to see them, wouldn't it? It really would. They knowed I was in the three C's a little bit, and I worked with the rangers some, and they called me ranger.

PIEHLER: That was your nickname, "Ranger"?

CARR: Yeah. (Laughter) That's what I was going to do, but when I went to Oak Ridge, I made a little bit more money than they did, you know. When I come back, I thought that that was such a neat thing if I would have not had to work Sundays, when I had to be at church. I knew a lot of them at one time. I knew most of them, and we got along really well. We'd stop and see them and joke. Alan Kelly and me we'd survey with a rod, he was a biologist then. I liked that better than that electric fishing pole. I believe that kills everything when it's hot. We'd go back in these little creeks, and check them, you know, specs and all that. We had a great time together. Grouse hunting together. When Robert Smith was over there, we went grousing one day without a dog, and we got our limit. He went back and said, "You know, that preacher knows where every grouse in that woods is?" (Laughter) I got a picture somewhere. We've got our six, and our shotguns.

PIEHLER: You've never joined a veteran's group?

CARR: I was. I was a member of the veterans a while, and I got so tied up with the church and other things I couldn't hardly.

PIEHLER: The American Legion in town, or ...

CARR: Mm Hmm. In Sevierville.

PIEHLER: But the church—well, being a pastor, I'm told, keeps you busy.

CARR: It does. I've not been pastor for about a year now, and it gives you time to think about things, and that's not too good either. I'm not sure the pew was made for me. I'm not there often. I'll teach, or preach for some of our churches or a supplier or something.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you miss preaching quite a bit.

CARR: Oh yeah. That's first. Bill Landry made my picture. I showed him how to catch a wild trout, you may have seen that on Channel 10.

PIEHLER: No, I haven't.

CARR: We were going up the Little River, and it was raining. I said, "Leave the cameras in here, Bill, pull her in right there." This was just about a quarter of a mile above Indian Head Rock, and it's a pretty good place there. I said, "I believe I could catch one right there." I caught one on the second throw, a big pretty rainbow.... I said, "You want this one Bill?" "Yeah, yeah." I field dressed it, and got back in the van and started up the road and he said "I saw that preacher, but it don't mean I believe it. The man telling me he can catch that ..." (Laughs) Then I called them and started to tell them to hold onto their equipment, and I'd whistle if I got a hold of one. I got a hold of one and by the time I got down there, he was about whooped out and I showed Bill. Bill's a character. Bill Landry, do you know him?

PIEHLER: I've not met him in person, but I've seen some of his shows.

CARR: He digs into a lot of things around. It's pretty interesting in way.

PIEHLER: Well, I don't want to—I have a feeling Nashwa might be back to visit. I definitely would like to be back and at some point this summer. I'll have to tell Cynthia.

CARR: I'd like to have you, and maybe we could wet a hook and walk around the stream.

PIEHLER: My wife actually has talked about going fishing, so, I think she would enjoy that a lot because she has mentioned fishing. She fishes.

VAN HOUTS: Does she fish?

PIEHLER: She fishes, and I fished along.

VAN HOUTS: Does she fly fish?

PIEHLER: She hasn't fished in years, so, she would probably need to be taught.

CARR: One time on a Saturday, when I should have been studying, I went fishing to kind of clear my head, you know, from the job. I was up at this little creek about a mile or something like that and I had my fish, and I stepped on my rock and threw those fish away. I never found them yet. They were beautiful fish. And it was getting dark and jar flies a-singing and rattlesnakes, you know, and no light. I got in that creek and come right down the creek. All right!

PIEHLER: Well, before we end this interview today is there anything we forgot to ask you or anything you'd like to tell us?

CARR: About the war?

PIEHLER: Or anything—the war, or anything. Don't feel obligated to.

CARR: If I had my golf cart out, I'd take you out and show you my birds. Have you ever seen a golden red pheasant?

PIEHLER: I'm not sure. We could come back for that.

CARR: Yellow pheasants? The Golden? Then we've got the Ring Necked. We've got three kinds out there. We've got a big barn over here on King Hollow where we've got them fixed up ready to raise birds now. We got chickens and turkeys and all that stuff. It's fun to fool with, you know.... I grewed 250 quail and turned them loose this spring and I ain't seen one in a while. There are so many hawks and things, I guess, they really work them over.

