

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. JAMES L. POINTER

FOR THE
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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Dr. James Pointer on April 8, 2003, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, with Kurt Piehler and ...

MEGHAN ZAMMETT: Meghan Zammett.

PIEHLER: You were born on March 13th, 1912?

POINTER: No, no.

PIEHLER: Oh no, I'm sorry that's the date of your parents—excuse me I spoke with such authority. You were born on April 15, 1921. And you were born—and I don't even know how to say the name. I know you were born in Anderson County, but what was ...

POINTER: Heiskell.

PIEHLER: Heiskell, Tennessee.

POINTER: That's located in Knox County, but it's a rural route; mail ran over into Anderson County.

PIEHLER: Okay, so ... you still—it was in Knox County, but Anderson rural ... delivery.

POINTER: Right.

PIEHLER: ... What were your parents' names?

POINTER: My father's name was Ike, and my mother's name was Bertha, but she was always known by the name Byrd, B-Y-R-D.

PIEHLER: And can you tell us a little bit about your parents?

POINTER: Well, my dad ... was, more or less all his life, he was a timber cutter, farmer, and my mother was a housewife. And my father went to school up to about the 3rd grade. My mother went to about the 5th grade in school. So, they never had the opportunity of any further education. They were raised in Anderson County and continued their lives within five miles from where they were born.

PIEHLER: From where they were born.

POINTER: Yeah, right.

PIEHLER: Do you know how they met each other?

POINTER: Well, my grandfather came here from Dalton, Georgia—I don't know how many years ago—but anyway, he had the family. He knew my grandfather, my mother's father. And through the family connections there, they met each other.

PIEHLER: And, you mentioned [that] your father cut lumber, but did he also farm?

POINTER: Yeah, yes. We had a small farm, about 30 acres, more or less truck cropping. And then we did some tenant farming, or mostly for corn and hay and stuff like that. Tobacco was the cash crop, and all the kids got their duties in the field, suckering and worming tobacco back in those, their childhood days.... So, I was—there was seven in my family. I had two brothers younger than me and two sisters older than me, so it started out girl-boy-girl-boy, came on down to the last two and then there was two boys in the family.

PIEHLER: And what's the earliest time you remember working in the field?

POINTER: There was plenty of them, I'll tell ya.

PIEHLER: How old were you when you first—your earliest memory?

POINTER: Oh, back in those days you followed your father to the field when you weren't old enough to do anything. And then when you got old enough to do anything, and I mean, five years old, you became a water boy. You carried water to the workers. And so, everybody had a job to do. Everyone worked every day unless you were sick, you know, and weren't in school.

PIEHLER: Did your father have a tractor?

POINTER: No, that was way before tractor time.

PIEHLER: So, so you used a mule?

POINTER: Yes, we used, we had a mule team, but mostly we used horses, because they were more gentle and safer, because mules weren't as dependable to get around.

PIEHLER: Well, I just interviewed someone who talked about farming with a mule ...

POINTER: Oh, yes. That was the only type of farming we had during those times.

PIEHLER: How ... big was your house that you grew up in?

POINTER: ... I was born in a house that had about three rooms, large ones, but I don't remember much about that one. Then we moved. We had a large log house, with the kitchen built off and so, the whole family lived in one room, and you had a fireplace and that was your heat for the whole house. I don't know how we all survived, because now we have everything controls, you know, certain temperature. But, I don't know we had—seems to me we had winters that were much more severe than they are now. But everybody kept warm.

PIEHLER: And how old—you lived in that house until you went off to college, or ...

POINTER: No, no, until I was born in '21 and we lived in that house until 1930, and we built a new house in 1930, and it was a four-room house, but only three bedrooms. We just had a living room—well, a kitchen, living room, kitchen, and two bedrooms.

PIEHLER: Two bedrooms?

POINTER: Two bedrooms. The house is still standing, empty.

PIEHLER: All the houses you described, they're pretty, pretty small in the sense that ...

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And you have seven siblings?

POINTER: Seven.

PIEHLER: And then your parents, so it's ...

POINTER: Yeah, it's nine people living in that ... thing. It seems odd to talk about that many people living in a house, but that wasn't uncommon at all during that time, because, it seems, that was just kind of a trend. Now, in some houses built like ours they had an upstairs or a loft where that, as kids got older they ...

PIEHLER: They went up to the ...

POINTER: They went upstairs to the ... loft to sleep at night and climb a ladder down.

PIEHLER: Did you ever do that?

POINTER: No, no.

PIEHLER: No. And you mentioned the second house, you had a separate kitchen outside the main house?

POINTER: Yeah, the log house.

PIEHLER: The log house.

POINTER: That was quite common in the country at that time. People would get up early and build a fire, and then go to the kitchen and build a fire, and then when the kitchen got warmer, well then they went in and cooked breakfast or meals. And then—for what reason that they had them separated like that—in a lot of houses they called 'em dog-trots between them, because they had a house, and then this passageway through there, and then another room over here that they went from one to the other. I assumed that they had the kitchen out by itself like that on account of the cooking odors, or something like that, you know.

PIEHLER: I assume—I mean, it seems like an obvious question, but just because, I think, readers, particularly my students, this is a very different era, and I only know from history. You also had a privy then?

POINTER: Uh ...

PIEHLER: In there, in your ...

POINTER: Yes.

PIEHLER: And that was sort of the ...

POINTER: It's quite interesting, that in this area here you didn't have any inside plumbing, toilets or anything for, until, in the late '30s. Then TVA came in and brought power to the valley and so, forth then they started changing. And even a lot of that, they did not have privies per say like we know them now, until about in the 1930s, then, through efforts of TVA, they started a program, a government program, that helped subsidize the WPA program, where that they went around and according to the family they built the size of the outside privies to accommodate the family.

PIEHLER: So, the privy I think of, or the latrine, that was even sort of an improvement or was—I mean, if you didn't have the traditional privy, what did you have?

POINTER: Well, in those cases, you had areas out most of the houses that are close to the woods, you just went to the woods.

PIEHLER: You just went to the woods. And that was very common?

POINTER: That's right. The thing about—the program to develop privies is for sanitation, primarily, and then, they would come in and bring in the floor for the privy. It was concrete and they could move that in.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: And people would dig a hole, and then people from WPA, or one of the agencies would bring a privy in and set it down and then you would build the structure on top of it. They'd usually have two holders, so to speak, and that was, that was a big improvement.

PIEHLER: Did you get a WPA privy, or did that ...

POINTER: Yes.

PIEHLER: What about electrification? When did the TVA ...

POINTER: Okay, I was raised six miles from Norris Dam, one of the first dams built. Electrification lit up the whole valley, but we didn't get electricity until 1936 or '37. We weren't the first people to get electricity there, but yet we were in six miles ...

PIEHLER: Six miles.

POINTER: Six miles of the source. Because they were kind of like our modern day cable TV people. They gonna run it down the highway that they get the most subscribers for it first, then fill in the spots, and so, this is what happened to us.

PIEHLER: You sort of say, "light up the valley," what was it like to have electricity come to an area which ...

POINTER: Oh, it was great. The most modern thing before TVA was carbide lights. And that's—and there wasn't but very few people in my community that had carbide lights. And that was where that they would have a tank out in the yard and they would add a little water occasionally to create the gas, and the gas was pumped in through copper lines, and then they would have lights on the wall or something.

PIEHLER: How did having electricity in your house change your life and your mother's and your father's life?

POINTER: Oh it—well, my father died before we got electricity.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay, so he never ...

POINTER: He never, never witnessed that. My father—he and I were in a hunting accident in 1930, and so, we, he didn't ...

PIEHLER: He didn't see electrification?

POINTER: No, no. But it changed our home drastically more, because all the kids sat around and studied at night, and so, before that we had kerosene lamps and a big fire when we had a fireplace. We would burn wood that would give, throw off a lot of light, you know. You'd studied by the lamplight and firelight.

PIEHLER: So, it sounded like you went to—I mean one thing, it sounded like, you went to bed a lot earlier, that you did really ...

POINTER: Ah, yes, yes.

PIEHLER: Is that, I mean ...

POINTER: In comparison yes.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, but staying up to like midnight now.

POINTER: Oh, no yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean when it got dark ...

POINTER: Probably, ah, not later than 8, 8 o'clock, 8:30, at the latest.

PIEHLER: So, in winter you'd get to bed, it sounds like, a lot earlier, I mean you were much more ...

POINTER: That's exactly right.

PIEHLER: By the cycle of the sun.

POINTER: A lot earlier because you got in the house lot earlier, you ate earlier, and you studied and, and went to bed. There wasn't anything to do, but to study and maybe occasionally play a game of checkers and go to bed. And in the summertime, well, of course, there was activities, family would come in, eat, and a lot of the times we'd sit on the front porch and sing songs or talk, kids would play out in the yard—and when I say yard I mean lawn—but as far as grass was concerned, we didn't have much grass in the lawn. And so, we would play marble and things like that. In fact we'd even take hoe and cut the grass out so we'd have a smooth surface to play marble on.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) When you said you used to take some time in the summer particularly to gather around and sing songs, what songs would you sing?

POINTER: Predominately, religious songs, because there wasn't any other songs. Of course, some of the old songs other than religious songs that I can remember, is that when they first came out with Victorola, would be "Boil Those Cabbage Down", you know, "She'll be Comin' Around the Mountain," songs like that, you know. I remember one, "Red River Valley" and that was kind of a sentimental song. And we would listen to those, and sing those songs, and other songs that I can't remember.

PIEHLER: Any of the hymns you remember that were favorites?

POINTER: Um, no I can't remember. I can remember some words to some of the songs but I've forgotten now what they were. "Red River Valley"...

PIEHLER: That one ... you remember!

POINTER: ... was a prominent song. And then there was a lot of others that I can't remember.

PIEHLER: When did your family get a radio?

POINTER: Well, let's get a Victorola first.

PIEHLER: When did you get a Victorola, maybe I should even back up.

POINTER: We were one of the first families that had a Victorola. Ah, it was an RCA; it had the little dog on it, and you cranked it, played the record, and it wasn't always clear, but we sold our tobacco crop, so we bought this Victorola. And at that time, probably the Victorola probably didn't cost fifteen dollars during that time. And then people would come to our house, especially on Saturday nights, to hear these records and talk. And so, then, it was probably in the—I'd say the late '20s, say '28, somewhere along there, after we got electricity, before we—well, we had battery radios before that, but we couldn't keep the batteries charged ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: So, you had that occasionally, and then you'd have to charge batteries, and then back and forth. But we had ... battery radios three or four years before we got electric. Of course, we couldn't get electric [radios] 'til after about 1937 when we had electricity.

PIEHLER: It's sort of interesting, because ... the life you're describing is very different than, I think, the lives your children would lead growing up, I mean in terms of not having—you had a Victorola, but not a radio until you were quite old.

POINTER: That's right.

PIEHLER: And a privy.

POINTER: Looking back on it, you know, it wasn't just that we were poor, but it was everyone was poor.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: And the story goes that Mrs. Roosevelt came in, and she saw all these poor valley people, and so, they sent rural sociologists in. And so, the story goes that we didn't know that we were poor until they sent the rural sociologists in to tell us how poor we really were. And so, this is something like that. But the thing about it is that even though with that stage of poverty as far as eating was concerned, I guess, our diet was just about as good back then, probably a better diet than what we're getting today, (laughter) because of the fact that you grew everything you ate, practically, off of the farm. We had our hogs, you know, and from the hogs we got our meat and also rendered our lard, our sausage, and so forth. We didn't have any refrigeration for our sausage, so mother would fry—make sausage from the killed hogs, fry it and can it. And so, you had your sausage caned there. And for labor, like putting up hay or cutting tobacco, you always swapped labor with your neighbor. So, the valley, actually until after about the time TVA came in, and a lot of people questioned that—you see none of us had any cash....

But when TVA came in, it changed the whole valley, because they put money into circulation; they gave people jobs, people started working. And then the rural farmer [was] hurt—it's because the other people had money. They had no money, or little money. And so, as a result of that, they had a difficult time there for a few years until the economy kind of settled out, leveled

out a little bit, until we could sell—more products on the market and get more money in exchange, or economy like that. So, this is one of the differences, but looking back on it—my childhood—and having traveled to some of the third world countries, it reminds me—I can relate to those people, because they're going through now some of the things that I remember going through as a child sixty, seventy years ago.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you are—because you once talked about your international consulting work, and it does strike me that this would have given you more empathy to a lot of these countries than some people who would say, you know, had sort of a very traditional academic track. In a sense [they] never had lived this, you know ...

POINTER: I tell you, you don't appreciate what you have in this country until you travel to other countries, and you begin to realize. And so, I think, that my childhood added a lot to my appreciation.

PIEHLER: More so than I think a lot of other Americans. You mentioned about the, sort of, lack of cash. In many ways, it was a barter system.

POINTER: Barter system.

PIEHLER: Did people keep also books, you know, of what they owed each other or was this a very informal ...

POINTER: Well, at the grocery store they had little ticket books, they'd put your purchase on the ticket. And it was just, to a great extent, an honor system. But they'd keep a little tab there, they'd have a little book, charge book, and they'd put down a sack of flour, so much, so what, and they kept an individual book. And then you come in, why, they had your book there in the corner. And that was one way of doing it. And then the other way is that, for a lot of the products they had, is that we grew our own. In other words, we had our meat, we had our eggs, we had our chickens, we had our milk, and so, we grew corn for corn meal, for bread. We grew wheat or either we traded with our neighbor that grew wheat to make flour, and so that way.... We did have a chance to sell eggs or chickens to the grocery store. People—they would take chickens in on trade, because traveling grocery stores would pick up the chickens and bring them to Knoxville.

PIEHLER: The other thing that is, sort, of striking to me is Knoxville must have seemed almost a distant place. Was that, is that an accurate ...

POINTER: Well, it was. I was probably ten or eleven years old before I was ever in Knoxville, twenty miles away.

PIEHLER: I mean, now you would think nothing of coming to Knoxville.

POINTER: Oh, every day, you see.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: But out in the road that ran, which is now Norris Freeway, the old highway was practically the same area. But a lot of times, the wintertime [was] impassable by car, and it wasn't unusual to go a week, two weeks, without ever seeing a car pass there. I can remember the first man in the community that had an automobile. And it was a T-model [Ford].

PIEHLER: When was that and who was it?

POINTER: What?

PIEHLER: When was that and who was it? Who had the first ...

POINTER: Well, it was a man named [Luke] Fielden, and he lived two or three miles back off of the Norris Freeway from our place. And he had—back then they had a whistle instead of a horn. That whistle was on the manifold some way. And he would come along and blow that whistle. And back in those days, another oddity of our generation was that you could hear for miles because there was nothing, no, nothing to make any noise. And so, we could hear him coming, and so, all the kids would get on the high point on the farm so we could see him go by. He was just flying, he was making ten miles an hour, you know.

PIEHLER: But at that time, that would have seemed so much faster.

POINTER: Oh, it was. Tremendously.

ZAMMETT: Do you remember what color it was?

POINTER: What?

ZAMMETT: Do you remember what color it was?

POINTER: Black.

PIEHLER: They were all black.

ZAMMETT: Oh. (Laughs)

POINTER: All of them were black. And of course, looking back on it, I didn't know it at that time, but when Ford Motor Company made T-models at that time, they were in four components, and they shipped them, and the dealer had to put them together. I had a friend that was a dealer and he used to put them together. But anyway, the transportation in the wintertime was very bad, and a lot of times traveling salesman was about the only one that would ever pass. They would get stuck and they would—maybe a mile from our home, and come get my dad to take the horses and go and pull them out of the mud hole, you know, to get them out of this mud hole so they could get beyond somewhere. And so, I don't have any idea how many times they had to be pulled out of the mud holes in that twenty miles between there where we grew up and Knoxville. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Your parents, when did they get an auto—your mother, did you dad ever own an automobile?

POINTER: No.

PIEHLER: What about your mother, did she ...

POINTER: Yes.

PIEHLER: When did she finally ...

POINTER: About 1932. We had a car.

PIEHLER: And before then, you got around by horse?

POINTER: Rode horses, walked, go in wagons, or go in a buggy.... You could borrow a buggy from a neighbor, you know, if you were going somewhere, especially if you were going to a funeral or something of that type. But it wasn't unusual that you go to church and you'd see horses and wagons, you know, bring the whole family in the wagon.

PIEHLER: Could you, you mentioned neighbors, could you talk a little bit more about your neighbors? And you said that most of your neighbors were just like you, you and your family.

POINTER: Well, when I was growing up, my next-door neighbor, he worked for the county. He helped grade roads. And back in those days, every person that lived in the county had to work on the roads so many days during the year. And so, he was one of the people who worked full-time, but he worked in conjunction with all the other people who contributed two days, three days, four days, I don't remember what it was. But I remember—I think it was about three or four days, because my dad would always take the team with him, and so, he would get credit for a days work and he'd get credit for two more days work because he had a team. And that was when they'd take the old scoop that they would use to move soil and work the roads with them. That was one. And they had a family of all boys. And there's one, the only one left now, he lives here in Knoxville. But they—since their dad worked off the farm, they never worked any, and they was in the creek a swimming, or something, all the time. We were awfully mad at those boys that they got to go swimming and fishing and we had to stay on the farm and work, you know, in the summertime. And others—of course, there was a few, people who manufactured the spirits,... they bootlegged moonshine, and you had those. And that was from necessity, so to speak. That was another way of getting cash. And I would say in my community you could—you knew everyone in a large area, but there wasn't many people in that area, but you knew what they did and everything about them. So, then one on the other side of me, he was a schoolteacher. Incidentally, Dr. Jerry Phillips, over in the law college, was my neighbor. He grew up in the neighborhood, and so did his family, they were farmers. They were all just about the same.

PIEHLER: How close was your nearest neighbor?

POINTER: Oh, our closest neighbor was probably oh, less than a quarter of a mile, because we were right on the main ...

PIEHLER: Main road?

POINTER: Main road at that time.

PIEHLER: But the main road wasn't paved.

POINTER: No.

PIEHLER: No, just ...

POINTER: It wasn't paved.

PIEHLER: What was the nearest paved highway, to you, or road?

POINTER: I don't even remember.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean so ...

POINTER: It had to be in ...

PIEHLER: In Knoxville?

POINTER: Well, probably Clinton.

PIEHLER: Clinton.

POINTER: County seat. Clinton was county seat. And that road between Clinton and Norris was graveled for many years. It wasn't blacktopped until in the '30s, so it was graveled. And most all the roads were graveled at that time. Well, if they had anything on them at all it was gravel, it wasn't blacktopped. But most of them didn't have anything and that's why in the wintertime it was so difficult to get by, because they would have mud holes in low spots.

PIEHLER: What about a telephone? When did your parents, your mother get a telephone?

POINTER: It was probably in the '40s.

PIEHLER: '40s?

POINTER: We didn't have a telephone as long as I was home.

PIEHLER: Not living there?

POINTER: Yeah, right.

PIEHLER: So,... if you needed to make a telephone call—or how often would you need to make a telephone call—where would go?

POINTER: Well, you had to, I guess, the closest telephone would probably be three or four miles to Andersonville, or in that vicinity there, that had the telephone, the crank system, but for people, like where we lived, if you got sick and needed a doctor someone got on a horse and rode to Andersonville. Andersonville was about five miles away, and that was about the closest doctor, the only doctor in that vicinity. But what they did if they weren't too sick—he'd come riding by, he'd make calls all over around and in a day or two he was by the house, you know. And so, you would flag him down, you know, he was ...

PIEHLER: And when he rode around, did he have a car or ...

POINTER: At first he, he rode a horse like in wintertime, a lot of times, he would ride, have a buggy, where he could cover up, and he'd have a horse or a buggy, and he'd have saddle pockets on the horse, so he could carry his medicines.

PIEHLER: And most people must have given birth at home?

POINTER: Right, right.

PIEHLER: And would doctors attend, or would midwives?

POINTER: Doctors.

PIEHLER: Doctors would.

POINTER: And, and ...

PIEHLER: And midwives?

POINTER: And midwives. Let's see, there wasn't one in my family that wasn't born ...

PIEHLER: At a hospital?

POINTER: ... at home, yeah. And that was one of the interesting things that when there was a birth in the community, the kids was always farmed out to a neighbor. And so, a lot of times, they couldn't understand why they were farmed out to the neighbors, you know. (Laughter) And so, when they went back home, they had a new brother or sister.

PIEHLER: Did your parents get any, or did you get any newspapers or magazines growing up?

POINTER: Very few. Our teacher, the neighbor, subscribed to some magazines, and they would pass those on. But very little other than that, but word—people got a newspaper and then

they'd pass the word along. I can remember back during the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, that was big news, you know, everybody had to know about this. But it was all word of mouth, because someone a mile away had gotten a newspaper and had read it, and that newspaper had circulated through the community. So, big events like that were just word of mouth. And another interesting thing that's out of the picture now was that when churches—churches were strategically located as they are now, but a lot of people would go to a Baptist Church—Baptist is what I attended—and a Methodist in another direction, and in the other direction was a Baptist. And when people died, they would toll. You know what tolling is?

PIEHLER: Oh, yes.

POINTER: Tolling the bell. So, they'd ring this bell to get your attention, and then everyone would stop what they were doing and listen. And then they'd start tolling this bell, one, two, three, and for each toll signified a year of this person's [life]. And if he was fifty years old, they'd toll fifty strokes. And so, you could hear what church it was. And so, people would usually stop their farm duties, and get their picks and shovels and go to the cemetery to help dig a grave. And we usually knew who it was, because we could tell, well, he was fifty years old, John Doe had been sick, he's fifty years old, it must be John Doe that died, you know. But we never knew until we got to church.

PIEHLER: You mentioned bringing picks and shovels to dig the grave. You would say, so the community would dig the grave often?

POINTER: The community always ...

PIEHLER: So, what about the coffin? Who would make the coffin?

POINTER: There was usually—in our neighborhood there was a man that would make coffins, boxes. But about that time, about the time I was growing up, the local funeral director in Clinton, they began having these coffins on hand, in other words. But I knew some boys, men that kind of specialized in making the coffins, and so—but some people made their own. I can remember when Ivan Harmon, you know here that's on City Council, or is it Commissioner? Any way, his grandfather was a neighbor of mine, and they had a child that was born dead. I remember going to their house, and he was making the coffin for it, so that was not unusual, for people to make their own ...

PIEHLER: People make their own coffin.

POINTER: Right.

PIEHLER: It sounds like the church must have been a pretty important ...

POINTER: It was. And the school.

PIEHLER: And the school.

POINTER: And the school. I went to a two-room school, and the kids start there at about age six. There was no kindergarten or anything. Of course, at that time we had pot-bellied stoves to heat the place. And you carried your own lunch with you. Everyone knew the teachers and what they said was Gospel. (Laughter) And if you got a—back in my days, if you got a whipping at school you got another one waiting for you when you got home that night, because your parents give you another one for being unruly. But there was a lot of difference that I can see in those schools than today that, I guess, means more to us older people. Because first, they were very strong on teaching you respect for your elders. You never dared to call anyone by their first name. It's 'Mister so and so' or 'Miss so and so.' And this is one of the things that kind of bothers me today: children call their parents by their first names, and you wouldn't have dared—or I wouldn't have dared to call my dad by his first name. And there wasn't any alibi. When you went home, you got a whipping. They didn't want to hear your excuses, because they knew that you did something or the teacher wouldn't have whipped you. So, that was that. And another thing is that they really taught you patriotism in rural schools.

PIEHLER: In what ways would they teach you patriotism?

POINTER: Oh, we'd give pledge of allegiance. We'd have programs. We'd have Flag Day when we'd draw flags, you know—paper we didn't have, we were lucky to have one flag to fly. We'd put the flag up every morning when we went to school and take it down when we went home. And any kind of special events, that was part of it.

PIEHLER: How far was the school from your house?

POINTER: About a mile.

PIEHLER: And I take it you walked.

POINTER: Walked, walked, right.

PIEHLER: And you said you lived next door to a teacher, was that was one of your teachers?

POINTER: Well, he was half a mile. No.

PIEHLER: No?

POINTER: He went the other direction. That was kind of a dividing line in our community. He went one direction and our teachers ...

PIEHLER: What was the name of the school you went to?

POINTER: Fairview.

PIEHLER: Fairview?

POINTER: Fairview. And it's on the Norris Freeway out here. They just built a new school.

PIEHLER: On the same site?

POINTER: Oh well, yes, right on the same site.

PIEHLER: Same site.

POINTER: They just moved it over a little bit. And it's kind of a different type of school. A few years ago, they needed a school and didn't have money to build one so they said, "Well how can we save money?" So, they go in and use a concept of clear-span steel, clear span the building and then built the school within the building. So, they built a school, less than half of what Knox County is paying for their school systems here. And it's a beautiful school, real nice. I went out for the dedication, and so forth.

