

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
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AN INTERVIEW WITH M.E. SPRINGER

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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with M.E. Springer on April 3, 2001, in Knoxville, Tennessee, with Kurt Piehler and ...

GINNY BRADLEY: Ginny Bradley.

PIEHLER: And, I guess, I'd like to begin by asking a few questions about your parents ... what were your parents' names?

M.E. SPRINGER: My father's name was Elzie Madison Springer, and my mother's name was originally Mabel Chapman, and they were both rural schoolteachers. My father taught rural school for seven years, and during the last year they moved on the farm when I was born, or when I was two weeks old, actually. And so, they both came through the rural school-teaching route, so things were rather formalized at our household.

PIEHLER: When were you born?

SPRINGER: October 21, 1913.

PIEHLER: And your parents were married in March 16, 1911.

SPRINGER: I ... presume that's right.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) That's what you had written. So, they moved onto the farm in 1913?

SPRINGER: Right.

PIEHLER: And how had your parents met?

SPRINGER: I don't really know how they got together. The Chapmans lived at Bourbon, and my father lived three miles farther east in the New Rock neighborhood. And, I don't really know how they met. My mother came from a fairly large family, and since she'd been teaching school for two or three years, was a fairly independent woman. And to illustrate this independence, the Chapmans were all Republicans, and my mother was a Democrat.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Oh. You indicated on the pre-interview surveys that both your parents only had some high school?

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: They hadn't gone to normal school.

SPRINGER: Well, there was no local high school. But there was a normal school at Steelville—Steelville, Missouri—which was the county seat and thirty miles away. And so, they both went to boarding school, and I think they finished. I think they finished there, but it would have been the equivalent of a high school education, what it amounted to. And so, they had

never gone to a teachers' college or anything of that sort. But this normal school—one of the things this normal school did was to prepare them to teach in rural schools.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like they taught the very early grades?

SPRINGER: Well, they taught *all* the grades.

PIEHLER: Until which grade level?

SPRINGER: Well, you see, in Missouri at that time, the rural schools were one-room schools, and so all eight grades went to the same school. And so, the way that it was handled is that they would teach the first, second, third grade and then the fourth and fifth grade would be—along there somewhere there would be two grades that would be combined. So, in any given year, they would actually teach only six grades. But both of them taught in rural schools with thirty to forty youngsters, and they would be teaching six grades each year, which is the kind of school I went to.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. A one-room?

SPRINGER: Right.

PIEHLER: Just let me—hold on, one minute ...

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: So, you went ... kindergarten through eighth grade in one room?

SPRINGER: Well, no kindergarten.

PIEHLER: No kindergarten. So, first grade?

SPRINGER: The fact is—you see, my birthday is October, and so I didn't go to school the first year. In other words, I started just about the time I was seven ... but, I went only seven years to elementary school. So, I ... essentially started a year late and finished on time.

PIEHLER: Particularly ... even for me, I mean, I remember when I was growing up there were still some one-room school houses—schoolrooms in the country, but for Ginny this is a real ...

BRADLEY: Yeah!

PIEHLER: This, in some ways, seems even more. What are your recollections of going to a one-room school?

SPRINGER: Well, you see, I was fortunate in that my father, having been a teacher, was generally on the school board, and they generally hired good teachers. Out of the seven teachers I had, I would say six of them were *good* teachers. And at that time, they hired only single

women, in one case a man, but they didn't hire married women. And so, most of these people had either been through high school with teachers' training or to teachers' college. And so, I would have to say that they were all fairly good teachers. Now, the interesting thing about the library was that the bookcase was not only about twice as big as that (gestures to bookcase in the room, and so, all the library books were in one room of the school, and those were the only outside books that we had. But, our education in arithmetic, and reading, and writing was adequate. We didn't have any frills—I just noticed the other day that for one of my writing assignments, I made a book with cardboard and put it together and had this writing assignment in that so, we had no frills at all.

BRADLEY: Now the fact that both of your parents were teachers; did that ... influence your decision? Did you grow up wanting to be a teacher, or ...

SPRINGER: No. We were on the farm, and I was interested in agriculture, and of course, I was interested in history. At one point, I was quite interested in history, and I was actually recruited by Westminster College, which is at Fulton, Missouri. It, at that time, was a Presbyterian men's school. And so, I was actually recruited by them, and if I had gone there I probably would have studied history, but I was interested in agriculture and took vocational agriculture. And so, all along I was interested in agriculture and growth of plants and animals and so forth.

PIEHLER: Well, you grew up on a farm?

SPRINGER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: And you worked on a farm. Your farm, where was the farm located?

SPRINGER: It's located alongside the Meramec River, about six miles south of Sullivan, Missouri. So, this was in Crawford County, and Smith School, where I went to school, was in Crawford County, but when it came time to go to high school, we went across – *just* across – the border in Franklin County, to Sullivan High School. And so, we were very fortunate in one respect. Now this is the northern edge of the Ozarks, and so the country is—by many standards, the soils are quite poor; that would correspond to the western highland rim in Tennessee. But, our farm was in the bend of a river, and we didn't own it. It was owned by some relatives, and so throughout our life, we only rented this place. But we treated it like it was our own, and it was our home. So, our life on our farm was really the center of our lives.

PIEHLER: And that's where you grew up ... until you went away to school?

SPRINGER: Oh yes, that's right; on the same farm. And, you see, when I was four years old I—well, I actually had pneumonia and went to the hospital and was operated on and came back. The doctor who was in partnerships with my father on the farm gave me a pig. And so, I had a pig when I was four years old. I fed that pig, and grew him up, and sold him. When I sold that pig it may have brought, I don't remember, fifteen dollars, and then I started my bank account. So, that was my first business project.

PIEHLER: It sounds like your first memory really being involved with the farm?

SPRINGER: Right.

PIEHLER: In a very real ...

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: How large was the farm?

SPRINGER: 328 acres.

PIEHLER: And what crops did you grow?

SPRINGER: Well, in the early days, we grew all the regular crops: corn, wheat, oats, alfalfa, timothy. And in the early days ... we had beef cattle and hogs. But one year, my father had this bunch of cattle—kept them all summer, and when he sold them, he got just a few dollars more than he gave; he kept them all year for nothing. So, he realized that we couldn't make it in the beef industry, and so then we started in the dairy business. That must have been, I don't know exactly, but maybe when I was 10 or 11 or 12 years of age. Then for the rest of our career, we were in the dairy business, and so I essentially grew up on a dairy farm.

PIEHLER: Agriculture in the '20s through the '30s, overall in the country, was doing very poorly—it was a very rough time economically for farmers. I would be curious how your father—family fits?

SPRINGER: Well, I guess the way to put it: see, we were on a good farm, and so we always had—my father was a great one to have a good garden—and so, we always had plenty to eat, and we never suffered. But of course, in order to do that, he had to be in debt. And so, unfortunately, he was in debt from I don't know when it started, but maybe 1925. So, he was in debt continuously from then until retirement. Now of course, we had more assets than we had paper in the bank, but nevertheless ...

PIEHLER: Debt was a part of life.

SPRINGER: Debt was a part of life; it was never good enough that we could get completely out of debt. So, from that standpoint, you see, the financial picture was bad, but our living was quite good because we were better off than most of the neighbors. Times were really very tough for many of those years. You see, there was essentially an early agricultural depression before the stock market crash, and then when the stock market crash came, that made it tough again, and so it was a struggle. But, we always had good crops and plenty to eat, so I remember it as a good life. But, financially, we never got ahead.

PIEHLER: When you say you were better off than your neighbors, particularly when it got very bad in the Great Depression and, of course, farming was never really—in the '20s [was] never really a boom. In what ways were you better off?

SPRINGER: Well, of course, we had better land, for one thing. And so, our yields were better, and our farm was a little bigger than the neighbors.’ Therefore, we had more acres. And then, my parents had more education. Now, you see, there were probably only two or three college-educated people in the whole rural community. And so, you see, my father was on the school board and was one of the community leaders. So, I was on the advantageous side, even though we had no money to spend.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. Did your family ever get to travel at all?

SPRINGER: No. My father went to Minnesota. I guess my father never saw either ocean.

PIEHLER: In his whole life?

SPRINGER: In his whole life. Now, you see he died at age 57, and as far as I know, Papa never saw either ocean. Now my mother, after my father died, and after she was a widow, then she traveled a lot. She’d get on the bus and go to the west coast or the east coast, and so she traveled a lot. But in the early days ... of course, there were no automobiles, and we didn’t get a car until 1923, when I was ten years old, and there was no mail route until about that time. The only way you could get your mail was to go five miles to town to get the mail. So, now, there was a phone line that ran through the neighborhood, and there were fifteen people on the phone line, and so it was a community phone line. The road to town was just a dirt road. And so, in those early days, the only way we could go to town was either: my father or mother rode horseback, or we could go in the wagon, and we had a buggy. And so, we could go to town on ...

PIEHLER: So you were—it sounds like one of your earlier memories is going to town on the buggy?

SPRINGER: Well, yes. And one of my memories is that my mother and I had gone to town in the buggy, and as we were coming home one day, the right front wheel of the buggy dropped in a ditch, and I got thrown out of the buggy into the ditch. Apparently, it didn’t hurt me much, but I can remember being pitched out of the buggy into the ditch on one of these trips.

PIEHLER: How often would you go into town? And, you obviously went in for your mail; would you go to church in town?

SPRINGER: The truth is that my mother belonged to the church in town, but it was six miles away, and you see, it’s just not practical. You see, that takes an hour by horseback or an hour and a half by wagon, and so it just wasn’t practical. So we actually did not have a church any closer than six miles. Now, from time to time, there would be an itinerant preacher that would come to the school and give a temporary church, but since it was so [far], you know it just wasn’t possible to go to church. Well, as to how far we went to town, about once a week, and we’d go in the wagon or the buggy. And then my father would often go one other day during the week on horseback because he liked to read the mail. You see, to go a week without mail is quite a long time, so he would often go. So, an average week, we would go once in the wagon and then once by horseback.

PIEHLER: ... Did your farm have electricity?

SPRINGER: Oh no. Oh no! Our farm didn't have electricity until REA came in. And modern people can't realize what a tremendous change it was when electricity came to the farm. That is *really*—because you see, there was no refrigeration, you used lanterns for light, you studied by kerosene lamps. And so, REA was a tremendous thing. I think I ought to depart a moment to illustrate how important this was. Southwest Missouri is in the Ozarks, and the people there are about eighty-five to ninety percent Republican, and they elected Dewey Short as their Representative, and he had been their Representative for years and years, just like here. You know, we never elect a Democrat. But, Dewey Short voted against rural electrification, and the people voted him out. So, on that one issue alone ...

PIEHLER: This really counted, people really...

SPRINGER: Yes, it counted. Rural electrification just transformed rural life tremendously.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like it's a very distinct memory for you. How old were you when the electricity came?

SPRINGER: I guess I'd already—I can't remember exactly whether I'd already gone to college or not. But ... you see, I went to college—started to college—in '31.

PIEHLER: So yeah, it would have started when you were in ...

SPRINGER: So, it was about that time. So, I went through high school without ...

PIEHLER: ... without electricity.

SPRINGER: That's right. I studied with an Aladdin lamp during high school.

PIEHLER: ... What did you do for fun growing up?

SPRINGER: Oh, that's nothing! I mean, to grow up on the Meramec River is a *great* experience. You see in the summertime, we'd work. You see, on the farm everybody works. So, summer vacation is a myth on the farm because when you have work to do, you work every day in the week. But in the evening after supper, we could walk a quarter of a mile to the river and take a swim, and so in the summertime, we'd do that. Or, if we got caught up with our work, we'd go fishing, or we could go squirrel hunting, or in the wintertime, we could skate on the ponds ... There's no boredom on the farm because we could do all these things. In the summertime, we could go up to New Rock and play baseball. And so, there are plenty of things—*plenty* of things to do on a farm. In fact, you know, as I think back on it, I think how fortunate we were to have all these things to do, as compared to youngsters now that are stuck with—well, they search for things to do, some of which are good and some of which are bad. 'Course, I don't mean that all the things we did were good, but.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Well, what would you do that was bad?

SPRINGER: Oh well, to give you an example, our family did not hunt nor trap out of season, and the neighbor boys could trap a few weeks before the season started, or they could hunt out of season. We didn't do that at our house.

PIEHLER: But some would. That was being bad?

SPRINGER: That's right. And so that's an example of how you step over the line—many of our neighbors, but not at our house.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to movies growing up?

SPRINGER: A few, but probably before I got out of high school, I probably hadn't attended ten movies. We would go to town, and once in a while, we would go to the movie. We'd go to town, and it would be silent movies, and there would be a girl that would play the piano for the music. Now, the town kids would go to the movies, but we seldom went. We probably didn't go to two movies a year.

BRADLEY: Do you remember when sound first came out in movies? Did you go see movies once ...

SPRINGER: Oh yes. But that was later; that was after I was ...

PIEHLER: ... at college?

SPRINGER: You see, I don't quite remember. I guess, it was during my college years that they went to sound. See, it slipped in along the way, and I don't ...

PIEHLER: You went off to college in '31, and there was—you know, it took a while for sound to really catch on. The first sound pictures, if my memory is correct, is '29.

SPRINGER: Well, you see, I don't really remember whether I went to a sound picture there in Sullivan or whether my first sound picture was in college. 'Course I remember being a freshman at college. That part, I remember that distinctly, but I just don't remember when we started seeing sound pictures.

BRADLEY: What was leaving home like for you, and going off to college?

SPRINGER: Well, of course it was a long trip. I mean, it was 130 miles from our house to the University and I went there. Of course, I was a pledge at the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, which is a group of all other country boys. And it was a great group of fellas, and so, we really had a lot of fellowship, back and forth and if we had problems, we could share those and so, from that standpoint, it was not a big transition. Now, it was a big transition the first week of university because I remember that I couldn't find my first English class. So, I ended up going to the second class in English because it was in Jesse Hall, and I wandered around, and so, in that sense, it was a little bit difficult. But, college was an interesting experience.

PIEHLER: How well did your high school prepare you for college?

SPRINGER: Very well. We were extremely fortunate at Sullivan because our superintendent was well trained. He was a crippled man, but he was well trained, and he believed in high education, and he hired excellent teachers. Those of us who went to Sullivan had a big start on the neighboring schools. Just a huge start, because three-fourths of my teachers were excellent, and thorough, and rigorous. And so I took physics in high school, and so when I went to college, the physics was Duck Soup. But now, in English of course, I found at college that some of the youngsters that had been to the bigger schools had an advantage, and so I was at somewhat of a handicap in English. But in the sciences and so forth, we got excellent [preparation]. But, that wasn't characteristic of *all* the high schools, you see. And so, many of our students went to the University of Missouri, and those that didn't go to the University of Missouri went to Southwest Missouri University. We had many students from Sullivan that went on to college and did well in school, but we were sort of unique in that respect. "Prof." Matthews was a real stickler, and so his was a beacon. So, I didn't have to go through the usual handicap.

PIEHLER: So, academically, you were very well prepared, it sounds like?

SPRINGER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: How big was your high school?

SPRINGER: Thirty-seven of us graduated.

PIEHLER: In your graduating class?

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: And, you were the Class of '31?

SPRINGER: Yes, that's right.

PIEHLER: And, were you in college prep from the very beginning?

SPRINGER: Well, you don't ...

PIEHLER: or in a school that small do you ...

SPRINGER: Well, you don't hear about that sort of thing in those days. You see, actually, I was in vocational agriculture, which is on-hands training in which you study agriculture in the classroom, and you have projects at home. So, in vocational agriculture you have a project each year: one year I had a bee project, one year I had a steer project, one year I had a calf project. And so, you're set up and you keep books on these things, and so it's an on-hands thing. So, in that sense, I devoted quite a bit of my time to this professional program, but along the way I took

world history, and physics, and so on. So, I got a pretty good preparation—well, *good* preparation.

PIEHLER: How were you able to afford to go to college? Particularly in the teeth of the Great Depression, I mean '31 is ...

