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AN INTERVIEW WITH SAM BALLOFF

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INTERVIEWED BY  
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AND  
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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Sam Balloff on March 12, 2004 on Downing Drive in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler ...

OLIVIA BLAIR: And Olivia Blair.

PIEHLER: And Olivia, why don't you start off with the first question.

BLAIR: I would like to start by asking how your mother came to New York?

SAM BALLOFF: My mother ...

BLAIR: Or how your mother's parents came to New York from Romania?

BALLOFF: I don't know, I don't know how my mother's parents came to New York from Romania. I don't know. I just know—we just talked about her days in New York. Well, how did you know that she came from ...

BLAIR: Her parents came to New York from Romania.

BALLOFF: How did you get that information?

BLAIR: Through Wendy Bessman's book *A Separate Circle* ...

BALLOFF: Really? You probably know more from that book than I do. (Laughter)

BLAIR: Do you know where she grew up in New York?

BALLOFF: In New York City.

BLAIR: Okay. You do not know if she grew up ...

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: What part of New York?

BALLOFF: They moved around a lot.

BLAIR: Okay ... what type of restaurant did her parents work in?

BALLOFF: They—I don't know. They just had a restaurant in New York. I don't know where—I really know very little about her parents. Her mother, I know, lived with us, but—for a little while, but I don't know much about those early years.

PIEHLER: They never talked about it very much?

BALLOFF: My mother ... talked about it a lot, but I just never made any notes and my memory's bad, and she ... just talked about a lot of things. I mean, I have ... transcripts of an interview that she did with my cousin that has a lot of that information. And I read it, but I don't remember all of the details.

BLAIR: Okay, well, your mother went to live with her aunt in Kentucky.

BALLOFF: Yeah, there was a flu epidemic.

BLAIR: A flu epidemic.

BALLOFF: In New York.

PIEHLER: Was this the 1919 flu epidemic?

BALLOFF: It was the 1918 to 1919 ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, so it was ... the very big flu epidemic.

BALLOFF: Yeah. And they sent her down to a family, her family, in Pineville, Kentucky. And that is how she got down here. And she met my father down here and stayed.

BLAIR: Uh huh. And where is your father from?

BALLOFF: Well, my father—my father came from Russia, and his brother sponsored him, and they lived in New York City, and there is all kinds of stories about how all of these immigrants got down to the to the ... South or the West, or wherever, and it is interesting that a—I read the book *The Jew Story*. You ...

PIEHLER: I have heard, I have heard—my wife has read it. I haven't got around to ...

BALLOFF: And it seems that there were agencies in Baltimore—this book you should have mentioned some agencies in Baltimore that made contact with merchants around the South or the West and sent these immigrants. And I have a feeling that is how my dad got down to this area.

BLAIR: What age was he when he moved, approximately?

BALLOFF: I think he was about eighteen, or nineteen, or twenty, or somewhere around there.

BLAIR: Okay, so he was the only person to come from his side of the family?

BALLOFF: Yes, yes, from his side of the family, yes. He had a brother in New York. He had a big family in Russia that we ... in the '30s kept in contact with, and would send ... supplies, or money, or whatever. And then somewhere in the '40s they just lost contact.

PIEHLER: And you never found out what happened to your family in Russia?

BALLOFF: Never, never. Uh, my uncle ... my father's brother in New York was the one, was the contact person, and they just never heard anything.

PIEHLER: So, you don't know what happened during the war to them?

BALLOFF: I have no idea.

PIEHLER: Why did these two brothers—what prompted them out of this large family to come to America?

BALLOFF: Well coming to America, probably, was the big dream. And ... my uncle came first, and then helped bring his brother over, and they lived in New York. He worked in an embroidery plant, and the stories I could tell you that he—they were paid salaries like five dollars a week, or something. He suggested to the plant manager that they get paid by the piece; if they could put out more work, they got more money. And that was kind of a story. We told about his being very progressive and a lot of drive, but this book ... gave me more information, I guess. As much information as anything that I've—ever—because—and I read the book, and thinking back to how we all came about, there were probably the agencies that made contact in the South or the West or wherever. And then he came down here, and then the book talked about wholesalers in St. Louis and Baltimore, who would find these immigrants and say, "Well, you know we would like to put you in business in a small town." And the railroads seemed to be ... the thing that put it all together, 'cause there weren't many roads. So if, like, I grew up in LaFollette, there was a direct rail line that came out of Cincinnati. So, he did a lot of his—those early years these jobbers would put these people in business and ... give them credit, or whatever. And ... they were looking for distribution and the immigrants were looking for livelihood, so from the [book], that is what I assume. Now whether that really happened that way, I don't know.