PIEHLER: Your original building, does it survive?

POINTER: No, it was torn down years ago.

PIEHLER: Do you remember any of—the teachers sound like a very vivid memory, do you remember any of their names?

POINTER: Oh, yes.

PIEHLER: Could you tell us about them?

POINTER: I guess, John Rutherford was one of them. An interesting—a lot of interesting stories I can tell you about this too. Another one was Vestal Sanders, Billy Mitchell, Mary Jo Wallace, was my teacher for the first time. Adeline Seeber that just recently died, she lived in Knoxville, and people like that at Fairview. And it was odd that when I was going to school, it wasn't unusual to have sixteen-year-old boys and girls in elementary school, because they didn't have the opportunity of going straight through. In some cases that caused some discipline problems because they were, in a lot of cases, as big as the graduating seniors. (Laughter) And so, we had some problems with that a time or two, but most of the teachers were able to take care of the situations.

PIEHLER: What about church? You mentioned about, for example, the gathering place when someone died how important it was to toll and for the community to gather.

POINTER: I failed to tell you that when the people went to dig the graves, then all the kids got to go and play, you see.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

POINTER: We weren't digging the graves, so, that was a social event for us. But then after the funeral and everything, it was a very solemn case in the community. Most of the time, in my church, we didn't have full-time ministers, and so, they would come preach the funeral, come

maybe preach at my church one Sunday, and another church the next Sunday, and another. We'd usually have church once or twice a month. And then they'd have their revival, usually once a year, and that would last for about five days, four or five nights. Then we'd have—during the summer we'd have dinner on the ground and singing all day, you know, that's where the people would come in and sing songs, everybody would bring in covered dishes and they'd just have a big blow out. And people would come from other churches and join in, and so, that was a big event. That was a community get together, and the ladies could show off their hats and their so forth and the men would sit around and talk about farming.

PIEHLER: How far were you from the church growing up?

POINTER: About, approximately two, mile and a half, lot of miles, mile and a half.

PIEHLER: So, that was a much longer journey?

POINTER: Yeah, yeah, we just started a little earlier. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned playing marbles, and you mentioned singing songs, what else did you do when you played? Particularly when you ...

POINTER: Well, we played ball when we could find a ball and bat. Back in those days we didn't have enough people to play a real game, and so, we had the deal where that if you hit the ball and tried to run the bases before the other people could get you out, you know. Then you rotated on that, and then we had another game where that—on our house, where the kitchen was built on, you'd throw a ball over the house, people on the side would catch it and come around and try to hit you—like dodge ball—try to hit you with the ball like that. So, that—and then a lot of times for entertainment we'd just walk in the woods. We'd go walking in the mountains, hunting teaberry. The same teaberry that you would buy, in other words it grows wild out in the mountains and so, we'd chew the leaves, you know, to get the teaberry. Back in those days there was plenty of chestnuts. We'd go and gather chestnuts by the gallon, you know, and have fun doing that. And then we'd go out hunting. That's about the only thing we could do, you know, for entertainment. We'd go out and hunt and catch squirrels, rabbits, and at night possums, and so forth.

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

ZAMMETT: Would the boys and girls play separately?

POINTER: Sometimes, and sometimes they would play together. And it depended on—as the girls got a little older they had other interests, you know, and they didn't get out and play as much as they did when they were younger. And then another unique character of our neighborhood was that about a mile, mile and a half, from where I was raised there was a colored community, and we'd invite them to come down and play ball, or we'd go up and play ball with them. And so, that was one of the ways that we had of getting enough people to have a real ballgame. And so, when we could get them to come, then we could have a regular baseball game, but if they didn't join in, why, we wouldn't, we didn't have enough people to play a game

of baseball until, we got older. And then we congregated near the church on Saturday afternoons when we weren't farming, and everybody in the whole surrounding communities would come in and we'd choose up and get nine people on each side and have a ballgame.

ZAMMETT: Did that include the black community as well?

POINTER: What? Yeah, yes black, yeah. When I was growing up, you know, you talk about racial discrimination, there wasn't anything like that. They stayed in their community, we stayed in our community. A lot of times they would swap labor and they worked for white farmers, but as far as any problems, we had no problems. In fact, when it came—they were at our house and when it came time to eat everybody went to the table and ate, whenever they could get to the table, sometimes we had to go to second setting or something like that. But, we didn't have any trouble. In fact, I went to school in 1938 with a black boy. In other words, the boy went to Norris High School with us, and every one of us ...

PIEHLER: No one ever ...

POINTER: No, no, no one ever said a word. No one ever cared.

PIEHLER: And the colored community that was nearby, did they have their own school?

POINTER: They had a little black school, and it stayed there until probably about World War II. And then after World War II, the black families moved out, because they went to industry, like Oak Ridge, TVA, and things like that. And so, the little community is gone now.

PIEHLER: What was the name of it? Do you remember?

POINTER: I don't remember the name of the little school. And they had a ... church there that we used to go to, to our church—or a Baptist Church, it wasn't the one I usually attended—but we had to walk by their place to get there. And they would, a lot of times—the Church that I'm referring to is called Mount Olive—we'd go to Mount Olive for the regular church service, and would come back. And by the time we got back, this black church would just be starting. And so, they'd have theirs late. So, we'd go in, and it's a one-room church, and they'd get to singing and they were very—I loved to hear them. They'd get in rhythm, you know, and they'd start swinging or patting their feet or something, and that little church would vibrate, you know, it's up on stilts. And we used to really enjoy going by.

And one of these people that lived in this community was a custodian at Norris High School—and, incidentally, they told us that Norris High School was the first high school in the United States that was totally air conditioned and heated by electricity. And this fella's name was Raymond Willis. Raymond was custodian. We had one white and one black, and they were both good workers. And they were just like fathers to all of us kids. If they caught us doing something wrong, well, the custodians would say, "Nuh uh!" They wouldn't turn us in to the principal, but they'd talk to us about what we were doing wrong. And just a few years ago, I'd say five, six, seven years ago, I went to Clinton Courthouse for something and got on the elevator, and there was a fellow that got on the elevator. And I looked at him and I thought, you

know, I knew him. I said, “Aren’t you Raymond Willis?” And he said, “Yes.” He said he recognized me too, and he was the custodian at my school. He’s passed away now.

PIEHLER: You’ve talked to me earlier, several times, about Norris High School and could you talk a little bit about your high school?

POINTER: Well, Norris High School was developed by TVA, and later it was managed by the University of Tennessee here and Dr. Graf in the education department was, I think, the principle overseer. We had, it was the first school, high school, or supposed to be the first high school of it’s kind anywhere around. It was more or less patterned after the university system. I can go in and register for math one or something else. You had a—it wasn’t one of these cut and dried situations that you take math at eight o’clock and something else at nine. You selected your ...

PIEHLER: Schedule. Like a University student would?

POINTER: Yes, right. And that was the first school I ever went to that you could just, more or less, get up and walk out to go to the restroom if you wanted to and come back without any problems. It was very good. We had extremely good teachers. The university sent us some of the best.

PIEHLER: Well, you also—you went to a two-room schoolhouse which, I assume, had an outdoor privy.

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You went to, really, even by—nationally, it sounds like, one of the Rolls Royce’s of high schools, in terms of facilities.

POINTER: It was at that time. I’d say that it was. And we had very fine teachers. Incidentally one of our principals just died two weeks ago in California, Dr. Kendall. It was unheard of to have a doctor in any of the school systems back in those days, because you went to a junior college, or some place like that, and you got one year of junior college work that qualifies you to teach elementary education. And so, Norris High School had the first doctors I ever heard of, one of the first ones in the system. And nearly all of them were either doctors or they were master’s [students] working towards an advanced degree. And so, we had ... extremely good teachers.

PIEHLER: How big was the high school when you were going? How many were in your class?

POINTER: Well, Norris High School has—our graduating class was approximately forty-five.

PIEHLER: What class were you in?

POINTER: Class of ’41. So, the first class that graduated from Norris was in 1935, they started high school before they had the high school completed. They held classes in homes and things around in the town for the first year. You see, Norris took the place of two other high schools,

Andersonville High School and Glen Alpine High School. And if you've ever gone out to [Interstate] 75 North out at the intersection that they planted there like you were going to the Appalachian Museum, if you turn left, go down to Golden Girls restaurant—do you know where that is?

PIEHLER: I've been to the Museum of Appalachia, but I don't think I've been ...

POINTER: Okay, if you turn left toward Clinton, about a half a mile down there on the left is where Glen Alpine was. And then, of course, Glen Alpine and Andersonville, they went to Norris. There was a—for a few years there we kind of had some problems, because all us country kids was going to school in Norris with all those city kids. And all the people, or most of people who lived in Norris at that time, they held good management—good professional jobs TVA. And, of course, naturally, they had brought families in from Norris and where that they had had experience with all those better things in life. So, there was a little difference between the country kids there for a while. But then finally, at last, well, we all blended ...

PIEHLER: Well, what were some of the tensions? For example, how would the city kids dress verses the country kids?

POINTER: Quite a bit differently, it was the social [differences] was what it was. They were always dressed very nice and everything and we were, of course, dressed in our blue jeans and country clothes, and so forth. But, most of them were very nice. The director of TVA, his children went to school there.

PIEHLER: Lilienthal

POINTER: So, Dr. [David E. Lilienthal]. So, in fact—incidentally, David and Nancy was his children. We got a letter from David about last summer, I think, it was.

PIEHLER: So, you've still stayed in touch with ...

POINTER: Some of them. See, we have—a few years ago, we decided to have class reunion. So that, I guess, was 1983. So, we had a class reunion and had so much fun and everything. And we had a dinner, and we wound up with a little money, I think 300 dollars left over. So, we got to thinking, “Well what are we going to do with this money, we don't need it.” So, we gave it to the library. And so, then we said, “We're going to have another one.” And so, we got started, and said, “Well, why don't we just start a—form a Alumni Association and have an annual fair, in which we'd have a ...” And so, we set up a non-profit organization, and we have now, we have something like 90,000 dollars in our scholarship trust fund. And we award anywhere from one to four scholarships a year out of that. And so, we've had as many as 600 at our annual meeting, that was probably the largest one we ever had. Normally, we'll have something like 150 to 160 each year, in July, each year, to our Alumni Association. So, after a few years everything blended together, and there was no difference. Because things kind of, by osmosis, I guess, they equalize itself, because the rural people got to making more money and they could buy better clothes and things.

PIELHER: It sounds—looking back, when did you realize, in a sense—I mean, it sounds like a strange question, but that all this was going on, that the valley was really changing for the good?

POINTER: Oh, well, yeah I'll tell you. From the day that TVA moved in to building Norris Dam, they built a freeway, then they built the connector from Lake City, that used to be Coal Creek, Coal Creek, Lake City to the Dam. Well, that opened up—that just opened up everything, because traffic back and forth on the roads built up. And so, you could see, in the communities, since I have an agricultural background maybe I see it a little more than other people do, is that at that time you'd go through the valley here, anywhere from Bristol to Chattanooga and some other cities, you'd see methods of agriculture that was related to 'do as do can.' In other words, they didn't have money to buy tractors and stuff like that, they didn't have money to buy fertilizer, or lime or something. And as a result, why, we had erosion, we had a lot of brooms sedge [weed plant], that was one of the characteristics of East Tennessee, I guess, is the brooms sedge that we had because of the pH of the soil. And, I'll tell you an interesting story. I had a fellow from Iowa call on me one time when I was in business taking him out through the country. And he says, "You know I can't believe that you got as much grass here." He says, "what is that brown stuff, you know, on the side of the hill?" I said, "That's Tennessee alfalfa." Well, he knew what alfalfa was and he says, "that's different from we have in Iowa." And I kidded him a little bit, and then told him that was a weed grass, you know. He got a kick out of it.

But with that—and then TVA, through their agricultural programs, and with the cooperation of the University of Tennessee and all the other land grant schools in the valley, you could just see from year to year, the change in the valley. You very seldom see brooms sedge any more, you don't see, very little erosion anymore. Our corn per acre yields went from probably ten or fifteen bushels per acre to now we can get up to 150 and 200 bushels an acre, and things like that. And so, as that changed, naturally everything, I mean, was changing.... A lot of people was working off the farm, bringing money. They become so-called 'moonlight farmers,' you know. And they've spent money for equipment, fertilizer and better livestock, better fencing and all that, you know. That this whole economy ...

PIEHLER: When the TVA first came in—how was TVA viewed when it first came in?

POINTER: Well ...

PIELHER: And particularly with Norris Dam coming in. 'Cause a lot of people lost their land.

POINTER: Everybody was happy with it, except a few. And not all of those that happened to be—they had to be relocated. And we had some people that just never did recoup. One family lived right within a half mile of where the dam was sitting, and now is—grieved herself to death, she never did get over it.

PIEHLER: She never did get ...

POINTER: Never did recover. But most people, they moved to different locations and it turned out that they were better off. Of course, TVA didn't pay too much for their land, they paid a

fair—what they thought was a fair market value. But, you know, when a person doesn't want to sell, you know, the value of his property is different than what you can get for it. But as far as my family was concerned, we were six miles away, we weren't affected other than ...

PIEHLER: In a more positive ...

POINTER: By that change. And, I think, as a whole, it was a godsend for this valley.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, I meant to ask this earlier, when was the first time you went to a movie?

POINTER: Oh, when I went to Norris High School. Yeah we had a—see, when TVA built the school they also built in a projection system in the auditorium of the school. And so, they had movies on a regular basis after TVA came in. That was—Norris High School was completed, you see, about 1936 ...

PIEHLER: So, you had never been to a movie theater, like in Elementary school?

POINTER: No.

PIEHLER: So, what ...

POINTER: Occasionally, and it was in the latter part of those times, we might have seen one of these portable sixteen millimeter projectors.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but not like going to, say, going to Knoxville and to the Tennessee Theater that ...

POINTER: No, no, no. We didn't have any way to get anywhere.

PIEHLER: And there were no theaters near by?

POINTER: No, no, Knoxville or Clinton—Clinton was eight miles away. And so—and in the first place is that we couldn't afford a movie.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned that you were twelve when you came to Knoxville the first time.

POINTER: Right.

PIEHLER: What was sort of, the farthest while you were in high school that you had traveled? Had you gone anywhere—had you left Tennessee?

POINTER: Well, were on the edge here and, of course, naturally, I went the Smokies and got the privilege of seeing Linville in North Carolina. You walk over. But other than that, Memphis was the greatest distance.

PIEHLER: That you had traveled.

POINTER: That I traveled. With one exception, is that I went to Connersville, Indiana, worked on a farm my sophomore year high school. And that's about forty-five miles southwest, I guess, of Indianapolis.

PIEHLER: How did that come about?

POINTER: Well, I needed a job and through my vocational Ag. Teacher, and things like that, he encouraged us, you know, tried to help us out. And so, he—it was through another individual that you could get a job up there, and so, a friend of mine knew a person up there, and so, that's how I got on it. So, I bought a T-Model Ford for fifteen dollars, had to borrow the money to buy the car,... and drove that thing to Connersville, Indiana, and worked on the farm that summer and caught the bus home. (Laughter) My car may still be there.

PIEHLER: How much did you make that summer? What were the wages, and what kind of farm was it compared to yours that you grew up on?

POINTER: Oh, oh I'll tell you, it was an eye opener.... The farm that I went to work on was about 300 acres, bigger than 300 acres because it was 300 acres of corn, one field, and then he had about twenty-five acres of pumpkins. And he sold those pumpkins to Stokley's, and—Stokley's being an East Tennessee company here, but was located in Indianapolis. So, that was where they canned pumpkins there. In addition to that, he had about ninety-five brood sows, and he raised hogs. And so, man that was something different. I thought, my goodness, the only pumpkins we ever grow in Tennessee is where you put it in your cornfield, you know, and you grow them like that. And I was just amazed to see a field out there that 300 acres in one field. Here our farm is only thirty acres, total.

PIEHLER: So, this must have seemed just vast.

POINTER: Yeah. But you see I was, I was the only boy there. He had about five or six people working for him. And so, the first job he gave me was driving a team of mules with a manure spreader. He fed out cattle and so, he'd have manure and bedding stacked this high, five foot, in the feed lot. And so, he'd clean them out once or twice a year, so, it was time to clean them out. So, he had two manure spreaders going. And since I was the youngest, weakest one there, I could drive the mules out. And so, he had four people, two on each side, and boy you'd drive in there and it wasn't just a short minute 'til they had you filled up, so, you went out. And I was spreading it on the alfalfa field and the alfalfa was knee high. And down here, we would have cut that two or three times before it got that high, you know. And so, I was amazed that they had that. So, after a few days there we finished up that job. And he came by one day and he said to me, he says, "Come go with me." He had three farms. He said, "Come go with me," he said, "you can help me today." And so, I traveled with him, lucky him that day. We got to talking and he says, "Where you from?" And I said, "Tennessee." He didn't even know where I was from. I said "Tennessee," and he says, "Whereabouts in Tennessee?" And I told him, and he said, "Have you ever heard of Rockwood, Tennessee?" And I said, "Yes." He says, "I grew up in Rockwood." And he went—as a young man he went to Connersville, Indiana, worked on a farm there, and when the land owner, the land owner died. After a few years he married the

widow (laughter) and her, so to speak, those farms. And so, he was real nice to me after that, he took care of me. And I more or less traveled around with him. But I got a lot of experience there, going to market with him. And he'd take me to Connersville, Indiana with him every Saturday afternoon. That was the day they go in and get a haircut and visit, you know, and do a little shopping and stuff.

PIEHLER: Which I think is, sort of, a ...

POINTER: That was, that was, other than Memphis, I wasn't out of the states until I went into the service.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you going to market, that sounds like a tradition you did not really have, that Saturday afternoon, evening. Would your community go into town like that?

POINTER: No.

PIEHLER: So, that was—my father talked about, I think it was in Lynchburg, the, sort of, coming in Saturday afternoon, evening, and what a crush of people that was.

POINTER: Later, yes they would ... come to Knoxville.

PIEHLER: Knoxville.

POINTER: Come to Knoxville, because—well, or Clinton, there wasn't much in Clinton, in fact, Clinton hasn't changed much in the last hundred years, out there. Some of those buildings out in Clinton were there when I was a kid growing up—but they'd come to Knoxville. And the rural people would—Central Street over there used to be a lot of—right in behind some of those buildings on Central Street, there used to be where they had livery stables, and places that people could park in there. And so, that was the place where they would come. Then they would walk up on Gay Street, and then over on Market. Because they had the Market house. And that Market house was—you would smell it for blocks, because they had the fish market and all that in there. And they were cooking hot dogs, hot dogs and hamburgers, and things. And then they had their people lined up, farm people that was selling products along each side of the Market house there. But people—they would rotate, I mean ...

PIEHLER: But, it sounds like, in your community that doesn't come until, going into Knoxville, until much later.

POINTER: Much later, much later. See we'd—what really brought people to Knoxville was after the dam started in '32 there was a bus company in Maynardville they would come across toward Norris Dam, up toward Norris Lake, to what used to be Loyston. And then come down to Andersonville, and then hit the Norris Freeway, and come back into Knoxville. And then, in the evening, why, they'd backtrack. So, people could ride the bus back and forth to Knoxville. That made all the difference in the world of the community too, because that gave people transportation.

PIEHLER: Could you—you mentioned your father died in a hunting accident, that must have been a big loss for your family.

POINTER: It was a tremendous loss. We had a cousin that worked for the railroad up in Jellico, and he come to our house every November, about Thanksgiving time. And he wanted to come and go hunting. Squirrel hunting in the day, we'd hunt for possums at night. And so, we were hunting possums that night and my dad—we'd been out about an hour, and we'd already caught about four. And so, we had one up the tree and my dad climbed the tree to shake it out and he happened to step on a dead limb and it happened to be hold of a dead limb, so, he dropped about twenty-five feet. And I was standing under him with a light, so he dropped on me, and broke my leg, and did some other damage. And the way he hit the ground, why, it broke his neck. And so, when they re-set his neck it pinched the spinal column and so, he died the next day. It was a big loss.

PIEHLER: And your mother and the farm, I guess ...

POINTER: We tried to continue on with the farm, and then my mother would get work off the farm you know. One time she worked for a man that was doing laundry for CCC that came in, that had a camp at Norris.

PIEHLER: She would do laundry for the CCC Camp?

POINTER: What they do is, they'd do the laundry for the uniforms.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

POINTER: Yeah. Another thing that's interesting I might tell you here, in 1932, about the time that TVA moved in here—of course, the relief program was started, and in our area it took a good year before people would accept the relief, charity. They had flour, and they had other types of food like that. But the farmers, people in this area, proud people, and they didn't want anybody giving them relief. And it took a year before that started to breaking over, before they would start accepting.

PIEHLER: You said to yourself, 'We were poor but didn't realize it at the time.' One question, it's sort of a standard question I sort of ask people, how the Great Depression affected your family? I mean, how did the Great Depression effect—or how aware were you of a Great Depression?

POINTER: If you'll define the year, I can tell you more. But let me tell you—in other words, it depends which side you were politically as to whose Depression it was. Whether it was Hoover's Depression or Roosevelt's Depression. Up until 1932, as I told you a while ago, everyone was in the same boat. No one had any money, they bartered, they grew their own food. Everybody had a hard time, it was hard. But you see, the hardest time for us, and others, came after '32, about '32 'til about '34, '35. That was when TVA came in and a lot of money, for that time, a lot of money began to circulate and everything. And we had no way of getting our part,

getting money. And we hurt, actually worse during those years, than we did in the year of 1932. But that's—and I think most rural people did, in my area.

PIEHLER: In your area.

POINTER: Most rural people did the same thing. But, of course, naturally, being raised in an area that was predominantly Republican, they wouldn't accept that it was a Hoover recession or anything.

PIEHLER: So, your father was a Republican?

POINTER: Republican, yeah. And my mother a Democrat.

PIEHLER: And she was always a Democrat?

POINTER: You see, my mother was a Worthington. Any time that you hear the word Worthington, you can mark that down as being a Democrat. And it's interesting that way. And the—a lot of people that, kind of, grew up in our area there, like Howard Baker, Senior, a good friend of the family, our local Congressman here at—during those times was a fellow that came out of Lake City over there. So, it was a pretty hot bed, you know. J. Will Taylor was the Congressman here and he—people—that was a best-known name in East Tennessee. And so, people, they took their politics pretty seriously. For many years in Anderson County, they never had an election that somebody didn't get shot up, or killed, because of politics.

PIEHLER: When you say that, I mean, how recently was that, and how early did that start?

POINTER: Well, we had—a good friend of mine came from Anderson County, and his name was Fletcher Sweet, was head of our information section here at Institute of Agriculture for many years. When he got through school, he was a schoolteacher. He was my brother's schoolteacher.

PIEHLER: Back in Norris High School?

POINTER: No it was Glen Alpine at that time. When he got through school, he went back to Anderson County [and] was a newspaper reporter for the local newspaper. And so, one time—and this must have been in about 1932, he wrote an article, before the election, that Anderson County appeared to have reached the maturity that they could have an election without killing. Well, lo and behold, back in the mountains past Briceville they had an election there, and an old man went in to vote. And they says, "Well, you're not registered," and he says, "Well, I've been here all these times, and I've voted before, what am I suppose to do?" And they says, "Well, you were supposed to go the Court House and register." Or something to that effect, you know. And so, he just says, "Well if I can't vote, nobody votes." So, he went home and got his boys, and they came back and got on each side of the school building out there, and shot the school building up, and closed the election down. So, years later when we were working together, one day I got to talking to Sweet and I says, "Do you ever think about that article you wrote in Clinton Courier" But that seemed to be the turning point.

Another thing about East Tennessee politics. I said we were predominantly Republican and there was good reason for that, as you know, Civil War—but when TVA came in a lot of Northern people came in and naturally under a Democrat administration they were all Democrats. So, they started changing the complexion of the political system. Then Oak Ridge came in, so now then, Anderson County's about fifty-fifty. And we would have better government ever since they started to balance those things out. It was actually a blessing, that we ...

PIELHER: Well, it's interesting, because I interviewed someone—you'd probably know him, he was a County Commissioner and, I can't think of his name off hand, yesterday in Anderson, and I just so typified East Tennessee as just Republican and he said, "Oh no Anderson, we're actually pretty competitive as Democrats." He was a Democratic County Commissioner. So, you think some of that—the fact that Democrats became a viable force, helped the County?