SPRINGER: This was really tough, largely because my parents sacrificed a great deal. For example, I ... was a fairly good student and was valedictorian, and so I got a Rollins Scholarship for seventy-five dollars. Now can you imagine a seventy-five dollar scholarship? And yet, that may have been enough to tilt me to go. And then I went to the University and I first started out, as I said, staying at the Alpha Gamma Rho house. And I noticed, in the day that those first two months, the board and room was forty dollars, for board, room, and dues and everything. And that was too much, and so I moved out and fired a furnace for my room and lived in a boarding house for a while. But, that would illustrate to you the level of cost. And so, my first year of college—fees, books, room, board, clothes—*everything* was less than five hundred dollars!

PIEHLER: But five hundred dollars was a lot of money in those days.

SPRINGER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Did you work at all?

SPRINGER: Oh yes, I worked part-time all through school. My first job was at the library, and I got thirty cents an hour. And then it played out, and I got a job then for twenty-five cents an hour helping with research projects in the greenhouse. And then, we got a fifteen percent cut on twenty-five cents, so take fifteen percent off of twenty-five cents. And so, I stayed there at the university one summer and worked at twenty-five, less fifteen [percent]. I haven't figured it out, but anyway, twenty-two or twenty-three cents an hour for the summer work.

PIEHLER: Did you hold—were these National Youth Administration jobs?

SPRINGER: No, this was before that. You see this was '31 and '32 ...

PIEHLER: Ok, so that wouldn't ...

SPRINGER: ... have started. Now, later those came in. Those came in while I was in college, and those were a big help to many students.

PIEHLER: But, you never held an NYA?

SPRINGER: At least I didn't ...

PIEHLER: Not initially?

SPRINGER: Let me think a minute. No, no mine was from the university.

PIEHLER: University?

SPRINGER: All University.

PIEHLER: You mentioned, in the beginning, you joined a fraternity with other farm boys.

SPRINGER: Yes.

PIEHLER: How much is—growing up you mentioned also the people who lived in town. How much is that the sort of split between rural people and town people, city people and rural people?

SPRINGER: None. We held our own, or exceeded them. Of course, now I'm getting off the subject, but there was one fraternity that would have a good many fellas from Kansas City and from ...

PIEHLER: St. Louis?

SPRINGER: We had a few New Yorkers that came to Missouri because the fees at Cornell and so forth were high, so they'd come to Missouri. And so, this fraternity would have Kansas City boys and New Yorkers and so forth and, of course, they had suits and could dress in style. I remember that at one time, during one year, the styles were instead of being down four inches below your shoes like they are now, it was stylish to have cuff pants and about two inches between your (gestures to foot and ankle), and so we jokingly called them the "Highwater Boys." (Piehler Laughs) But when it came to elections and politics and so forth, we worked very closely with the city boys, and we ...

PIEHLER: So, there wasn't a split there, in student government elections between city and rural?

SPRINGER: Oh, no. Now, there might be a split between this one—the "Highwater Boys" and some other fraternities, but no. No, we would join in. There was more rivalry between Alpha Gamma Rho, which is a group of farm boys, and Farmhouse [Fraternity]. See they were on one party, one side, and we were on the other. No, when it came to school politics, there was no difference between country boys and city boys, and in the sciences and so forth, we held our own or could put them in the shade. (Laughter)

On the other hand, in English, they generally were better prepared than those of us from the country. But you see, we're taking too much time here, but you see, you can't realize how crude some of the customs were in those days. For example, a freshman had to wear a beanie cap for the first six weeks of school, and he had to obey whatever the sophomores said. For initiation, they'd bring you out on the quadrangle, and all of you put your shoes at one end of the quadrangle, and they'd take you up by the other end. Then you run back barefooted and hunt your shoes out of that pile. And then, they parade you barefooted uptown through the stores and so forth and, you know, that sort of hazing. But all this—and the University of Missouri was only 3,500 people at that time, and so, you see, we got to know a great many of—well, we knew *everybody* in the college of agriculture, and we got to know a great many of the other students through politics and so forth, and the rest of the campus.

PIEHLER: Was there a big split between—I know at one campus—I have done a number of interviews at Rutgers—the fraternities really had a lock on all the big jobs: editor of the paper, student class president, student government council. Was that similar at Missouri?

SPRINGER: Well, sort of. But, it's hard to tell, because you see, generally the fraternities try to go out and initiate the leaders. So, there is a little bit, but that was really at a minimum. Now, as I say, it's hard to tell because, well, I remember Joe, Joe Johnson was an independent, and he held political office. And so, no, there wasn't much. The two parties would be split, but they always were clever enough that they would try to get an independent for Vice President or for President, and so they were working for the independent vote. So, it was pretty well split. You see, the cleavage was half the fraternity boys were on one side, half on the other, and the sororities were half split down the middle. You see, I don't remember what the line-up was, but, you see, maybe the Pi [Beta] Phi's would be on one side and the Kappas [Kappa Kappa Gammas] on the other or something.

PIEHLER: So, it was actually the split that divided the fraternities. The fraternities had their divisions ...

SPRINGER: Oh, yes.

PIEHLER: ... between the two parties.

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: So, it wasn't the fraternities versus the independents?

SPRINGER: Oh, no...

PIEHLER: So, in many ways, the independents had a lot of power?

SPRINGER: Oh, sure they did!

PIEHLER: Because the fraternities weren't united.

SPRINGER: Well, they didn't want to be united. They wanted a challenge. No, in that respect, the independents got a great break. The big issue in those days was "Should ROTC be compulsory for freshman and sophomores?" And that was the kind of ...

PIEHLER: That was one of the splits that occurred?

SPRINGER: You know, students always have to have something to fuss about. Well, that was the thing there. Some of the students felt they shouldn't have to take compulsory military as a freshman and sophomore, but at the time I was there, there were no questions. I mean, you took military. And a little later, "Should physical education be compulsory?" That was the issue. So, that's the kind of issues we had in those days.

PIEHLER: You took two years of ROTC?

SPRINGER: Yes, but not—I didn't take advanced. See, advanced was optional.

PIEHLER: And, you didn't want to take advanced?

SPRINGER: Well, I didn't have the time. I didn't mind ROTC. In fact, I enjoyed it because you see, I got on the rifle team and was on the rifle team for four years, and we were national champions one year. But, I didn't mind the military. It didn't help me a bit when I went in the army, but I didn't mind it.

PIEHLER: ... You worked while you were in school; what else were you involved with outside of the classroom? Did you join any clubs, or ...

SPRINGER: Well, I wrestled intramural and was second in my weight class in intramural wrestling, and I was on the rifle team, and then, I participated in the Ag activities: barn warming and Farmer's Fair. I didn't debate in college; I debated in high school, but I didn't debate in college. And then I had these jobs which I would work on Saturdays, and the one job I worked with a Dr. Stadler, who was a tremendous geneticist. I mean, the most brilliant man I've ever known. I grew barley and wheat and corn for Dr. Stadler, and pollinated corn for Dr. Stadler during the summertime. And, of course ... Stephens College would sometimes have dances, and they would call up and want four fellas for blind dates, and we would go out to Stevens. (Laughter) Four of us would go, and we knew some of us was gonna get stung, and we knew some of us would get queens and so (Laughter), it was always quite a challenge to see what came down that stair when you went for the blind date, but, you knew it was for just one evening. So, we would go to Stephens College—we also went to Christian College sometimes for blind dates, and then, of course some of the fellas dated university girls.

PIEHLER: So you did go to your share—it sounds like you went to your share of dances and proms?

SPRINGER: Yes, but I didn't do as much, what we called "jelly dating," as many of the people did. A "jelly date" is where you go to—there were two restaurants that had an orchestra; the students played for their meals. And so, if you wanted to, you could take a date to one of these restaurants and buy yourself a ten-cent Coke and your date a ten-cent Coke. And so for twenty cents, you could sit there and listen to music and dance. A date would cost you twenty cents. But, you see, I had to work, and I didn't have time for that much of that sort of thing. So, I was not a socialite at all. I didn't ...

PIEHLER: So when you would go on dates, where would you go? You mentioned going to Stevens and other places where would you ...

SPRINGER: The movies [were] about the only thing.

PIEHLER: How much was that?

SPRINGER: Well, thirty-five cents at the regular movies or twenty-five cents at the second rate; the Varsity was twenty-five cents. But, you see, if you're making twenty-two cents an hour, you don't go to very many thirty-five cent movies.

PIEHLER: That's over an hour's worth of work.

SPRINGER: That's right. And if you take a date, that would be three hour's work to go to ... the movie. But now, I tell you to record of all these things, but college was a great experience.

PIEHLER: I guess, coming in terms of—one of the things you did is a lot of lab work, which it sounds like that was pretty important, working in the greenhouse. And ...

SPRINGER: Oh yes!

PIEHLER: How influential was that in your career?

SPRINGER: Well, it was quite influential. You see, on the basis of that, I took a genetics course, which had a reputation for being very, very tough which I wouldn't have taken if I had missed. But then when I graduated, the usual college assistantship was thirty dollars a month, but I didn't get one, and so I didn't go on to graduate work. I mean, even those thirty-dollar a month ones were very scarce, and so, I didn't go on to graduate school. I got a job with the Production Credit Corporation.

PIEHLER: So you did want to, in fact, to go right on to graduate [school]?

SPRINGER: I probably would have. I would have probably been a geneticist.

PIEHLER: You would have if you'd have gotten ...

SPRINGER: ... a scholarship.

PIEHLER: So in other words, the GI Bill was fairly crucial in your getting a doc—I mean, jumping way ahead, but ... would it be fair to say was fairly crucial in you getting a doctorate?

SPRINGER: It helped a great deal, yeah. Well, what it did, it made the difference. I could go to graduate school without a scholarship, and I chose to do that, rather than do the other.

PIEHLER: ... In college, what had you hoped—you mentioned you had thought of going to graduate school. Did you expect to go back to the farm, or?

SPRINGER: No, but I expected to stay in agricultural work. Vocational agriculture was one of the jobs that many people—but I did not go that direction. I went the direction of straight agriculture, and so I would've gone somewhere into one of the sciences.

PIEHLER: What was your first job? You had mentioned your first job; well, what exactly was it?

SPRINGER: This was with the Production Credit Association. And the Production Credit Association is a semi-government organization that advises farm credit associations, which make loans to farmers for production. This was in St. Louis. I went to St. Louis, and then I would travel. We would go to different towns in Illinois and Missouri. Arkansas was also in our territory, but I didn't go to Arkansas. We would go out into a particular town and spend a week reviewing the loan: looking to see what the net worth was and we would review. And so, of course I was working with a senior member in each case. We went to Hannibal, Missouri and Springfield, Missouri and Rolla, Missouri and Danville, Illinois and Jacksonville, Illinois and various towns. We would spend a week there reviewing loans. But then, after about six months of that, back at the university there was an interdisciplinary project that was going to start, and apparently, the people back there knew that I had the kind of background that would work. So, they asked me if I was interested in that job, and I went back. So, two of us worked on it. Actually, it was a farm records study in various parts of the state, and again, that was a traveling job. I'd go to four different counties and visit those four counties regularly, each year.

BRADLEY: How long did you end up doing that?

SPRINGER: Well, about two years, and then a job opened up in soil survey. I shifted over to soil survey then ... I stayed in that, then, until the war. Again, we would go to various counties in the state. So, we would go out into a county, into a small town, and find a boardinghouse and set up. And then, we would stay in that town for seven or eight months during the year, and then we would go to school, back to the University for the winter months. And so, that's why it took nine years to get a master's degree, you see; you just went to school part of the time. That's why I was determined when I went for a doctorate that I was not gonna stretch it out for the rest of my life.

BRADLEY: ... Did you follow politics a lot through college, like national politics and international ones?

SPRINGER: Not really. I mean, of course I was interested and, of course, I distinctly remember the elections. I voted for Roosevelt the first time and every other time. And by the way, some of my relatives just hated him—just hated! I mean, you can't imagine how the people were divided on that issue. But, there were enough people that favored him that he always won.

PIEHLER: You mentioned your father was Republican and ...

SPRINGER: No, he was Democrat. Both my father and mother were Democrats. It was my mother's family that was Republican.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. So it was your ...

SPRINGER: So, when we had family reunions in an election year, we just didn't talk about politics because my mother was an outcast, I guess, as far as politics are concerned.

PIEHLER: But your mother and father were Democrats?

SPRINGER: Oh, yes. Oh yes!

PIEHLER: And pre-Roosevelt Democrats?

SPRINGER: Oh, yeah. At one time my father was a Democratic Committee man, and my mother was a Democratic Committee woman, so they were very, very active in politics.

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

PIEHLER: [Would you say that] where you grew up, that community, that the REA made a big difference in the ...

SPRINGER: Oh, a tremendous difference.

PIEHLER: ... in the switch from Republican to Democrat, that's a very distinct ...

SPRINGER: Oh, I know ...

PIEHLER: ... or at least in terms of the Congressmen?

SPRINGER: Oh, yeah. I mean it was fatal to vote against the REA. But, I used Dewey Short because he came from an area where he'd never been even challenged! It's just like here. You see, those people—I started to say the “enlightened” people—accused the people of just coming out once each four years and voting Republican. That area down there is solid Republican. But on this ...

PIEHLER: This issue?

SPRINGER: ... on that issue, they turned against Dewey Short. See, Dewey Short was a Rhodes Scholar, a very well educated man. But, when he ran for politics, he shifted back into the Ozark lingo, and he was a very intelligent man, except on this issue.

PIEHLER: ... It sounds like he really missed the boat, as they say.

SPRINGER: He apparently didn't realize how strongly the people felt about that issue.

PIEHLER: What about—because you were involved in agriculture in the '30s when there's a real effort to—for example, the AAA is, for me is just a textbook lesson, but you were involved in agriculture when that was ...

SPRINGER: Well, it was quite controversial. You see, it was viewed as a Democratic program. And so, when I was in soil survey, which is totally neutral, and I was with the University of Missouri, ... in the rock-ribbed Republican areas, I had to make *clear* to the people that I was not

involved with AAA. In other words, some of them wouldn't let me on their farm if they had thought I had anything to do with that. So, people felt very strongly about that. It put some of the Republicans in a real bind because they were generally opposed to the AAA, and yet there were some programs there that were designed to help them. That's kind of a tough proposition, when you have to choose between a program that's gonna help you and violate your principles. (Piehler Laughs) But, the AAA was controversial.

PIEHLER: You hadn't traveled much before the war—I mean, before you went to college, what was the farthest you'd traveled away from home? You'd mentioned your dad going up to Minnesota; did you ever go with him?

SPRINGER: No, I didn't go there. [The farthest was] to the state fair, which was 130 miles away.

PIEHLER: So, that was your biggest?

SPRINGER: That was my biggest trip before going away to college.

PIEHLER: So you hadn't really—it sounds like you hadn't left Missouri before?

SPRINGER: Well, you know, to Illinois. But see, Missouri and Illinois, I guess, were the only two places I'd been. Now, of course, when I was in college, I was on the rifle team, and so we'd go to Nebraska and I traveled then.

PIEHLER: And in, you mentioned, your first job you did quite a bit of travelling in the ... Midwest?

SPRINGER: ... and parts of Illinois. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, it was a real circuit?

SPRINGER: Oh yes, I've probably stayed in more different towns than almost anyone.

PIEHLER: Did you enjoy that sort of moving around; 'cause it sounds like growing up there was a very limited ...

SPRINGER: Well, it's peculiar. I enjoyed life, but, you have to use some judgment. Because when you go into a strange town—most of these towns were two, three or four thousand people—you have to be careful or use good judgment. This part oughtn't to be passed on ...

PIEHLER: I can (gestures to tape recorder) ...

SPRINGER: I guess on the other hand I don't mind. In other words, if you go into a small town like that, and you have two or three dates with the—we'll just say the wrong girls, your life's gonna be pretty dull because then the schoolteachers and so forth are not gonna have anything to do with you. So, it's gonna be pretty dull. So, what you have to do in a town like that is, go into

town and—you see, I was not confined to any particular denomination, so I could go to two or three churches and find one, as I've often said, with the best preacher and the prettiest girls. (Laughter) And then when the old ladies in the neighborhood want to help you, by introducing you to somebody, you let them help you, and you do them a favor by it. So that way, you pretty soon get acquainted with some of the schoolteachers, or the ... bank clerks and so forth. Then you become part of the town. And so I never—I only had one town I disliked in the whole...

PIEHLER: ... the whole circuit?

SPRINGER: ... in the whole circuit. But you see, as I mentioned, you have to be careful. I mean small towns are pretty—did you grow up in a small town or a big town?