PIEHLER: So, you're not quite sure how your father got set up in business?

BALLOFF: Right. He worked for a family in Middlesboro, Kentucky. And somewhere along the way he did some peddling. He went to the mining camps with a pack on his back.

PIEHLER: Quite literally with a pack on his back?

BALLOFF: Yes, and ... then, I guess, he accumulated enough money. He—somehow or another there was a decision made whether you go to Kingsport, or you go to LaFollette ... from Middlesboro to set up a business, and how he got set up in business I don't really know, other than it could have been these jobbers.

PIEHLER: He never really told you how?

BALLOFF: We never talked about it.

PIEHLER: Because by the time you were born, it sounds like, the store was pretty much established.

BALLOFF: Well it was. The store was started in ... 1921, and I was born in 1923. So ...

PIEHLER: And so by the time you were conscious, this—it might have seemed like an eternity to you as a small child.

BALLOFF: Right, right. He was interested in LaFollette in Campbell County to help the people. And he kept telling us those people were the ones—customers who did business with us and made it possible for us to make enough money to help us buy a home and a car. They're the ones—you got to help these people. So, he never wanted to leave LaFollette or Campbell County. He'd go away for ... two weeks, and in February, after they did inventory—and my mom—it was just never [common] for him to be away.

PIEHLER: Where did he go in February?

BALLOFF: They went to Florida.

PIEHLER: So, that was a ritual.

BALLOFF: That was a big deal, and—of course, the stories that the people could not believe in those days that there were Jewish people, Jewish people in Tennessee. Because most of the people, friends that we met in the hotel, were from the East.

PIEHLER: Where did they travel? It sounds as if they went to the same hotel every year.

BALLOFF: Yeah, they went to the uh—I can't think of the name.

PIEHLER: Was it in Miami?

BALLOFF: It was on the beach. It was up on the beach.

PIEHLER: In Miami?

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah, in Miami. You know, I should remember, but I don't.

PIEHLER: Did you ... go with them, or ...

BALLOFF: Well, at that point, my brother and I were in school. I would go down—I didn't go

PIEHLER: Your father, being a peddler, quite literally with a pack on his back, did he ever tell you any stories of what that was like?

BALLOFF: If he did ... I don't remember it.

PIEHLER: So yeah, it doesn't sound like that your father told many of you these ...

BALLOFF: You know what, he must have. He just, I don't know, he just—if he talked about it, I don't remember.

BLAIR: Well, did he have any language problems when he first came over?

BALLOFF: He did. He did. He always had an accent, a little accent. And it's so funny. We found ... a video or a tape, of a picnic that we had in my mother's backyard and my dad's voice is on that, and he died in '72 and it was kind of strange to hear his voice again, and he was talking about the business.

PIEHLER: When did your father pass away?

BALLOFF: 1962.

PIEHLER: And so, you have a tape of him talking?

BALLOFF: I have a tape of him talking. And this ... is probably in the '50s when we had—my mother would have all the family, and everything.

PIEHLER: And did he maintain the store until he died?

BALLOFF: My brother and I kept the store. Yeah, he died—the store was still operating when he passed away ... We came out of the service in 1946 and worked in the store. And then, over the years, my brother and I both got married, had a family, and we decided to spread out a little bit because three families couldn't live out of one store. So, my brother and I opened a store in Oak Ridge, and then we opened another store in Knoxville, and ...

BLAIR: What were the stores called?

BALLOFF: Balloff's.

BLAIR: Balloff's?

BALLOFF: Yeah. We, we opened the store in 1955 in Oak Ridge and then we opened one in Knoxville in '60 ... '62-'63 somewhere in there. And then we went to West Town Mall and then—in the meantime, my dad passed away and we kept the stores until 1990. And then we just sold out. We just quit in 1990.

PIEHLER: Which is quite the wonder in retailing.

BALLOFF: Wow, it got tough, it got tough.

PIEHLER: Yeah?

BALLOFF: I mean the '60s, '70s and '80s were, were great years. And then in the middle '80s, seems like it just—I don't know, things just got turned around.

PIEHLER: Well, we will come back to retailing. I guess, maybe I should ask you a general question? What was it like to grow up in LaFollette at a very early age? What were some of your earliest memories of life in ...