POINTER: Oh, absolutely. There's no question about it. When I was a kid growing up, the person to get in an office, he stayed there. And it didn't make any difference how crooked he was, he stayed there. And so, now then, you're accountable and, of course—but there's other reasons for this too, is that back in those days, if you weren't a politician, you weren't very well known outside your community, you see. Well now, everybody's in the spotlight and communications are so much better, and everything. But as a whole, the people are better educated too. They read the newspaper, they listen to radio, and everything, but as a whole, I think we've got the best system, I mean the situation is better than it ever was.

PIEHLER: It sounds like Norris High School was very important for your—I mean before high school you thought you'd never go to college.

POINTER: No, well, I never knew I'd go to college even in high school.

PIEHLER: Even in high school?

POINTER: Even in high school.

PIEHLER: How many of your brothers and sisters finished high school? Did they all finish high school?

POINTER: No. My two youngest ... brothers did not finish high school. The rest of the family finished high school. My brother went to college and taught high school, he didn't get a degree. He went to college and taught school for about four years, in elementary school. So, then he went in to the military and made a career out of the military. I suppose that some of my teachers—I mentioned some of those teachers at Fairview—some of the teachers, I guess, in junior high school and high school, had an influence on me, because I almost quit school when I was in sixth grade. And R.B. Wallace, he heard that I was about to quit school, and he came and talked to me, he was the principal. And he said, "No you've got to go on, you've got to on to school." And then when I got through grammar school, I really didn't have any intention of going to high school. But I was on the farm working, building a fence, and here came a person walking through the field to me, and it was a fellow named O.J Mattil. He was my Vocational

Ag. Teacher. And he says, “I just want to come and meet you, and I want you to come to school and be a part of the agricultural program,” and so forth. And Mr. Mattil was a very fine man. He owned Wood Craft and Carvers, in Gatlinburg. You know where the Candy Kitchen is, up there now, as you’re going up town, it’s right close to the Ramada Hotel. He owned a track of land in there, and he had that and he taught school, Vocational Agriculture. And he took us country boys under his wing and encouraged us.

And while I was in high school, we had to have a project of some kind. So, TVA had an experiment farm out at Norris. They had a dairy and a creamery, and they had a poultry farm, and an animal farm, and so forth. And so, they had closed down most of that, and they had these poultry houses there, and so, Mr. Mattil encouraged me to raise chickens. So, I leased a couple of those poultry houses, and he loaned me the money, I didn’t have any money, he loaned me the money, and I got into that. And I raised chickens there, and had a business. I’d sell—buy the chickens, start them in spring, and cull out the roosters and sell them for frying chicken. And we had a cafeteria there in Norris and he would buy quite a few from me, and people in town would buy from me. And I would kill those chickens, and dress them, and deliver them. I slaughtered chickens and dressed those for market ‘til, I believe I could do one with my eyes shut now. Anyway, then the others—I had a laying flock, and I’d sell eggs. And I had a deal with the local grocery store selling the eggs. And we had an understanding that he’d pay me two cents more per dozen than was listed in Knoxville Journal, a paper at that time, than eggs on the New York market.

So, that was working out just fine, until he ... hired a produce manager. And the produce manager said, “Well I’ve got to go to Knoxville every day to get produce, so, while I’m in there, I’ll just buy my eggs in there.” So, that left me with chickens there laying eggs, and me with eggs backing up. So, I talked to Mr. Mattil and he says, “I tell you what,” said, “you go down and talk to”—we had a professor, his name was Harold Van Morgan that was teaching, what do you call it, typing and business school. And Harold Van Morgan eventually moved to Knoxville with TVA, and the Land Between The Lakes was his idea. He developed that.

PIEHLER: How interesting.

POINTER: And so—he just died about a couple of years ago—so, he says, “Well,” he says, “bring me a carton of your,” I put eggs in a carton. I’d get the eggs and I’d candle them so the meat spots, and blood spots would be taken out, I mean you wouldn’t sell those. And he says, “bring me a carton up here.” And so, he had some of the—we had some art teachers there, and so, the art teachers, they fixed a sheet, you know, with that egg carton on there, and my name and telephone number. And I used the telephone number of our department at school there. We had, even the department back then a ...

PIEHLER: Telephones?

POINTER: Yeah, that was real great. And so, I put papers, I put those advertisements behind every door in the city of Norris. So, they started calling me direct, buying eggs direct, and I would deliver eggs two days a week. I’d deliver eggs to them behind their screen doors. So ...

PIEHLER: How long did you do this for?

POINTER: About three years. I was in high school.

PIEHLER: And, it sounds like, that was your spending money.

POINTER: Yes, yeah that's right. That was the first real spending money I ever had. And so, I did that and my business grew so much that I couldn't supply all the eggs. So, I contracted with the other FFA members there to bring me their eggs in, and I had an egg co-op, started an egg co-op.

PIEHLER: You said the other members of the FAA, which group, what group was that?

POINTER: Future Farmers of America.

PIEHLER: That was the Future Farmer ...

POINTER: Yeah, and so, that helped them, and it also helped me tremendously, because I was supplying the market. And it got big I couldn't take care of it by myself. So, I'd hire my fellow students to deliver eggs for me. And then, then in the fall of the year when I killed all the laying chickens, especially for Thanksgiving, I'd have Mr. Van Morgan fix me a flyer which would have dressed hens for Thanksgiving and Christmas. And so, I dressed those hens, the culls you know, and deliver them to people the day they wanted them for Thanksgiving, and so forth, like that. And so, I did that until—I closed out before I graduated. So, I was blessed in growing up, and being associated with some fine, fine teachers, and fine people during that time, because, I guess, they looked upon me, knowing that I needed all the help I could get.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, did any of your brothers or sisters take jobs with, say, the CCC or any of the other—or WPA, or any of the ...

POINTER: Not the CCC.

PIEHLER: That was more for urban, city kids?

POINTER: My brother went to school, and he was the older one.

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Dr. James Pointer on April 8, 2003 at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with Kurt Piehler, and ...

ZAMMETT: Meghan Zammett.

PIEHLER: And you were saying you had a National Youth Administration, NYA job. Was that in high school?

POINTER: No, that was in grammar school, because I didn't work on that in high school. But in grammar school I did for about three years. And what they'd give us a job doing is carrying in the coals, sweeping the floors, firing the stoves, and cleaning the blackboards, dusting the erasers, that type of work. And then on Saturdays, I could go in and most of the time on Saturdays we would scrub down the latrines or the outside johns with disinfectant and soap and water. And if it needed something like that we'd do that kind of work. And then when I was in junior high school, I did the same thing but at a different school.

PIEHLER: NYA?

POINTER: NYA. And I made six-dollars per month on that, and thought that was good money.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, it's hard, because in today's standards of money ...

POINTER: You can't compare.

PIEHLER: It's hard to compare.

POINTER: And so, at least, that helped us—a little money with the family.

PIEHLER: I'm just curious, because we've talked about how, particularly before TVA, it was really not a cash economy. Then you wouldn't need cash for certain things, when would you need cash? Particularly before TVA.

POINTER: Oh well, you had to buy salt, you had to buy sugar, but there is a case where—a lot of the times everyone grew sorghum molasses.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

POINTER: And that was our sugar supply, sweets supply. And then nearly everyone had bees and honey. And so, you had sugar, you know, [if] they started to bake a cake or something.

PIEHLER: What about coffee? Was that something ...

POINTER: Coffee was something that—and sea salt and coffee, and something like that we had to purchase.

PIEHLER: What about taxes?

POINTER: Taxes?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: We didn't have anything like that.

PIEHLER: No county taxes? Did you...

POINTER: No, no not to my knowledge. Oh, other than property taxes.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: Other than property taxes, I don't remember.

PIEHLER: And a lot of your, in terms of the store, how far was the store that you would ...

POINTER: A mile.

PIEHLER: A mile?

POINTER: A mile.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned earlier this is where you keep a tab ...

POINTER: Yeah, right.

PIEHLER: One question, before we start moving towards the war, you mentioned going to Indiana.

POINTER: Right.

PIEHLER: And then Memphis, how did Memphis come about, because, like, Cynthia has yet to be to Memphis, so it ...

POINTER: How I got to Memphis was through the FFA, Future Farmers of America. And we'd have a state convention. So, that's an organization within the educational system where that you have officers and you learn parliamentary procedure, and so forth, and so on. And so, we'd have state conventions and I went to Memphis at a state convention. And that's how I got to Memphis.

PIEHLER: And what did you think of Memphis? Memphis is a big city.

POINTER: It was really something that was really an eye opener. Because at that time, Memphis—and in later years as I traveled as a part of my job through Memphis, Memphis was as clean as it could be. I mean, you saw no trash or anything. Later on, I found out why it was that way. (Laughter) But it was really something; it was really something to see.

PIEHLER: Where was the convention?

POINTER: At the Peabody Hotel.

PIEHLER: So, it was at the Peabody?

POINTER: Right, Peabody Hotel. And that was the first time I ever heard of the Peabody Hotel.

PIEHLER: I mean, it's also—it was quite ...

POINTER: Oh, it still is.

PIEHLER: A swanky hotel, too.

POINTER: Very swanky. They've added the ducks to it to jazz it up a little bit. So, that was my journey across the state.

PIEHLER: And you got there by train, or by ...

POINTER: No, we—teachers would drive their cars. They—that was back before OSHA came along because it wasn't unusual for the teacher to have eight to ten boys in one car, you know, just stack us in there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: By the way, did you play any sports in high school?

POINTER: No, well yes, yes I did. Norris—when TVA built Norris High School and initiated the educational system there, they would not permit competitive sports, due to insurance. And so, we were the only high school in the county that did not have competitive sports. So, every five boys had their own basketball team. And so, we participated like that in sports. We had touch football because we didn't have any equipment, you know, so, that was the only thing we could do. We played baseball, softball. But then when FFA—we had had, we had our own team in the FFA. But since our school didn't have competitive sports, we got the best high school players on the FFA team. And the other high schools had competitive sports, and so, the boys that played on the high school team couldn't play on the FFA. So, we had an unfair advantage over all the other schools, and so, we seldom lost a game in anything that we played these other schools. (Laughter) So, we played sports, but it wasn't recognized.

PIEHLER: Were you involved in any other clubs, besides the Future Farmers?

POINTER: No, we just didn't have any in our schools.

PIEHLER: What about dances? Did your high school have dances?

POINTER: They'd have parties occasionally, but most of the time, country boys, we didn't go. We had two left feet. We didn't go to the dances.

PIEHLER: I meant to—when you mentioned it earlier, I meant to ask you, you mentioned at sixth grade you were ready to drop out of school. Which was—your parents had—that was about the time they had dropped out. What led you to think about dropping out?

POINTER: Think about it? It was the need, family's financial needs, that I would have dropped out [for], find work, or something.

PIEHLER: And what did the teachers say to you?

POINTER: Well, they just discouraged me from doing that, because of the fact that—'How long was I going to get a job, if I could find one today, how long would that job last. And how much would it pay, and so, you better stay on in school, and so forth.'

PIEHLER: Which was ...

POINTER: Which was true.

PIEHLER: Well, let me give Meghan a chance before we start moving towards the war, if you have any questions on this part.

ZAMMETT: Well, I don't know if it's a good time to bring it up or not, but your wife went to Norris High School as well, right?

POINTER: Yes she did.

ZAMMETT: So, is that how you met? And also, she went to Alen Elementary. Is that ...

POINTER: Yeah, she was raised about two miles from where I was raised. And so, we went to school together from junior high school through high school. At the elementary school level she went to a different school than me. But we rode the bus to the junior high school and then to the high school, and that's how I met her.

ZAMMETT: Did you start dating in high school?

POINTER: We didn't date until after I came back from the service.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. What did you know about, sort of, what was going on in the world? And then you mentioned the Lindbergh baby, when did ...

POINTER: Well, gradually as we—when we got into Norris High School, of course, we had a library. They had a lot of magazines and things and actually, I guess, a little magazine called Pathfinder, I don't know if your familiar with that or not.

PIEHLER: I've heard the name.

POINTER: Yeah, it's a weekly magazine. I don't know who published it or what, but it had all international events in that. I guess, that was one of the things that whetted my appetite for military, because it had the history of Europe's conflicts and the political turmoil and these things kept interesting me on that. I read that magazine faithfully every week. And then, of course, by that time we had newspapers, the Knoxville Sentinel and Knoxville Journal. We used

to get the Journal. And you know the reason we got The Journal, that was the Republican paper. The Sentinel was the Democrat paper. So, that's how the country people got the Journal also, because it could be delivered by mail, because of the time they published it, you know, they could get it in the mail to you. So, that was another thing. And then, of course, we were getting a little radio.

PIEHLER: What do you sort of know—did you ever read National Geographic growing up?

POINTER: Never heard of it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so, it was really Pathfinder was the ...

POINTER: The Pathfinder was the little magazine that I read most. Then of course there were other magazines in the library. You had the Progressive Farmer, the Saturday Evening Post, magazines of that type.

PIEHLER: There was also a magazine which, I don't even think it exists anymore, there was a magazine Grit.

POINTER: Yeah Grit, yeah, it still ...

PIEHLER: That's still going on.

POINTER: I read it occasionally.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. I was just remembering, Boy's Life always used to have ads saying you could make money by selling Grit.

POINTER: Popular Mechanic.

PIEHLER: Yeah that ...

PONTER: Oh, I love that, Popular Mechanic.

PIEHLER: So, the Norris High School—access to the library was ...

POINTER: Great.

PIEHLER: Where had you ever had access to a library before that high school library? Did that make you more of a book reader?

POINTER: Well, I'm really not a big book reader. I read, but ...

PIEHLER: It was more the magazines that you ...

POINTER: But, yeah, that opened up a whole new way of life for all of us country boys and girls when we moved into Norris High School. And we were encouraged to read, we had to read, you know. We had to use the library.

PIEHLER: Where were you when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred?

POINTER: I was in the service. I happened to be at, I know the exact spot. Let me go back and tell you why I was there first. Before I graduated from Norris High School, May 23, 1941, I had a friend out at Norris that was a truck driver for Mason/Dixon Lines here and sometime before that time in the spring of '41. He was involved in a truck accident down near Marietta, Georgia. And he was burned over two-thirds of his body. And he was in the hospital, Crawford Long Hospital in Atlanta. And so, when I went into the service, and I went to Fort McPherson, Georgia, then I went to visit him. And I made it a weekly routine to go back and see him, because back then two hundred miles was a long way for his family. They didn't get a chance to see him very often. So, I would go by and see him and I was in his room when it came over the radio that all service men report back to their units, that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Sunday, December 7.

PIEHLER: Well, I need to back up a little and ask you how—you graduated high school in 1941, when did you join the service?

POINTER: Okay, I'll tell you a little story on that.

PIEHLER: I figured there was a ... (Laughter)

POINTER: In the last days of our high school, I didn't have any money, I didn't have any job, and I was wondering what I was going to do. And so, I was in English class one day, we were sitting there, three of us boys, and one of them punched me and instead ... of listening to the teacher, he punched me and he says, "Let's join the Army." And so, I said to him, "We'll see if," we used nicknames back in those days and I said, "let's see if Slim will go with us." Slim turned out to be Ivon McCarty who was a professor here too with me. So, I said to him, I said—this boy was named Jimmy Cole, I said, "Jim wants us to join the Army with him." He said, "Okay." So, the three of us come into Knoxville to the post office, the recruiting station, and signed up to go in to the military, the Army. But we wanted in the Air Force. So, we got a letter the next week: "We have an opening in Mississippi that can send you to the Air Force immediately." So, Jimmy Cole, he wanted to go, and I said, "No, I'm not going. I've worked too hard, this far. I'm going to graduate before I go." And so, next week we got another letter from a recruiting sergeant. And back then I thought recruiting—I was always taught, you know, that your elders were responsible and dependable people, you know. (Laughter) It took a little bit to discover the character of recruiting sergeants! Anyway, we could go to Florida, and so, I said, "No, I'm not going until I get through." So, we graduated on Friday night, May 23, 1941. And so, by that time McCarty had backed out on us so Jimmy Cole and I came on Monday morning after graduation weekend. Came to Knoxville, got in there, and the recruiting sergeant says, "Sorry we just don't have any openings in the Air Force." And I said, "We'll just go back home then and wait." "Oh no," he says, "we've got a good position here, a good place you could go in the Army and go to Fort McPherson, Georgia. That's right in the city limits of Atlanta.

It's a great place, the best base I've ever been on." Anyway, he says, "and then you can transfer to the Air Force." So, Jimmy and I have a little conference and he says, "Now you know what, the hardest thing about leaving home is the family crying." And we said, "Let's just go on to the Army and we won't have to go home and hear that all over again," you know, crying when we leave home.

So, we went to Fort McPherson, May 26, 1941. So, we came to Knox—we got our tickets here. We went over to L&N Depot to catch a train to Atlanta. So, they were waiting for us at the station, loaded us in the G.I. truck, and took us out to Fort McPherson. And as we went in the gate, the guardhouse was right beside the gate. So, the fellow says—said to the guard out there—says, "What outfit are those boys coming in to?" So, he said, "Ours, Station Complement." Oh, they were tickled to death, you know, that we were coming in, because mostly the ones there was pulling guard duty and they wanted someone to help pull guard duty. So, that's how I wound up in the service there at Fort McPherson. I stayed there a while and worked in Station Complement. And what I did, I pulled guard duty and things like that and went through basic training.

And then I got to work in an induction center where they was bringing the draftees in. And there was education in seeing those people come in too, because you got all kinds. So, it was interesting to watch the situation. Of course, they had to come in and go through physical exam and everything and some of those—after us old veterans had been there ninety days, you know, found out what the system kind of was! We'd tell each people, "Oh, you're coming in at an awful time. All we got open today is for submarines or paratroopers." And these people said, "Oh, I'm not wanting to jump out of no planes or nothing." And so, we'd say, "Well now, if you can see well, they'll put you in paratroopers. If you have any hearing problem or anything," he says, "that might keep you out." And going along, you know, these cubbyholes, these doctors in there—one time the doctor came out and he says, says, "I've never had a day like this before." We said, "What's happened?" He says, "Those fellows can't even see the walls." He didn't know we were setting him up back there. (Laughter)

But anyway, you had some fun as you went along like that. Then about this time the draft got started. It was really revving up. And there was a question that came up about the fairness of the draft, because we were getting a lot of colored people from Georgia. And we—I was assigned along with four other people to travel over Georgia to the four main Induction Centers to check draft board records. And so, what really brought it about was that a car dealer in Atlanta had bought a farm out in Henry County outside of Atlanta, a dairy farm and was supposed to put his son on as operating it. He became a farmer and got exempt. Well, they said he's not a farmer, he doesn't spend any time out there, and so, that really got in all the papers, the Atlanta Constitution, and all that. So, they assigned us the duty of going around and checking these records to see that they were calling them as they were scheduled to. And if John Doe was supposed to be called up in April, and he wasn't on the call list that month, we just checked it and for next month, then the next month if he wasn't on the May list, we sent him an induction notice from Fort McPherson Service Headquarters, Army Headquarters in Atlanta. We sent him a direct call up.

PIEHLER: So, people—what was happening, white farmers were getting exemptions?

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And black farmers ...

POINTER: Well, well farmers total were getting the exemptions. And so, there wasn't any question about it they were manipulating the draft. And so ...

PIEHLER: In other words, they were claiming there were more people were farmers than ...

POINTER: No, no. They were sending people in that wasn't supposed to be called.

PIEHLER: At all.

POINTER: Not on the schedule. No. See they had a schedule that you would call them on. They were sending other people.

PIEHLER: Instead of the people who were—so blacks were being sent before whites in these counties?

POINTER: I remember—well, I ran into one black schoolteacher which should have been and was—he wasn't supposed to be drafted for a long time if at all.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: He was right at the top of the list at this one occasion there, that this happened, and I'm sure there was a lot of others. But what we do is check them. And so, that was a good assignment. We'd spend a week in Atlanta, a week in Macon, a week in Savannah, and a week in Augusta. And any month that had five weeks we got a vacation, you see. So, that was pretty good duty.

PIEHLER: How many months did you do this?

POINTER: We traveled about six months, until we got on an even keel.

PIEHLER: Is this—what year—this was 1941 or ...

POINTER: That was about 19—the beginning of 1942, probably.

PIEHLER: And, it sounds, like you probably got per diem for the day.

POINTER: Oh yeah, yes.

PIEHLER: I mean, that actually must have been ...

POINTER: And if I remember correctly, we got something like six dollars a day for food and maybe five or six for lodging. And we ate on the base and slept on the base, so, that's extra money. So, that was—I got twenty-one dollars a month, as a private, twenty-one dollars a month.

PIEHLER: Well, with this per diem money ...

POINTER: Oh, that was ...

PIEHLER: I mean, you must have made six dollars for the whole month.

POINTER: Yeah, yeah. That was a lot of money. And so, after that, then I had a company commander that was a schoolteacher at Tyson High School out here on Kingston Pike. And so, I kept trying to go to the Air Force. My brother was in the Air Force. And so, he says, "No, I'm not going to let you go. I need you. I won't let you go." And I said, "I've been here, and there's no advancement," you know, so I said, "I want to transfer." And so, he wouldn't let me transfer. My brother had it set up for me to transfer to—he was stationed out in Denver, Colorado, he was going out there to go to photography school. They had some good schools. But anyway, he wouldn't let me transfer. So, it came up one time in an announcement that they wanted candidates for OCS and the cadet training, and I applied for both of them. And so, I went before a board, and I was accepted at both of them, but I was called for cadet training first. And so, I shipped out of Atlanta and went to Biloxi, Mississippi. From Biloxi, Mississippi, why, they got us all together and sent us to different schools, you know, for training. And the train went up through Memphis and up—we didn't know where we were going, had no idea at all. We knew when we went through Memphis, we was headed up. So, we went from Memphis to Cleveland, Ohio then up by Dunkirk, New York, and across the top of New York state and into Massachusetts and stopped at Springfield College in ...

PIEHLER: Springfield, Massachusetts?

POINTER: Springfield, Massachusetts. And there's where we were dropped. We had about, I guess, 150 ...

PIEHLER: And this was cadet training for the Air ...

POINTER: For the Air Force.

PIEHLER: Air Force.

POINTER: Air Force. Then they went on to Colby, Maine with the other company, to Colby, Maine. So, we were in the training at Springfield College, Springfield, Massachusetts, where they run you through the courses we had. We had English and math and weather and then the one that everybody loved was code. You know, dee-dot, dee-dot, dee-dot, all that, you know. And we had some good teachers there. The teachers came down—we had a series of teachers, the lecturers were, most of them were from Harvard. They'd come down and lecture for three days a week and then the, I assume looking back on it now, that they probably had graduate

students come down, you know, graduate assistant students to teach the labs for two days a week. And so, we went through that, and then we had the opportunity to do a little flying there. And so, there—we flew from Chicopee Airbase, Chicopee, Massachusetts. And it just so happened that that airbase, it took off right straight toward Westover Field. And so, we had some problems there, or I didn't have, but some people had some problems, they were wanting to fly too close to those big bombers. Things taking off for overseas, you know. They'd load those planes, all the bombers going to Europe would carry freight. So, those planes would take off, and the angle of climb off was just almost flat, you know, you just kept trying to pick them up. So, some of the boys got pretty close to them, and had a little problem there. But my instructor had a little ferry company in that flew over to Martha's Vineyard, I had never heard of Martha's Vineyard, but it became famous later on, you know. And so, the first thing he told me when I got in the plane is, "When I tell you to do something, you do it and do it right then." And he said, "I'm not going to let a student kill me this late in my life." (Laughter) So, he said, "When I give you instructions, you pay attention." Well, that was the first time I'd ever been in a plane. I had never been in a plane.

ZAMMETT: Was this a Piper?

POINTER: What?

ZAMMETT: The Piper?

POINTER: It was a Piper J5....

PIEHLER: And this is in cadet school?

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: In Springfield College?

POINTER: Springfield College. And so, he told me, he said, "Start it up." I said, "Well, I don't know how to start it up. This is the first time I'd ever been in a plane." He said, "Well, that's good." You know, here I was kindly apologizing, because I hadn't been in a plane. And he said, "Oh no, that's good." He said, "Now then we can just start from scratch and teach you how to fly." So, he showed me how to set the magnetos, the controls and all that, you know, to take off. And so, we had—I had an interesting experience there, flying. I had ten hours flying time, and on the tenth hour they give you your check-up. And so, the one fellow that checked all the people, he was from North Carolina. And he had a habit of going to town every night, and he said he imbibed a little too much so when I was having my check out. He got in the plane and he just kind of said, "Okay take her off." And so, I said, "Aren't you gonna watch me?" He says, "I can tell what you're doing." So we flew and did all these maneuvers and everything and came back down, landed, and he says, "I guess you thought I was asleep, didn't you?" I said, "Well, I was hoping you weren't."