BRADLEY: A pretty big town.

SPRINGER: All right. You don't know how vicious small towns can be. In other words, they really draw a line, and this half of town's riff-raff and this town's ok—now, they overlap, understand. But, I enjoyed most of the Missouri towns.

PIEHLER: And you worked for the soil survey, for the University?

SPRINGER: That's the Soils Department, in the University. In fact, I've always worked for universities; I've never worked for the Federal Government. But, I've cooperated, and in every case I cooperate with the Federal Government; I've worked alongside the people, and we do exactly the same thing. The only difference is they get paid about 30% more than we did. So, in those days I'd get fourteen hundred dollars and they'd get two thousand.

PIEHLER: Would you have liked to have been an agricultural agent?

SPRINGER: Not necessarily. Originally, if I'd have gotten into that I would, but that was the main good job that most of our graduates got.

PIEHLER: That was one of the plum jobs?

SPRINGER: That's right. You see that plus vocational agriculture. Because, at that time, the agricultural industry was so depressed that not many people got [jobs]. In fact, Kroger grocery would occasionally hire some Ag graduates because "Ags" have some managerial ability, and they found that they ... could convert them to grocery store people pretty easily. But county extension agents and vocational agriculture agents were the main jobs.

PIEHLER: How did you meet your wife?

SPRINGER: Oh, this is a much later picture. This is much later, but I'll tell you about it.

PIEHLER: This was after the war?

SPRINGER: Oh, yes, this was after the war, and I was working in the Department of Soils. And Jean was in the College of Home Economics, they called it at that time. She taught Foods and Nutrition. And, I mentioned Stephens, and Christian, and the University. Well, one night there were four or five of us bachelors that were sitting on Saturday night, and we were discussing. “Well, here we are, sitting here visiting. There must be some girls over at Christian or Stephens or University that are doing the same thing. Wouldn’t it be great if we had an organization in which we could all be together?” And so, we decided to set up one. And so, we got some representatives from Home Ec. [Economics] people and Stephens College, and we set up an organization with no dues, no rules, no regulations. The only prerequisite was, you had to be single, could not be married, and you’d have to have some interest. We set up an organization in which we had the one central meeting, and then we divided up into interest groups—music appreciation, hiking.

And so, on one of the hikes, Jean and I—we happened to be on the same hike—so somewhere on that hike, somebody introduced us and we visited a little bit. Then from that, I don’t remember how it came, but I must have asked her for a date sometime. So, that was the beginning of that. So, it was this Cus Club, which was of independent people. That turned out to be a wonderful organization, because—well, you wouldn’t appreciate the fact of how the dating system worked. But, in those days, you see, the boy would ask the girl for a date, and they’d go out. And so, unless there was some reason to have some communication and so forth, there was no reason for the fella to ask the girl for a date and so they would drift on, unless they met in class or somewhere. So, this was an attempt to get away from that fact that the boy had to ask the girl for a date. In other words, maybe if they went to an interest group and found common interests, they would [get together]. And so, it turns out that, although I was partly the one who started it, that was really a brilliant idea to get these people together, because the people could come with no idea that they had to be there for the date; they came just for the interest, and then the later thing followed. So, that’s the way this worked. We were on a hike and we met and then, of course, we later found that we had many common interests.

But, this was in 1949, and then I went away three years to graduate school. Jean stayed at Missouri and taught. So, I was away three years and got my degree and then I came back to Missouri. I mean, had I gone to Purdue which I was also interested, or UCLA, where I also interviewed, you see I probably would have never—would not have followed through with Jean.

BRADLEY: So, you guys kept in pretty close touch while you were in grad school?

SPRINGER: Only by letter. Jean was a wonderful letter-writer, and we would probably write two or three letters a year. That’s all—just minimal contact. In other words, hers was kind of a courtesy letter, and I responded. So there was no—I’m sure she didn’t spend any time pining for me, and I didn’t spend any time pining for her. See, I dated other girls and was totally independent, but then, when I came back to Missouri, we resumed this thing.

PIEHLER: You were a democrat in the ‘30s. What did you think of Roosevelt? What did you think of the coming of? When were you conscious that ... this war in Europe might be *our* war; the war in Asia might be our war?

SPRINGER: Well, you see, that thing just slipped up on us. We saw what was happening in Europe and were horrified by it. See, I was working as soil surveyor and, of course, when the

war broke out in December of '41, then, of course, we knew that we would be eligible for the draft. I guess we'd already signed up for the draft, maybe before that. Then, I got some kind of draft papers in 1941, and went for the examination. But I weighed 118 pounds and at that time, they considered 118 pounds as not being an adequate soldier. So, I was 4F for a year. But a year later, they were still holding to the twenty-one year limit, and by the year later, they had drafted practically everyone over twenty-one. And so they came back, and they weighed me, and I weighed 118—that's fine. So, I was taken in. That was in 1942. Then, a little later, they had everybody that was twenty-one, and so then they dropped it to eighteen and started picking up people.

PIEHLER: So in the pre-war draft, the pre-Pearl Harbor draft, you were 4F?

SPRINGER: That's right. Well, let's see, I don't really remember when I got my first draft papers.

PIEHLER: The peacetime draft was enacted in '40.

SPRINGER: Yeah, all right. So, I guess I did get papers before the ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, for the peacetime draft; but you were 4F?

SPRINGER: That's right. I was 4F at the time the war broke out.

PIEHLER: Oh. Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor occurred?

SPRINGER: I guess I don't. I remember distinctly the ...

PIEHLER: The news?

SPRINGER: ... radio broadcast and so forth. But let's see, that was December of '41. I guess I was back in Columbia; I guess I was in Columbia, Missouri at that time.

PIEHLER: You were 4F for a while and on the home front. How did the war change agriculture from your perspective? You were sort of observing what's going on?

SPRINGER: Well, it didn't change it very much abruptly.

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: I've forgotten where we had left. I'm sorry for the brief pause.

SPRINGER: You asked a very important question. What impact did the declaration of war have on agriculture? Well, at first it didn't, it didn't have a great deal, but then as the war progressed—and most of this would have happened after I was gone—it did have an effect in that rationing began. And, of course, when you have rationing, then that really favors the farm people because you've already got your own butter and cream and eggs and so forth. So, the

rationing doesn't affect you so much on the farm, until it gets to fuel. And you see, I don't really know how the rationing of fuel affected the farm, but I expect that the farm people could get the fuel because of production. Most of the impact of the war on the agriculture came after I'd already joined the army, so I only heard about the [rationing].

But, the big concern during that period was, you see, "Are you gonna be drafted, or are you gonna stay on the farm?" And you see, some of my colleagues—one colleague had two children, and I think they had hurried up and had a third one, so that he'd be sure not to go to war. Now you see, I'm being facetious here, because that's the kind of thinking that people had at that time. That if you were married and had children, you were less likely to be drafted. And if you were on an important farm job, then you were less likely to be drafted. But, for example, if a farm family had three sons, they sometimes wouldn't draft the last son and would leave one on the farm to help farm. So, in that sense, it did affect [agriculture].

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like ... at least in this agriculture area, a lot of people really didn't want to go off to war. Is that a fair characterization?

SPRINGER: Oh yes. That's a fair characterization. Now, there were lots of people that did.

PIEHLER: Yeah?

SPRINGER: There were lots of people that were scheming how they could keep out of the draft.

PIEHLER: Yeah ... I don't want to take anything away from the people who served, but often the image is that everyone was willing to go.

SPRINGER: Oh, no.

PIEHLER: And that—it's sort of good to have someone who remembers the fact.

SPRINGER: But now, it turns in peculiar ways because in the line where we were marching up to have an examination at the reception center, to illustrate how it was on the other hand, there was a youngster behind me, a real country boy, and he'd been into trouble somewhere or the other and spent six months in jail. And, he was visiting with me and said, "Well now, do you suppose they'll still take me because I've had that six months?" In other words, he was concerned that they wouldn't take him.

PIEHLER: Because ...

SPRINGER: Because he'd been [in jail]. So, you see, you have the whole spectrum, from those guys that really wanted to go, to those that were doing everything they could to stay out.

PIEHLER: The reluctance, in some farm families, to have fathers go and to have children go, sons go, was it also the nature of farming? In other words, if you work for a company, the company, particularly a big company, is still going to be there. But farms really, without a farmer, or without the labor—I mean, I guess, how much does that enter in?

SPRINGER: You have to have somebody to run the farm. The draft boards, took—they were pretty fair in this. They took it into consideration. If the farm could operate without the person that was drafted, well, they generally drafted him. But, they were also considerate; if the father was dead and it was just the son, then they often left him on the farm.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you got to know something about how the draft boards worked?

SPRINGER: Oh, of course you do. But, the public pressure is terrible on this sort of thing. In other words, in a small town, everyone knows that Jim didn't get drafted, and why didn't he get drafted. And so, there's real pressure to ...

PIEHLER: To draft someone?

SPRINGER: To get him out of there and get him drafted. It's pretty much common knowledge as to who's drafted and who wasn't. The people do their own evaluation as to whether they should and shouldn't have been drafted, and so forth.

PIEHLER: So, there's a lot of second-guessing?

SPRINGER: Oh yes, oh sure. So, we may have been "The Greatest Generation," but we had other kinds too.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) ... While you were doing soil survey, you were out in the field a lot; you were also at the University. How did the war change the University from what you could tell—the University of Missouri at Columbia?

SPRINGER: Well, of course, it took away all the men and left only the women. And so, my wife is the one that can tell you about that because she's ten years younger, and she was at Purdue when the war was on. And so, you have only the women, and then they had the various military training programs. So, most of those, you see, that group would be in the military, and so those guys would march to class and have classes. There were navy programs and army programs, and so it drastically changed the university. But, you see, I was gone, and I didn't know about it.

PIEHLER: So, you went into the service ...

SPRINGER: In '42.

PIEHLER: '42.

SPRINGER: In August of '42.

PIEHLER: August of '42. So you really—it sounds like it hadn't had a dramatic impact yet on the university?

SPRINGER: That's right; they hadn't really had a change. For example, in the draft class that I had, one of the draftees, one of my fellas that sat on the same train with me, was a history professor with a PhD and an outstanding professor, and he was drafted along with me. And so, during my time, they'd already taken all the good soldiers, and so they were drafting history professors, and lawyers, and soil surveyors, and so forth. And so they were getting a lot of very competent people in the draft at that time.

PIEHLER: Where did you report for your induction?

SPRINGER: At Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. That's a tremendous experience, to go there and be in line at that reception center and see the cross-section of humanity that's involved. Then, you think about it. You can't help but think, "Well, if these are the people that are being drafted, then what kind of people are being left at home?" You see, you really have the whole spectrum there. As we were going along, for example, one guy had an epileptic fit, was right there on the street, kicking. So that hadn't been picked up in his drafting, and, of course, I presume that they probably didn't take him. But, that would illustrate that.

PIEHLER: Well, you mention the person you had the conversation [with] was worried about his criminal record keeping him out of the military. I also imagine you had a lot of people from agricultural communities, but also it's in St. Louis, and you have people from different urban ...

SPRINGER: Oh, yeah. You have them from everywhere. That's the amazing thing about the army; you get the whole spectrum—city, country. And so, the fella alongside you may be a Pole from Chicago, or somebody from New York City. Heinrich Strauss from New York City was in our outfit. So, they're all put together, and then you're faced with getting along.

PIEHLER: You reported at Jefferson Barracks. How long were you at Jefferson Barracks for?

SPRINGER: Oh, just three or four days, until they get you processed and get your papers in order. Then, you get ... a little package like this [points to leather satchel] that you carry through the rest of the thing. Then, you wait around for shipping orders. Finally, after four or five days, they take you down load you on a train with seven or eight cars of soldiers. When the train pulls out of the station, you don't know where you're going. You don't know whether you're going west or east or where. After a while you discover you're going west, but you don't know where. And finally after a couple days on the train, you end up at Camp Barkley, Texas in the medics. See, you don't know whether you're going into infantry ...

PIEHLER: So, you didn't pick medics?

SPRINGER: Oh, no! You don't pick that; they pick that for you. And you see, at that time they were short on medics, and so they just put all of us in the medics.

PIEHLER: So, you ended up in the medical area, not because of your background in social ...

SPRINGER: Oh no. That had nothing to do with it.

PIEHLER: So, a bunch of people from Jefferson Barracks were from all kinds of backgrounds?

SPRINGER: That's right. It just happened that the people that were there at that time were there when they needed medics, and so they shipped us to them.

PIEHLER: Who were some of the people you traveled with down to Texas? You mentioned one person from New York, a Strauss?

SPRINGER: Of course, I got aquatinted with Heinrich a lot later; I'll tell you about Heinrich later. Well, of course, I don't remember much about who was on the train going to Camp Barkley. I just remember we didn't know where we were, and we speculated about where we were, and we knew we were going west. Before we got to Camp Barkley, they told us where we were going, but we'd been on the train a day or so before that. So, I don't remember much, except I remember the group of people that were drafted out of Columbia, Missouri. There were several people with master's degrees, and then I mentioned the history professor with a doctorate degree. There were maybe two fellas there in our group that had doctorates and they were drafted. See, I know this one this one fella that got on the train, this one fella that went with me to Camp Barkley, the history professor.

PIEHLER: And when you got to Camp Barkley, what happened next?

SPRINGER: It's was out there in the field, and they had a row of latrines, which we called "Latrine Hill," if you can imagine a row of twelve latrines. And then, from each of those, there was enough tents for a company. And there were no new tents, so these were condemned tents that we—they put up. So, they had holes in them and so forth, but they put up the tents. I believe that each tent held five. They're pyramidal tents. This long row of tents, and so you were assigned to one of those tents. Then, of course, if you need to go to the latrine, you walk to the end of the company street to the latrine and back. And then, we had the mess halls on the other end, and you'd go to the mess hall. So, we were out there in a bunch of condemned tents, and we stayed there from—basic training went from August until December. And there was one place down—you didn't have water on the street, you had to go to—that isn't right. You had one faucet on the street with cold water, and so, if you wanted to shave or anything you went down to that faucet and shaved. So, we weren't set up, really, for ...

PIEHLER: It sounds like it was very, very primitive?

SPRINGER: It was at that stage. And so anytime you got to—then when you got to OCS and moved up to the barracks where ...

PIEHLER: That was living.

SPRINGER: That's living.

PIEHLER: How long were you living in Camp Barkley?

SPRINGER: Well, I was there for basic training and OCPS, Officer Candidate Preparatory School, which was about a month, and then OCS which was a couple of months. So, I was there from August until May.

PIEHLER: And you were in basic training to be a medic in the Medical?

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: Medical Corps. How did that differ from—well, you never took regular basic training, but what was it like?

SPRINGER: It's exactly the same except, instead of carrying a rifle you carry a litter, and when you go on maneuvers, you move your litters and pretend to take care of people. But, the basic training is *just* the same; you drill. The fact is, our platoon leaders were infantrymen, and they made sure that you were. So there was no—our discipline was just as rigid as if we'd have been in infantry.

PIEHLER: How did you feel about being in the Medical, being trained as a medic?

SPRINGER: Of course, I was surprised because I thought I would be in the engineers with my soils background. See, I could have known about airports and so forth. So, I was surprised that they put me in the medics. But I didn't dislike it; I mean, I just went with it, which is what you have to learn to do in the army. Now, we had one Bronc Buster from Montana, and he really resented being in the medics. But, it turned out that he became a surgical technician and was the most prized technician in the surgery. And so, he was a prime soldier, but he was not reconciled to be in the medics.

PIEHLER: He would have rather been an infantryman?

SPRINGER: Oh yes, oh sure, but he was of course, at that time, a pretty big man. I mean, 185 and about six feet tall and perfect specimen. I mean, he could do pushups from now 'til next week. So, he sort of resented being a medic, but he made an *excellent* soldier.

PIEHLER: Do you have any recollections of your drill sergeant, your drill instructor from basic?

SPRINGER: No, except he was pretty good, and he was firm, but he was fair. I had a good impression of our first sergeant

PIEHLER: Your initial unit, what were their backgrounds? You mentioned a lot of them had come from Missouri.

SPRINGER: You just name it. It was *everything*. I mean ...

PIEHLER: So, you had people from Missouri ...