BALLOFF: Well, the first—we were the only Jewish family. For many years—and, uh, we grew up as boys, you know, as part of the neighborhood. And, uh, belonged—my parents belonged to the congregation here in Knoxville and the only Jewish training we had was Yom Kippur, you know, the Jewish Holidays when we came to Knoxville. So, we had very little Jewish training.

PIEHLER: Now you were a member of Heska Amuna?

BALLOFF: Yes, my dad and mother were for many, many years.

PIEHLER: But you would only go—yeah, and that is the only day your father would shut the store down?

BALLOFF: Well, yeah, yeah. As we were growing up, that was about the extent of our Jewish education. My, mother tried to teach us.

PIEHLER: What about Rosh Hashanah?

BALLOFF: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur we'd come home [to Knoxville].

PIEHLER: So, you would come home [to Knoxville] for both of those holidays?

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You would keep the Seders, Passover Seders?

BALLOFF: Oh yeah. And we—that was a big thing, because in the late '30s early '40s there were some Jewish families that came in, and they created a shirt factory in LaFollette. And ... that brought in some Jewish people, and so ...

PIEHLER: And so the whole Passover, congregation gathered for the Seders.

BALLOFF: Right, right.

PIEHLER: What about—did your mother try to keep a kosher kitchen?

BALLOFF: No, no.

PIEHLER: No?

BALLOFF: We had no ham, or pork, or anything like that.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So, no traits, but ...

BALLOFF: In later years she allowed us to bring ham in the house if we didn't put it on a plate. We had to use a paper wrapper. (Laughter) That was the extent of our being kosher.

PIEHLER: That sounds like us with pizza. We put it on paper plates when we serve pizza. (Laughter) Well, I guess, one other—what other memories do you have of—early memories do you have of LaFollette? You had mentioned having a neighbor. What was your neighborhood like?

BALLOFF: Well, we had a nice home. What can I tell you? We just had normal boys growing up, you know, baseball, outdoors. It was a real nice community, and, I guess, we—the interesting part about growing up in LaFollette was that ... it was—there were two different societies. There was a coal mining—the coal miners who went ... to LaFollette, to Jellico, that was all coal miners. If you went from LaFollette up the valley, the Cumberland Gap and Middlesboro that was farmers. There was farmland. So, we did business—growing up in the store, I mean, you talked about what I did, I remember—well anyhow, there were two different groups of people that I grew up with, coal miners and farmers. And they were two distinct different types of people. Coal miners had a different kind of lifestyle, and ... I just met two whole different types of people. We did a lot ... of charge business. And the farmers had—a lot of the farmers raised their own vegetables, raised their own crops. And the women worked in the shirt factory, that was probably the only money crop—I guess, tobacco was the only other money crop and that wasn't very much. But growing up with these people, I guess, I had a ... whole different outlook on it.

PIEHLER: Well, ... let me ask you a question. Will you tell me a little bit about what made them so distinctive?

BALLOFF: Well, coal miners—I can't speak for the coal miners.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but ...

BALLOFF: From my point of view, they had a hard life. They spent their money—I mean if they got paid which was very little, they spent it all, it was all spent.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, if they got payday, it sounds like, it was a good day for the store.

BALLOFF: That's right, Saturday.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: Saturday was the day. You know, you were talking about closing on holidays, you know, my dad would say, “Now boys, you know Saturday is a big day. We’d open 8:00 and close about midnight, so we got to go to bed early Friday.” (Laughter)

BALLOFF: We all worked. My mother, my mother did all of the accounting in the early years and ... we worked. In the morning before I went to school I went with my dad to the store and swept the sidewalk and—swept out the store and the sidewalk. And at night after dinner, one of us would go down with my mother [and] clean up the store and close.

PIEHLER: And roughly how big was the store?

BALLOFF: Well, the store—the first store was twenty-five—the storefront was twenty-five feet wide and 100 feet deep. And ... over the years, they rented the second building, knocked a hole in the wall and went into the second building. And then over the years rented another building. So, we had three twenty-five foot buildings ... as a store.

BLAIR: What other stores were around in your community?

BALLOFF: Pardon me?

BLAIR: What other type of stores?

BALLOFF: Well, there were—I mean LaFollette had a cross section of stores and every street had businesses—there were restaurants and barber shops, hardware, clothing and—I guess, on our part of the street there might have been four or five clothing stores.