Anyway, so Springfield, Massachusetts I've got to tell you an interesting thing that happened to me, because my life has been full of the most interesting experiences I've had. The chief

architect of Norris was Tracy Auger, worked for TVA. His daughter was my classmate. I remember going to the school there. She said she was going to go to Smith College. Well, I didn't pay any attention; Smith College didn't mean anything to me. So, when we were shipped to Springfield College that was the only time I had been in service that I was quarantined, so they quarantined us. We couldn't get off the base there, or the university campus for a week. And so, on Saturday, we got in there about Thursday, Saturday afternoon everybody was gone to town except us new birds. So, I was walking down the hallway, and something said, I believe Smith College is in Massachusetts. So, there was a couple of fellas filling up a coke box on down there, and I said, "Fellas, where's Smith College?" And they said, "Oh about twenty miles up the road." And so, I went over to the telephone exchange and that was a converted garage, but it became the university's telephone exchange. So, I went over there and called Smith College and asked for her and she was gone. But I left my number and name. So, she called back and so, she said, "Where are you?" And I said, "I'm down at Springfield College." And so, I explained to her the situation and I said, "How about coming down here tomorrow and bringing about half of Smith College with you?" (Laughter) And she says, "We'll be there." So, the next Sunday afternoon, here she came in, waiting for me. She brought twenty-three girls from Smith College with her. And so, we couldn't get off campus, but we sat around campus and had a lot of fun. And out of that visit, they was two girls and two boys met and married over there. And Virginia and I, well, we got together quite a bit up there.

So, the Campus Commander was a Vermont schoolteacher. Monday morning when we lined up for reveille, he got up on his big platform out there and he says, "I don't know about you upper classman," he says, "but these new fellows that come in here had more girlfriends here yesterday than all them people put together." So, we made the record there early. But Virginia and some of the girls, as long as we were there, why we had dates that we'd get off campus on the weekends, you know, and had a lot of fun.

PIEHLER: Where would you go on dates, when you were—particularly in Springfield?

POINTER: Springfield? We'd go to the movies or into town. There was activities in Springfield at that time.

PIEHLER: In many ways you were starting to live a life—you had talked about Norris—the differences between city and country. You were starting to live the city boy life, is that ...

POINTER: Yeah, that was right.

PIEHLER: Is that a fair—and it seems like you were enjoying some of it quite a bit.

POINTER: Oh, sure. And, well, of course, it's always nice, you know, when you're away from home to see someone that you—well, especially your classmate. Of course, Virginia and I kind of dated a little bit when we was in—I took her to the senior prom, and so forth like that. So, we had, we'd had fun together, before that. So, it worked out real good for all of us. She—incidentally, she was in school with one our first ladies, [Nancy] Reagan, in Smith College. And so, then we—when we left there then we went to pre-flight [training] in San Antonio, Texas and rode the troop train again. And, I don't know what took them so long, but it took a long time to

get down to Texas. Oh, I got to back up and tell you a story of these boys and getting demerits. In other words, you could get a demerit for doing various things. And what you do to erase that demerit, you had to walk, or drill. In other words of you were by yourself you had to walk in military fashion around the parking lot. If there was two or more, you had to be in line, you know, in the set, and so, that made it a little bit more complicated, you know, to stay in step. And so, the school commander's wife was an invalid and she had a picture window. And she sat at this picture window, and it looked out at the parking lot. And so, she had a list of us and she watched to see that everybody did what he was supposed to do. Well, thank goodness, I got through there and I didn't have a demerit or anything. But we had a boy that had about fifteen demerits, and he hadn't walked them off. So, he had to walk them off before he could qualify to go on to the next stage, but you could get someone else to do it for you. So, fifteen of us decided, you know, we'd go out there and donate an hour of our time to keep him with us. Lo and behold, I got out of step one time and I carried a demerit to San Antonio, Texas with me. (Laughter) And so, when I got there, I walked in, you know—"Okay you have one demerit, sit against that wall over there." And they had a board that sat up like this about six inches from the wall, and you sat there with your back against the wall for one hour on that sharp board.

PIEHLER: To work off that demerit?

POINTER: To work off that demerit. And so, if you sat there an hour you had a crease across your rear, you know, it took a month for it to disappear. (Laughter) But anyway those are funny incidences that ...

PIEHLER: A lot of people have told me pre-flight was very rigorous in terms of spick and span discipline. Was that ...

POINTER: Well, the Air Force, they—back in those days, they believed that they ought to have hazing like they did in the academies. We had to go through that at Springfield College, you know.

PIEHLER: How did they haze you?

POINTER: Oh, you had to sit at a certain place to eat. You had to sit at attention while you ate. You had to eat a square meal, you know. And just anything, you had to cut your meat up in little bitty pieces and eat them one at a time, you know, so you couldn't get ...

PIEHLER: And always at square angles?

POINTER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so, then the upper classman, you know, would haze the underclassman. But it so happened that my class most of us were ground force people, and so, they—we had already gone through all these close order-drills and all that, that was just a ...

PIEHLER: For you guys that was ...

POINTER: That was nothing for us, you know. And so, some of those, some of the boys—we had a bunch of upper classman from New York City. And they were city boys and they were

putting it on us, you know. So, we didn't pay much attention to that, or anything. But while we were flying—I'll tell you another interesting incident. A lot of times boys would come in and break their tail wheel off of those Cubs, and nearly every one of them were city kids. And I thought about that even 'til today. That farm boys were out on the farm and they could estimate distance, you know. These city kids, I'm positive that that's the reason that they had problems, is that we never had—most all of them that had problems were city kids, and I know it's because that they had never had experience in judging distance on that.

PIEHLER: No, it's a very interesting observation.

POINTER: Yeah. And so, so—but anyway, when we got to pre-flight, you have to go through a series of tests. They call it, back in those days, Cyclomodes. And that's to determine your coordination and everything. And they'd have these little trainers, and you had to sit there and keep it on an even keel. If you get over here—and so, you had to go through all of that before you—and then they would classify you as to whether that you were going to be a pilot, bombardier or a navigator. And so, if you had no desire to be a bombardier, why, you could mark that one out, you know, and if you made one of the other two, okay, and if you didn't, why, you were out. And so, I put down, mine was pilot, bombardier, and navigator. The reason I did that was, I thought, "Well, if I'm a pilot and make a mistake it's my mistake, or if I'm a bombardier I can get that, but if I'm a navigator and make a mistake, well, I got a lot of other people that are gonna suffer from my mistake." So, I thought, "Well I'll take—I'd like to take that as the last option." And so, I came out in that category.

PIEHLER: That was the one you got, was bombardier?

POINTER: No, pilot. And so, it was my number one.

PIEHLER: And you got that?

POINTER: Right, number one. And so, we were ready to go to pre-flight. All out, had our beds turned in, bed material turned in, and clothes ready to go to pre-flight. The buses didn't show up. So, after about an hour, why, they came out and called us to attention and read a telegram saying that all previous ground force men would be sent back to the ground force. And so, 1,250 were sent back to the ground forces, because they didn't need any more pilots out at San Antonio.

PIEHLER: What month and year was this in, do you remember?

POINTER: That was in, that was in the spring of 1944.

PIEHLER: '44?

POINTER: '44. I believe that, yeah about '44. And so, I had met those pilots there that had graduated six months before and they're still in the barracks out there. That they hadn't ...

PIEHLER: Hadn't been deployed?

POINTER: Yeah, they hadn't lost as many pilots as they had anticipated. And so, I took it pretty good. I had been in the service long enough by that time, you know, that you learn to cope with any reality.

PIEHLER: There must have been a lot of disappointment.

POINTER: Oh, it was for everybody. I tried to make the best out of it. So, they shipped us from San Antonio and to pour salt in the wound, they sent us to Camp Polk, Louisiana. And of all places that you don't want to go, it's Camp Polk, Louisiana. And, there I was attached to the Ninth Armored Division. They had the South Camp and North Camp Polk, Louisiana. And so, I was in ordinance there because I, over a period of time, I'd had experience with working with the armaments. And so, my company commander was from Atlanta, and so, we made friends there because he was out in Texas, and there was no southern boy there other than a Texas southern boy. And so, he told me, he said, "Would you like to stay in my outfit here?" And I said, "Yeah, as long as I can." It's a pretty good assignment, you know. And so, he came to me one day and he says, "I can't get you assigned on a permanent base," he said, "We got cadre going to Texas." So, I thought anything would be better than Camp Polk, Louisiana.

PIEHLER: You are not the first talk about Louisiana in these terms and even Camp Polk. Can you describe, though, a little bit more of what was so bad about Camp Polk?

POINTER: Well, one is temperature, it was pretty sandy, and you would go on a hike or something, you'd just sink up in it, and it would just zap you, as far as strength was concerned. And you were miles from anything. Leesburg was the closest little town there.

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

PIEHLER: You were saying Leesburg ...

POINTER: And they—about the only thing they had was beer joints around there and they were made with slabs, all the good building materials was going in to housing. And so, it was a rough place, hot and undesirable in every way. But anyway, I got to—a three-day pass while I was at Camp Polk And I got me a map and I says, "Let's see, where's the Army bases, here's the Navy, here's the Air Force, here's the Army," and I picked out Lafayette, Louisiana. And so, I thought "that's the farthest I can get from other Army bases." So, I went down to Lafayette, and I didn't know that there was a college there. And so, I got to Lafayette and met a girl. We went to the movies, and so, coming back walking down the street there was a truck that pulled up with MPs. And the sergeant jumped out and he said, "Soldier, you know you're violating curfew?" Well, I didn't know there was a curfew in that town. I said, "I don't know sir." He said, "Let me see your pass." So, I showed him my pass and he had the pass, reading it, and he saw my buddy coming down the street with his date. He told his driver, "Get that fellow up there." And I reached up, got my pass out of his hand, and I took off, left that girl standing there, didn't ever see her again! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, it was a rather abrupt end to that date?

POINTER: I took off down the street. And Lafayette had converted a barn into a fire hall, and here's these fireman, and they have the fire truck in the center of the barn, you know, to drive through. And these people in straight-back chairs leaned against the wall there, sitting there. Well, I took on down there and he was right on my heels. I ran through that fire hall, got to the far end, why, I had him then. I was going to see which way he was going. I got away from him, run up the alley, and then put back stairs in the motel, I mean hotel room. The next afternoon I had to go back to camp. So, lo and behold I got down to the bus station, and guess who was down there. (Laughter) He said, "Didn't I see you last night?" and I said, "I don't believe so." You learn to lie pretty good. (Laughter) I said "I don't believe so," and he said, "you're lying." He says, "I ought to arrest you right now." I said, "Well I'm on my way back to camp." So, he let me go.

ZAMMETT: What happened to your friend?

POINTER: What?

ZAMMETT: Your friend, did he get caught?

POINTER: No, no he ran. He saw me. I got back in to the room and, just a minute after I got back, somebody hit the stairway. I knew it was him because—so anyway, we went to Camp Polk, then the cadre went down to Camp Bowie, Texas. And so, while I was in Camp Bowie I was a—I might back up and tell you a little something that's interesting. While I was at Fort McPherson, Georgia, you see, we had stables there. It used to be a cavalry place. But at the time I was there they only had three horses that they still maintained. That was for the—mostly for General [John] Lucas. And he was wearing a nice—he was just a picture type of an individual. Very neat, and he would ride those horses every morning, and wore his high riding boots, he was from the old cavalry. And so, one time I was Sergeant of the Guards and they had a man on base, walking the base where we had an ammunition dump at Fort McPherson. The General rode down through the golf course and back around and up over the hill with the Ammunitions Officer... So, this sergeant—I mean this soldier, or duty there, and the name was Kitchens, and he came from Fort Paine, Alabama. And so, Kitchens said he didn't want to be in this man's Army and he says, "I'm getting' out." He was a draftee. So, he complained all the time that he was going to this Army. So, he was on base and General Lucas came by and he says, "Halt, dismount and advance and be recognized," which is proper. And so, he says, "throw your pass." So, he got the pass and looked at it, he saluted the General, handed it back and says, "You may go." And the General was curious, you know, and he says, "Soldier, couldn't you tell I was an officer?" And he says, "Well how?" He says, "Because I have these high top boots on." And he says, "Well I have high top shoes on, but that don't make me a sergeant worth a damn." (Laughter) So, the General was so amused that he called the Post Commander, and told the Post Commander this, you know, and thought he would be amused too. Post Commander, he was a four [star] Colonel, bucking for General, and he wasn't amused at all. So, he called and says, "Get that man off the post and bring him to my office." And then, he really dressed him down. And so, anyway, Kitchens was cadred out to Welch Convalescent Hospital in Daytona, Florida. And after a little incident down there, at the WAC camp, well, they discharged him. They discharged him and he came back with his papers and said, "I told you I was going to get this paper."

Anyway, when I got to Texas, General Lucas had been transferred out to that area there. And I went in there as ordinance for engineering headquarters—headquarters company in engineering, that was about as good as you could get. And so, they had a—in one of the side of the supply room they had a truck load of stuff just dumped like you'd dump just right out of the truck there, had binoculars and engineering, surveying instruments, you know. And so, I was with the Captain that interviewed us. He saw right off, you know, you could look at your serial number and tell if you were regular Army or not. So, this old Captain came up from Panama and he says, “Son, are you a soldier?” And said, “I’m regular Army, too.” And I said, “Yes sir.” And he said, “How would you like to be in my outfit?” He said, “I’m regular Army too.” And I said, “What outfit are you in?” And he says, “Headquarters, Headquarters Company.” And I said, “Well, yeah I’d like too.” So, he transferred—he got me transferred in his outfit. And so, he says, “I want you to take care of that supply room back there.” So, I got some help and we, I mean we really gave him everything that we got, cleaned it up. I built a room so we could lock it up, so people couldn't carry it off and everything. General Lucas pulled a surprise inspection. And we were the only company on the base there that had passed the inspection. And that tickled that Captain to death, you know. And while we were having that inspection, General Lucas recognized me from Atlanta, so, we had a little conversation and ,forth. And you may not remember the name General Lucas but he was the Commanding General of the Anzio Beachhead.

PIEHLER: Yeah I ...

POINTER: Okay.

PIEHLER: It's a very familiar name and I just couldn't place ...

POINTER: Anyway, the Captain there said to me, he says, “Since you're a regular,” he says, “I think you ought to go OCS.” I said, “No, not interested.” And this went on every day for weeks, you know. And I said, “Captain, I’m just not interested.” And by that time I had been in service over three years, and I said, “I’m not interested and I think I’ll just get out and go back and I’ll see my way ...” and I thought about my G.I. bill and, you know ...

PIEHLER: So, in ‘44, you were already conscious of the G.I. bill?

POINTER: Right. And so, I could go ... back and go to school. So, he said, “No,” he says, “you need, you need to stay in the service.” And so, anyway, I went in one morning, the first Sergeant says, “Captain wants to see you.” I went in there and he says, “Sign these papers here.” And so, he had them filled out, and I signed the papers to go to OCS. Anyway, in the mean time I had checked around and we had four or five people in the company there that had passed the board and everything to go to OCS and they’d been there for months. So, I says, “Well, I’ll make the old Captain happy,” you know. He was kind of the fatherly type, you know, and I said, “I’ll make him happy if I signed those things and I won't have to go, because things will change.” So, I went out to fire over—a machine gun over in the filtration course that day, and about noon that day a jeep came out there and called for me. And so, it scared the life out of me, because when you’re out like that they never call you unless you got a death in the family or something, you

know.

PIEHLER: So, you felt there was really bad news?

POINTER: I knew there was, you know. But what it was, he called and sent out there for me to go before the board, for OCS Board. So, I went in, took a shower, and changed uniform and went before the OCS Board. Six o'clock that night I was on the train for Fort Benning, Georgia. (Laughter) So, I went to Fort Benning and stayed at Fort Benning. And after you're there fifteen weeks, the last two weeks, you spend the last two weeks in tactics and things like this, that's just kind of the slowing down process. And so, as part of that, we was on the rifle range and you had a lieutenant that stayed with your platoon to just guide you, keep you going places.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: And that's all his duty was. And so, they'd take you out and we were doing some firing out on the firing range, and they had a gunnery officer meet you and go through that. So, they called on me to fire four machine guns, you know, on the target. So, you have people down on their guns, they'll give you elevations and everything. I know this is boring to you.

ZAMMETT: Oh no, it's not boring at all.

POINTER: Elevations, you know, the elevations they put on the guns. And so, I called down, because the gunners couldn't see the targets, you have to guide them in on target, you know. And so, I told them to set their guns on two mils and they had a little thing on their guns to know they could set it. So, I have ... three guns on the target at the first shot and the fourth, the fourth gun was way up in the air, so I cut him down, I said cut him down, twenty mils. And so, he hit the target. So, the Lieutenant in the critique—the Lieutenant asked someone to critique it. And so, they critiqued it, and they said it's okay, but he disagreed, he said that I shouldn't give twenty mils, that's too much, you might hit the troops. I give the reasoning for what I did there, because when I said two mils, I knew as high as he went, that he'd misunderstood me for twenty-two mils and I cut him down to twenty and he hit the target. So, he and the gunnery officer got into a little argument, and the gunnery officer chewed him out. And when I got back to camp that night at the barracks I was asked to come see the lieutenant. I went to go see the lieutenant, and of course, he chewed me out. I was just doing my duty, you know. I was doing what I was supposed to do. And he says, he said I shouldn't have done what I did. The next, the next morning, I had a demerit! The first one, I believe, I had, you know.

PIEHLER: And you were almost at the end?

POINTER: He was the one that—and so, then about a week later they always have a screening, so they screened me and some of the others out, to drop out.

PIEHLER: Drop out?

POINTER: Yeah, I got kicked out.

PIEHLER: You got kicked out almost at the end?

POINTER: Yeah. Well, yeah. And so, I went from there then to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. They had asked me where I wanted to go. And I said, "First outfit that will be going overseas." So, they sent me to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma.

PIEHLER: When did you arrive in Camp Gruber?

POINTER: In August of '44. Yeah August of '44, I believe. And so, when I got to Camp Gruber, first inspection they had, here come—the lieutenant comes by the inspection. I was with him at Fort Benning. His name is George Tuttle wound up being a Colonel George Tuttle and he was from New York. And as we sailed out, going overseas, he pointed out his dad's office in one of the office buildings.

PIEHLER: In Manhattan?

POINTER: Yeah, yeah. And anyway, he was my lieutenant, and so, we got along real good and shipped out of there from Fort Dix, Jersey, New Jersey. Then we loaded up and left out of New Jersey.

PIEHLER: Hoboken or Camp Kilmer?

POINTER: Camp Kilmer. And we left out of New York, I believe, it was Pier 22.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay so you ...

POINTER: I believe it was Pier 22. We left out of there, and my good fortune again, the good Lord watched over me. I got on the flagship. And I said, right then, I said, "You know if there's any ship reaches, reaches Europe, you know, it'd be that flagship, it had all the generals on it!" (Laughter) And it was USS Alexander. It was a German freight ship that we captured from the Germans in World War I during the service. And so, it had been—and so, we sailed down ... Cape Hatteras. Got into Cape Hatteras storms, and everybody got sea sick and then we went to—and then by the Azores and then ... over by Liberia and up the African coast to Straits of Gibraltar, and just about, oh, about five or six hours before we got to Gibraltar, I thought we were going to go through in daytime you could see everything. A German sub got in to the convoy, and we got a splash hit, and so, it delayed us, so we didn't get to Straits of Gibraltar until about ten o'clock that night. You could see the lights in Spain, you could see lights in Morocco, but the rock, it was blacked out. But the interesting thing is that we were so seasick and everything I wanted to see that ship. So, I started touring that ship, you know, and I thought, you know, when you come out of a wave, you know, and that propeller come out of the water, it'd just shake that whole ship, you know. And I thought, "Now what in the world are those boys feeling like, you know, that's bunked down there?" So, I went to the deck down there, it was a colored outfit. And here I was being sorry for them, and they were shooting craps up against the rear wall with that ship, you know, with the propeller running right out beside them, and it wasn't bothering them at all.

But anyway, we got into the Mediterranean, but before that, ... they asked for volunteers to help prepare food on the way over. So, I talked my squad in to volunteering to work in the peeling room. And so, I didn't know that we had mechanical peelers, potato peelers. So, we had three big peelers about this big around [two inches], and we would just get a whole 100 pounds of potatoes and put fifty pounds in one and fifty pounds in the other and turned it on. It wasn't a few minutes before we had all those potatoes peeled, you know. What it was this big wheel in there that had rough material on it that took the skin off of the potatoes. Well, we had those potato peelers full of potatoes when that submarine got in to the fleet. So, we were taking our time getting our head out the portholes seeing those destroyer escorts dropping depth charges and everything. So, after a while somebody thought about—says, “did anybody check the peelers,” you know. We opened up the door and those potatoes were about big as marbles, about that big. (Laughter) We said, “What are we gonna do now?” So, he said, “We have but one thing to do, and that's go back down in the storage room and get more potatoes.” So, they had guards on those rooms. So, the guards said, “Didn't you fellas get some potatoes down here, a while ago?” “Yeah, but the mess officer sent us back to get 300 hundred more pounds.” So, he let us in. And so, we got the potatoes and peeled them and nobody ever knew about those little marbles.

And so, while we were down there in the supply room, we stole the Navy blind. I remember one of my favorite things was these long boxes, I guess, about five pounds of Oreo cookies, and we'd get them and stick them up in under our jackets and getting them in our belt here so we'd walk out and the guard'd never see. And we'd get canned stuff, and we'd add a little more to it, you know. So, we ate cookies and everything like that. But we had three gallons of peaches that we were going to eat. So, we got to the port at Marseilles, and the French fleet had been scuttled in the harbor, so those ships was turned right side up, and we couldn't get in the harbor so they docked us way out, sent a barge out to get us. So, before we got off there we tried to get people to take those peaches. So, I put two number ten cans of peaches on top of my pack. Now I just only weighed 132 pounds back then you know, and I put that on there, so lo and behold they said, “Everyone has to go down a rope ladder,” (Laughter) on top of that to get to the barges. So, anyway I got down, I finally got down, man I thought, if I had slipped here or lose grip here I'll hit the bottom of the ocean like a lead sinker! Anyway we got on dock, Germans had a plane over us, but they didn't try and attack us. And but when we hit the shore in Marseilles they said we were going to march away from the port so in case they bomb, we'd be out of the way.

So, we went out, and marched out about five miles before we stopped. And that pack was sure getting heavy by then, but I passed by some of these prisoner camps that weren't necessarily prisoners, but they were misplaced persons that were put in camp 'til they can be checked out by the doctors before they released, because that was very important in that prisoner of war camps, because releasing people with diseases and stuff. And in the mean—while we were on the way over and it was muddy and those poor people, it was awful conditions and, I guess, that was the best they could do under the circumstances. You get a little more education about what the war was about all the time as you go through this thing. So, they came with some trucks to pick us up and took us away on to the top of the mountain out there to bivouac. And these trucks—that was our first experience with these black out lights, you know. You could see if it was going toward you, but you couldn't see any light if it was going away from you if you were on it. So, these Transportation Corps—we got on these [trucks], and they had a wood frame around it, and you just marched everybody in as close as you could get together and just stand there. And we

went through an underpass, and that wood rack scraped a wall on that underpass all the way around. I just thought, “Boy we’re going to be lucky if we even get to the front, let alone—we’re gonna get killed before we get there,” but we got out to bivouac. We were there a couple of days until we could get transportation to move up.

And so, while we were there bivouaced we could look down on the coast, just see a little end right there. So, we decided since we weren’t doing anything, we’d go down there. So, we went down there, and while we were cutting through we found the—we’d been warned about booby-traps. But we found a German motorcycle, it was in a little cubby. It was covered-up and everything. We wouldn’t touch that thing. I don’t know whether it was booby-trapped or not, but we got down—a lot of the boys got tanked up with wine, and so forth, and we made it back to camp that night. The Germans came over and strafed us that night. And I never, I never heard that plane. Some of the tents had holes in them but there wasn’t a ... soul hit.

PIEHLER: When was this that you were finally were at this camp?

POINTER: About November ...

PIEHLER: ‘44?

POINTER: No, no about—that would be about December 10th.

PIEHLER: 1944?

POINTER: 1944.

PIEHLER: Or ‘44, because the war is over by December ‘45.

POINTER: No, May of ‘45.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so this was December ‘44.