SPRINGER: Yes. Some of us, but, I'll give you an example. One of my tent mates was named Ruiz. He was a Chicano from Texas, and he barely spoke English. He and I were littermates. By littermates I mean the two of us carried the litter. I don't mean we were—and I considered Ruiz a good friend, and he was a good soldier. Of course, he trusted and respected me because I had a little more education, but I thought that was interesting. Here, I practically had a masters, and here he was and he barely knew English. One day during inspection, you know you're standing out there at attention, and you know they're going to ask you something. They asked Ruiz, "Who's the President of the United States?" and Ruiz didn't know. And so that illustrated to me—but he was a good soldier.

PIEHLER: Did everyone in your initial unit know how to read and write?

SPRINGER: Yes, but they had a special training for people that were not very competent. And so, they pulled them out and sent them to a special training, so that they would become able to read and write. We had two or three of those fellows in our outfit in Europe that had gone through that program and in 90 days they got to the point where they could get along all right.

BRADLEY: With so many people from such a good cross-section of the country, did you find that sometimes it created some tension in the camp, like people not getting along, or was everybody pretty tolerant?

SPRINGER: That isn't the way it works. It doesn't make any difference where the people are from, what their background is. The combinations are really peculiar, but it doesn't divide up by region or so forth, no. No, sometimes the best buddy will be some person from Chicago that can barely speak English and some country boy from Texas. I thought one interesting thing to me was that, to go back a different direction on this particular one, however, at OCS we had some blacks in our unit. Most of the army didn't, but we had some. And there was a black from Georgia and an aristocratic white southerner from Florida, and those two became good friends in the army. You see, back home they couldn't have associated, but they became good friends. So, that's a little different. There, apparently, the understanding of they were both southern and they understood each other outweighed some of the ...

PIEHLER: But then, it sounds like they developed a true friendship?

SPRINGER: Oh, they did! Oh yeah, they were good. You see, once you take away the outside pressure, then people start evaluating from what they are. And so, it doesn't make any difference whether you're from Montana, or California, or New York City, or wherever you're from. You start usually on a different basis. Now, of course, when you go on pass, the drinkers tend to go together, and the non-drinkers tend to go together and so forth. So, when you go on pass, people sort out in a different sort of way.

PIEHLER: It sounds like one of the big distinctions is the drinker and the non-drinker. That sounds like?

SPRINGER: Well, you don't discriminate on that basis. It just happens that if you want to, on pass, that guys that want to go to the bar, they tend to go to the bar. And the ones that don't, don't.

PIEHLER: Which group were you in? Were you in the drinker or the non...

SPRINGER: Well, I was essentially a non-drinker. I would give Captain DeBold my liter of cognac for cigarettes, and then I would trade cigarettes for other things. Captain DeBold was a great cognac—liked his cognac. So, I didn't drink at that time.

PIEHLER: When the non-drinker went out on leave, where would he go? Was there any typical pattern?

SPRINGER: Oh it depends. I even went to church in Abilene. And, I can't say that I went because I was so devout, but you see, you kinda think you oughta go to church once in a while. And so, I would go to church, and I met some girls at church!

PIEHLER: It sounds like, growing up in a rural area, that part of the reason—not taking anything away from the other reasons you were going, but it sounds like going to church and listening to an itinerate preacher is partly for recreation. That it's a social thing to do. Is that ... accurate?

SPRINGER: Well, you see, I grew up in Missouri, which is not the "Bible Belt," and the churches were actually in serious trouble at that time. Many of the little local country churches were in decline, and they had to combine. You see, the Methodists and the Presbyterians had to combine in some of these rural areas. Church isn't as big a thing in Missouri as it is here. Of course, it is in Catholic communities and Lutheran communities. But, Missouri is a unique state in that you have some places that are Catholic and German, and Lutheran and German. Of course, when you do that, you have friction between the Lutherans and Catholics. Other places, you have the hillbilly culture, so you have a handful of Episcopalians, a handful of Presbyterians, and then *lots* of Baptists, and lots of Holy Rollers. See, we had lots of Holy Rollers. Excuse the derogatory term, but I'll just go ahead and use it anyway. So, you have—up in St. Charles County, it's always Republican and they're all German, mostly German. Down in southwest Missouri, they're all hillbillies, and they're all Republicans. But then Kansas City is all Democratic, and Little Dixie is all Democratic, and southeast Missouri is all Democratic. And so in Missouri, you have to learn how to get along and tolerate.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you learned a lot of this by riding the circuit?

SPRINGER: Oh, yes. Oh, I was very fortunate to live in these different places

PIEHLER: It sounds like you got to experience a lot of very different cultures?

SPRINGER: Oh, yeah. Well I lived in Mound City for two years and Carthage for two years, which is southwest Missouri, and St. Charles County. You see, in St. Charles County, because of their strong Catholic population and strong German population, they just didn't appropriate

any money for rural schools. I actually saw a school being held in a log school in St. Charles County, Missouri in 1938. And so, you probably can detect how my reaction will be when they come to vote on vouchers. You can probably predict how I will vote on that one, (Laughter) because I saw there where the public schools were just squeezed out.

PIEHLER: Because they had such strong parochial ...

SPRINGER: Right.

PIEHLER: You had such a strong Lutheran and Catholic...

SPRINGER: That's right. So, those people weren't going to vote taxes for public schools. Why should they?

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: Before we go back to the war, while we had a move across the hall, you were talking about some performers you heard. I guess, before returning back to the war—you had mentioned hearing some singers. Do you remember which?

BRADLEY: You mentioned Little Blue Betty, Bonnie?

SPRINGER: Blue what?

BRADLEY: Blue Betty, Bonnie?

SPRINGER: Oh, Wee Bonnie Baker!

BRADLEY: That's it.

SPRINGER: Oh well, you see, in those days you had shows, circuit shows, that would come by—big bands. So, this was one of the big bands, and of course each big band had a singer. Wee Bonnie Baker was one; I just remember her because she had a high voice and was unusual. Well, no one other like her. And so I went down from Mound City traveled down to St. Joe to a show—or to an orchestra, I heard the orchestra. And I can't remember if I had a date and went to the dance, but I remember hearing Wee Bonnie Baker.

BRADLEY: Did you get to go to shows like that and see orchestras and stuff a lot, or was it just every once in a while?

SPRINGER: Oh, only occasionally. Of course, by being in Columbia I saw them. But no, most of these rural places don't have they don't have that. That was St. Joe, so I came from Mound City down to St. Joe to see that. So, you'd have it in St. Joe, and Kansas City, and St. Louis, Springfield, Cape Girardeau, but the rest of the state wouldn't have them. Wouldn't have ever heard of big band, unless they went to them.

BRADLEY: Now, during the war did you get to see a lot of the shows that came over to entertain the troops?

SPRINGER: Oh, yes! Oh yeas, in fact, one of the big bands stayed at our hospital one night, and at Base Air Depot, they would come, and I saw, oh, several of the big bands. That was a good diversion.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned—you talked about your being in basic training. And after basic training, what then happened?

SPRINGER: Well I went to OCPS, and OCPS is just like OCS except that they're getting ready for it. You take map reading, and military law, and all that. And then you go to OCS, and OCS is *really* tough. The idea is, they always take more than they're going to graduate, and they do their best to eliminate you. In other words, you have to march, and you have to follow, and so during that two or three months while you're in OCS, you don't have a *minute* to spare. I mean, you may have to change uniforms—you may have fifteen minutes to change uniforms and get to the next class, so you double time. You march to everything. So, OCS is a real experience.

PIEHLER: Your OCS took place in Abilene?

SPRINGER: Yes.

PIEHLER: Was that standard OCS, or was it, sort of, a medical corps?

SPRINGER: It was medical, but the thing you need to remember is that the basic OCS training is the same in all the branches. Only part of the curriculum is devoted to medics. But you still have the same drills, the same orders; you still have the same military law, military discipline. Everything is the same except that instead of when you go on maneuvers, instead of setting up artillery, you set up tents. And so, the OCS is just the same, and some of our OCS officers were infantry officers. But the idea there, I guess, is to see if you'll crack; see if you can stand the pressure. And so you go, and when they call the role, on a certain day of the week, you'll notice that one or two guys' names are missing, and then you just hope that the next week it isn't you.

PIEHLER: So what would people wash out for? Do you remember any particular stories?

SPRINGER: Oh, some people can't handle drill. Where, you see, you have a platoon of men and you march them down the street, and you have to give them the right command to get them across the street without getting them all scattered all over the place. Some people get flustered and can't do it. In other words, I don't know what the thinking is, but apparently, the attempt is to see how people react under stress. And some people improve under stress and some ...

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with M.E Springer on April Third, 2001, in Knoxville Tennessee with Kurt Piehler ...

BRADLEY: And Ginny Bradley.

PIEHLER: And, Professor Springer, you were saying that it tests you, and some can't handle the pressure?

SPRINGER: Yes, that's right, and then some people just don't look like a soldier. Apparently, they place a good bit of premium on that too. Some people just, apparently, in the eyes of the military don't have the presence to look like an officer. But it's the same thing you'd be looking for if you were hiring an employee that you wanted to get along with the public. But, I don't remember what proportion passed and what proportion failed, but I expect that a fourth of the people were kicked out.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like you were under pressure too. Were you ever worried that you wouldn't make it?

SPRINGER: Oh, sure you are! Oh sure, and then eventually, you have to go down for a review. Which is, you sit there with five officers and they ask you questions, and there's no one that doesn't dread that. I mean, to go down there as a lone candidate for lieutenant and sit there with five officers asking you various questions is—it's real pressure. That's apparently the motive in OCS is to put you under so much pressure to see if you can take it.

BRADLEY: What did you think was the absolute hardest thing for you about training?

SPRINGER: Oh, (Laughs) it's a lot that's hard. Of course, I didn't have the problem of resisting regimentation. In other words, I was willing to realize that in the army, you have to fit into a pattern. I guess the hardest thing was trying to go nine miles in two hours with a full pack.

BRADLEY: Wow.

SPRINGER: Now you see, that means you have to go: one hour you have to go five miles, and another hour you have to go four miles with a forty-pound pack on your back, and that's *hard*.

BRADLEY: Yeah, I can imagine.

SPRINGER: That's much harder than going fifteen miles in five hours with a full pack. But, I guess that nine miles. Now, you could do it, but ninety percent of the women here couldn't do that.

BRADLEY: Yeah.

SPRINGER: I mean, it's real' hard.

PIEHLER: And there's a good number of men who couldn't do it as well! (Laughs)

SPRINGER: Now on the hikes in Texas, when we—250 of us would go on a march, they always had to have an ambulance on those hot afternoons. We'd always have three or four people who would keel over and have to be hauled away. That would never bother me because I was slender and tough, and so that part didn't bother me. And now, the exercises—they do just about all you can, but you know, that's really how you put people to the pressure. See, I could barely do all the pushups and so forth and get by on that. So, the nine miles in two hours was the toughest. And the reason that came about, is that we had some setbacks at Kasserine Pass, and we lost some soldiers because they were not in good enough condition to retreat and get away, and so they sent orders right then to step up the ...

PIEHLER: So, you were aware of this—why you were doing this. They made it very clear that that ...

SPRINGER: Oh, yes—that what we'd been doing was not enough. We had to ...

PIEHLER: There was a reason why we were doing this.

SPRINGER: ... step it up. And so, over the whole United States, the fact that we'd found our people were not in good enough shape at Kasserine Pass caused us all to get more training.

PIEHLER: What, in OCS, did you specifically learn that was related to your branch? You mentioned that most of the training was standard.

SPRINGER: We had emergency medical training—that's what you do when you find a guy on the ground wounded—and then we had a little bit about hospital management. But, most of it was soldiering, map reading, let's see ... but you see, we were being trained for medical administrative officers, and so the emergency medical training was all that we needed to be proficient in because we were taught to turn them over to doctors; get them in shape to turn them over to the doctor. So, we had lots of drill on not moving people quickly, keep them warm, that you've got six hours to get them to the hospital. So, we were trained definitely not to do anything that the doctor would not ordinarily do. Just keep them—calm them down, keep them warm, take care of them until you get them in an ambulance, and you get them to a hospital.

BRADLEY: Was there any training that once you were overseas and actually in these situations that you had wished you had gotten when you were back at OCS?

SPRINGER: No, we were thoroughly trained. (Loud noises in the background) We had been through training early to be a 236th station hospital. So, we at that time were trained, and at that time did our swimming. We learned to swim so that we could go to the Pacific. So, we were trained thoroughly for a station hospital, and then, they decided that we were going to Europe, and they wanted field hospitals. So, they broke us; they rearranged us and put us into field hospitals, and we were trained, then, to operate in field hospitals: set up tents, be able to take patients within 12 hours. So, we were then trained for field hospitals, and so our training was good. You see then, after we got to the field hospital, we had three platoons that are all supposed to operate—can operate separately and then the headquarters. And I was a training officer, so I

had these 250 men, and I would assign those men to the wards and to the secretaries and to the cooks and other places, trying to get a place where they could fit in. And sometimes you'd get a soldier assigned to a nurse, and they couldn't get along, so you'd move him to another nurse, and they'd get along fine. And then sometimes, you'd find a fellow who wasn't any good as a medical technician, and then you would try to find another job for him. And so, we shifted them around, but our training was good and so whenever we could, of course, overseas we'd try to find a building and set up in the building. But if we didn't, we could pitch the tents and set up. But no, our training was good. Then ... we got 12 doctors and 12 nurses and, of course, they were the professionals and handled the professional work. I was impressed. Out of the 12 doctors, I would have been happy to have any ten of them operate—work on me at any time. There were two that, I guess, I would not want to have work on me if it was anything serious. In fact, our CO was one of them. He had been a doctor at Carmel, California, and I think most of his practice must have been listening to old women's complaints and so forth. (Laughter) But, Colonel was a good CO; he had a bunch of good doctors, and he turned it over to them, and he ran a good outfit.

PIEHLER: So, after finishing OCS, where did you go to next?

SPRINGER: I went to ... Camp Adair, Oregon, and that's where we set up as a 236th station hospital. We were stationed out there north of Corvallis, Oregon, and we hiked all over that country. As I say, we thought we were going to the Pacific, and then we had orders that everyone need to swim too, so we went down to Corvallis, in the swimming pool there. Sergeant Green had taught swimming at California, and so he was in charge of teaching swimming. Half of our people couldn't swim, and so his job was to teach them to swim, and he got all of them but one to learn how to swim. Busto, who was a 45 year-old Spaniard, never could learn to swim. Busto was a good soldier, but he couldn't swim. So, Sergeant Green essentially taught half of that outfit how to swim. Then we went to Europe, of course, where it was so cold you never could swim.

PIEHLER: When did you report to Oregon?

SPRINGER: In May; May '43. Then we spent from May until October in ...

PIEHLER: In Oregon?

SPRINGER: In Oregon ... and that was a happy experience. The 236th was a good outfit. We had a colonel in charge, and he was a big grandfatherly man, and so that was a good experience. Camp Adair was a pleasure. And then we went to Camp Ellis, Illinois, and at that time, we had no doctors; we just had the skeleton crew. But, at Camp Ellis, we had to depend upon the base mess hall, and we had no unity among the outfit. And Camp Ellis was a tough experience because we just had our training and we'd get out there in the prairie and set off TNT in the middle of the winter. So, that was a tough experience. And then we moved to Camp Atterbury, down south of Indianapolis. And then, we got our doctors and nurses, and we had our own mess hall. Which is—food is terribly important, and our outfit always had good food, so then we had a good experience at Camp Atterbury. We were there up until the winter, and then we went to New Jersey and got ready to ship out.

PIEHLER: ... Your last base in the US was Camp Kilmer?

SPRINGER: Yes, we went right to Camp Kilmer and spent a week or ten days there.

PIEHLER: But, it was not until, really, Camp Atterbury that you got your compliment of doctors.

SPRINGER: ... and nurses. That's right.

PIEHLER: How big was the unit without the doctors and nurses?

SPRINGER: Well, about 250, the whole unit is about company size.

PIEHLER: So, these are the orderlies and the medics and the, sort of, support—the kitchen staff and the ...

SPRINGER: And the supply and, of course, administratives. You see, as administrative officers you have a whole set of sergeants and corporals and so forth that handled the papers on the medical personnel and the patients.

PIEHLER: And was everyone unarmed?