PIEHLER: So, you had—what do you remember about your competitors?

BALLOFF: Well, we always had a good relationship with our competitors, we did. I guess, my whole life I have had good relationship with all ... of my competitors.

PIEHLER: Well, going back to the observation of coal mining versus farming, anything else about coal mining which—really farming still sort of exists, but coal mining is almost—that way of life is almost completely gone from Tennessee, I mean from what can—I mean there may be some coal miners, but not in the way ...

BALLOFF: No, you wouldn’t ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: There is no way you can understand that. When we would—I don’t think in LaFollette in those early years that we had—I think we had a newspaper that might have come out once a week, but when we would have a promotion, like a back-to-school sale or a Thanksgiving sale, they would print a circular, a four page circular, like you see in the *Knoxville News Sentinel*. And then my brother and I, and my cousin—they would take us into these mining camps and we put a circular on every front porch—so if you go into Campbell County,

and Scott County, and Anderson County there were a lot of coal miners, and we would go to these coal mines and deliver the circular.

PIEHLER: And these—sounds like they were company towns.

BALLOFF: Oh definitely! You know, the story is miners paid so much for the school and they paid so much for the church and then it was all taken out of their pay, and what was left over they got scrip and—I don't know how that got converted into dollars to spend in town. But somebody did it, converted scrip into dollars.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you are conveying a sense that you realized from a very early age that they had a pretty hard scrabble life, coal miners.

BALLOFF: They had a terrible—they had a hard life. And the women that worked in the shirt factories they make, I don't know, five dollars a week, it was a big deal. But they were selling shirts for—I remember one was selling—one manufacturer were making shirts for Grant, W. T. Grant.

PIEHLER: Oh, yes.

BALLOFF: And they were—I think they sold for thirty-nine cents. So, you can just imagine just how—what kind of uh ...

PIEHLER: Wage rate.

BALLOFF: Wage rate there would be, selling shirts for thirty-nine cents or forty-nine cents.

BLAIR: Was that the same for your family's business? How much was your merchandise going for?

BALLOFF: I'm not understanding you.

BLAIR: How much did a suit cost or a dress?

BALLOFF: We had a circular, we had a circular ... that somebody kept, it was 1921, and it was a sale, another big sale, and I think that shirts were thirty-nine cents, and you could buy a lady's silk dress for a dollar and—shoes, we sold Florsheim shoes and Stetson hats. That was the big thing.

PIEHLER: Those were two, those were two ...

BALLOFF: Florsheim shoes and Stetson hats. That and Arrow shirts. That was the big thing. An Arrow shirt might have been, an Arrow shirt might have been two-fifty, three dollars maybe, and a pair of Florsheim shoes might have been less than ten dollars. I mean, that was American made great, great shoes.

PIEHLER: Oh no, Florsheim was a great, was a great brand.

BALLOFF: A Stetson hat, you know?

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah.

BALLOFF: To wear a Stetson hat ... everyone liked that.

PIEHLER: Do you remember any, sort of, strike activity growing up?

BALLOFF: Oh yeah. Oh goodness yeah ... the United Mine Workers tried to unionize the—they tried to unionize the coal operation, and they finally did. But then they got into unionizing the shirt factory. I mean they had the United Mine Workers union in the shirt factory, and they didn't know much about making shirts, but they always had more than they wanted to do.

PIEHLER: When did ... they come, when—do you remember any sort of strike very vividly?

BALLOFF: I remember big strikes of a—and don't ask me what year, but I remember ... they loaded their shirts, you know, in big boxes, and then they loaded them into a truck to be taken to the train station. Everything went by rail. And then they had—I can remember a man standing on the cab of the truck with a gun, driving through town, to take the merchandise to the depot for delivery.

PIEHLER: Because of the strike activity?

BALLOFF: Because of the strike activity. And there is all kinds of stories about, about problems with trying to unionize, even ... later on when some of the smaller miners would not unionize. A lot of things happened. Do you know the, Yablonski the President of the United Mine Workers that was killed?

PIEHLER: I remember that story when it came out.

BALLOFF: Well ... I think that was put together in Campbell County, all of that, the planning of all that.

PIEHLER: His assassination?

BALLOFF: Yes. That was all put together in LaFollette yeah, it was tough.

PIEHLER: How as a small town, sort of, store owner—what happened when there was a strike? Did you ever feel like you were caught in the middle?