POINTER: December ‘44. Yeah you’re correct. December ‘44. Yeah. And so, then we got on this French train, a forty-and-eight, you know, and went up through France and went on up to Strasbourg. And we dug in—Germans were trying to break through the bulge at that time. And so, we went on the line at Strasbourg on the Rhine—of course, they had an agreement with the Germans. Kehl, Germany, it’s right across the river from Strasbourg, and so, they had an agreement that the Germans wouldn’t shell Strasbourg, that we wouldn’t shell the city across. And so, that wasn’t too bad. You could see the Germans walking around over there, and we got out walked around over here. It wasn’t a bad way to fight the war. But we had to be careful that night, they would come down the river and we hadn’t been on the front two hours until a German patrol got in behind us. And they had gotten in a canoe up the river and they would float down the river with a paddle out so it would cut them across the river. And they’d float right out of one of those canals, and they would never make a noise and they were—the paddle was never out of the water and they would never make any noise or anything. And, of course, we had an outpost down there, but you couldn’t see. They got in behind us and caused a little problem there, but

that was the only thing we had around Strasbourg. And that was around, I said that was the 10th of ... December. It was earlier than that, because we moved up a little further north along the line, because we went north. There was—we were eyeball to eyeball there. There wasn't a river to separate us. And so, we started from there, and then we had—the weather was extremely bad, and everything, so, we were more or less in a holding position right at that place.

And so, we stayed there, maneuvered around there a little bit. And then, we started moving up and down the front. We'd go up the front at night. We'd get on the trucks and ride up the front at night, probably fifteen or twenty miles and we'd get in the buildings, stay in the buildings all night, all day, come back down the next night, you know, like that. We did that for about three or four days, and couldn't figure out what was going on. But the Germans were trying to establish a southern bulge, and so, we were right in the ... target area. And so ... after a while we settled in and they attacked. And so, we had our first battle on there. And that was the first experience I had with the Big Bertha, the big railroad gun. But also, it was the first time I saw—had really experience with the eighty-eight artillery that they had. Tanks and artillery—'cause one of our tanks' retriever picked it up and it had a hole, about yea big, you know, in one side and right out the other side where that eighty-eight had shot it. So then, when they started doing things like that, that started getting our attention real good, you know. But this little town, you had a question.

PIEHLER: I just wanted to ... (tape paused) Thank you for giving us so much time today—I wanted to, you were—just before we broke off, you were talking about, for example, the first time you were strafed, which sounds like your first contact with enemy, ... the German enemy in World War II. You also told a story which, just so in case you forget to tell it, how the Germans used to play a trick with the sort of, I think, it was the ...

POINTER: Cans.

PIEHLER: Cans. They were the A-ration cans, or C-ration cans?

POINTER: Kind of like our C-ration cans.

PIEHLER: C-rations. And you said they would, sort of, attach them on to the barbed wire and then they would string a cord.

POINTER: Yeah, the string from it would shake, you know.

PIEHLER: And you thought that was movement?

POINTER: Yeah, we thought they were trying to get through that line.

PIEHLER: Which didn't make for a good night's sleep, (laughter) you had said.

POINTER: Play back that last part there.

(Tape paused)

PIEHLER: You had talked about, I mean the artillery which, I guess, I mean, American G.I.s, a lot of them told me, had a lot of respect for ... German artillery particularly the eighty-eights. And very few of them had heard of Big Bertha.

POINTER: The German eighty-eights was probably the best artillery weapon that was in Europe. The better—we had a ninety, but it wasn't as good as the eighty-eights. The eighty-eight could shoot straight up and make an anti-aircraft gun, but we couldn't do our ninety that way.... Germans were good gunners. They were good soldiers, but they were good with mortars also. They would put a mortar in your hip pocket, you know. They were real good. But at this place we were located, where the Germans tied the cans on the wire, was up above Inqolsheim. And we were in a holding position, and we had an outpost about a mile ahead, one accompanied out front and we were always leery about the patrols coming back. We had stretched the razor wire and that makes about a twenty-four inch coil. But the Germans—it's too big for, you know, you to jump across it in most cases, and so, they would usually cut it, or something, to get through. And they'd take gravel and put them in these cans, tie them on there and then take a piece of string, go back about fifty yards and get in a fox hole and pull those on up long. And you'd think there was a group of soldiers trying to get through ... that razor wire and get to you. Where this occurred, it was right up by an apple orchard. And after you sat there and watched your turn there, about four o'clock in the morning and everything, even if it's quiet, those apple trees looks like they'd get up and start walking around. (Laughter) You stared at 'em so long, it looks like—but that same place that I'm talking about there, one night there was—they drove a herd of sheep in to the wire. Of course, ... first thing they did when they got caught in that wire, they started jumping and pulling that wire and bleating so, we knew there was sheep on that. But they would do things like that, you know. I guess, we'd do things like that, too, when we had a chance. At this place we were holed up—we were in the Maginot Line along there and—go down inside the Maginot Line and they had a little train track down in there. I don't know how far that it would go. We used to get down there when we were off duty and ride that train, you know, under there. They had an underground reservoir and things like that.

PIEHLER: How long were you stationed actually, physically in the Maginot Line?

POINTER: We were in there probably ten days or something like that, just in a holding position 'til we could move out. We would go out, they would have burms built, and we'd go out and stay behind those burms. But then we'd come back and go down in to the underground part of the Maginot Line where it's warmer.

PIEHLER: And this was in January of '45?

POINTER: Yeah, January. About how things happens, you know, that there's sometimes, you think a lot of cases, you know, well, "why didn't I think of that first," you know. When we moved on a line, we stretched our communication wires up, and so, we stretched them—or the Army stretched them—along by the side of the power poles. And the Germans were smart enough to know we were going to use those power poles, because they served two or three good purposes. One is that it was a good place—you could identify where your wires were come

snow. Next thing is your out there tracing this line at night—you didn't have any lights so you could kind of get that power pole between you and the sky and stay in line, you know where it's at. But the Germans got smart enough they would drop a mortar shell right in to the base of those power poles down through it to cut the communications. So, then we'd play a little guessing game with them, and the Signal Corps would move them five steps the right or ten steps to the right or left, you know, so that the Germans would have to guess where we were putting them. It's just one of those things, that you'd have to outguess your enemy on that. But the Germans were excellent soldiers. But while we were in this holding position one day, a sniper kept sniping at us. Every time we'd raise our head up, well, they'd snipe at us. And we couldn't figure out where he was. We couldn't see him. So, we kept watching and watching and watching, so one day one of the fellas saw him stick his head up and fire and duck his head back in the hole. So, we set up a sniper on him, and so, one day, it wasn't long after that, after we located his spot, he stuck his head up one time too often, his helmet flew and didn't have any more trouble with him.

But it wasn't long after that until there was a German soldier came off of the hill over a couple or three hundred yards, we saw him coming down the road. We hadn't had a prisoner in a while so we just thought, "well maybe that might be our chance to catch a prisoner." And he, just like he was out on a stroll or something, he just walked down and down through the little town at the foot of the hill and right up toward our line. And so, the order had come down not to shoot at him, and so, he walked straight in on to our land. And what he was doing, he was supposed to go up there and relieve that fella that had shot in that foxhole. And so, we asked him what he was doing, well he says, that fella out there was a butcher, and they were gonna have a party back in the town and he was to relieve this fella so that he could go butcher a cow or something, so they were going to have a party. So, the word is translated on back to the rear and so, they had a party that night, the artillery had a good party. So, we shelled that town real good that night. So, in this same town that this happened in ...

PIEHLER: Which town was it?

POINTER: I can't ...

PIEHLER: You can't remember the name of it?

POINTER: I can't remember the name of it.

PIEHLER: What month was this, was it still ...

POINTER: This was in January. And they had a Big Bertha back there, big artillery place. And the Air Force behind us, they would come up and try to find it. And so, they had difficulty finding it because there was a tunnel back there. They'd roll it out and fire a time or two and then back in. So, a pilot got down low enough that we found out that they were camouflaging a great distance on the mouth of that tunnel on the railroad so that we wouldn't find it. So finally, at last, they pinpointed where it was and they bombed both ends of the tunnel shut. And we didn't have any more trouble with it. But it was shooting about thirty miles. It was a big, when it went over us, why, it just vibrates, you know, it just went just a swish, you know. And they

were shooting at the Haquenau Air Force behind—but that was the only time that we had any experience with the railroad guns. The eighty-eight's were mean. They would—they were hard to get away from, because they were very accurate. And at this same location, during the Battle of the Bulge, on the south side, we had held their front, and the front around us had pushed back and we were coming out on the thumb. So, we got orders one night about seven o'clock that we were going to withdraw. And so, there was snow on the ground, I guess, it was eight or ten inches of snow, and the roads were iced, and so, we had a tank outfit that came up behind us, that'd support us and they was caught in a predicament, because they couldn't move those tanks on that icy road because they would just slide off. But we had to withdraw about twenty miles one night, and it was really cold. And we withdrew back towards Haquenau to this Bois D'Ohlungen we were standing about. And this about the 20th of January, because we had the Battle of the Bois D'Ohlungen about the 21st, 22nd, somewhere along there. And there was a river, they called it a river, but for us here, it wasn't much bigger than a big creek, you know. And so, the Germans, by the time we had withdrawn, and did it as quietly as we could, got back, crossed the river and dug in, the Germans was on the other side of the river with binoculars watching us. They had caught on that we were withdrawing and they just followed us right on up. And then, that was when they were trying to break through our lines, the one I was telling you about, the battle we had on the 21st, 22nd of January. That was one of the biggest battles that I was in. The Germans got some tanks in behind us. But the anti-tank in behind us were told—well, we were supposed to hold the line and they were going to come up and get these tanks out from behind us. So, there was about six German tanks that got in behind us, they knocked them out. We held on, but we had a big sacrifice.

PIEHLER: Well, you were facing—you said over lunch, ... your regiment was facing three divisions?

POINTER: Three divisions, yeah. And I'll bring a copy of that citation. It was one of those deals where that the Germans had troops floating trying to find a weak spot so they could get through, and they attacked and tried to get through. We lost quite a few men in that.

PIEHLER: You said over lunch, how many—it was over two hundred ...

POINTER: 237 officers and men in one twenty-four hour period. E Company, I was in C Company, the E Company, I guess, suffered the heaviest loss, because they were in a draw and they were trying to go through that and lost there. And about, I guess, three o'clock the next morning, they said that we was going to have to have somebody go behind us a distance to set up a roadblock to keep the Germans from coming back on us with those tanks. And so, I went back with a group to block the road with bazookas. And so, they said, "Anything that comes up here that you can't see a marker on it, shoot it." And it just so happened that an American tank was coming up the road, and we dug in right beside of the road and it came up, and I saw that star on there and so, it ran on by it didn't see us. (Laughter) We didn't want to draw any attention, but they got the German tanks the next morning.

PIEHLER: Did they get them with American tanks, or by air power, or artillery?

POINTER: No, tanks.

PIEHLER: Tanks.

POINTER: Yeah, tanks. But back then, the air weren't very accurate. It wasn't—I used to kid my brother about them coming up and missing the target, you know. But, I believe, the figures show they only hit about five to ten percent of there ...

PIEHLER: So, if you called—if close air support was called in ...

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It was great, but it often didn't hit the ...

POINTER: Well, it served a good purpose. We were always glad to get it.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Dr. James Pointer on April 8, 2003 at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with Kurt Piehler and ...

ZAMMETT: Meghan Zammett.

PIEHLER: And you were saying that even if the aircraft wasn't so fast—at least it got the Germans in their holes.

POINTER: Yes, right. And I think they were pretty effective, I'd say, [on] road transportation, railroads, and stuff like that, because they had a better target, you see, they would be on that. But one time we were sitting in a holding position on the front, and we always put markers out in front of our lines so that the Americans would know where the line was and not drop any bombs behind those markers. And the American plane came down and strafed us, and in a few minutes another one came, and another one came. Three planes strafed us, and they were P-47s. And we called the rear and said, "Hey, what's going on, you're strafing us up here, and your not looking for our markers." And they said, "We're not strafing you, we don't have any planes in the air." So, come to finding out, the Germans had captured three P-47s in Italy, and brought them up to France, and was strafing us with them. And they said, "Knock them down." And so, in one day we knocked all three of them down. They brought up some extra anti-aircraft guns and knocked them down. The German's were dressed in German uniforms, you know—of course, the Geneva Convention, what you could do with those? And, I guess, they got that treatment. I understand they did anyway. And because—but that was the only time I had any experience with Germans using our uniforms or our planes, or equipment.

PIEHLER: But they were in German uniforms when they were ...

POINTER: In German uniforms, with American planes, with American markings on it. Which they can be executed on the spot [for]. And so, anyway—but a lot of times we'd get prisoners that would tell us a lot, give a lot of information, and that helped out a lot.

PIEHLER: So, prisoners were a very valuable commodity?

POINTER: Oh yes, yes. One of those battles there in the wintertime—we had an outpost in a pillbox, and the Germans came up with flamethrowers on the tanks, and forced them to surrender. They marched them out of sight, you know, around the hill and we heard the machine gun fire and everything. And that night we set out a patrol and found those people all killed. And the word spread real fast along the front, you know, about killing a prisoner, or something like that. So, we didn't take any prisoners for about a week.

PIEHLER: This incident, where did this occur again?

POINTER: It happened somewhere in the vicinity of Soltz, or Inqolsheim.

PIEHLER: How many Americans were ...

POINTER: Oh, it was probably twenty.

PIEHLER: Twenty.

POINTER: And so, that's the only time that we, that I experienced, any people killing that many people.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and in a very deliberate way.

POINTER: Yeah, but we had lost other single prisoners and things like that. We found them later on. That they may have been killed in battle, or they may have been shot, you know, kicked out. But anyway, that's one of the things there. So, the orders came up from the rear to quit shooting and take some live prisoners. They needed information. So, we'd go out on patrols and pick off prisoners on patrol. One time we went out, and they said that the Germans was coming when we was in a holding position. They said the Germans—most of them are sleeping in the daytime, and they just got a guard here and there, because they are awake all night. And so, we went out on a patrol and got a—went into a bunker in the woods, and got an officer and brought him in. Got some information on him about what the strength was behind the lines, and so forth. And it's the same time that we were in this area working the—we were getting a lot of artillery coming in on us. And we couldn't—they would shoot back at it, but they wasn't doing too good. But the 101st Airborne was in that area, and so, they came up to help us out. And they came up through our line and went out on a patrol and they was gone about all night. And they came back, and I don't know how many prisoners they had, 100 or more prisoners that they'd take and brought back. We were told that they had the whole headquarters of the artillery battery back there. But we didn't have any more of the barrages of the artillery after that. So, we was very thankful for their help too.

So, then, I guess, then—I can't keep the dates straight, but anyways it was up into March, and we was getting ready to make the final push into Germany. And a little incident happened, you know, getting prepared and everything for the.... And at this time we were in the mountains, in a mountainous area, because we were going along the mountains. And one of our outfits down the line—a prisoner came up with a white flag and said the company wanted to surrender. And so, the person out there told them that he wouldn't accept their surrender, you know. He says, "You go back and we'll come get you when we want you," you know. So, they almost court martialed him on that, because of the fact that he was out on an outpost, and he didn't know what else to do. He didn't want a bunch of prisoners.

So, then on March 15, we made the last push into Germany, and that was our jump off, and we were in the lead on that. And after about two hours, why, it was pretty much trying to catch them from then on, for a while. At first, when I first went over, when we were on the front, we were limited on artillery. We didn't have—they would sometimes limit us to only three rounds a day. And so, when we got ready for that final push we were told there was five battalions of artillery supporting our one outfit. They tore the woods up so bad that we had to ask them to quit shelling because we couldn't get through, that they'd just torn the forest down, they were just land ...

PIEHLER: So, the limbs were, actually, a barrier? The fallen limbs were a barrier?

POINTER: Yeah, and so, it was a good defense for them, but it wasn't helping us out, because we had to go through it. And so, we got through that. But, I guess, another thing that—we were trying to break the Siegfried Line. And we had—the way that we did [it] was we had, of course, three regiments. And we had two on the front, and one in support. And so, the one in support—we had the 222nd, that's mine, 232nd, and 242nd, regiments. And so, the 242nd was in reserve, and they had taken special training on how to break pillboxes. And so, they came up and they was going to attack these pillboxes. And in one ... attack there was about fifty people that got their feet blown off from boot mines. And you see, we didn't know that there was anything around like—you know, in mass like that. So, then they—another attack came about noon, and then they told us that we were going to attack at six o'clock. The Air Force came up and bombed in the meantime for us. And so, well, we were dreading that because we didn't know what to expect.

PIEHLER: Now, you hadn't had the special training?

POINTER: No, we did not have special training. But we had engineers, they brought engineers up to be with us. So, the engineers was gonna—they had the explosives. So, we attacked the pillbox in their front, and the Germans—we were lucky, the Germans were just starting to pull back. And so, we caught them, and had enough firepower on the pillbox that the engineers could slip up, and they'd put dynamite on the front, on the doors, and blew the doors open. And when we got to the pillbox, there had been about four or five Germans that had been in that main pillbox, and they was just plastered all over the wall, it was—anyway we went, we went about ten miles that night, and only had one man that fell and broke his knee cap. And that was the only injury that we ...

PIEHLER: Where's this other unit that had the specialized training ...

POINTER: They had pulled back, because they had so many ...

PIEHLER: Well yeah, I mean, they had lost fifty people, just on the mines themselves.

POINTER: And so, we went in to Dahn, D-A-H-N, I believe it is, Dahn, Germany at that time. And Dahn, Germany and Fischback Germany—they are pronounced a different way in Germany—was about twenty-miles. And it was a valley, the Northern rural South. And this time we were chasing the Germans and they were trying to withdraw. They had to withdraw south to get across the river, the Rhine. And so, we got in there and cut it off, and we captured about a division in one day. They were—we just got on each side of the highway and just let 'em march in, and took prisoners. But the Air Force and Artillery played havoc with prisoners withdrawing. And between Dahn and Fischback, Germany there was about, they estimate, 2000 horses that was killed pulling their vehicles and no telling how many people were killed, soldiers was killed, on that. And that was a mess, but we didn't stay there long enough for it to become a problem to us, because somebody else would have to come up and bury the horses and all that. And we rushed on to the Rhine River and went to Worms, across the Rhine River at Worms on a pontoon bridge. And the Germans was shelling the pontoon while we were there, thank goodness they didn't hit it, but they were shelling at it. Then after we crossed the Rhine, and we started chasing the Germans, we continued to chase them, they were—I guess [they] had probably decided that it was better to let us take land than it was the Russians to take land, or at least that's what they said. So, they put more pressure on the Eastern Front than they did on the Western Front. So, we didn't get too much resistance except just in spots.

PIEHLER: But where would you hit resistance, and how predictable was it?

POINTER: You didn't know. In other words, if there was a town, you could expect maybe a crossroad, you could expect resistance that type and form. And so, we got to a place just outside of Wurzburg, Germany, and it was the home of [Joachim von] Ribbentrop which is equivalent to our Secretary of ...

PIEHLER: State?

POINTER: State, right. It was his—on the town, they had flags all over the town, and white sheets and everything, and we thought they were going to quit. As we come into this place there was an Army Barracks there and we caught the Germans, I guess, by surprise, and they had white sheets on the bunks and coffee on the stoves. We run them out. And so, at that time we just got out on the high ground, took the high ground, and the barracks there, and looking down on the river. And the river had one end of the bridge blown, but tanks, German tanks, was still trying to get on that bridge and get across. So, they called artillery in on that. Then our commanding officer came up and wanted the patrol to go into town. I was leading the patrol into town, and a machine gun opened up on us. So, as we were trying to knock out the machine gun I turned around, facing the rear, and motioned for a BAR man to come up to me, and a sniper got me in the leg. But what we would do is on these machine guns, if there was just one machine gun, or two machine guns, if they were kind of isolated, why, we knocked them out pretty good.

Because we'd take BARs, two BAR men, Browning Automatic Rifles, and they [took] a clip that shot about twenty rounds. We'd shoot one round, then the other round, that way we'd force them down and they'd have to get their head down in the hole. And while they were doing that why, another one would crawl out there and put a grenade in the hole, and blow them up. So, we were doing that when ... I was wounded.

But the Germans were good soldiers. They were disciplined soldiers, but they didn't have a transition as well as we did. In other words if our Captain was killed, why, the Lieutenant took over, and so forth, like that, right on down. And they didn't have that smooth of an operation, it seemed, in combat. And another thing I forgot to tell you, while we were on these holding positions, you sat around and you think of something you could do. And the Germans would come up—one time they came up to our line and, just like they were going to surrender, three of them, and they had a machine gun tied on to one of their backs—and so, they walked up, and he just fell flat, and the men are following him and grabbed that machine gun, it's already set up, you know, and they shoot into the line. We had some of them that would, as I was saying, pull those strings and things. Some of them would do things like that and we kept trying to get one sniper out of the hole like that. And so, you can't booby-trap anything unless you have authority. At that time they said a Brigadier General had to give you authority before you could put down mines or booby-traps. So, anyway, we kept wanting to booby-trap that hole because he didn't keep in it in the day time, he'd just come at night. And so, they wouldn't do that, but somebody slipped out there and put a grenade in the hole and tied a string across that hole and when he came out there and jumped in that hole, he pulled the key out of that grenade and it went off. No one ever said anything to us about it, but we didn't have trouble with him anymore.

That's a—then I was put on a hood of a jeep and hauled back to the rear to Frankfurt, and was operated on in Frankfurt and flew out to Rheims, France [on a C-47 cargo plane], and was put on a hospital train at Rheims and set down to Epinal, France. And on this hospital train they just put you in there on hangers, you know, and just hang you up on—and so, they just about had me hung up on one, and I looked down the aisle, and there comes an old soldier I'd been in Fort McPherson, Georgia with. (Laughter) So, he took good care of me until we got to Epinal. And I got to Epinal and was in the Army Barracks—it used to be an old French barracks, and they turned it into a hospital. And so, they operated, and so forth, but a few days before that, we were taking a little town in France before we went into Germany called Philippsbourg. Philippsbourg, France, and we had taken it once before, and had to withdraw, and then we was taking it again. And so, we caught a German snipping at an American Med Corpsman. And so, the Colonel said, or he was a Major at that time, he asked him why he was shooting at the Medic. And he says, "Well, they say it's better to kill one Medic than it is ten riflemen because this Medic takes care of the other people." And he hit him with his fist and broke his fist.

PIEHLER: So, he really hit him?

POINTER: Yeah. (Laughter) So, in the meantime, why, we received word that our battalion commander had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. And so—when I went to Epinal I didn't know where he was. He checked the roster every day for the wounded coming in, to see if any of his men were on the list. So, he came to visit me, and I told him that he had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

PIEHLER: He sounds like a very conscientious officer, to have—he couldn't do anything, he made sure to visit the wounded.

POINTER: I'm not criticizing other officers, but I was fortunate. I served under West Point graduates, all except one officer, and they were all good.

PIEHLER: You had a lot of respect for them?

POINTER: Yes. I respect them. But—Colonel [Walter J.] Felenz was his name. After the war he served two hitches in Vietnam. He was stationed at Fort Knox, I went to see him. And he was writing the history of our division. He lived in San Antonio, and he died suddenly—he had a heart attack and passed away. He had part of the manuscript finished but they never did publish it. But anyway, after Epinal I came to Cherbourg, Cherbourg to a hospital ship to Elida E Lutz, hospital ship back to Charleston, South Carolina, and flew down to Welsh Convalescent Hospital at Daytona Beach, Florida. And then, after a time there, I was discharged and returned home.

And a funny incident is that, there were several of us, you know, getting out of the service at the same time, because the Japanese had surrendered at this time. And I had planned on staying in. And I had, when I was in Atlanta, I had made friends with a Colonel that was in charge of the ROTC programs. And so, at the time, I was there, at onetime mentioned to me, he said, "How would you like to be in the ROTC program?" Well, I didn't—at that time, I didn't know enough about it to know if I would or not. So, when I decided that, ... I might just stay in a little while longer. Why, I was on furlough, and I went by Atlanta to visit with him, and so, he gave me a choice. I could go to the University of North Carolina, or North Carolina State, Springfield, Tennessee, or Columbia, Tennessee, Columbia Military Academy. And I had chosen Columbia Military Academy. And I was going to do that but after the Japanese surrendered, we got orders from the President, all limited service men would be discharged.

So, about five or six of us headed home. We came up through Milledgeville, Georgia, that's the home place of Eugene Talmadge. And so, we'd stopped there and went into a little restaurant. And there was just a booth, and I pulled a chair up to the end of the table, and a policeman came in and motioned for me to come out, and so I went out. And he said, "Did some of you people embarrass this lady out here?" She was sitting in the car and I said, "I don't know, we just drove up here and got out and went in the restaurant." And he says, "No, she said there was one who came back out." And I said, "Well I didn't notice." I went in and asked one those people if he had—if anybody had gone out, and he said, "Yeah I did." So, he went outside, and this woman said that he embarrassed her, because he had taken the bottle, taken a drink before he ate and she was—thought that that was a sin. (Laughter) And so, he told this policeman, he said, "Listen we've been overseas, we've been wounded, and we've been discharged, and we're on our way home, and we plan on going home and nowhere else." And he said, "We want to eat, and we don't want anybody to bother us." So, the policeman just walked away. But he was—he wasn't going to be arrested, he was going to go home.