SPRINGER: Yes; never had to. The only time I carried a pistol was in Germany, after the war was over, when I went down to get a payroll. However, at—let's see, this was at Camp Adair, they had an optional chance to do rifle practice. See, at that time, we thought we were going to the Pacific, so they wanted us to be able know what was going on. So, they took us down to the rifle range and about half the outfit learned to shoot. And we went through the ...

PIEHLER: Underneath the barbed wire?

SPRINGER: ... underneath the barbed wire, and so forth. You see, I having been on the rifle team, they actually had me to help with some of the rifle training there.

PIEHLER: Because you were familiar with it because of the rifle team?

SPRINGER: Oh, sure. See, I was in the rifle team, and then during the war, that one week when we shot at the rifle range was the only time I saw a weapon, except when I went for the payroll.

PIEHLER: Its also striking that you ended up in medical—I had forgotten to make the connection. You had this experience in the rifle team. So, it would have made sense to put you in infantry—engineers or infantry.

SPRINGER: Yeah, that's right.

PIEHLER: But it seems like, you developed very quickly a patience for the army.

SPRINGER: Oh yes!

PIEHLER: The army way; you've conveyed that, mentioned that before.

SPRINGER: Oh yeah, you see, I'm ambivalent. In other words, on most of the issues, I'm a peaceful type, but if you have to have an army, you have to have discipline. And I expect you even have to have discipline on the rowing, because if seven of you do it one way and one of you does it the other, you don't win. So you see, the army is the same way. You learn that you're better off if you do it the right way. So, if you're in a good outfit its fine, but if you're in a terrible outfit, it's terrible. And your immediate superiors are the ones that count: your first sergeant and your CO. If you have a good CO, then don't worry about the brass and so forth, but if you have a bad CO, then you're in a tough spot.

BRADLEY: One thing you mentioned was that you guys were never really sure where you were going. Like, when you were coming down to Texas, you guys didn't know that you were going to Texas. And, you thought you were going to the South Pacific, and it turned out you went to Europe. Did that tend to frustrate a lot of people in the service?

SPRINGER: Oh yeah. Oh sure! We had a good outfit. The 236th station was a good outfit; we were used to our officers and used to the people. Each office had an assignment and we could put up tents at the drop of a hat. And then when they tell you, "Okay, the 236th Station Hospital is done, you're going to be a field hospital," of course there's all kinds of unhappiness. And on the train back—we came on a troop train from Corvallis back to Camp Ellis—there was all kinds of complaining and uncertainty because we didn't know what the field hospitals were going to be like. So, then you start all over. So that's why Camp Ellis was a poor experience, because our unit had been broken down, and we were just loose soldiers at a strange base, eating at a strange mess, and no unity. So, that's a bad experience. But then the moment we got to Camp Adair and got our units formed and got the same one and had our own mess, it fits in fine.

If you're going to run an army, you have to have discipline. Well, that's the only way different kinds of people can get along. And then, you turn them loose on pass and you go out and boy, you get in *all kinds* of trouble! (Laughter) An idle army is just ...

PIEHLER: Is not a good thing?

SPRINGER: Not a good thing. You have to keep people busy.

PIEHLER: Even if you have to make work?

SPRINGER: Oh yeah. You've got to keep *men* busy.

PIEHLER: Otherwise they'll get into ...

SPRINGER: That's right; otherwise they'll get into trouble.

PIEHLER: What your specific—once you reported to Corvallis, what were your responsibilities in the unit in the States?

SPRINGER: I was training officer. I was the one who assigned the guys whether they were going to be medical administrative, I mean ward people, or cooks, or clerks, or so forth. I'd look over their records or their histories and assign them someplace, and if they worked, fine, and if they didn't then we'd switch them. So, I was training officer most of the time, both with the 236th and with the field hospital. Then ... I was never supply officer, and I was never mess officer. So, most of the time, I was administrative officer, and then we'd handle paperwork as well.

BRADLEY: When you guys found out that you were going to go to—you went to England first, correct?

SPRINGER: Right.

BRADLEY: When you first found out where you were going to go specifically, and you went to New Jersey to get ready to ship out for that ...

SPRINGER: Yeah.

BRADLEY: ... what were people saying about it? Were people nervous about going overseas? Were they excited?

SPRINGER: That's the toughest thing that you have to do. ... We didn't exactly know where we were going. We knew that we were going to Europe, but we didn't know if we were going to Scotland or England or where. We just knew that we were going to get on the *Queen Elizabeth*. So, they line you up in a line, and they start you on that ship. And the first guy steps onboard, and the second guy steps onboard, and the only reason he takes that step is because the guy behind him is stepping. And, to make that step from the United States onto the *Queen Elizabeth* is probably the toughest thing you have to do in the whole war, because, for once you stop and reflect, "Maybe this is the last time that you'll be in the United States." (Catches a sob in his throat)

PIEHLER: We can take a little break.

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: After getting aboard the ship, what was life like aboard the ship, aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* going over?

SPRINGER: Well, let me first say that that step that I told you about, that's the first place where discipline comes in. Because once you make that first step, get aboard the ship, get your foot up on the ship and go down, then you can start wondering where you're going to be assigned and what kind of accommodations you're going to have. Well, there were 18,000 of us that were aboard that ship. And we marched in, and all around the deck there were, around the

promenades, there were racks on the wall, three high. And so each enlisted man was going to get to occupy that—each of those racks for eight hours, and then he was going to get out and another guy was going to get in. So, each of those racks were going to take care of three people.

PIEHLER: So, I think it was going to be a “hot bed;” I think that is the term?

SPRINGER: That’s right. We were going to have two meals a day. And now, I was fortunate. I was a lieutenant, so they put six of us in the stateroom that ordinarily would occupy two, so we did have a whole bunk. But there were 18,000 of us. So then, the ship puts to sea and everything’s fine. I can remember that I went down and played chess with a naval lieutenant in a little space in the lounge. So, the only thing you have to be sure to do is not miss one of those meals, because if you miss one, then you don’t get another one for—so, all you’ve got to do then for the next four days is to manage to get to those meals each day. And, of course, you’ll always wear life preservers. There’s just no if, ands, or buts—you just have to have your life preserver all the time. And everything went smoothly.

We were going—the idea was that this *Queen Elizabeth* was supposedly fast enough where subs couldn’t catch it, but then, when we came around the first corner of the British Isles there was some concern. The destroyer came past us—breezed past us, and we saw a cruiser off in the distance. So, they didn’t say what it was, but apparently there was a sub in the area. For a few hours there was a little concern, because we didn’t see why a destroyer needed to be chasing around out there, and the cruisers were out in the distance, and so forth.

But, then we got around and we had no difficulties, and then we pulled in to Greenoch, Scotland, which is up north of Glasgow. We pulled into Greenoch, Scotland and they put us on the train, and headed south. As we went down through Scotland and England, the natives would wave, and we would wave, and that gave us a good feeling. You see, they were glad to see us. And we went down to BAD2, Base Air Depot Number Two, which is a big base for refurbishing airplanes after the missions. So, we sat there for some time and, of course, we had training while we were there, but we had no official duties. And then, later we were shipped to Kent, England, down near Goudhurst, which was about 15 miles from the channel and south of London. We set up at Glassenbury House, which was an old castle built about 1300, and the officers stayed in the house. The woman of the house still lived there, but the officers stayed in the house with an old moat around it and water in the moat. The enlisted men stayed out in the cow pasture and our hospital tents were out in the cow pasture. We were in there during the buzz bomb days, and it was a pleasant place. We would get strawberries from the local people and eggs from the local people; one day we had eggs. So, it was a pleasant place to be stationed. We took patients in the hospital.

And then the buzz bombs started. Of course, as you know, they set those off from across the English Channel. And we were right at the point where those three tracks crossed, as they went into London. They were called track one, two and three. I don’t know which one was which, but they crossed right over us and then would go on into London. And at first, our people were a little excited. They would shoot at them with aircraft as they come across the coast, and the airplanes would chase them, and then finally, they put up balloons. And so, it was pretty disruptive there at one time. One day, we were on an inspection, we were walking down in between the tents and a chunk of metal about as big as that, (gestures with hands) hit right in front of us. Our 90 millimeter anti-aircraft had been shooting, and a piece of the fragment came down right in front of us. So, these buzz bombs would come in, and they were just about, oh I

don't know, 500 feet up, I guess, and had fire out of the tail. As long as they were chugging fire it was no problem of course, when they quit, fire would come down and hit. So, they created a little concern. And one of our Dentists, dug—we called it his grave—a hole under his dental tent. About twenty of the fellas were really pretty well concerned, and they had trenches under the tents, and so forth. But some of the rest of us took the attitude that maybe it wouldn't hit us, and we went ahead about our business.

PIEHLER: ... It sounded like none of the rockets really landed near you?

SPRINGER: The nearest one was about as far as here to Cumberland.

PIEHLER: That's pretty close. (Laughs) So, this concern about it; this was not completely hypothetical?

SPRINGER: Oh, no!

PIEHLER: Because, for those who would be reading this, it's not very far from here to Cumberland. (About one city block)

SPRINGER: But, anyway our folks saw the folly of this random airplane shooting around everywhere, because it was going to hit somebody. So then, they set up a system in which the first wave would just be ACC Aircraft up the coast, of course, and then, airplanes would take over, and then, finally, they had the balloon barrage. The balloon barrage was between us and London. And so once they got that set up, we weren't so concerned. Next to us was a British outfit and there was an old—I say old because he was a fifty-year-old British officer that was in an ordnance outfit. He was disappointed that he wasn't in some combat outfit, but he set up on a post in his outfit a machine gun. When the buzz bombs came over, he'd shoot at them. So, there was a good bit of activity, but we didn't lose anybody, and nobody was hurt. However, one day the captain and I, Captain Harrod and I were coming home from a pass. As we were coming down the road, we saw a buzz bomb coming directly at us. Of course, we didn't know if it was going to hit where we were or ten miles away. So I suggested, rather quickly, that we better stop and get out. So, we got out, and got in the ditch, but the thing landed about 200 yards before it got to us. So it ...

PIEHLER: But that's still pretty—that's still fairly close.

SPRINGER: Yeah, but you're so conditioned at that time, that you just figure, "Boy, we're lucky." That could have happened to us, you see. So, you kinda figure, "Well, that was a good day." So, we didn't have any incoming. So then, we were there during D-Day, and on D-Day, I had a driver and a Studebaker six by six, and we were going back for supplies. We didn't know that it was D-Day, but we had got up early so we went. We were going opposite, away from the channel towards ... the west of London, and got up there and for some reason we had to—we wanted to stop. So, we stopped and went into a little pub or grocery store. There were all kinds of jabbering and going on, and they said we'd landed across the Channel. Then we proceeded to this place where we were going to get our supplies, and we noticed that there was extra security there. We had to *really* establish who we were and why we were there and there were extra

guards. And this base was one where they were loading out paratroopers for the invasion. So, they were actually loading them out, as we were—while we were there.

PIEHLER: So, was this before D-Day or after?

SPRINGER: Well, that was *on* D-Day; that was on it.

PIEHLER: So, you saw them loading up the paratroopers?

SPRINGER: Yes, but only at—this was nearly noon, you see, after it had been going on all morning.

PIEHLER: Okay.

SPRINGER: But what I'm trying to illustrate: now, we knew something was going to happen because there were more airplanes, and the airplanes had white stripes on their wings. So, for two or three days, there were more airplanes. But, we didn't know which day it was going to be. So, my driver and I didn't know that it was D-Day when we were going back. We didn't find it out until we got to that little British pub. Well, it wasn't a pub; it was a grocery store, where you buy cheese and crackers. So, we were fifteen miles away from the channel, but none of us knew which day it was going to be. Of course, we speculated, but we didn't know which day it was going to be.

BRADLEY: How—you mentioned that there were some British officers, and you guys stopped by a pub and stuff. How was the interaction between the British people and the American troops?

SPRINGER: Oh, it was wonderful.

BRADLEY: Was it great?

SPRINGER: It was wonderful. Just, they treated us great, and the enlisted men would go out and people would invite them into their home. To show you how well they got along, one of our soldiers—the British officers came over one day and wanted to see such-and-such a corporal. It turns out that the British have a custom of the fathers give part of their military pay to the mother of their child. So, this farmer's daughter and one of our soldiers had been friendly enough that British officers came to our place to round up this soldier because they wanted to abscond fifteen dollars a month of his pay to help support this youngster of his. So, that illustrates how well they got along. And on pass we'd go down to Peacock Inn and they'd be there, the British soldiers, and I can remember that they would drink beer, and the Irish soldiers would sing Irish songs, and the Scotch soldiers would sing Scotch songs, these sad Scotch ballads. Of course, tears would run down their cheeks. You know, they'd had two or three beers, and tears would run down their cheeks because of this sad song. So, I always fondly remember Peacock Inn. I told you I didn't drink, but I'd ...

PIEHLER: But you would go to the ...

SPRINGER: I'd have one beer. And so, the relationships were just wonderful. Now, I illustrated this intimate detail, but there were lots of families there who would invite the soldiers there for Sunday lunch, and so forth. And so, when the outfit shipped out, there were lots of people who'd hate to see us go. There was never any problem that way.

PIEHLER: Did you ever make it to London on pass?

SPRINGER: Oh *yes!* We'd go into London about every other weekend and of course, it was complete blackout, and we'd walk up and down the streets. One week you'd go up and down the street, and maybe two weeks later you'd come back on pass and go by and there would be some buildings that had been bombed out. The buzz bombs were actually knocking out buildings. Oh no, I got to see lots of London, and we enjoyed London.

BRADLEY: Was England what you expected it to be like? Because, I know that you hadn't traveled very much; except for kind of around the Midwest and in Missouri, and then in your military experience, you got to go all over the United States. But, when you went overseas, was it as different as you thought it would be?

SPRINGER: Well, maybe more different because we were stationed in Lancashire, and it was actually difficult to understand the local language, the Lancashire accent. At first we had difficulty understanding the people. But, we would go to Blackpool on pass, and up at Blackpool they had dances. Of course, we danced with the British girls and the British WAFS. But the complaint was that we'd go up on pass, and we had to be in at eleven o'clock. So, you go up on pass and have to be back, and, you see, it was still daylight at eleven o'clock. So, you couldn't take full advantage of a pass because it all had to be in daylight. (Laughter) I don't mean that that bothered me, but I did hear some of the soldiers complaining.

PIEHLER: How long after D-Day did you remain in England?

SPRINGER: Oh, six months. You see, it had a point system. And if you were in infantry and combat, you had lots of points and got home early. And so on May 8, we moved from—our hospital moved from Valenciennes, France, to Kaldenkirchen, Germany, which was right on the border with Holland. So, that would be the day that the war was over.

PIEHLER: Actually, backing up, how long were you in England after D-Day?

SPRINGER: Until October.

PIEHLER: October of '44?

SPRINGER: Then in October of '44, we went to LeBourget, France, and stayed in an old apartment with all the windows knocked out. And this was in winter, of course, so we had no heat for two months there. And again, we ate at the standard mess, and that was kind of tough. But, we could get a pass, and we didn't have any duties, so we could get a pass every other day and go down to Paris. And so, we'd go down and ride the Metro, and so, we got to see Paris

during that time. And then the third day of January, we moved out to Valenciennes, France. But on the twelfth day of December in 1944, another officer and I and an enlisted man went up to Belgium to locate a site for a hospital. And so we went down the Meuse River and went to this place in Belgium, and ... found a place to set up the hospital and came back and ... had orders to move. But then, the Bulge broke loose on the sixteenth or seventeenth, and they pushed almost over to the Meuse River, and so our orders were canceled. We never moved to Belgium because of the Bulge. And so then, on the third day of January, we moved to Valenciennes, France, and set up in the Clinique de Tessier, which was a fine hospital just a fine modern hospital. And we moved in right with the local people, and so we utilized most of the hospital, and they still took care of emergencies for the local people.

PIEHLER: ... In England, were you a fully operational hospital?

SPRINGER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: So, when did you first start taking patients in?