PIEHLER: So, you've still very much had a farm, in a lot of ways?

CARR: Yeah. My daughter's got about fourteen acres over there, and some of us have got a few acres. We got this, and the neighbors got a few acres out there, and I like to garden. I've got a tractor and a disk and plows and things over there at the barn. I just love to grow a garden, you know.

VAN HOUTS: Mm hmm. It's very rewarding. You said that when you're not preaching now, it gives you more time for thinking. Is that about that war and about what happened?

CARR: Yeah, yeah it does. When my son got killed, I was building the second Holiday Inn in Gatlinburg. I was president of the pastor's conference and president of the Sportsman's Club and I had a little radio program. And I still stay about five minutes behind. I thought of it later and the good Lord would give me all that to do to keep me going. I found that was one of the better strengths was to keep busy.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like you miss your son a lot.

CARR: Oh yeah. He'd go fishing with me, you know, and he'd say, "Dad get out here I'm going to beat you," and things like that. We'd fish these little creeks ... and sometimes there's beautiful trout. I've seen him shoot a squirrel running with a .22, you know. He got wounded 2 or 3 times before he got killed. On the last, he said, "Dad, if they quit bombing, we ain't got a chance." But that's the only time he said that and he said, "When I get out of here, I'm not fighting anybody else's war." I think when they quit bombing is when they come down in mass numbers. They didn't—they could just kill until they got tired, and still they were coming on. I imagine that China was in that, weren't they? There wasn't that many men in North [Vietnam], was there?

PIEHLER: China actually didn't send troops in, but there was a lot of support from ...

VAN HOUTS: And supplies and so forth ...

PIEHLER: Supplies.

VAN HOUTS: So, given the fact that you said, Melvin, what could they do, they couldn't even get a tug boat here, how do you feel about the present war? Do you feel angry about that? The war in Afghanistan?

CARR: Oh, the Afghanistan war?

VAN HOUTS: Yeah.

CARR: The prisoners you say?

VAN HOUTS: The fact that now there are American boys in there again.

CARR: I was hoping we wouldn't go in there unless there was a necessary thing, but we're there. We'll have to try to make the best out of it. I think they done well by doing all that

bombing. Try to flush them out, you know. One of the prisoners the other day said that he saw Bin Laden two days before he was captured. So, they think he's still there, there still looking.

VAN HOUTS: You would feel okay if your child was there? Would you be better about it?

CARR: That's a little different. We had a cause to be there. They killed all our people, and you couldn't let that go. You couldn't let that go. He's got by with too much already. Well, if it was me and I had to, I'd go. Vietnam was a total different thing. That's the blackest mark America has. We shouldn't have been in those jungles. My boy hitched a ride on a tank once, and they run over a mine, and blowed him out and hurt his leg. He played dead while he got shot in the leg. I believe he was the one that carried the, what was that, M-60 machine gun? He was a big strong boy, and I believe he carried that for a while. He would have been a sergeant if he got back that week. He had made his grades. But I just—I think we pulled a big booboo over there. They would say, "Well, France couldn't win," and that just turned me a flip. France isn't more than one of our states, don't you think, in the way to war. But they're a superpower now. They got atomic equipment, but I never thought of them as being a real power. Years ago they were, they were the greatest, but man, in World War II, they was run over pretty bad. In World War II, I don't know why they didn't take some of our new battleships over there and just take that wall down before they went ahead and we lost a lot of men in Normandy. We took the wall down on Guam. They found out they had stuff stored in the churches and everywhere. We spent about a day with that wall. It was pretty flat when we got through. (Laughter) Chief Tweed—you know, the thing that bothers me about this Survivor [television show] thing that they have on the tube, they ought to call old Chief Tweed, and ask him about survivor. He lived two years on Guam. There was twenty-five of them, and he was the sole survivor. He signaled a destroyed, and they went in and got him one night.

VAN HOUTS: Gosh.

CARR: Well, I don't want to take anymore of your time ...

PIEHLER: No, we really appreciate this. This concludes an interview with Melvin Carr on December 19, 2001 in Pittman Center in Sevier County, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

VAN HOUTS: Nashwa van Houts.

PIEHLER: And thank you very much. We really appreciated this.

VAN HOUTS: We did.

PIEHLER: This was Nashwa's first oral history interview.

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