PIEHLER: He was going home one way or the other.

POINTER: Go home one way or the other. So, these little funny things that you run into—it's real interesting to see all kinds of people. I met—when I first went into the service, I was assigned a bunk between a couple of fellas, and they lectured me. They said, "We're gonna show you how to make up your bed and everything." They said, "Now if you get gigged, we pay the penalty, and we don't get a pass over the weekend, so you, you're gonna do this right." So, they taught me how to make a bed and one of them, his name was Jay Waverly Ray of Mississippi, and I'll never forget him either. Finest young man. And he—I kept up with him, he went to, to OCS. He went to Paratrooper training, and went overseas and jumped at Kasserine Pass, in Africa and was killed, at that time. So, you met some of the best, and some of the worst.

PIEHLER: I wanted to, sort of—Meg and I have some follow up questions. Let me even, sort of, go back to basic training again. You mentioned two people that you really felt very highly of, that they taught you how to make your bed. But I'm also—you had really not been, really outside of Norris and the surrounding areas for the most part. What was it like to meet all these guys in basic training from all over the country?

POINTER: Well, it was really an experience.

PIEHLER: How many were Northerners, or New Yorkers?

POINTER: Not many.

PIEHLER: Not many. Most people ...

POINTER: At that time, I went in because that was before the war.

PIEHLER: Now, were you all volunteers, or were there some peacetime draftees?

POINTER: There was a few peacetime draftees coming in at that time.

PIEHLER: And you told us the story about the one who wasn't gonna stay in this Army.

POINTER: Yeah, now he was one of the first of those draftees when they really revved it up, you know, they were bringing them in fast. We had so many of them coming in at that time we hardly had places for them to sleep. In fact, a lot of them had to sleep in pup tents out on the parade ground. But there was a lot of training that we were more or less catching up—in other words, trying to get enough people in to form units at that time.

PIEHLER: In terms of basic—I mean, in some ways, while they're gearing up, you're still in the pre-Pearl Harbor Army.

POINTER: Right.

PIEHLER: And could you talk a little bit about your first sergeant that you had? Sergeant [or] Drill Instructor.

POINTER: Well, our first sergeant, we didn't see much of him, because he was the office manager, you know, he didn't have much to do outside. It was the master sergeants and the tech sergeants, and the staff sergeants, and the buck sergeants, and the corporals, like that. Most of my drilling, and calisthenics, physical fitness programs, and everything, was run by corporals. And the thing that's so much different today then it was back then, is we had, I guess, what you might call 100 percent discipline. Because, a private didn't dare to double-cross, or do much that a PFC didn't like. You know, if he didn't—if you weren't following orders, he'd put you straight. A corporal would do the same thing, and a sergeant, and so forth, so forth like that. So, by the time that the war was over, I saw people talking to officers in a way that you would never believe—that four years would change the attitudes and the actions of troops.

PIEHLER: It had been much more formal when you had started?

POINTER: Oh, absolutely.

PIEHLER: Even a private first class was a rank.

POINTER: That's right. That's exactly right, it was a rank. And a corporal could put you on KP. And when we got out of the service, why, a tech. sergeant would tell a lieutenant, "Well, I'm not gonna do that." And that's what makes me worry about a volunteer Army. Although it seems like it's working, they don't have the discipline that we had. But you were talking about the pre-Pearl Harbor Army, that was a really good service. You trained or drilled two and a half days. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and then you were off on Wednesday afternoon. Thursday and Friday you worked again. And then after you had an inspection on Saturday, you were off until Monday morning. And we could wear our civilian clothes, and it wasn't bad. But you were talking about being away from home. You never saw anyone that was more homesick than I was. Oh, I was terribly homesick. And after I was there about three weeks, I was going to the PX one Saturday afternoon, and met an old boy from Norris walking up the street. I told him a lot of times, I said, I never saw anyone that looked so good. (Laughter) So, he's—and so, but we had a good service. I really, I really enjoyed the military. I enjoyed the discipline. We had a good outfit, it was well disciplined, and, I think, that was one of the things that helped many of us survive.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you had had a lot of experience with the outdoors growing up. You had hunted a lot, how much of that came in good standing, particularly in basic, and then later in the Army, when you were actually in the field?

POINTER: A lot, a lot, just like I said about the ... wheels on the plane. Well, when we got, when you get out in the mountains, in combat, or something, estimating distance and to know the terrain, and to experience the terrain, and stuff. And I always had a good sense of direction, and that's important, because I never had much trouble map reading. You go from this location to that location, and that's important too. Because you got—sometimes you just make one, two, or three steps off the straight and narrow, and you're lost, or in the hands of the Germans, and so forth. And so, I enjoyed that. I think my rural background and being a country boy helped me tremendously.

PIEHLER: You ... stayed at Fort McPherson, you didn't go...to another post initially?

POINTER: Not initially. I could have stayed there throughout the whole war if I hadn't requested it.

PIEHLER: Really, you could have been doing what you ...

POINTER: Yeah, I could really have done that. I think, I could have, if indicated.

PIEHLER: Yeah, or it might have been—or if not that whole war, pretty close it sounds.

POINTER: Yeah. And I told you that was the best place that you could be. For fifteen, I guess, fifteen or twenty years after I got out of the service, I'd go back to Fort Mac, maybe if we were on a vacation of something, I'd go out and drive around the fort. And it was fifteen or twenty years that I went to Fort Mac [before] I didn't see someone that I knew, that I served with there. Because the Army had a deal whereby that if you want to re-enlist you could pick your post. And so, it was such a good place that every time they re-enlisted they wanted to come back to Atlanta. And so ...

PIEHLER: What made it such a ...

POINTER: We'd just walked out the gate and catch the trolley. You ride the trolley free, and you'd go into town and you had a lot of things in there to do. But one thing I forgot to tell you was—I got to tell you this. While I was at Fort McPherson, Georgia, I had a—got acquainted with a master sergeant that had come back from the Azores. He had been down in the Azores, and he said—he was telling me about his experience and everything, and by that time, I kind of settled down in the Army, you know, and was enjoying it. He said, “You ought to go to the Azores,” he said, “you'd like that.” And, at that time, if you served in the Caribbean, Panama, Azores or anything, you got time and a half. In other words it was just like, you served one day, you got credit for one and a half days, so on a three year hitch, you see, you could serve three years and they give you credit for four and a half years. And so, I said, “let's see if we can transfer, I'll go with you.” He wanted to go back, and I said, “I'll go with you.” But anyway we couldn't transfer.

And we got an outfit that came in from the Philippines—in fact in those days, you didn't necessarily get your uniforms, you could draw cloth, and have your uniforms made. And so, they gave you a clothing allowance. And so, this outfit came from the Philippines and they had blue uniforms, and they were made just like our dress uniforms, and they were sharp. And so, I saw this outfit out with swinging sickles cleaning up out there one time, and I stopped—I was carrying a message from the headquarters to the radio station. The radio station could transmit Army information, at the radio station at Fort Mac there—so, I saw this outfit, and I said, “What in the world!” I couldn't believe it! I stopped and asked the sergeant there, I said, “Where'd they get these fatigues like that,” you know, “as their work clothes.” And he says, “Oh, we came from the Philippines,” and he said, “we drew a clothing allowance, and so, we had these clothes,” and said, “we can get the uniform tailor made for six dollars.” And so, they had it all

tailor made, you know, fatigue clothes out there working. They looked sharper than we did in our dress uniforms. So, we got to talking, about going to the Philippines ...

PIEHLER: This is before Pearl Harbor?

POINTER: Before Pearl Harbor, November. And so, I put in for, what they call a short discharge, that meant that you could ask for a discharge if you had, say, a year of service, or how many months, or whatever, provided that you were going to re-enlist. And so, I applied for a short discharge to re-enlisted and be re-assigned to the Philippines. And, as I said to you before, the good Lord was looking over me. So, I didn't hear anything about that, never heard of that, because when the war broke out, why, all those things was out the window.

PIEHLER: And luckily you put it ...

POINTER: So, thankful I have been all this time that I didn't put that in a month earlier.

PIEHLER: Yeah, because they could very well have shipped you out, and you would have had a very different war.

POINTER: If I wound up in the Philippines, right.

PIEHLER: But that was viewed—I've been told by [members of] the pre-Pearl Harbor Army, Philippines duty was viewed by a lot of Army people as really good duty.

POINTER: Oh yeah. Yes, Philippines. Panama wasn't too good. I guess that was because they were in hotter weather down there, and the people, and so forth. But, back to your training, I never experienced—I can honestly say, I never experienced a bad officer in the Army. I enjoyed every one of them, because they were—now there were some better than others. I think one of the best officers I had was Colonel Felenz that I was telling you about. When we'd ... be out drilling, or something, and when we took a break or we'd get out in a scrimmage football game, or something, he'd get in and play with us, and we'd roll him in the dirt.

PIEHLER: This was where?

POINTER: He was just like anybody else. But when he calls you to attention, there wasn't any question of who was the boss.

PIEHLER: Colonel Felenz, you served with him in where again?

POINTER: In Europe.

PIEHLER: In Europe.

POINTER: Europe, yeah. And I don't think that there was ever a fellow that wouldn't have followed him anywhere.

PIEHLER: So, when you played scrimmage this was back at Camp Gruber?

POINTER: Back at Camp Gruber, yeah. And then, of course, then George A. Tuttle, that was my platoon leader. He was a good officer.

PIEHLER: And he was a West Pointer, right?

POINTER: West Pointer, all of them were West Pointers but one. He was a ...

PIEHLER: Who was the one that wasn't a West Pointer?

POINTER: He was a—like a—one was a CMTC, and you know what that is? That's where that you could go to camp in the summer, for so many summers, and you could get a commission.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I know there's a famous camp up in New York, in upstate New York, which—the name is slipping me, but I know exactly ...

POINTER: And that person wasn't a very good officer at all. And he was—I guess, I have a reason to feel that way about him, because he was part of my downfall to getting me kicked out of OCS.

PIEHLER: This is—yes this is the lieutenant at OCS.

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: I actually—I'm gonna—Meg, why don't you—I'm going to give you a chance.

ZAMMETT: Well, I just wanted to ask you—you had just said something about prisoners out of—that you had rescued out of forced labor camps, what was that like?

POINTER: Well, as you advance, why, you're liberating so many prisoners that were in forced labor, in towns and things, they really wasn't held in camps. They were held in smaller groups like factories, working in factories and things. And so, they were of all nationalities. And the thing about the Holocaust, or the prisons that were being liberated, a lot of people place emphasis on it being Jewish people, but there was more other people than there was Jewish people in there. And the Germans, they didn't treat—I don't know that they treated the Jewish people any worse, in my opinion, than they did the other people. Because they were really demanding on all of them, whether they worked in factories, or whether they worked rebuilding railroads that we bombed out. They had work crews that they had people working on, and things of that type. So, anyway you weigh up, the situation of "war is hell," just like they say ...

ZAMMETT: What kind of physical condition were they in when ...

POINTER: Very bad. Most of them were very bad. They were undernourished and they had been underfed and probably—overworked and underfed, you know.

ZAMMETT: Also, you had said before about the German soldiers messing with you with the tin cans, and you had said that you had done stuff like that to them, do you remember any specific examples of that?

POINTER: Well, just like booby-trapping their foxholes, or something like that. I guess, that's about the only thing. And then another thing was, like, catching prisoners, and saying that they were going to have a party back in town that night. And we'd save it, we'd pass the word back to Air Force, and the artillery people, they'd shell the town, bomb the town, and break up their parties, and things of that type. So, all these things that—a lot of these things happen, you know, that you wonder exactly what's gonna happen as a result of what you've done.

The Free French Army, at first when we went overseas, they would come up to our front. And they'd just float, they didn't have any responsibility other than to be up there in our way. And one time we were in a holding position in this little town down in the valley. And if you—you got to understand that the towns in Europe are different than ours. In other words, ours is strung out all along the highway. But you either—when we was there, you either were in town or you're out of town. In other words, it's just like going through a gate. And so, this little town down in the valley, it was in between the two fronts, and we were patrolling it to keep the Germans out and the Germans were patrolling to keep us out, occupying it permanently. The Free French came up one time and they kept, with their binoculars, looking over, way over on the hill, at this house sitting over there by itself. And so, they would watch, and when these German officers would go to the outside Johnny—it was sitting out in the field from the house, they kept watching, and watching, and watching. At first, we couldn't figure out what they were doing. And so, then they'd talk. So, they'd come a couple of days, and then the third day they came up, and they had artillery piece behind [them] ... and then they aimed, and they aimed, and they aimed, and they aimed.

And so, finally, at last, what they had done, they had watched that until they found out that ... the commanding officer, or high-ranking officer went to the bathroom at ten o'clock every morning, or something like that. (Laughter) And so, so they waited until he got into this outside john and then shot that thing, it just blew apart. And then, [they] hooked onto that thing, and took off to the rear. And then, in come their artillery, you see, the Germans throwing it in on us. And so, our battalion commander, Colonel Felenz says, "Don't let them [the Free French] on the front." He says, "Come up here and run them off." And so, that's what we did. We never did—after that we never would let them on our front. And they'd come up and jabber around, you know, and we'd say, "We don't want you up here, we don't want you, go somewhere else." And as far as I'm concerned there were a lot of those people that ought to have been fighting their own war, rather than doing other things. But you just have little incidences like that everyday. If you didn't do something, why, you'd, you'd loose your mind, you know. And then, too, we had American soldiers—we had some before we went in through Germany and broke the pillboxes that shot themselves intentionally. I didn't see it done, but when a man's gone through training and he would put your hand in the barrel of his rifle—you know good and well that he's been taught not to do that, you know.

PIEHLER: This was, this was in training you saw people, or in ...

POINTER: No, when he does this and accidentally gets a hole through his hand to get out of the War, or shoot his self through the foot.... We had some—we had one man that was court-martialed, a sergeant was court-martialed ...

-----END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: You were saying you knew a sergeant who was court-martialed, because he deliberately kept his hands ...

POINTER: Kept his hands out. He didn't try to protect them from the cold. And we were told that he was taken to the rear and was court-martialed because he did that intentionally to [get] off of the ...

PIEHLER: And he had access to gloves and ...

POINTER: Oh, sure he access to gloves. And besides, if you're on a holding position, you don't have to have your hands exposed all the time, you can put them in your pockets, and under clothes, or something. That's what we—a lot of times if you're standing watch at night it's really cold, or something like that, a lot of cases, why, you keep your gun covered up to keep it—you don't want the thing to freeze shut, you know, lock it up. So, you protect your gun to keep it warm, too. So, that was some of the things that happened. And then we met some—when we went into Strasbourg, we would take over a house, or two, or three, a dozen houses, to shelter us, if we could [to] protect our front on that. And so, we was checking in this house, well, we took a room, we took an upstairs room this time, because the family wasn't using this room, so they let us use the upstairs room. And so, this—it was in—of course, that was in the Alsace-Lorraine territory of France, and they were predominantly German. And so, the lady was pouring wine to all of us, you know, and I made the mistake of coughing. I had a cold, and so, this lady said, "Vino makes good for cold." And so, I said "okay." So, I go upstairs and she—in a few minutes, why, here came this motherly type woman, you know. And she pull my shirt apart and she greased my chest, and put a flannel cloth on it, and gave me a glass with about that much liquid in it here, and she says, "All, all." And so, I drank it.

PIEHLER: Sounds like it was—was it Schnapps?

POINTER: Schnapps. (Laughter) And I told the boys, I said, "I believe she's poisoned me." (Laughter) "My toenails are coming off," you know. But I felt better the next day. We stayed there about two days. And they were real friendly people. And, I asked about Schnapps, and she had her husband go out and show me how they made Schnapps. There was this room in the barn, a stable ...

PIEHLER: Size of our office?

POINTER: ... had a barrel, I mean a big old silo, and they'd take the potato peelings out there and throw them over there, and every so often they'd go out there with rubber boots. And they'd walk in that thing, you know, and that's why I get a kick out of Lucy Arnaz, you know. She—there's one of the programs [I Love Lucy] that she and her friends is making wine on the grapes,

you know. And so, after seeing him walk and that, and everything, and him making Schnapps.... But the Germans could have killed every one of us if they were the—if they had poisoned their wine cellars.

PIEHLER: So, your unit often—if you had a chance to get alcohol—you looked for wine cellars?

POINTER: Oh, that was the—we had some people that that was the number one object going in—if there happened to be a German down there they'd catch him while they were down there, but their primary goal was to find that wine cellar. (Laughter)

ZAMMETT: Would they keep it with them?

POINTER: What?

ZAMMETT: Would they keep it with them?

POINTER: No, no they'd just drink it, they didn't take anything with them.

PIEHLER: No filling of canteens during the war?

POINTER: No, no. Well, I guess, maybe sometimes they would, but normally ...

PIEHLER: Normally they'd just consume it?

POINTER: Normally they'd just drink. And I experienced something there that I hadn't experienced before, is that nearly in every basement you went in to, cellar, they had pickled eggs. And I had never experienced pickled eggs. So I tried some, and so, I found some and put them in my coat pockets, you know, here and here, got out, it wasn't long that I had to hit the ground, but those hadn't been pickled. (Laughter) I had to wait until we could get a lull, you know, and take the coat off, turn the pockets around inside out and wash them out with snow, you know, wash those pockets out. It got—when it got warm those eggs didn't smell good.

Another little incident I did, is that we had hoods, and we didn't always have the best clothing for the winter up there. But we had this jacket with a hood on it, but it didn't have a liner in it. And so, I noticed that some of the hoods that they were getting had linings in them, and I happened to be in one of the barns there and I saw these rabbits. And this woman, about two or three women, was in the house there that was sewing like this quilt, so I got the idea that I'd take one of these rabbit skins and ask her if she'd sew it in my hat. And so, she did and I looked in and she was sewing it, my hood. Then the man came in and he says he recognized those rabbit skins, I'd stole his rabbit skins.

PIEHLER: This was in—was this in France or Germany?

POINTER: France. France, yeah. That was behind Strasbourg when we was in a holding position. That's the only time you had time doing much of anything.

PIEHLER: Well, he was not pleased you took his rabbit skins. Did you work out some sort of trade?

POINTER: Yeah, I paid him for them. And, because—I don't know how much I paid him, because France had so many different sizes of bills, and I just usually just handed him something, you know, I didn't know much that money was worth. Another time we were buying—we were having a wine sale, and eating bread, rye bread, and wine. And the restaurant ran out of bread. And so, we asked them for more bread, he said he didn't have any bread. So, we had our little interpreter's book, you know, and we kind of talked to him. So, he says—we found out that the bakery was around the corner, but you had to have a tag, a tag to get bread you know. So, I go around there, and it's like you walk up to a teller at a theater, you know, to get a ticket, and I says, "Bread, bread," he says, "Ticket, ticket, ticket," [I said] "No ticket, no ticket," [he said] "No, no bread, no bread." So, I'd been paid, so I laid a bill down there, [he said], "No, no." I laid another one down, "No, no." I laid the third one down there, and I don't know how much it was worth, but—it may have been worth ten, twelve dollars, and he said, "Oui, oui, oui." And he brought me a whole arm full of bread, out there. Those were sticks like that like (gestures), and I took them around the corner. And we were sitting—this little wine place had a picnic table in there, just like picnic table here. So, I just put them in the middle of the table and everybody drank wine, and ate bread, 'til there heart's content

PIEHLER: How important was getting these, sort of—you know, the bread and the wine and other—I mean how—what were you generally living on, in terms of rations when you were in the field?

POINTER: We had D rations, and C rations, had some—another, I think it was, E rations, and that was a—that ration was where that they had ten and one. And that was pretty good. But most of our—when we were in a moving position was D rations. That's a ...

PIEHLER: So, you weren't getting very many hot meals?

POINTER: Very few, very few. I'd say, that in the three months, or thereabout, that I was on the front, we had—I can remember having hot sandwiches. They brought them up, hot sandwiches, maybe once or twice.

PIEHLER: Once or twice ...

POINTER: In three months, in a three month-period yeah.

PIEHLER: So, forget about dinners, or ...

POINTER: No, in other words—those rations weren't bad. They'd have ham and eggs in those little cans. And the thing about it, that I'll have to apologize to Mr. Hershey on his Hershey Bars, you know, they'd have a little Hershey Bar about this long, and you'd have to take your bayonet to break it, it was so hard. (Laughter) And they told us—we used to give them to kids, you know, going through town and throwing them out, you know. They made us quit doing that,

because they was so high in nutrients that it caused dysentery for these kids. And so, they told us to quit giving them out. But after visiting Hershey, Pennsylvania I felt bad, that such a fine goal that they have up there, that I talked about their product like that. But we'd get cigarettes, I didn't smoke so I gave them away, and soap, we'd get soap, and that was the only thing that I black marketed while I was in France.

And somebody—one day, we were in camp out on the hill before we went up to the front lines, and he threw a—wanted to know if anybody needed any soap. And so, they didn't so one of them threw it to me and he says, "Give it to somebody." And it hit the ground and broke into two. Well, there was a Frenchmen there [that] had about a sack of wine and it has—they all had knapsacks, and so, he wanted to trade me wine for that. And I didn't want any wine. And so, he finally, at last, wanted to give me money, and I got two dollars and forty cents worth of Francs for a half of an Ivory ...

PIEHLER: Ivory ...

POINTER: So, I turned around and spent it on something else.

ZAMMETT: I was wondering, what kind of things did you guys do to keep yourselves busy, like, at night when you were all just bored, you know, what kind of ...

POINTER: You mean while we were in combat?

ZAMMETT: Mm hmm.

POINTER: Well, there wasn't, there wasn't anything for you to do, because you were out there in a foxhole. You rotate your shift, you're on two hours and off two hours, if you could stand it that long. And so, when your time came, why, you lay down and went to sleep on that. So, you didn't have—occasionally, why—there wasn't anything for you to do unless you just stood up there and talked to your buddy, keep him company or something. The hardest time was when it was cold or raining. You didn't have any way of cutting out the rain or anything. So, each one of us had a half of a pup tent, because it took two, you know, to make one pup tent. So, what we would do is take one pup tent, and spread it out over the hole, so that the one that was on guard was right on the corner of the hole, would leave it open. So, he'd get up and pull it around his body, so that it would shelter the hole, and the one that is down in there could sleep without getting wet. And other than that—I remember one time, I laid down with my hand like this, on my head and went to sleep, and it was cold, and I reached up there and felt my hand and it was so cold that I didn't have any feeling in it. And I can remember jumping up, because I thought that my buddy had been shot, he'd froze in there, and I had a hold of his cold hand, you know. And so, these—it's not as easy as I've made it think, made you think it is, because you're out there and somebody's looking for you, looking for you, and if you should stick your head up, why, he's going to shoot it off. And so, it's just the fact that he can't be looking at you all the time, and you can't be looking at him all the time, so just thank goodness that you're in the hole when he's looking and vice versa, you know. So, there's really nothing for you to do. Write letters occasionally when you wanted to write home, and I didn't do too much writing, because I just never had the chance.

ZAMMETT: Were you able to receive letters?

POINTER: What?

ZAMMETT: Were you able to receive letters?

POINTER: Yeah, occasionally. But when you're in combat you won't receive letters until there was a break or something. So, it may be a week before you get a letter even if they've got it in the back. And so, sometimes we'd get on the move, why, the mail can't keep up with you, and things like that.

ZAMMETT: Well, I was wondering how your mother felt, when you were ...

POINTER: Well, I guess, just like any other mother. I know she hated to see me go into the service. And at the time I went into the service, you had to be twenty-one years old to enlist, and—see, I wasn't twenty-one years old so my mother had to sign a permit for me to go into the service. And so, as a result of that, I'm sure that she felt guilty. And I—after my mother died, I was going through some of her material, and I found a telegram that I was wounded. They sent her a telegram that I was wounded, I wasn't seriously hurt, and that I'd be okay, and things like that. And then I found, about a week later, was a postcard, and then another postcard—I think there was about three or four contacts that the Army had made with my mother telling her that I was going to be alright.

I'll tell you something else that we don't give enough credit to, and that's the Nurse Corps. When I was wounded, I was brought back to Frankfurt and operated on. And when you're shot with a rifle, they try to open up that wound and let it drain; get the gas to drain out of there. So, I was shot in the leg, it went straight through me. And I was close enough to the German that the velocity of the bullet was still high and it was an armor-piercing bullet in addition to that, and so, my wound was small in comparison to most of them. Because where it went in, it knocked a hole about as big as my finger, and where it went out it knocked a hole about the same thing. But if it had been—if I'd been farther away from him, and it had been an anti-personnel bullet, when it hit me, why, that bullet would have enlarged, and it would have started to wobble, and so, a bullet this long turned side ways, tears out a lot of—a big hole when it comes out.