SPRINGER: Well, when we moved to Kent, we were fully operational. Now, we were supposed to take care of them within twelve hours, and I don't remember when the first one came in, but we had patients regularly there, in Kent. And then in LeBourget, we were inactive again, but then when we went to Valenciennes, we took patients. We were back behind the front, so we would get people who'd run into the back of a truck with a motorcycle, and fall out of trucks, and then, we got some air force casualties, and we took care of some local people. We had some people from one of the airborne divisions in our hospital. And one of the real interesting things to me in the war was that we had six or eight or ten people out of this division, and, the day before they were getting ready to go on whatever trip it was, one of the officers came over to the hospital to check with our officers to see which ones were able to go back on duty. And those guys—some of them were too sick to go, and they'd beg to get to go on this mission; they wanted to be with their outfit when they went on some hazardous mission. And that really illustrated to me, the kind of morale that those Airborne people had. But, that was while we were at Valenciennes.

PIEHLER: In Kent ... for example on D-Day, did you take any D-Day casualties on the sixth or seventh?

SPRINGER: No, we ...

PIEHLER: You were strictly ...

SPRINGER: We got a few from the airplanes.

PIEHLER: Yeah?

SPRINGER: But no, we didn't—that was all on the other side [of the channel].

PIEHLER: So you strictly...

SPRINGER: No strictly, only—see we were taking care of advanced air force bases. They would put a ... mat down in a cow pasture, and we were taking care of those in the Ninth Air Force fighter planes. And of course, we also took care of local casualties, but no, we didn't have any D-Day [casualties].

PIEHLER: So, you had a lot of the accident casualties, it sounds like?

SPRINGER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Sickneses because of the local ...

SPRINGER: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Just people...

SPRINGER: Blowing up stoves. You know, they cook with gasoline stoves and people ...

PIEHLER: That was ... common?

SPRINGER: Oh yeah. So, you see, you get a lot of common [injuries]—and all the careless things, we'd pick up those people. But, we were always far enough away that when we were in Germany, we could hear the artillery. But, we were always there a few days after the ...

PIEHLER: So in many ways Kent was—it sounds like quite a, in some ways, you had quite a routine life, and you were even within a population that spoke English?

SPRINGER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: Or a version of English, I might say.

SPRINGER: Oh yeah. Well, the Kent, of course, is a different language than Lancashire.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

SPRINGER: But there's no problem in communicating. And ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, in both Kent and Lanc ...

SPRINGER: Now when you move to France, of course you've got the language barrier, but that doesn't bother you much.

PIEHLER: And while you were in Kent and Lancashire and then in France, what were your duties? You had been training officer in the states; what were you in charge of specifically?

SPRINGER: Well, personnel officer is what it amounts to. You still have to man the different places, and if somebody's missing, then you have to make transfers. And then occasionally, you'll get an order like, "Send us six people," and so then you have to decide who you're going to send. Well of course, you're supposed to not do it, but you always send the people you don't want. And so, you have to pick six names and ship them somewhere, and that sort of thing.

Well, I think I ought to tell you about one interesting thing. ...After we were at Kent, we went back to BAD2 for awhile. While we were up there, we got orders one day ... that they wanted us to crack platoon, our special platoon. So, they stripped one of our platoons down, and I happened to be one that was in that group. And we had to hightail it across England, to the east side of England, to get there right away. So we did; about thirty or forty of us, hightailed it across England and went over to this place, and when we got there, they were in a state of turmoil. They said that they were holding up for awhile, that they weren't ready to go on a mission. And so, we held over to the next day, and the ground troops had captured the area that we were supposed to go to. But we found out that what we had been—we were an airborne outfit—what we had been sent down there to [do was], we were going to be loaded into gliders and land in the Netherlands. And so, we needed to be pretty grateful to the ground troops for taking that ground, so we didn't have to glide in there as a hospital.

PIEHLER: You were going to?

SPRINGER: Yeah. We didn't find that out until ...

PIEHLER: Until you got there?

SPRINGER: Until we got there—until after it was over. But that's what we were going to do.

PIEHLER: But you never did actually have to?

SPRINGER: We never did go, but you see ... that would have been awful because Germans had posts out in those pastures.

PIEHLER: ... Oh, those things were ...

SPRINGER: And we didn't ever. But anyway, so then they cut us loose and then we headed back to BAD2. And while we were going, we saw an airplane up above, and people bailing out of it. Then, that airplane came down and crashed not too far from where we were going. And so, this wasn't in the line of duty or anything, but we thought we ought to see what was going on. We drove up towards where that crash was, and we saw—we found one of the soldiers that had bailed out. We went on up to the crash and then up there where the airplane later exploded.

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

SPRINGER: Well, we got to Germany on the eighth day of May and took over a Catholic hospital there and kept, used some of their personnel to help us run the hospital. This was right

on the street that separated Germany and Holland, and so when we'd go on pass, we'd go over into Holland. And we operated this hospital and ... used their personnel. And to show you—and at that time of course we had a non-fraternization policy. In other words, you weren't really supposed to talk to the German people, and that went pretty well early, but there was one, about sixteen-year-old German girl that worked regularly in the hospital. And after a week or so, (Laughs) she said she really wished she could talk to these people because she wanted to learn English. And the policy was that there was no fraternization. 'Course, after a while, that fraternization policy weakened, and I guess she later could talk to the people, but it illustrates the complexities. And I mentioned Heinrich Strauss. Heinrich was born in Germany, came to New York City, was a cook in New York City, and was a cook in our outfit. He was a *cantankerous* fella and could get along with only a few people. So, he and a soldier from up here in eastern Kentucky, we called him Short Adam Hubbard, ran one mess. And so Heinrich had the best food of any cook.

PIEHLER: He was cantankerous, but a good cook.

SPRINGER: And a good cook! So, everybody liked to eat Henry's meals, but what I'm leading up to: we moved to Kaldenkirchen on the eighth day of May, and he grew up in Hahn, Germany, which was only fifty or seventy-five miles away, just across the Rhine River. And so, in a matter of two or three weeks after we were there, he wanted to go to see his mother and his sister. And so, I went with Heinrich, and I took Heinrich, and so we went fifty or seventy-five miles over to Hahn, Germany, and he saw his mother and his sister.

PIEHLER: What had the war been like for them? Did you get any sense during the visit?

SPRINGER: Well, of course, I didn't get much of a sense. I mean, of course it had been tough, but the irony of it to me was—you see Heinrich originally said that he wouldn't go to fight in Germany and signed a bunch of papers, saying that he would join the army, but he wouldn't fight in Germany. But then we got orders to go to Germany. He was a bachelor and although he couldn't get along with people, he got along with people with our outfit better than anybody else, and so he didn't want to be separated from our outfit. And so, he had to go in and have the officers change his papers so that he could go to Germany. He went with us to Germany and then, ironically, ended up ...

PIEHLER: Pretty close to home?

SPRINGER: Fifty to seventy-five miles from home.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, based on Heinrich's paperwork, there was a good sense that you weren't going to be in the European theatre.

SPRINGER: Originally, you see, we were going to the Pacific but the thing shifted.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and he should have been separated, but he didn't want to?

SPRINGER: But he didn't want to.

PIEHLER: Didn't want to leave the unit. When you were—you mentioned you were taking casualties in France.

SPRINGER: In Valenciennes, yeah.

PIEHLER: In January?

SPRINGER: Yes.

PIEHLER: Is that when you got a lot of the Battle of the Bulge?

SPRINGER: No, we still were so far away that we got mostly local bases, and the Bulge was ... 100 miles away. Now, we got a few more casualties as a result of the Battle of the Bulge, but they were not combat casualties in the Battle of the Bulge. But the Bulge created—I mean during the time that we were there, see, we went up there the third of January, which was two weeks after the Bulge. But it created some anxiety, because the word got out that the Germans were travelling around our country in Jeeps and American uniforms. And so, I actually saw somebody shoot down the street, one day in Valenciennes, because they thought it was a [German], but that was a mistake. But, there was some excitement.

PIEHLER: Which was true, I mean, the Germans had infiltrated. That really made people ... it sounds like, much more nervous.

SPRINGER: That's right. But there was a DP [Displaced Persons] camp out there, not very far from Valenciennes. They were Russian families that had been moved around, and they had a camp out there. Of course, we were all supposed to stay blacked out, but that camp didn't stay blacked out. I mean, they didn't have much discipline. But they invited us out to their place one time, so one night we went out to a Saturday night program at this DP camp.

PIEHLER: What was the program?

SPRINGER: Oh, it was a real thrill really, because it reminded us of the old time pie suppers back in the country, in Missouri. It had this little old room, you know, and they had a program up front and real country people. And then, they later played music, and they wanted us to dance with the DPs. Well, of course, we did; and some of those, they were real country girls, they weren't very good dancers, but they had lots of enthusiasm. (Laughter) And so, we even danced with some of those DPs and then, come 11 o'clock, of course, we went home.

PIEHLER: But in many ways, it's interesting. There was this bond; even though, it was very different parts of the world ... being from the country. Those that had been from the country, you could relate to them because they had been from rural ...

SPRINGER: Oh yes. You see, it's so different to Paris. I mean, it's just nothing like Paris, you see.

PIEHLER: So, what were your impressions of Paris?

SPRINGER: Oh, always favorable. You see—and it's a thrill to go back to Paris now because the Plaza de Concorde is just like it was during the war. And, you see, we could get a pass and go downtown. Of course, you couldn't spend any money; we had only scrip, so we got a good look of Paris.

BRADLEY: There's a general ...conception that French people, and especially people from Paris, don't like Americans?

SPRINGER: Well, that's true now, but see out in the country and get out in the smaller towns, and the French people are wonderful. See, we spent a year in Belgium later. Of course, the French were divided, but many of the French, actually, during wartime they were grateful to us.

PIEHLER: You had a sense that you were viewed as liberators.

SPRINGER: Oh yes. They were very friendly.

PIEHLER: When you were based in France, how much trading would there with the civilian population?

SPRINGER: None.

PIEHLER: There was no ...

SPRINGER: No, just that you'd have a base. But now, we better back up. We actually moved into this hospital and we slept in some of the beds and we took—we had patients. It was a Catholic hospital, and the sisters worked on the wards, and they had some of their personnel worked there. So, we worked very closely with the French personnel there at the Clinique de Tessier and then went to Kaldenkirchen, Germany, and worked with the Catholic hospital there; we used some of their staff and worked with them. There were no problems; well, sometimes you do. I think the Germans stole some of our gasoline, but generally that works all right. Because you see, once you take money away, there isn't—we had no dollars, everything was scrip, so cigarettes were the only medium of communication. I told you that I traded ...

PIEHLER: Yes, you'd trade your cognac for cigarettes. What would you buy with your cigarettes?

SPRINGER: Everything. I mean, I have some stuff at home; I have some butcher knives at home.

PIEHLER: That you bought in Germany.

SPRINGER: Fact is that the tableware that we use on our meal daily, I picked up in Solingen, Germany, and bought with cigarettes, Captain DeBold and I.

PIEHLER: Did you ever treat any enemy personnel?

SPRINGER: I didn't, but I'll give you a good example. We had three platoons in the field hospital, and another one of our platoons was setting up near Duren, in a field down near Duren. This was about two weeks after the soldiers moved out, because ... we could hear the artillery. I told you we'd set up our hospital and take patients within 12 hours. Well, this platoon was down there setting up, and the first patient that they had was a woman, a German woman who was having a baby. And then, occasionally, we'd have German children that would get injured with—well, one day they found a German grenade and banged the thing on the ground and it hit two or three of them. So, we treated those Germans, and I guess ...

PIEHLER: But during the war itself, you never had any soldiers or airmen?

SPRINGER: Not German, no. One incident I probably ought to tell you about, because it was a big event. When we were back at BAD2 in Lancashire between D-day and October, when we went to France. We were idle; we were just sitting there waiting for orders, and I was OD that day. You always have an OD and a CQ. I was OD and I got a call. They called our hospital and said, "Do you have any people around? We've had a tremendous casualty, and we've got more people than we can take care of." And so, I said, "Yes, I can round up." So, I started rounding up doctors and nurses to go over to help this local hospital. And what had happened is that one of these, I don't remember whether it was a B-24 or a B-17, that was out on a test run, had apparently been hit by lightning. It came down in Wharton, and it came through the schoolyard where the second grade was playing. And it essentially wiped out the second grade from that town, and went on across the street and hit in a pub, where there were British, and American, and civilians, and killed several people in that thing. All totaled, I think about 50 people were killed. And so our people—we rounded up all our people we could, and took them down and they helped take care of the casualties on this disaster. That was really a shock, because if you can just imagine wiping out the second grade in the whole town. So, the GIs took up money, for the local people, and established a playground there on the schoolyard for future generations.

PIEHLER: That was during the war itself?

SPRINGER: Yes. It was August 23, 1944.

PIEHLER: Immediately after that they established ...

SPRINGER: Oh yeah. I mean they didn't establish the playground, but they took up the money for the playground two weeks after the thing was over. So, our GIs chipped in and financed. We were back there a generation later, and I went by to see that playground and it's...

PIEHLER: It's still there?

SPRINGER: It's still there. But, that was a real sad occasion because, you see, the American losses and British losses, and of course, many of these soldiers had youngsters like that at home.

So, it was a real, real traumatic experience to be there during that. So, in some respects, we had lots of contact with civilians.

PIEHLER: Yeah. More so than, I think, a typical unit, closer to the line.

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: Being in touch with the air force, what was that relationship like? Because, you're Army, but you're also part of the Air Force.

SPRINGER: Well, of course at that time ...

PIEHLER: You're all part of the same branch.

SPRINGER: ... at that time, you have to remember that it was the Army Air Force.

PIEHLER: Yes.

SPRINGER: I mean, they had not yet been Air Corps. Well, the best way I can illustrate it is; there were four field hospitals on this *Queen Elizabeth*, when we went over. Two of those field hospitals were assigned to the ground army and followed the army from D-Day all the way through Europe and into Germany. Two of us were assigned to the Ninth Air Force, and we were assigned to these airfields. And so, in that sense, there's no rivalry between them. I mean, I just wore a Ninth Air Force patch on my uniform.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't feel any different?

SPRINGER... and they wore an Infantry patch, but we did the same thing. The rivalry is interesting, the way they divide up, like down at the Peacock Inn. There would be Canadians, Britishers, and Americans. And when they're all reasonably sober, everybody gets along, (Laughter) but then if you start a fight, the Canadians and the Americans will fight the British. So, you get peculiar. Well, this doesn't have anything to do with the interview, but ...

PIEHLER: No, no. (Laughs) I've heard similar stories. I remember interviewing someone about Italy and he'd said one of the scariest moments he had, was—now, he had been shot by artillery in a close barrage—but he said, “I was also really scared one day, I was in this bar and there was this fight on the second floor. There was this fight of all fights.” He thought the whole thing was going to give way. It was between New Zealanders and Australians and Britishers and some other Commonwealth troops. And he said, he just was afraid there were so many people and there was such destruction and, sort of, bouncing, he thought the whole second floor of this bar in Italy was going to give way. He said, “I was never more scared, not so much of the fight, but just that the second floor was gonna collapse, and you know, I was going to get killed.”

SPRINGER: But now, the interesting thing is that, once the war was over, there was no more hostility between the Germans and the Americans. In fact, our Dutch people across the street

said that we were too good to the Germans. The Dutch were not very forgiving; they really had been punished and they really wanted us to take a harsher stand toward the Germans.

BRADLEY: So, did you feel like there was more animosity within the military towards Hitler and the leaders, and not so much towards the general German population?

SPRINGER: Well, this is one of the interesting things and it depends on who you ask and how you ask it. The best I can tell, the Germans, mostly, were with Hitler all the way until after the D-Day thing. The most bitterness was toward Hitler, because he prolonged the war after ... August of '44, until the next year. They were bitter towards Hitler for that, but apparently many of them *were* with Hitler. When you visited a German home, they would often have a picture of their sons that had been in the army. I remember one or two cases, they'd say, "This boy was lost on the eastern front." The Germans hated the Russians much more than they did us. Many of the Germans were in the war effort with Hitler until the war was lost and then, they were bitter toward him for prolonging and all that extra suffering and bombing and casualties that happened between August of '44 and the next year. They were almost unanimous in that; that he should've thrown in the sponge. Now, this is just one person's opinion.

PIEHLER: It's interesting—how long were you in Germany?

SPRINGER: Well from May 8th until the next February. See, I was at Kaldenkirchen, and then I was at Stuttgart and several places.

PIEHLER: With your unit or were you detached from your [unit]?

SPRINGER: Well, I would be assigned to different ...

PIEHLER: So you were at ...

SPRINGER: ... now, our unit was at Kaldenkirchen, and then our unit was broken up after Kaldenkirchen, and then those of us that were there were then reassigned to other units.

PIEHLER: Because you didn't have enough points?

SPRINGER: That's right. So, I spent some time down near Frankfurt, and some near Stuttgart, and some near Wiesbaden. And then we were assigned such that my duty at one time was to make sure that every soldier that got on the ship had all of his vaccinations. We had one fella that had avoided vaccinations all during the war and he hadn't—but now in order to come home he had to! So, he had to go down and *get his shots* before he could come home!

At that time, ... one other lieutenant from some other branch of the service and I were the only two fellas that were in this barracks. During the night, a basket of clothes caught on fire somewhere down the hall in a room, and that smoke filled that building. And this lieutenant had a dog, and that dog barked and woke us up, and so we got up and went down to see what was going on. But, if that dog hadn't been there to bark, that smoke would've—would've gotten us. Wouldn't that have been awful, to hear that two or three days before you're gonna be shipped home, be killed by smoke in a fire? But that dog was ...

PIEHLER: He saved your lives.

SPRINGER: That's right. Now, see, he was an *unofficial* dog.

PIEHLER: Well, I guess since you've raised the unofficial dog ... did you do anything off the books?

SPRINGER: Me?

PIEHLER: You, or the unit in general. Were there any things?

SPRINGER: Oh, well I won't speak about that.

PIEHLER: You don't have to name names.

SPRINGER: Oh yes, there were all kinds of shenanigans that go on off the record. I mean, when you're stationed in a place like Germany, there'll be some and then you're moved. There will always be a few people, civilians, that will show up at the new base and there are lots of [shenanigans]. Now, I don't—this isn't general. I mean, some of my fellow officers were straightlaced all the way.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah?

SPRINGER: But nevertheless, in any outfit of a hundred men if you were stationed out here on the edge of Knoxville, in two days they'd have connections here in Knoxville. Or if it was in Timbuktu, they'd have connections. I mean, there are some guys that just get along with the local population wherever you go (Piehler Laughs), and whatever country it is, there are a few people who enjoy the military and they'll follow the military.

PIEHLER: So, there is some fraternization, particularly between men and women, that are going on wherever you ...

SPRINGER: Oh, of course.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Whether it was England, whether it was France, or whether it was Germany?

SPRINGER: Of course, but it's no different than being out in Sevierville. It just happens that in that case it's soldiers. Oh yeah. Languages and so forth are not much of a barrier.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) You had alluded that it sounds like there was some curiosity about how Germans felt about Hitler and others. Since you had been in Germany for a while, what was your sense, I mean, how often would you talk to Germans? Did you have much chance?

SPRINGER: Oh yeah, sure ... you see, after the war, there were no jobs in Germany, and so every mess would have a German orchestra play music, and of course they'd have German

waitresses serving the tables. Of course, you talk to the waitresses, and when you go shopping for knives or accordions you visit with the Germans. But once the war was over, you treated them pretty much the same as you would somebody in Wisconsin. See, the Dutch thought we treated them too well. But, you see, at one stage there between this August that I told you about and the next May, you see, I've seen a field where the German civilians were camped out with tents and so forth in that field. The town had been bombed out. So, I don't know whether there'd be 200 or 400 people out there in that one field living in tents and living under sheds and so forth, because their homes had been bombed out, and they'd had no place to go. And then it was common to see people coming down the road with a baby buggy with all their belongings on it and so forth. Of course, you're used to it at the time, and you don't think much about it. And then, where this woman—I told you that she had her baby in our hospital the first time—as I drove down that road to get to that place, there was a fence alongside, there were fence posts alongside the road. And there would be maybe three American helmets and one German helmet and then two American helmets and two German helmets down on that fence. You see, the people had come and taken the bodies away, but the helmets and much of the gear was still, still left there. But, you're accustomed to it, and so you just go on down the road and about your business and you don't pay too much attention to it.

BRADLEY: Since you were working in field hospitals all over Germany, did you ever have any experience treating victims of the Holocaust, or did you know people who did?

SPRINGER: No, we didn't.

PIEHLER: You didn't treat any displaced persons?

SPRINGER: We didn't treat any displaced persons. Now, during this period, after the eighth of May, while we were at Kaldenkirchen, we would occasionally get orders that we were gonna have seven people come by and stay. We never knew who those people were, but those were apparently people that were being skirted out of Europe. But, you see, we never knew who they were, they didn't tell us. But, we'd see them and eat in the same room with them. So, we felt pretty sure that some of those people were people who were being skirted out for some reason.

PIEHLER: Were they German, or were they displaced persons?

SPRINGER: Well, we didn't know. See, there was a certain part of it that—see, since a field hospital often has some extra space and good food, the army would run those people through there. Just like, one time we had one of the big bands stay at our place, but we didn't [treat D.P.'s]; we weren't close enough to see anything. We didn't know about the Holocaust ahead of time. We just didn't. But, of course we heard stories about the Russian soldiers and the American soldiers getting together at the same time and drinking wood alcohol and both dying. I mean, you have all kinds of odd things happen during the war. It's just no good; you just oughtn't to get in one.

PIEHLER: What about rumors? Do you remember any good rumors that you [heard], particularly when you were actually overseas?

SPRINGER: The army lives on rumors. You *always* have rumors floating around. Of course, here's the thing—you wait three or four days, and then the rumor would come out in this *Yank* magazine. But, this was always approved, so ...

PIEHLER: (Laughs) They were approved rumors?

SPRINGER: Oh yeah. The army lives on 'em. 'Course they call rumors "latrine echoes," because the people that take care of latrines generally know most of what's going on. It's very difficult to find out the real truth on what goes on because it always comes three or four days later.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned ... quite a bit about food, that food was pretty important to morale. It sounds like you appreciated a good meal?

SPRINGER: Well, you see, we were fortunate. We were a field hospital, and so we always got food. We were never hungry. Now to illustrate though, we ate dried eggs. While we were in camp, the mess sergeant went out and traded something with a farmer and got some eggs. So, on one Sunday morning, everybody got one egg. Two of the guys were sleeping in, and so they missed that real egg, and they were really aggravated at their roommates, or buddies, because they didn't wake them up for that egg. So you see sometimes—or, they traded for strawberries and, of course, that would be a treat. But you get used to dried eggs and so forth. But, you see, it's the poor guys out there that get cut off and have to eat K-rations and C-rations. Anytime we traveled, we would either take K-rations or C-rations or Ten in One rations. But, we were fortunate in that our CO's placed a high premium on food. They felt that food is number one in a hospital, so we always had good food and Heinrich was a good cook, and we had other good chefs. So we really didn't; we never suffered for lack of food. But the guys out there, under some conditions really did have to eat K-rations an awful lot. One of the real tragedies in the war was that our fellas didn't have adequate footgear. So, they got to spend time out in the trenches and got trenchfoot and so forth. But, you see, we didn't.

PIEHLER: You didn't treat that?

SPRINGER: We were far enough away that we didn't get any of that stuff.

PIEHLER: I'm curious; you had mentioned earlier about the doctors and you said you had a great CO, although not a great operating doctor. So?

SPRINGER: Oh, well ...

PIEHLER: And you mentioned ten, you would have them operate without a problem, and the other two, you're not quite sure about. (Laughs) What was your relationship with the doctors?

SPRINGER: We lived in the same room! We went on pass together; we had the same table with the doctors and the nurses. We would talk about the different situations. You see, people talk about women in the military. Well, I actually spent two years eating at the same table with

nurses. Well, it's difficult to imagine, and this isn't always true, but *mostly* we were happy that the nurses dated flyboys. In other words, we didn't. We generally didn't date our own nurses.

PIEHLER: There wasn't, generally, dating in the unit?

SPRINGER: Not much. Now, there were some exceptions, but ...

PIEHLER: And you said you were *happy* about that? Why were you happy that they were dating the pilots?

SPRINGER: Oh well, aren't you—when you're in an outfit you want everybody to be happy.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, romances could complicate relationships?

SPRINGER: Yeah. I mean, ideally, you ought to have no ...

PIEHLER: But it did happen?

SPRINGER: And especially relationships across rank. I mean, between officers and enlisted men. That, you really need to hold a hard line on that, because ...

PIEHLER: And you would do that?

SPRINGER: Yeah, that's pretty well held, and that's important. And, it would be *better* if people always dated somebody from somebody else's outfit.

PIEHLER: That's the ideal if you're gonna have it?

SPRINGER: That's right. Just like—but that's always true. So, we would joke with each other about dating flyboys, but ... in general that's the way it worked. Our nurses dated people, in general, from other outfits.

PIEHLER: ... You're rare among military units. It's more common now, but you have to—as you mentioned, you had women—when that's not the norm in the military.

SPRINGER: That's right.

PIEHLER: Except in some very rear bases, headquarters. What ... were some of the accommodations you would need to make to have women, particularly once you left England?

SPRINGER: Well, you just have a different tent, and that's all. You eat at the same table, and you go down to their ward. See, the nurse will have a ward, or she'll be an operating nurse. So, as I say, if you didn't have any dating within the unit, it worked perfectly. That complicates things.

PIEHLER: It did, really, some relationships?

SPRINGER: Well, not outwardly, but you know about it. But there wasn't much of that in our outfit. See, one of our nurses married a flyboy—a pilot, and many of them dated them. And, you see, at one stage we were stationed next door to a P-38 outfit, and we visited back and forth with those pilots. They had been out the first day that they had seen a German jet and that caused some anxiety among them. Now, I'll give you one example of when I was at one of the bases, and we had to go through that, under the machine gun fire with the obstacle course. We all had to go through, nurses included. I was in charge of sending the next wave through, and in one case, we had a soldier that *really* didn't want to go through that obstacle course. Nobody wanted to go through it, but he was really hanging back. And finally, I said, "Well, now if that nurse can go through that, can't you go through it?" And his pride was great enough that he got alongside that nurse, and made, they went through that obstacle course. So, you see, there's no question about women's courage.

PIEHLER: In other words, it sounds like were very—you think the integration of women in the military ...

SPRINGER: Well, I'm mixed. You notice I keep drawing the line; fraternization within the unit is not ...

PIEHLER: Well, that would be one of your concerns?

SPRINGER: Yeah, you see, I'd rather an all-woman or all-man outfit. I really would, because, you see, when you make assignments it's supposed to be impartial. We'll just say that this fella and this girl are in the same outfit and they're buddies, he's likely to give her a break, or vice versa. And so it would complicate—I haven't made up my mind about that. And out there—now, of course, I didn't spend any time in a foxhole, but out there in the foxhole, things will get pretty grim, and I guess, I'd rather have women in one platoon and men in another platoon, maybe. But, I haven't made up my mind about it. But, you see, I've lived with nurses. I know you can do it, and I know that they're good soldiers, and I know that when you've got a job to do, they step up. Anytime you're busy, most people are good soldiers. And then you get idle, and some people get into trouble.

PIEHLER: So, the time in Lancashire that must have been—you were basically down for several months—that must have been when people were not busy?

SPRINGER: That's right, but we didn't have any real problems there. But anyway, an outfit is better when it's organized and busy. Once you get a group cut off from any loyalty or headquarter—you see, people don't join an army because of the flag. I mean, that's just an idea, that the flag's so important. When you're with a unit, I like to think about Heinrich Strauss. You see, he wanted to be with that bunch of fellas, when they were in adversity. Heinrich could care less whether it was the American flag or the German flag, but he was welded to that group of people and the same way with Busto, this Spaniard who couldn't swim. That unit was his only home, and I really felt sorry for Busto when he had to get out of the army and go back to whatever he did. So, it's the loyalty to your colleagues that is really important.

BRADLEY: Do you think that women, the women that you worked with, developed that same kind of camaraderie with the unit?

SPRINGER: Oh yes. Oh yes! They were—that sticks, you see. ... Now, some of the women were not very soldierly, but most of them were. Oh, no no. No, I would defend our nurses to the bitter end, because they didn't ask any quarter. Oh no. No, I would be very loyal to our nurses.

BRADLEY: There wasn't any special treatment of the nurses because they were women.

SPRINGER: Generally not. I mean, I guess if you had two bunks, if you had a place where there were fourteen beds, I guess the women would get twelve of them and the men would get two. But, I mean, there's a little bit of a tendency to give them a *little* bit better accommodations, but not much. Not much. No, they're pretty well—and they didn't expect any extra treatment. I'd be loyal to [them]. And especially when we had work to do; *everybody pitched in*. Out of the 300 people that we had, there'd be only about two of them that I'd want to push off the cliff. There were two that just never did get to be soldiers. I mean, they just were such sad sacks that they just never did get to make it. But the proportion of people, when they're busy and got a job to do, is very high.

PIEHLER: I also interviewed someone who was in a medical unit, and he said there was a real chasm between the doctors, nurses, and the officers, and then all the support people who came from—in his case he said they came from, sort of, very rural backgrounds. And they felt that it was like two different units. What about your unit? How did people get along across the, sort of, you know, this chasm?

SPRINGER: Of course, you can never tell, really, because no enlisted man is gonna tell you that you're a jerk, as an officer. But, we didn't have much of that. Now, we had one lieutenant that came into our outfit and he was one of these guys that somebody handed us. He gained no respect, but he was just a sorry soldier. I mean, he just should never have been a lieutenant. So, you have a few guys like that that are prunes, and then you have, occasionally, apparently—we didn't have many of them—but, occasionally you get some officer that thinks he's a hotshot and that apparently irritates people. But, we didn't have that in our outfit. No, our outfit was ...

PIEHLER: You didn't see a real chasm between the two?

SPRINGER: Nuh-uh.

PIEHLER: Did your unit—did you ever have a reunion?

SPRINGER: No, we haven't, and I'm sorry about that, I really am. We had a Robert Mold from Alton, Illinois, that kept record of everybody and worked out travel arrangements and so forth, but we've never.

PIEHLER: Never had a reunion?

SPRINGER: And I'm sorry too because, I did go see Captain DeBold one time, but I've never seen Captain Harrod, who was from Michigan. He married a French girl, by the way; I went to his wedding. And this French girl was the daughter of a French girl and a Russian officer, a World War I officer, and then she married Gordon Harrod. So, you see, there was some fraternization. Well here, I mustn't keep you too long.

PIEHLER: Well, we could ask you a few more questions and if it's ok with Ginny, we could do a little follow-up. I feel we should ask you a little bit about UT, but I know it's been a long day. But let me just ask one or two questions.

SPRINGER: Sure.

PIEHLER: I guess, how did you come home? You left Germany in February?

SPRINGER: Oh, that was a *real* trip. We boarded a Liberty Ship in the Netherlands and came over to the west, southwest corner of England and put in there a day, and then started across the Atlantic. It took us nineteen days to cross the Atlantic, because one day we got into a tremendous storm that shook the ship this way, and shook it that way ...

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

SPRINGER: But, we thought it was lying flat on its side from the way it ...

PIEHLER: But, you also said earlier, between tapes, that the kitchen was all a mess in that storm.

SPRINGER: Oh yes. You see, that storm was—ordinarily on the tables, they have a rim about this high [indicates with fingers] that would take ordinary sway, and slide across and hit them, with an ordinary storm. But, you'd get a big storm like that and the thing goes off on the floor. And so there were about three days, and we later learned that that same storm had blown the end off an aircraft carrier and done some other damage, but we were out there. And of course, if you get out on deck in the cold air you can pretty well survive. But at one breakfast, I think twenty or so people out of 300 showed up for breakfast. So, there were a lot of sick people on that ship. And then, nineteen days later we got back to New York City and, of course, sailed past the Statue of Liberty. That was a pretty good day. But you know, in all fairness, we weren't as anxious to get back to this country, as the people here were to get us back. You know, we had been in the army and we were so conditioned to it; and of course, I didn't have any family. I mean, I didn't have any wife and children. We weren't in a big hurry to get back.

PIEHLER: You were glad to come home, but you weren't in a great hurry?

SPRINGER: That's right; that's right.

PIEHLER: And, in fact, you did stay in the Reserves?

SPRINGER: Yes, and that turned out almost to be a mistake. Because, I was in the Reserves, and I applied for summer training, because you have to to review, and they didn't have any space; they turned me down, and then let me out, and then the Korean War broke out. So, if I had gone to training that summer, I probably would have been in the Korean War again. But, see, I after I came back in April, I went to Japan in August, with the Army of Occupation in Japan.