PIEHLER: So, your bullet was—the velocity—it sort of tore a hole in you, about a half an inch, is that ...

POINTER: Oh, about as big as the end of your finger.

PIEHLER: Big as the end of your finger.

POINTER: Going in and out.

PIEHLER: Okay.

POINTER: But you see, what happened was that they cut me on both sides here, about that far into my leg and stuffed cotton through there so it would drain. And the material that had drained on the backside looked like gangrene, you know. You've seen brass rivets and leather, where it stayed out? It looked just like that. And they left me open for about—they left that in there for about oh, five, six, seven days. And then, then they cleaned it out, sewed you up, and then you—normally you're all right.

ZAMMETT: How long did it take you to recover, and walk?

POINTER: Well, it didn't take too awfully long. I was fortunate. Let's see, I was wounded on April 1st, and so, I was walking without my stroller in thirty days. You had somebody help you but—the thing about that situation is that the difference between medical technology at that time and what it is today is all the difference in the world. We took over—captured a German hospital, and here was boys that had pieces of steel sticking out of their legs, you know, pins. We'd never seen anything like that before. They had broken legs, so they drilled a hole through there and put a pin in it, and they were up and walking. Well, I had a broken leg when I was ten years old, and I had a cast on my body, and I laid flat on my back for three months. You see, here's these boys, [after] three days they were up and walking. A difference in technology.

Incidentally, when I had my leg broke, they set my leg and it grew back crooked. They had to break it, and operate on it again. And it's crooked, they didn't straighten it up, it's crooked. And that was what I was telling you about—the Air Force doctor saw that it was crooked. But the officer that was sewing me up, and cleaned it out, I came too before he finished up. He said, "I see you had a broken leg." And I said, "yes." And he said, "It's crooked," and I said, "Yes." And he said, "Don't ever complain about it being crooked again because," he says, "that bullet scraped the bone right in the crook," and he says, "if it'd been straight, it'd been broken." So, there's a lot to the saying that "there's a silver lining to ever cloud," you know. So, I guess, there was a ...

ZAMMETT: Well, for your mother, you getting injured it might have been that way, coming home—for you getting injured in Germany and having to be sent home.

POINTER: Yeah. So, I came home and, and then a short time after that—well, after I was discharged, I came home before I was discharged, for leave. And then I planned on entering a university. And so, I didn't get discharged in time to enroll in the fall quarter, so I came home and went out to Oak Ridge and worked for a few weeks until the new quarter started. So, I enrolled here at UT, on February 2nd, 1946.

ZAMMETT: And you used the G.I. Bill?

POINTER: Used the G.I. Bill. I got sixty dollars a month, and they paid the tuition, and for the books and the pencils and all that stuff. And at the time that I arrived here, I say there was probably, three—there was about 6,000-6,500 students here at that time. I would say that half of those, a good half, or maybe two-thirds were veterans.

ZAMMETT: Really?

POINTER: Yeah.

ZAMMETT: Were you a student of agriculture? Or were you ...

POINTER: I was in agriculture.

ZAMMETT: And you went for four years straight?

POINTER: Yup. I started in '46 and graduated in March of '49. And so, I went straight through. And talk about people encouraging you to go to work; I had a friend out in the country that had a sawmill, and every time that I got a break between quarters, or anything, or got a few days off he'd want me to come out and off-bare [means to carry lumber and slabs away from sawmill] for his sawmill. I'd helped him before, you know, so I'd go out there and off-bare the sawmill, and that's hard work. And so, I said, "You know that's good therapy for me, because, first, I can do something, and second it reminds me that I don't want to do this all my life." (Laughter) And so, I'll come back and enroll the next quarter. So, those are some of the things—well, do you have any other questions?

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, yeah.

POINTER: I can talk for a week, you know.

PIEHLER: Well, I want to ask a little more about what happens—you know, some of your UT stories and what happens, but I have a few more questions, well, actually quite a few about the Army. One of them, is you mentioned after you finished basic, you were in the induction area of the base.

POINTER: I was in station complements. Who, as part of their work at that time, was to conduct the induction center.

PIEHLER: You mentioned—you already had some good stories, for example, pulling one on both the recruits, but also some of the other personnel, like the doctors. What were your impressions of all the—I mean, do you have other impressions of all these people coming in? And it's also—my sense of it, I've never been in the Army, but a lot of people have said it's a very, sort of, odd time for people coming in, because they're often a little just stunned, even if they want to be there.

POINTER: Let me just give you an example of some of the experiences I've had, hope you don't mind. When these people come in to be inducted, we take them into a big room and then say, "Everyone take your clothes off." Okay, and they say, "If you are embarrassed, you don't want to take your clothes off, or for some reason, you don't have to, we'll take you through at the end of the day." They take you through. And so, you'd find a few people that was in that category, that wouldn't take their clothes off. And so, you'd—then we'd always finish up our work in time to come back to find out why, you know. And so, as a result of that, there was two hermaphrodites, you know what a hermaphrodite is? So, that, in that—one fella came in, he had

lipstick on and everything, and I can be honest with you, I didn't know what a gay—I never heard of a gay when I was in the service. I was a grown man, I never heard of a gay, but here he was.

PIEHLER: In lipstick?

POINTER: In lipstick, and he was black. So, we got to standing around and talking to him, “Why ... do you have lipstick on,” and so forth. And he told us he was gay. And so, he says, “I was born like this.” So they were kidding him about it, you know. He says, “You've always heard that one knows another one,” and he says, “there's one of you are gay.” And so, we says, “Okay tell us which one, tell us which one.” And so, he says, “No, you'll get mad, you'll get mad.” And so, all of us pledged to him that we wouldn't get mad, you know. And he says, “The sergeant.” And we had to hold that sergeant, and you know, it wasn't two weeks until he was caught in a hotel in Atlanta, along with about fifty or seventy-five others. And they arrested them.

PIEHLER: The police? Was this a police raid, or ...

POINTER: It was a police plus an Army raid. The Army was—it was for the Army.

PIEHLER: So this black gay recruit had actually—I mean he actually really had identified this guy.

POINTER: Oh yeah. He told us that one and he was sure one of them. That's—things like that that happens. Another thing that I noticed, that people in the milling section of Georgia, where that they have cotton mills, they would come in, and the first thing that went into hearing, and those people would wash their ears out. And I've seen hooks as big as the end of my finger, and I'm not exaggerating, of cotton balls, and people say, “You know I never realized that I was so near deaf,” because [the] accumulation with the wax in your ear, and accumulation of that fiber, it just builds up and you don't notice it. You just—your hearing goes away so slowly.

PIEHLER: So, doctors would literally see all this stuff built up, clean it out, and they ...

POINTER: That was the first thing that the men did, is wash their ears out, clean it out, and take hooks, and hook that stuff out. Now this only occurred for those people who was working in those cotton mills in this section of Georgia. So, you found all kinds of people and all kinds of ailments and things.

PIEHLER: There was a pretty high rejection rate in World War II, in induction, I mean, what was the sense—particularly, did you get people that really did want to serve, but physically, or mentally ...

POINTER: Well, for instance the hermaphrodites. Well, they'd give them an F classification and send them home. And so, they—the other boy, well, he didn't go in. In other words, he was given an F rating at that time. And later on they changed that rating a little bit 'til F meant undesirable, you know. And that first didn't mean you was undesirable, but you was unfit for

service. And so, it was ... a really interesting study, I guess, that the experiences I've had, I've enjoyed studying different people, and different cultures, and things of that type, under different circumstances, and various things.

PIEHLER: Did you have any sense, particularly among the recruits coming in, how many could read and write and how many couldn't?

POINTER: You'd be surprised. I would say that at that time, I'd say the majority of them could read some. But we would pass out stuff, and some of them couldn't read very well. Couldn't—they couldn't understand what they were reading on that. And another point—you've heard of wrestlers? 'Course you didn't hear of this one. "Man Mountain Dean" was a—he weighed 300 pounds, was a world champion wrestler during those years. Well, we inducted him. And guess whose army he served in? George Patton requested him. And he went—he left Atlanta—we had to keep him two or three weeks—well he went home every night and back everyday—we had to keep him three or four weeks before we could get a uniform for him. And then once he got a uniform, they shipped him to California. That was when Patton was forming an Army in California on desert warfare. That's where Patton went from there, then to Europe, and to Africa. And he was his physical fitness man.

PIEHLER: I'm curious about your division at Camp Gruber. You joined the division—how long had the division been together when you ... were assigned to Camp Gruber?

POINTER: I really don't know.

PIEHLER: Were they still in training at Gruber?

POINTER: Yes, yeah, they was still in training, they was just finishing their training. They had—you see the publicity of the 42nd Rainbow in World War I—they got the idea that they wanted to duplicate that in World War II. And, of course, this division is still active. It's in New York now.

PIEHLER: And the Rainbow in World War I was probably the most famous division.

POINTER: Yeah, World War I.

PIEHLER: Yeah, World War I.

POINTER: And so, that was [Douglas] MacArthur's division. And he was the one who formed the Rainbow Association, that we still have a reunion, it will be in July this year, we had a reunion every year since 1917. And so, we have affiliated ourselves now with the active Rainbow Division so that we can keep this continuity, and because our veterans are dying so fast that are numbers are coming down every year. I had them here in 1998, we had 862 registered, that's the highest that they've been since then. They've been coming down, so there are about 300 now, at this last reunion. So, that's how fast that they're disappearing. But what the idea was behind the 42nd was to have an international outfit that represented every possession, or every state and every island or anything that was a possession of the United States. And so,

that's why you didn't find many people from the same state in the Rainbow. Because at the time you get forty, forty-nine, or forty-eight at that time, you got forty-eight soldiers, you see, you only had one soldier per state. So, we had the—say, multiply that to get 20,000 or 15,000 and then, you see, you don't have but a few, maybe a hundred, from each state.

PIEHLER: You liked the Rainbow Division, and the officers, and it sounds like your fellow soldiers? Is that ...

POINTER: Oh yeah. I enjoyed, enjoyed the—I enjoyed the Army life, the time I was in. I think, as I said a while ago, I think I enjoyed the discipline as much as anything. It was a good outfit, everyone did their job, and if they didn't, why, they usually transferred.

PIEHLER: What about chaplains. How much contact, while you were in the Army, did you have with chaplains?

POINTER: Not much. Not much, not like they indicated that they do now. A chaplain would come up when we were in holding position, or when we were, say in a rest situation. They'd come up and hold services. And incidentally—I'll tell you another story. There's one thing I've always done, that is I've always shaved every day, there's just something about shaving. And when I was in the service I shined my shoes every day that was a requirement of course. But when we got overseas, sometimes it was hard to shave. It was hard to get the weather, and it was hard to shave. So, one time we were in a holding position, and they said that they were going to have services on Sunday. So, I get up early and I go out—we were out in the woods, so I took me a little fire, you know, and took my helmet and put it over the fire. I got me a five-gallon can and I poured about a half a gallon of water in it, I thought water, and I poured it in that and started cooking. I noticed a little blue flame started forming around that helmet. I thought, "Oh, that's strange. Somebody's had gasoline in that can where they put water!" So anyway, when I started to shave I found out what it was, it was champagne. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, it wasn't gasoline, it was champagne?

POINTER: No, champagne. Yeah, it was the alcohol. And I shaved in that. You'd catch a lot of prisoners that are real interesting to talk to. For instance the one I told you that walked into our line, we talked to him. He had on a nice clean uniform, and I got to talking with him—I had a boy in my squadron that was from Munich, he could speak German. And so, I held onto him to be my interpreter, you know.

PIEHLER: So, he was very valuable to you when you ...

POINTER: Oh absolutely. And so, we got this man, and we had interpreted our own prisoner we took before we sent him to the rear for the others to interpret. And so, we got to talking to him, and he wasn't in favor of the war, he didn't want the war. He was a professional, and he was a chemist. He had just come from Norway, where he had worked with the German atomic energy program. And you see, the British blew that thing up. And finally, the Germans decided that it was too late for them to rebuild it, so they re-deployed those soldiers. And he was ...

PIEHLER: He told you about this?

POINTER: Oh yeah, he told us all about it, and we passed it on to the rear, and so, they got all that information, so they had ...

PIEHLER: It's interesting, because the atomic bomb was a big secret.

POINTER: Oh, it was a big secret and, why, he talking about working in the heavy water facility didn't mean a thing in the world to me.

PIEHLER: At the time, you were just ...

POINTER: No, at the time, or anybody else. But the people in the rear knew what we were talking about, some ...

PIEHLER: Oh, that's interesting.

POINTER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It's interesting how that could have been a much more memorable conversation than ...

POINTER: Yeah. So, sometimes we'd get a prisoner [and ask] "What have you been doing?" And he'd tell you what he's been doing, and then you could apply what he says he's been doing with ... the situation out there in front of you, and it helped you quite a bit.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, you were stateside quite a bit. I mean, partly because you went into aviation and then they sent you back. What was your impression of both enemies, the Germans—and even the third enemy, the Italians, the Japanese, and Germany, when you were stateside? Because you would then not have a lot of contact with the Germans, so they weren't distant. What did you think about them? I mean, it's a very broad question.

POINTER: Well, I guess, that I was patriotic enough, and heard all these atrocity stories and things like that, that I was just gung-ho to get them all, you know, on that. But it was a—you see they had bombed London, killed a lot of people, you know, that we knew that they had killed. Stories leaked out about the concentration camps.

PIEHLER: When did you—when were you sort of aware that there were concentration camps?

POINTER: In ... some of the training they would tell us some about German-held prisoner of war camps and concentration camps.

PIEHLER: Did you see—do you remember seeing, while you were in the Army, Why We Fight, the Frank Capra documentaries?

POINTER: No, I didn't see that.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to any USO shows?

POINTER: I went to one, and you won't believe it, Patricia Neal, (laughter) and she was a little girl.

PIEHLER: Where was the show?

POINTER: It was somewhere in France, I don't remember where it was. They came through, and they let some of us come up to the front to go back to the rear to see the show.

PIEHLER: What about USO clubs, had you ever used ...

POINTER: Never, never used them. Very little. You can ask me another question about the Red Cross.

PIEHLER: That was my next question, was the Red Cross.

POINTER: Well. Yes ...

PIEHLER: Well, I was wondering because veterans have either really spoken very highly or there have been very negative comments.

POINTER: As far as I'm concerned then—I shouldn't be saying this as any negative towards them now, because I don't know about them. But at that time—I'll give you some examples. I went to—when I was wounded, I went to a hospital. Well, it just so happened that I had taken a prisoner, and I'd taken his knapsack off him. And he had a razor like I've never seen before, or since. It was just like a safety razor but the blade was curved, like that.

PIEHLER: Sort of twisted?

POINTER: Twisted right on the cutting edge. So, you put the blade in there, and when you tighten that blade up, why, it twisted to—naturally, and anywhere that you're shaving your face, it's at an angle. And it would cut long beards.

PIEHLER: We didn't have, really, that for years, anything even like it for years.

POINTER: I haven't seen one since then. And so, I had that, I carried it in my pocket, because when my beard got long I could just wet the beard and it would cut so good, you know. And so, I had my stuff with me, so when I was wounded why, I just kept it with me all the way through. And they came in, and when I got to Epinal, France they put one of these little goody bags on the end of the table. And so, the next day, why, here come a Red Cross worker and he said, "Sign right here." I said, "What am I signing," "That's so we can deduct twelve dollars out of your pay for the goody bag." And I said, "Well, you're crazy take that goody bag and go with it, I don't need, and I don't want it, and I don't want it."

PIEHLER: They would have charged you twelve dollars?

POINTER: Twelve dollars for a goody bag that had a razor, toothpaste, and stuff of that type in it.

PIEHLER: Sort of basic Army—also basic Army issue too.

POINTER: And so, ... I refused to take it, refused to sign it. And then, of course, I had already had experience with the Red Cross. They would ... come and give parties in the rear echelon, but they'd never give parties to the front liners, up there. They didn't get in close. So, one time there was a truck came up, lost his way and wound up behind the front lines. And so, driving up, you know, you could smell those fresh donuts. So, I asked the person—they was wanting to know where to go, and we sent them in the right direction, and I said, "How about given, sharing some donuts with us," and everything. They wouldn't give us any donuts because they were going to a party, but they'd sell us the donuts. So, we had to buy the donuts to pass out to the troops. And besides the—again, you can't judge all by one. The girls that were in there, they started out having their high fling at the first of the month with the officers, and they'd work their way down to enlisted men, you know, to get as much money as they could get. And just, not once but—I had sorry experiences with the Red Cross.

PIEHLER: You're not the first veteran. I once did an interview with a CBI veteran and he said they used to charge them for donuts. And they were so mad that when they got back on their landing craft—apparently the Red Cross was giving out free donuts, I think it was in New York harbor, people in his unit were so mad, that finally they gave them free donuts, they were throwing the donuts at the Red Cross people.

POINTER: But they were there making money. There's so many incidents that came up. When I was at Camp Gruber, we had a medic. He went overseas with me and, bless his heart, he put a tourniquet on me when I was wounded. He was from New York, he'd been raised by his grandmother. Well, his grandmother passed away, and he said he didn't have money to go home. So, I took him to the company commander and he says, "Well, go over to the Red Cross." We went over to the Red Cross, borrowed the money to go home on, and, you know, he was paying them back each month, and so, the Red Cross—and they weren't giving him credit for all of his payments. And so, it got so bad that he went to the captain, and talked to the captain, and every time he made a payment, he sent a witness with him to the Red Cross.

PIEHLER: They were so ...

POINTER: That's here in the States. So I ...

PIEHLER: Do you remember your medic's name that put the tourniquet on you when you were wounded?

POINTER: No, but I've got it at home.

PIEHLER: Is he still alive?

POINTER: I don't know. He was just a kid, you know, when came in. I was one of the youngest in my outfit when I first went in, but by the time of the war, you know, you added another two years on that. And—but, there was just case after case, after case on that. But the Nurse Corps, as I said a while ago, is one that is the most underrated ...

PIEHLER: Hold your thought on the Nurse Corp, because this tape is almost out.

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Dr. James Pointer on April 8, 2003 at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with Kurt Piehler and ...

ZAMMETT: Meghan Zammett.

PIEHLER: We were talking—you are among the members of the veterans who have less than fond memories of the Red Cross, but you said—well, maybe I should even back up about your being wounded because you found your medic was really good, or at least he did the right thing. Could you maybe talk a little bit more about him? You said he was from New York, and that he had lost his mother, who had raised him.

POINTER: Yeah, the medics did a wonderful job in my outfit. They were always right with us, among us, and—of course, in most cases, they were wearing arm bands and their helmets and everything, according to the Geneva Convention, they were not supposed to be shot at, and in most cases, they were not shot at. Occasionally, you'd witness someone shooting a medic. They were there, and they gave everything that was expected out of a medic.

PIEHLER: Did you lose any medics in your unit that were killed or wounded?

POINTER: Not as far as I know. I don't think we lost any. This medic I was talking about, he went overseas with us, and he was there when I left the outfit. He was right within fifty feet of me, he was right behind us, so he came right up and put a tourniquet on my leg, and I'm sure that he might have saved my life, I don't know, but it did stop the bleeding. The medics all the way down the line did a wonderful job. They were overworked, and I was going to tell you that when I was wounded and sent on back to the field hospital in Frankfurt, Germany, I saw one of the nurses working a tent of beds there. I'd say there were twenty beds of all types of wounds. Some of them were amputees, others were different ailments, and I remember very fondly of a nurse that was working a tent when I was brought in, and every time she had a little break, she would lay her head down on her desk and try to catch a little sleep, because she was the only one on duty. She had to work, I don't know how many hours she was there, but the 24 hours or more that I was there.... But everywhere on the line I went, the nurses did an excellent job, and when I was wounded and went to a field hospital in Frankfurt and then was flown to Rheims, France. From Rheims, I was hospital trained down to Epinal, so all along the way they had medics, and doctors and nurses all along. They not only took care of our soldiers, they took care of the German soldiers too, because anytime anybody was wounded, they helped. As I came out of Frankfurt to Rheims, they brought a German out that was on the plane, he'd been wounded, and

they were sending him to a hospital. He was putting up some resistance, he didn't want to come, so one of the soldiers said that if he didn't come he would push him out the door of the C-47 we were on. (Laughter) A lot of times, we don't give them enough credit. And as far as medicine in that time, I never heard of any shortages or anything. I know that our medics shared with others that was wounded along the way, or anybody that had a sick child, they'd take care of them.

PIEHLER: When you were in Germany, how often would you encounter German civilians? Particularly ...

POINTER: It's hard to say, because when we were in actual combat, the only Germans we found were those who were trying to flee, or hide, or get out of the way, but if we were in a holding position, where that we were, say, in a staging area where we hadn't jumped off or anything, where there wasn't any danger from snipers or anything, the German people were very friendly. In fact, when we went into Germany, they were standing over the side of the road with wine giving everybody wine as we came in, and they were like that everywhere we came in. They were very friendly. Very few people that I ran into, civilians, that were hostile.

PIEHLER: Over lunch I, sort of, asked you, did any of the places tempt you to move out of Tennessee? Because you had been to a lot of different parts of the country. Could you recap ...

POINTER: Well, I said after traveling the places I'd traveled, if I had to leave the United States, of course, if I couldn't go to Canada, I would probably go to Germany, because Germany is probably more like Tennessee than any place I've ever been. They have their hills, valleys, their streams, all the people are nice as they could be. In fact, I've been back two or three times since the war, and traveled throughout Western Germany. So, they've been very friendly. I have talked very openly about the war. Some of them just don't want to talk about it, and you can understand why. They had family members killed. A lot of times they express the fact that they were caught up in a regime that they didn't know it was evil. So, that's just one of those things that could happen to any of us. We just don't realize what's going on all the time. Just like I have a friend that was raised near Dachau, and I got to talk to her—she lives in Newport now—I got to talking to her, and she said, "Honestly, my mother and father did not know that it was a prison camp at Dachau." I suppose that you can be like that, that you can't know everything, you know. Most of them will admit that they were led down the wrong path.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because you developed a fairly favorable attitude towards Germany and Germans. They were the enemy, I mean, they were trying to kill you. They came somewhat close when they wounded you in the leg ...

POINTER: Of course, but I think the majority of Germans are more like us, Americans, than any other people I've seen.

PIEHLER: Do you think a lot of your other fellow soldiers you served with thought as highly of Germany and Germans as you?

POINTER: I think so. I think every soldier that fought against the Germans respected them.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: They were predictable, I guess, that was one of the reasons we were successful.

PIEHLER: Well, you said about moving the poles for the Signal Corps, because the Germans were going to zero in on this one spot.

POINTER: Once the Germans surrendered, or we captured them, they were very cooperative. I really don't think that the ones that knew—there was one that we captured, he didn't know what was happening and everything. I don't know if he was sincere or not, but it sure sounded like he was sincere. I think, really and truly, they are.

PIEHLER: You mentioned at one point that several of your men had been executed, American prisoners had been executed, and you said, sort of, word spread throughout the front. How did you know how the war was going? Because you were, for example, there when your front wasn't doing so well, but also the Bulge. How aware were you—for example, did you ever get a hold of the Stars and Stripes?

POINTER: We got the Stars and Stripes occasionally, but really, the only way we knew exactly where the front was and where things were was by word of mouth down from headquarters. They would try to keep us briefed as to what the 232nd Infantry—whether they were holding their front, or they were moving forward, or whether they were falling back. We needed to know that, because we didn't want to push too far ahead or fall too far back. If we did, it could endanger the others, so they tried to keep us informed on that. As far as how far they had pushed into France and Belgium during the Bulge, we didn't know how much about that until the battle was over. We knew it was serious, and that we'd lost a lot of people, but ...

PIEHLER: So, for the whole course of the battle, you didn't know ...

POINTER: Through the whole course of the battle, we never was told, "Here's a map, and here's what it looks like."

PIEHLER: Yeah.

POINTER: Even the time we were out twenty miles on each flank, and had to pull back to keep from getting cut off, we never realized we were twenty miles out. We were sitting out there holding our front, and the Germans kept putting pressure on the others, so they had to fall back, so it caught us out there. We were just lucky that they hadn't put pressure on us, so we had to pull back in order to straighten the front. It wasn't the fact that they ran us back, it was the fact that we had to pull back the front so we wouldn't endanger the whole program.

PIEHLER: You were wounded. Was that your closest call in combat?

POINTER: I suppose ...

PIEHLER: Were there any other close calls, or any ...

POINTER: You find a lot of close calls, but they say that the bullet that misses you by half an inch is no different than the one that misses you by half a mile. It doesn't sound the same. I would say that several times I came real close, because when you have some of your buddies killed standing right beside of you, or something like that, it could have been me instead of them.

PIEHLER: So, that did happen to you?

POINTER: It could have been anyone.

PIEHLER: How many replacements did your unit get? You were on the line for about three months, roughly, when you finally left the unit because of your wound[ed], how many ...

POINTER: I would say that our company—you're supposed to have about 200 people, but we didn't have that much, because the first thing we did when we went to France, before we went to the front, they went around and said, "We need some replacements here, you've got to give us so many people, one man per squad." So, a squad of twelve men, you'd lose one as a replacement for an outfit that has lost several men. During that time, they'd send in, maybe send us back some, if we'd lost some more, they'd send us back some. I'd say that we were never more than or less than half strength, probably most of the time around two thirds strength. We'd get replacements coming just like we helped out others. I'd say that from the beginning of the time I went in until the time I left, I'd say the turnover was 90 percent.

PIEHLER: So, most of the people you were with at Camp Gruber didn't make it through? Either they were killed or wounded.

POINTER: No, in my platoon that I went overseas with, I know some of them got back, and another one of my buddies was killed just after I got hit. I visited him later on. It's hard to estimate there exactly how many that survived. I don't believe—I have one that I communicate with quite often. He's in Scotia, Nebraska. We call each other every little bit. Other than him, I'd say there's not more than—I didn't know more than five in our platoon that made it back ...

PIEHLER: Made it back from the beginning ...

POINTER: Now that doesn't mean that they were killed, maybe they were wounded, but maybe they were taken out or transferred, or something like that. You don't have many, because you start taking them down. And especially when you have nights like I told you we had in Bois D'Ohlunqen, where we had 237 in one night. We were fortunate, we didn't lose but very few, but E Company, they lost something like seventy or eighty men.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

POINTER: You see there, you've got a fifty percent turnover in twenty-four hours. They had to withdraw that company off the line, because they can't exist like that. They pulled them off, and refurbished them, and put them back in the line at a later date.

PIEHLER: I've read a lot that replacements would come in the middle of the night. Did you have that happen in your ...

POINTER: Oh yeah, that wasn't that unusual. A lot of times, you don't want Germans to know that you're getting replacements, or the enemy, and so, we'd bring them in at night so they couldn't watch them and see them. Then we'd been in places where that's the only way you could get in and out was at night, because you couldn't move out and couldn't move in, because the Germans were watching. We were on the side of a hill, and they were over here on the side of a hill, and so, we got some replacements, four or five in my platoon that came from the Air Force. (Laughter) That they had been cut, you know, and sent to the ground forces. They didn't have the proper training that you would normally give an infantryman.

PIEHLER: So, how did they do?

POINTER: For instance, I'll give you an example. We jumped off on March 15, [and] was heading into Germany. After about two hours—also we had pack mules. We made the break, and the Germans started withdrawing, so we went through. But they always set up defenses where they would snipe us and delay us, so we had to take time to remove the resistance. On that day, when I mentioned the pack mules, we had three pack mules carrying wire and ammunition at the same time, and one of those mules got scared during the battle, and took off running towards the German line. We found our mule along that afternoon. He was just standing back there in the woods. Still had his pack on, and ...

PIEHLER: Hadn't been killed or ...

POINTER: No, hadn't been killed or wounded. He just got scared and took off. Germans had withdrawn so fast that they withdrew before the mule got there. But what I was going to tell you, we had a replacement, and the boy was from Wyoming. We were going out, and when you're going out tactically, you've got your weapon ready. And this boy would invariably carry his down in his hand like he was carrying a package or something. We'd get after him and after him, didn't seem to have any effect on him. Short time after we jumped off, there was a machine gun nest that was holding them up, and there was a bullet hit him right on his helmet. He screamed, and hit the ground ... just hollering and going on. So, we finally worked around and got to him, and that machine gun had hit him right at the top of his helmet. It looked like someone took a hatchet and cut down in the top of his head, but it didn't scratch him.

PIEHLER: It, sort of, like, almost cut the helmet in half?

POINTER: We got him up, and told him that he wasn't hurt, and, boy, he was in the proper stance from then on.

PIEHLER: So, you no longer had to tell him ...

POINTER: We no longer had to tell him after that. He was ...

PIEHLER: The holding a weapon where you should have, was that something that was taught in training, or ...

POINTER: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that was ...

POINTER: Yeah, that was taught in training. The quickness you can get off your ammunition might save your life, so you could save your life. You couldn't wait for something like that.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, how well—you remembered the four or five Air Force replacements, how did they fair in the end in your unit? You said they didn't even get basic infantry ...

POINTER: You know, I don't know, because they were there when I left.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so they were still there when you left?

POINTER: Yeah, right, because we got them right on the last [part] of the war.

PIEHLER: You had had a lot of army training. You had been through basic, you had been, you had almost made it through the entire Fort Benning—and you had had Air Cadet training ...

POINTER: I had had more training, far more than the average....

PIEHLER: How good did that—looking back on it, how useful did it ...

POINTER: It was very useful to me, because instead of having to wait to be told to do something, I had had enough training to where I knew what I had to do, and that helped tremendously. You can't get enough training. Any questions?

ZAMMETT: You had put it in your pre-interview paper that you had been awarded the Bronze Star ...

POINTER: Uh huh.

ZAMMETT: Can you tell us a little about that?

POINTER: Well, it was awarded—the first one, when we were moving from Strasbourg north to face the Germans, as we were jockeying for this little town, and we went into this town on patrol. We had to see if the Germans were in there. We had to keep the Germans out, and so, the Germans happened to get there the same time we did. So, we had a little firefight, and I had the—the first person that I met when I went into the Rainbow division, a master sergeant from Massachusetts, and he was killed in this firefight. And during that battle and the withdrawal that's where I was awarded my first Bronze Star. One of the first Tennesseans that I know of that was killed was a boy from Chattanooga. His name was Frist, same name as Senator Frist. He was killed by artillery. He was a chauffer for the colonel, the battalion commander, and he

had come to the headquarters behind us. Got out of the jeep and started in the headquarters, and had the door open, and a German shell lobbed in the place, and a fragment hit him right in the back, so that's the only Tennessean that I know of that was killed.

PIEHLER: Did you ever get any disability from the VA because of your wound?

POINTER: Yeah, I have 40 percent disability from the gunshot wound, 20 percent disability from the loss of hearing in my right ear. That was because of a concussion. That's why I've got hearing aids, see this is a hearing aid with a crossover. In other words, this here picks up the sound and transfers it here so that I can hear.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. Have you used VA hospitals, and VA medicine?

POINTER: Yes, for my hearing.

PIEHLER: Hearing.

POINTER: That's all. In fact, I went to the VA yesterday about some other paperwork, and so, they encouraged me to come back for a checkup on my hearing, but I keep in touch with my audiologist up there. But as long as my hearing aids work, there's no use of driving up to Johnson City to have that done. They've been very nice to me.

PIEHLER: Did your leg—after you got discharged, did you need continuing care for it?

POINTER: No.

PIEHLER: No, so it's really just been your hearing that ...

POINTER: Just my hearing. On my leg, I've had, of course, continuous problems, but it's nothing that can be medicated. My wound didn't completely heal for, I guess, six or eight months after I came home, so that wound kept green, and didn't completely heal. So, that was normal, lead poisoning and drainage.

PIEHLER: You're a member of a number of veterans' organizations. Which organization did you join first when you came home?

POINTER: Well, of course, I joined the American Legion first.

PIEHLER: And that was right when you came back?

POINTER: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: You're sort of smiling a little, how did that come about?

POINTER: Well, let me tell you. The American Legion was the one that publicized most. I joined the American Legion, and found out they were more interested in drinking than they were

about doing anything for the veterans, so I quit. (Laughter) Then I belonged to the Veterans of Foreign Wars ...

PIEHLER: When did you join them?

POINTER: Um ... several years ago.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but not immediately when you came back?

POINTER: Not immediately. I'm a life member. I'm a life member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. When did you join them?

POINTER: When they formed an organization here in Knoxville.

PIEHLER: And what about—when did you join the DAV?

POINTER: Years ago, when I first came back.

PIEHLER: And you've been very active with the 42nd Association. When did you first become involved?

POINTER: I'd been home, I guess, four or five years before I realized that we had a national association. And I got a solicitation, joined it, and became active in it for several years. I was the membership chairman of the 222nd Infantry Regiment. I did that for years and years, and then I finally got so busy that I turned it over to someone else. We have a very active organization. They're quite proud of what they've done. I enjoy going to the annual meetings, but then the only sad thing is you remember these fellows as young soldiers. Now, they're changed.

PIEHLER: You used the VA to go to school, did you ever use the VA loan?

POINTER: No.

PIEHLER: No. After you graduated, where was your first job? You graduated class of 1949 ...

POINTER: Well, while I was waiting to go to graduate school, I decided to go to graduate school, because I had some G.I. Bill left. I'd had job offers, and I decided that while I was in school, I'd better stay in school. While I was waiting for the quarter to start at VPI, the dean asked me if I would run the horticulture farm, that they'd lost their manager. So I ran the horticulture farm for them on a full time basis for a short time until I got into school at VPI. I finished, I went up there in the fall, and finished my master's in one year. And about Christmas, I came home, came by to visit some people over there at UT, and the dean asked if I'd be interested coming back at a full-time job. I said I would, so I went back to the university in June 1950. I taught for three years, and decided that I'd go into business for myself. And I had stayed

ten years, to the day. And so, every time I'd see friends over at the university, and they'd say, "Why don't you come back, why don't you come back." When I left, if I ever wanted to come back, [but] they said they'd have a job for me, so I had the opportunity to sell my business. I sold it out, and called them, and said, "You said you'd have a job for me, was that just friendship offer, or was that an offer?" They said, "No, that's an offer, can you come this afternoon?" I said, "No, I'll come tomorrow." So, I come back the next day, interviewed, hired in, and stayed for about twenty-eight and a half more years. Twenty-nine.

PIEHLER: Why did you decide to go into business for yourself?

POINTER: Well, at that time, I was young and full of vinegar and so, forth, and I saw the outside world as a challenge. Ford Motor Company had a representative that worked this area, and he came by the engineering department and was always in touch with the engineering department. I got to talking with him, and he said, "We've got a dealership that we'd like to get you into a dealership." So, I bought out a dealership, and stayed for ten years, but it didn't take me long to find out that, once I got out in business, that I didn't—that wasn't what I wanted to spend my life at. But it took me ten years to get my money back out of it.

PIEHLER: What was it about it that you found out?

POINTER: The business? Well, it's different from the educational system. In other words, there is pressure on you all the time regardless of how good of a job you do. There is always the possibility of you doing better. Do better, do better. That was one thing. The next thing was that I was doing business with clientele that when their business was good, my business was good, [when] their business was bad, my business was bad. And so, just one day, I just sat down was reading the financial statement, and said, "Look here, I'm making money, but I've got my name on enough notes here that, I was in business in Blount County, the aluminum company controls the economy over there. If they came out on strike, and the bank asked me to pay on all these notes, I'd be bankrupt."

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

POINTER: Because I had my name on over a million dollars worth of paper, and that was sixty years ago.

PIEHLER: That's still a significant amount.

POINTER: I was putting in eighteen hours a day, I wasn't spending much time with the family, and it wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to get back into education.

PIEHLER: Obviously you stuck with education, what was it, on the positive side, what was it about education that you liked so much? Particularly when you were in the dealership, you realized that maybe you didn't ...

POINTER: I did a lot of extension work when I was with the dealership. Sometimes I think I worked as hard for the university when I was with the dealership as I did for myself. Helping

people, I think that's the biggest thing. You'd like to be of service to people, and this is one way, that I felt that being in education, you would have to opportunity to be of service. You meet mighty fine people each way. That's one of the reasons I got back into education.

PIEHLER: Now when you came back, you were initially an agricultural agent?

POINTER: Yeah, when I came back, I was an agricultural agent in Knox County. I was working with community development public relations. That was back when the university put a lot of interest on integration, and community development.

PIEHLER: Because this was 1963?

POINTER: Right, right. So, they had this job here, and they wanted someone here. We had several black community clubs, and they were trying to consolidate them, and they wanted someone older, and I was older. So, I took the job, and we integrated without a bit of trouble. Never had any trouble or anything, and had—at one time, I had thirty-eight community clubs in Knox County. We took up such issues, social issues in the community as community cleanup, sewers, water, zoning, that was part of a total package. I made a lot of friends, and accomplished a lot by helping those people. At that time, the university had then decided that maybe this was something that had advanced to a point that it didn't need to be totally involved in it, and so, at that time the horticulture industry in the state of Tennessee was at the point that they could do something. So, they wanted horticulturists to come and work with them, and that's when I came back to the main campus again. I didn't want to go back in the college, I didn't want to teach, and so, I wanted to go to the extension. So, I went back in as a specialist in horticulture design, traveled all over the state. My work consisted mostly of greenhouse production and construction.

PIEHLER: When did you start that position?

POINTER: About 1972. Yeah, about 1972.

PIEHLER: And then you stayed in that position ...

POINTER: Until I retired.

PIEHLER: Until you retired. You've also mentioned to me that you've also done some consulting work abroad. Could you ...

POINTER: Well now, my trips to India were through the university ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, I ...

POINTER: See, back in the '50s, '60s, early '70s, we had a contract with the State Department to assist the Indian government to establish land grant ideas in three southern states of India. So, we had sixty or seventy professors over there for ten or fifteen years or more. They made real good progress. We'd taught those people how to use fertilizer, how to rotate the crops, improve

livestock, and things of that type. I guess, when Nixon was president, he was trying to mend some fences with China, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. He goes to India on a visit, and he doesn't tell Mrs. [Indira] Gandhi that he's going to China. So, he flies across the hump into China for the first time, you know. So, when she found out about it, she was peeved, and cancelled the program, ran us all out. Then in the early '80s, I was over there in '83, she had discovered by that time that she had made a terrible mistake, because we had a tremendous influence on the agricultural economy in India. Of course, the thing about it is that we have millions of dollars tied up in India that we can't bring out of the country. That's an agreement we've made to them. We were spending our money to help them in their school system, paying their salaries, and so, she asked us to come back. I was on the team to go over and evaluate the school systems, and see what sort of progress they'd made since we first left there.

PIEHLER: How much progress had they made?

POINTER: Oh, they'd made tremendous progress. For instance, we'd set up a school in Bangalore, or we helped them set up a school in Bangalore, that had about 5,000 students. When we were there, they had about 10,000 applications for the fall semester. So, it was one of those things that no matter how fast you move over there, you're still behind on education. The thing that they needed most was money for books, and I don't know why the government didn't give them enough money to buy books. But you'd go to the library, and they'd have one text for all these students. You'd got to get on a list to get that text and then turn it back in. That's kind of a hard way to educate people, when they can't get the knowledge they need. While I was there, to brag a little, I had the chance for an audience with Mrs. Gandhi. She's a very nice ...

PIEHLER: This was in the 1980s?

POINTER: Yeah, 1983. I was there just a few months before she was assassinated. She met us, I was in a group, she met us and was very gracious. No guards, nobody anywhere. You'd wonder why she didn't have a guard, we just walked in. The day we had the interview with her, the electricians were on strike in New Delhi, and the lights would go on, and they'd go off, go on and off, and she'd talk right on sitting there. She didn't act like she was fazed at all. She was supposed to see us for thirty minutes, and we talked an hour and a half. Then she sent us to the director of education, and we talked to him.

PIEHLER: You had a pretty—this wasn't just a social call, you had a pretty substantive ...

POINTER: Well, it was, it was kind of a public relations deal that tied in. We knew what her feelings were, and we wanted to be nice.

PIEHLER: But still, that's more than a ten-minute little ...

POINTER: Yeah. She wanted us to see the Director of Education, I talked to Mrs. Gandhi my question for Mrs. Gandhi was, "What was going to happen to those students who had made an application to the University of Bangalore that didn't get in this year." She said, "Their education is finished, because next year we will have that many more, so we'll take the younger ones." I said, "Well, what are your long range plans to build more school?" She says, "We don't

have any. We have all the college graduates that the government can hire.” That answer kind of dumbfounded us, so we also brought the question up to the Director of Education. But private industry needs college graduates. College graduates need to be out in business. That seemed to be their attitude. But we’ve never gotten them back on track.

PIEHLER: Does the program still exist?

POINTER: It still exists. Let’s say it’s on recess.

PIEHLER: But there’s still a tie between ...

POINTER: There’s still that tie. We’re still working pretty closely with Thailand. That’s switched from India to Thailand, and I’m not positive—I haven’t talked the director in a while, to see how that program is going. I’ve had an interesting career.

PIEHLER: No, I mean, I remember you telling me about India, and I definitely wanted to get that on the record.

POINTER: Now, as far as other consulting, the State Department has an organization—I can’t recall the name of it right now, they are short-term assistance, where, for instance, a company in Egypt wanted to build greenhouses, and so, they asked me if I would come to Egypt for ninety days. I didn’t go, because I had problems and I couldn’t go. But I would do this. I would take the problem and write up a report on it, and give it to them for consideration. Because they had, say, in Egypt one of the things they had to consider is what kind of covering material they could use there that the sand wouldn’t beat up, and where were they going to get water, and stuff like that. Up until—I did studies for a couple of African states, governments, one in Egypt, one in Russia. I guess, the Russian one is the latest—no, Macedonia. Skopje, Macedonia, I worked for them.

PIEHLER: When did you do that one?

POINTER: Just before the war over there.

-----END TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE-----

POINTER: I would have liked to have gone to Skopje. For one reason, I bet you can’t guess? Mother Theresa, that’s her birthplace.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. I knew she was from that region, from Albania.

POINTER: Skopje, Macedonia. And while I was in India, I traveled to several different locations in India that was very interesting. One that was Mysore, India. That was one of the old places, you know. Then I went over to Madras. Madras is on the coast, and at one time was a large shipping port. And while there, I got a taxi to go out to see a temple that was built. There were Hindus, Jainists and Buddhist. And the Jain temple—they paint those temples with their figures, little figures all over it. And they had painted this one different colors, and it was high.

As I was going in on in the train I said, “I’m going to come back and get a picture of that.” So, I got a taxi and went back. And so, I was taking pictures and the taxi driver said, “Do you see that building over there?” It’s just like a picnic shed. He said, “There’s something in there that since you’re a Christian you might be interested in. St. Thomas is buried there.” So, I go over there and visit St. Thomas’ tomb. He went to India as a missionary in 52 A.D. He was stoned to death in 72 A.D. Then I went to Calcutta, and I went to visit some of the place where the three of these religions I mentioned were born there, outside of Calcutta. And it had the—we talk about reading the Bible about sacrifices, the platforms for sacrifices were still standing.

Then I went to Khajuraho. And you wonder why in the world would they ask you to go to Khajuraho. Well, in the 800s, the Jain priests decided that they would build—each section area of their influence, would build a temple there. So, they built 122 temples in that area. And there is not any type of pornography that was not displayed in these temples. Because they say that anything that has to do with the human body is not vulgar. But they built one out of granite. It took them too long to build it out of granite, and so, they built the others out of sandstone. They have twenty-two of them still standing. And that was interesting. I went into a service, and I wasn’t allowed to go in the holy of holies, but I stuck my head around to see. I have a lot of good experiences.

PIEHLER: You really found India quite intriguing, it sounds like.

POINTER: Quite intriguing.

PIEHLER: And, it seems like, you have a lot of respect and real admiration for Indians and it’s people.

POINTER: You know, at the present time, they’re probably the largest populated country in the world. Europe at about over 800 million. And I think Texas is a little more than 2 million. To see farming in some of those areas, and see those people, I can relate back to my early childhood.

PIEHLER: I think a lot of Americans had just been taken aback at how “primitive” it was, but, it sounds like, some of that was not so different, in a lot of ways, from Norris.

POINTER: That’s right. For instance, I went to the Taj Mahal, and as far as craftsman[ship] is concerned, I’ve never seen any better. They would take marble and inlay flowers in that marble, and it looked like it had grown there and formed that way it was so accurate. But how were they doing it? You’ve seen the old pedal sewing machines?

PIEHLER: Oh, yes.

POINTER: Well, that was the same system of pedal there that run this little stone that they were grinding with. You’d sit there with your foot and grind that stone. And they made all kinds of things like that. And I got to see the Taj Mahal as the sun went down. Went back the next morning as the sun came up, which was very interesting. It was surely different. And so, I thank goodness for my rural background, I can cope with it very well. The people—you had to figure out the people. In other words, ... so, you could communicate with them. Almost every one of

them could speak English, but there are nineteen different dialects. So, when you go from one state to another one, you stop at the state line and pay your state taxes—there is a fee to get into a state. And working with the three southern states, we were the first university—and they had about half a dozen universities over there—we were the first university that made enough progress and increased production amount that they could ship from one state to another state. You see, you couldn't ship out because they needed the food in that state.

PIEHLER: In that state. So, you had actually helped build a surplus. Well, I've read that India now, for example, does produce an agricultural surplus in our three states area.

POINTER: I talked to a doctor, who got his degree at Cal-Tech in Engineering and said, "How can we help you get these people on rubber tires?" He says, "Well, we don't want that. What if that tire goes flat, how are they going to fix it?" "Well, we can get them on ball bearings." And he says, "Well, we would have revamped our manufacturing of two-wheeled carts, and so forth, like that." And he wasn't too interested in trans-modernizing. And we talked to him about mechanizing agriculture in along the Ganges River, and places like that, where they've got good plains. And he says, "We're not interested in that kind of stuff. It will put all these people out of work." But, eventually, it's going to come and it's a shame that those people—they really have to farm every little inch with intensity and do it by hand, whereas they could take a whole plain and do it by tractors and they'd all gain by it. So, it's quite interesting. I've always considered those things, regardless of what the situation was, as a learning process.

PIEHLER: Any last questions? I'm timid to ask you more about UT, but I think we probably should save that for another day. But is there anything you want to say in terms of World War II or growing up or any final thoughts? We've kept you here for a good part of the day ...

POINTER: No, no one wants to be in war, or anything, and, as I've said, everything I've kind of looked on it as a learning process. So, it's not anything I'd want to do again, but I wouldn't take anything for that experience that I hadn't done before. I think war gives you a different outlook on your fellow man and other countries. So, I think, that it broadens your scope and you have more respect for other countries, how they think, and so forth. Kind of like we're giving France a hard time right now. We need to look at their side and say, "Why are they doing it?" Of course, them being some stinkers to start with, but nonetheless, they have an interest for their people. They have to protect their people. So, we ought to be able in this world to get along with everybody else. I'm not saying that as a criticism of what has happened here. I think what we're doing now is necessary and should have been ten years ago, because I remember approaching World War II the same little cancerous things happened that people just gradually move on, and on, and on, and on, and he would never have been satisfied at any point, and I think of Saddam Hussein the same way. He wouldn't be satisfied with just that, as he illustrated in 1989 or '90 that he was going to take in Kuwait. And he would have taken Kuwait, but this time he would have gone on to Saudi Arabia or some of the smaller countries. He would have gotten them one at a time, because he had seen himself as the great ruler and he wants to rule the whole continent as the King of Babylon did years ago. Sometimes you have to do unpleasant things to try to arrive at the nice things.

So, looking back on World War II from a different aspect, you say, it's a terrible thing, well it was a terrible thing, but just think of how World War II changed people's lives and changed the world. For instance, if World War II hadn't come along, there were thousands of G.I.s that would have never gone to school. And from that aspect, had it not been for all the G.I.s going to school, and getting into technology ages that we've experienced since the war, you know, going along, even the space age, computer age, the knowledge explosion, what part did World War II contribute to that? So, again, I say that a lot of times, we fail to see the silver lining to these clouds. That's the way I feel about these things. We've made so much progress. Thousands and thousands of soldiers just exactly like I was, and they had never been out of their county until the war came along and they got out. And as a result of that, many of them went on to school, many of them migrated all over this country and all over the world. I had a schoolmate who spent his life in Saudi Arabia [and is] living in Paris now. Just like we were talking about David Lilienthal, the head of the TVA. David worked in Italy for years.

PIEHLER: This is the founder of TVA's son.

POINTER: Yeah, we've got friends like that. And I'm just a little speck in the whole thing, and so, just think of how many other people have done the same thing? And so, I try to look at the good side of it instead of the bad side. And I know that we can't ever undo those things that happened, but we can make the best of what did happen. That's what I think about that. I think that what we need to do as Americans is to be more appreciative of what we do have. I've enjoyed it!

PIEHLER: Oh, we've really enjoyed it! Thank you very, very much.

POINTER: I hope I haven't talked about everything except what you wanted.

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