PIEHLER: You came back in February of forty ...

SPRINGER: .. six.

PIEHLER: ... six, and then you went?

SPRINGER: To Japan in August of '46, and spent a year in the Army of Occupation in Japan, but as a civilian. So, I got out of the army as a Captain, and then I went to Japan as a civilian with MacArthur's staff.

PIEHLER: We may save that for another interview, (Laughs) I have a feeling. So, you were on MacArthur's staff? What were you doing?

SPRINGER: We were in the natural resources section. We were ... working on the soil survey of Japan, to help decide whether Japan should try to increase the acreage of crops and grow more of its own food, or whether they should become an industrial nation and trade. So, we were trying to evaluate their soil resources and working with Japanese people to do that.

PIEHLER: How did you get that position? It sounds like a fascinating opportunity.

SPRINGER: Well you see, I have experience in soil survey, and they needed, for different reasons, seven soil scientists. You see, not everybody wants to go to Japan for a year. So they looked around and they found some people, and so I bit and took on, and so they shipped us, shipped me to Japan for a year on a soil survey.

PIEHLER: I guess you were on MacArthur's staff; did you ever get to meet MacArthur?

SPRINGER: No, but I'd been out there to see them stop the traffic on the big street while MacArthur walks out from the Dai Ichi building and salutes and gets in his car and drives away. Then after he drives away they let the traffic go again. So I was familiar with his operation. I think he was a great Army of Occupation man, but then he got too big for his britches, and I was happy when MacArthur fired him. I mean ...

PIEHLER: Truman.

SPRINGER: Truman fired him. So I have mixed loyalties about that.

PIEHLER: I guess, in partly preparation for the next interview, and I might ask for a Japanese historian to sit in on the questioning on Japan, who did you report to your office, where did you fit into the ...

SPRINGER: This thing was divided into different sections, and the natural resources section was headed by Colonel Schenk, who was a geologist from some university. I don't know where, but he was a top geologist at some university. He was a man of perhaps fifty, and Colonel Schenk was the head of that section. So, I reported to, through channels, to Colonel Schenk, and Colonel Schenk reported to General MacArthur's Chief of Staff. They wanted everything so precise, and so accurate, that all they needed was a signature. In other words, they didn't want any order coming up that had to be modified and sent back, and so the channel was MacArthur, his Chief of Staff, then Schenk, and then down to us. But the Army of Occupation was well run. The Japanese were so surprised that we were kind to them, that there were never any problems. That was a ...

PIEHLER: That's a whole other interview. I have a whole bunch of other questions I want to ask, but Ginny, do you have any questions for today, in terms of, particularly about your European experience?

BRADLEY: I have, actually, just one question.

SPRINGER: Yes?

BRADLEY: You wrote that you received the Bronze Star? What did you get that for?

SPRINGER: I'll show it to you.

BRADLEY: Alright!

SPRINGER: [Papers shuffling] Oh, here we are ... [pulls out medal]

BRADLEY: Oh wow!

SPRINGER: Well, I'll try to be as honest as I can. You see outfits are rated in the army, and so our outfit had a good reputation. And so I presumed some colonel or general decided, well, they ought to be recognized, some way or another. So they probably said, "We ought to send down a couple of Bronze Stars, or three Bronze Stars to this outfit," and so they probably sent it down. The only way I can interpret it is that Sergeant Mold got a Bronze Star and he was an outstanding sergeant. And I guess they looked around at the second lieutenants, or the first lieutenants at that time, and I guess they figured that maybe I'd worked pretty hard on this training, and so they'd just give it to me. So, it's for nothing in particular, but it's just for having been a good training officer, I guess. Then, of course, one of the major officers, one of the field officers, got a Bronze Star too. So I guess our outfit was good, and they had to pass them out to somebody, and so they passed it out to me.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned several close—well, you didn't view them as close calls—with buzz bombs. Was that your closest call, besides the fire? You also mentioned the fire in the barracks. Were those your closest calls?

SPRINGER: I expect the closest one was that day that the fragment of friendly fire. See it hit—we were walking—it was inspection day, and so the commanding officer and somebody else and I were walking down this aisle, and we heard that thud right in front of us, not much farther than from here to that clothes net.

PIEHLER: Just a few feet.

SPRINGER: We dug it out to see it, and of course if that had hit us, that would have killed us. Of course, the close call was this trip, this crack platoon that went to the east side of England, and had we had to go on that, the chances would have been fifty-fifty. So, the fact that that was called off ...

PIEHLER: That was potentially your the closest call?

SPRINGER: Yeah that was the close call, because had we gone over there in a glider, we would have been at the mercy of the ...

PIEHLER: You'd never had any training in a glider.

SPRINGER: Well, no, but we had lots of training in C-47's. I mean you see, all the glider and all the planes do is get you there. Then you take your stuff out and put it up. So, no, we hadn't had any training in a glider, but that would have been.

PIEHLER: That was your closest potential?

SPRINGER: Oh yes. Because those nights, we wore our helmets, we were on potential bombings that never came around. Of course, had one of those buzz bombs hit us, that would have wiped us out, but none did. I think a buzz bomb did land in one field hospital, in Belgium or the Netherlands, and caused some casualties. But, no; I never came close to it. You see, my attitude toward war would be different to somebody that had seen half their outfit killed. I visited at great length with infantry officers, and talked about it.

PIEHLER: And you sense, it was a very different war for them?

SPRINGER: Well, it would be from the standpoint of having seen lots of people killed. You see, we didn't lose a single member of our outfit—the whole outfit. That's quite different than if you'd lost half the people that you knew. You see, I talk about Captain Harrod, and Captain DeBold, and Major Stringer, and Bob Mold, and Sergeant Schickadanz, and all those people lived. If half those had died, you see, my attitude would have been quite different, really.

PIEHLER: Now, I guess, there's one thing I always try to ask. A little personal perhaps, but where I'm headed is, how much gambling did you have in your unit, particularly in the

downtimes?

SPRINGER: Oh! That's a good one. (Laughs) There's a real hierarchy there. And you see, the way it starts, on payday—about half the fellas gambled. I dunno, maybe not.

PIEHLER: So, it was the drinking and the non-drinking ...

SPRINGER: About half of 'em gambled. Half of them went to get their paycheck and sent it home or something, and the other half would get into a small card game. And so, they'll play, and then one or two guys would get a little money out of that bunch. Then they'd move up the next echelon, and so they have a crap game. And then finally, it gets down to Sergeant Schickadanz, and Corporal Weiss. Sergeant Schickadanz was one of the best soldiers in the outfit, and Corporal Weiss was the sorriest soldier you ever saw, but they knew how to play poker. So finally, it would get narrowed down to five or six people, and then they'd have this big table. Then Sergeant Schickadanz and Corporal Weiss and one or two other guys would end up with all the money. You had to have gambling every month. Now, we didn't have any just among the officers, because, I mean, we just weren't a big enough outfit to have any. But the enlisted men, every month there was a crap game. Then, coming back on the ship, there was a gambling sequence. You see, you started out and half the people gambled. But then, it got concentrated in a few hands. So, by the time we got home, on that nineteen day trip, two or three guys had all the money. Oh yeah, gambling's part of it. And volleyballs would get set up and ... people would start playing volleyball. You know, in the army, you have the evening meal at 5:30. And so then from six to eleven it's daylight, and so we had volleyball games ... from six 'til 11 every night. I mean, that volleyball was big.

PIEHLER: That was also one of your memories of the war, playing with volleyball games.

SPRINGER: Well, I didn't have to play much, but ...

PIEHLER: It seemed a constant volleyball game?

SPRINGER: That's right. So you see, not everything's bad about the army. You have to have some spare time, and you'd play. Oh yeah, gambling's a big part of the army. But you see, I didn't gamble, and half of my friends didn't, but ...

PIEHLER: But the other half? (Laughs)

SPRINGER: Yeah, that's right. And it just funnels up, from what I'd say, to the same three or four people winning it every time.

PIEHLER: Well, I think that we should let you go home, because we've spent a lot of time.

BRADLEY: Yeah, thank you very much.

PIEHLER: But I'd like to schedule a follow-up session, if that would be okay?

SPRINGER: That would be okay.

PIEHLER: I definitely would like to ask you a lot about your Army of Occupation.

SPRINGER: Well, I have some interesting things, because that's rather interesting. Anyway, I'll be glad to, when it's convenient for you, and when it's convenient for me.

PIEHLER: And I think Ginny would like to come back. So, thank you. Let me, first of all, thank you very much for today's interview, and say this concludes today's interview with M. E. Springer, on April third, 2001 in Knoxville, Tennessee, with Kurt Piehler and ...

BRADLEY: Ginny Bradley.

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

ADDENDUM

Notes to supplement the interview with M.E. Springer.
This information was written by M.E. Springer in June 2008.

In August 1947 I returned by victory ship from Japan, then proceeded by train to Columbia, Missouri, where I rejoined the Soils Department of the University of Missouri. My schedule included field work as a soil surveyor in the summer and teaching soils and doing indoor research during the winter. This continued until 1949.

During this time I met Jean Huston through a club for single faculty members from Christian and Stephens College and the University of Missouri.

In the fall of 1949 I went to Berkeley, California to study for a doctorate in soil formation at the university. Dr. Hans Jenny was my advisor. Except for the summers, I lived in the International House. The association with foreign students and the occasional trips to nearby attractions broadened my outlook. Two summers were spent in the desert of the Lahontan Basin (near Fallon, Nevada) studying and sampling soils for a doctorate which was finished in 1953.

Interviews at UCLA, Purdue, Illinois, and Missouri preceded my return to the University of Missouri Soils Department. Jean Huston, as an assistant professor, was still single, so we restarted dating. In December 1953 we were married. Jean taught Foods and Nutrition while I proceeded to teach and do research in soils. In 1955 our first son Steve was born.

In late 1956 a job in soil formation and classification at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville opened up. I interviewed for, accepted, and started as an associate professor on February 1, 1957.

My duties included teaching and research in soil formation and classification and serving as State Leader in the Cooperative Soil Survey. Supervision of the field work in the various counties took me to different parts of the state each year.

I worked closely with people of the Soil Conservation Service in developing Soil Taxonomy and soil loss prediction. I designed a slide rule for soil loss prediction which was used nationally and in twenty foreign countries. This slide rule may have resulted in my being elected as a fellow of AAAS.

Every third year I coached the collegiate soil judging team.

An especially interesting year, 1966 – 1967, I was a Fulbright exchange professor in Ghent, Belgium where I taught a graduate course in soil formation and classification at the state university. The same course was offered in French and English, the French lecture taught by a staff member at Ghent and the I handled the English half. Identical examinations were given in both languages. Field trips were joint.

Our family lived in Saint Martens Latem and our boys went to school where the teachers spoke only Dutch (Flemish). By Christmas time each of the boys was fluent in that language. At that time they were 11, 9, and 5.

A memorable trip for me was a jeep trip with Dr. Rene Tavernier (leading soil scientist in Belgium) and Dr. Guy Smith (the author of *Soil Taxonomy*) to a Mediterranean soils conference at Montpellier, France.

While I pursued my work at the University of Tennessee Jean chose to stay at home to rear our three sons Steve, Kent, and Scott. These were busy years with three boys active in school and also in Boy Scouts, where all three won Eagle rank. Each of them graduated from UTK.

Hiking and fishing with the boys was great fun for me and included three canoe trips with them to Boundary Waters in Minnesota.

Retirement as a professor at age 65 was automatic in 1979, so I turned to running, gardening, fishing, photography, genealogy, and travel. But first, because of my experience in soil survey, Joe Elder and I prepared a General Soil Map of Tennessee that was published in 1980.

From 1985 until about 2000 I worked as part-time soil consultant for the State Health Department, preparing soil maps which environmentalists used to determine suitability of lots for drain fields. Although extremely hard work, it was fun because my early experience as a soil surveyor could be used to turn out useful maps.

For each of several years Jean and I assembled groups of people and led farm tours to Western Europe. The two of us also visiting Hawai'i, Alaska, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Malaysia, Spain, and England.

About 1977 I joined a physical fitness program for staff members of UT which stressed moderate exercise for about one hour each day. Since we were in good shape, several of us ran in the first Expo 10,000. I continued to run three miles on alternate days until 2006. As a member of the Knoxville Track Club I would compete in numerous 10K and 5K races. After age 70 it was common to place first in my age group.

After learning about the Senior Olympics I added shorter runs, long jump, and triple jump and competed at the regional, state, and national levels. Even later I also competed in USATF track and field programs and finally in the World Masters' Athletics Championships. Especially in later years my placings in age groups were often first or second. In 2006 my name was placed in the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame. World records in the 90-94 age group for the mile run and long jump still stand. These winnings at the World Masters' meets in England, Puerto Rico, and Spain are only bonus for a fitness program which kept me in shape.

Reflections on the past point out that life has been good to me. My parents and brother Maurice were a good influence on my early life. Teachers in elementary, high school, college, and graduate school gave me a great education. Growing up on a farm furnished many interesting and pleasant experiences.

A key moment finding Jean, my wife, who has been a wonderful companion and a mother to our three sons. Now we have two granddaughters, Alison and Audrey.

Our health has been good except for Jean's brush with breast cancer about twenty years ago and my stomach lymphoma two years ago. Fortunately chemotherapy has put my cancer in remission. We are in unusually good shape at ages 84 and 94.

Max Springer

Born October 21, 1913, Crawford County, Missouri (age 94)

Grew up on Missouri 400 acre dairy farm.

Education: A.B. And M.A. - University of Missouri
Ph.D – University of California, Berkeley

Profession: Soil Scientist

Instructor and Asst. Professor of Soils: University of Missouri until 1957

Assoc. Professor and Professor: University of Tennessee 1957 – 1979 (when he retired)

Fulbright Professor: University of Ghent, Belgium (1966 – 1967)

Soils Consultant: Tennessee Department of Health, 1980 – 2001

He is a fellow of AAAS and member of Soil Science Society of America; co-author of *Tennessee Soils* (1980); developed the first slide rule for the Universal Soil Loss Equation; participated in the development of Soil Taxonomy

Member of Alpha Gamma Rho, Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Sigma Xi

Parents: Elzie Madison and Mable Chapman Springer. They were former rural school teachers

Family: Wife: Jean Huston Springer. Married 1953
Sons: Steve, chemist, Dearborn, Michigan
Kent, electrical engineer, Pepperell, Massachusetts
Scott, electrical engineer, San Jose, California
Granddaughters: Alison (16), Audrey (15), Dearborn, Michigan

Military Service: World War II, US Army; Captain at time of discharge.
European Theater of Operations. Awarded Bronze Star
Civilian soil scientist with Army of Occupation, 1946 – '47 in Japan, determining whether Japan could be self-sufficient in its food supply.

Sports: Four year member of the University of Missouri rifle team, which was collegiate National Champion in 1934.

Running (Since 1979): Awarded more than a hundred gold, silver, and bronze medals.
Has run more than 14,000 miles in training.

Knoxville Track Club: Honorary lifetime member. Competed in numerous 5K and 10K races for charities.

Regional, State, and National Senior Games (Senior Olympics):
Has competed in 5K and 10K, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m races, long jump, and race walk.

USA Track and Field National Masters' Indoor and Outdoor Meets: Competes in 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m races, long jump, and triple jump. Awarded plaque as 1999 US Athlete of the Year in 85-89 year-old class.

World Athletic Veterans Association - Gateshead, England, 1999: Gold medal in 800m for 85-89 year age group, second in 400m, third in 1500m and 5000m and fourth in triple jump.

USA Track and Field Indoors Masters' Championships – Boston, March 2004: Set six national track and field records for the 90-94 age group, and world records in 3000m run, 800m run, and long jump

USATF Masters' Hall of Fame – 2006

Other Hobbies: Gardening, fishing, photography, travel.

Volunteer Activities:

Assists as volunteer University of Tennessee track official at several meets each year

Member and ex-deacon of Second Presbyterian Church. Served on Building and Grounds Committee for a number of years, and currently works a number of hours each month on grounds maintenance, tree and shrub pruning, and planting.

Past President of UT Retirees' Association.

Active at John O'Connor Senior Citizens' Center. Past chairman of Camera Club. For several years member of planning committee for Garden Club.

Gives talks to encourage activity for physical fitness.