BALLOFF: I don't think so. I don't think so.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Now, I had asked you to talk about the coal miners and by comparison could you talk more about the farmers.

BALLOFF: Well ...

PIEHLER: You had said it was a very different world.

BALLOFF: A very different world, and it, and it was just a matter of when you went to LaFollette; if you made a left turn it—see the main highway between Cincinnati and Atlanta went through LaFollette, went through that coal mining area. And that was—there were a lot of problems when tourists would come through there and—but ...

PIEHLER: What kind of problems?

BALLOFF: Well, there were a lot of—the county didn't have a lot of income, so they would stop a lot of people and, and you know ...

PIEHLER: (Laughs) So, you were an element of a road trap?

BALLOFF: That was the income for a lot of sheriff departments and things. And I—you know, things—I was thinking as we talk, was that there was so much—you talked about the people, the farmers were more family oriented, were more family oriented people. Like I said earlier, we did a lot of charge business, because there wasn't a lot of cash. And the only time a farmer had any cash in those days was when they sold their tobacco, which that was in November, so you would charge ...

PIEHLER: So, you would keep people on credit all year?

BALLOFF: All year.

PIEHLER: And then in November, in a sense, it was a time for settling up.

BALLOFF: That's it, for the farmers, because that was their big money crop. See, the other time they grew their vegetables, they slaughtered their meat, they did that a lot.

PIEHLER: So, they were buying—they were really ...

BALLOFF: They would barter a lot of stuff.

PIEHLER: So, you would barter also with them?

BALLOFF: Well, I don't barter. The only bartering that I can remember was moonshine. And somebody that worked in the store—the guys would bring in moonshine, you know, in these gallon jars and trade off something. Now I—they never let me know what was going on. (Laughter) We were kind of sheltered, but I know that that happened.

PIEHLER: Even in your store?

BALLOFF: Yeah. Oh, yeah. But it was just—we would—my mother would go home to prepare dinner, and then after dinner we would take a ride for the house to cool down and the kitchen to cool down, and we would drive up the valley. That was always our evening drive to kind of cool down.

PIEHLER: So, you would take evening drives pretty ...

BALLOFF: Right. And that's how we got, that is how we got to know a lot of people. Not only were they our customers, but they were our friends too, because we would stop for a visit and have us for dinner sometimes.

BLAIR: What type of vehicle did you drive?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: What type of vehicle, or car, did you drive?

BALLOFF: Well, we—my dad always liked a good car. (Laughs) We had Chrysler and, you know, everything then was American made and—I think we all kind of grew up with the—that most of the car dealers were, our customers. So, one year you would buy a Chrysler and the next you would buy a car it a Buick, or the next time you bought it, a Plymouth. You just did business with your customers.

PIEHLER: So, you would buy from local ...

BALLOFF: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. Over for the—well when we—very little was bought out of LaFollette. Uh, so why is this history of our growing up, why is it ...

PIEHLER: Well, we partly ... do life course—and you never know what stories historians will be most interested in. It is also just fascinating. This is because, in some sense, LaFollette in your day does not exist anymore, small town merchants.

BALLOFF: Wal-Mart came in the later years and just destroyed everything as far as retail. And those people—see my brother always—his story was that God kind of took care of LaFollette because first they, they decided to have TVA. You know, somebody, Senator Norris, somebody said, “Let's build a dam,” and that created a lot of employment in the early '30s and that was a lot—there was a lot of ... employment there. And then for some reason someone said, “Let's build Oak Ridge,” down in Anderson County and most—and a lot of these LaFollette people worked in Oak Ridge. And there was ... 75,000 people out of this ...

PIEHLER: No, it was a huge.

BALLOFF: Yeah, it was a big thing.

PIEHLER: 'Cause, it sounds like, your family did quite well in the '20s and the '30s.

BALLOFF: It was very successful. In relation to what all ...

PIEHLER: Well, 'cause it sounds like—I have interviewed people who have ... home owners, store owners, and they say that, you know—I can remember one very vividly who said that “at one point in the Great Depression we would sort of keep, we would keep the lights off until the customers came in to buy.”

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you did do that?

BALLOFF: We had these heavy—I don't know what the wattage of the bulb was, but there was like four of them, you know, in the store and the clothing was in the back and if you didn't have a suit customer you would turn off the lights.

PIEHLER: So, you did do that?

BALLOFF: If somebody, you know, wanted to see whatever merchandise was in the back you went back there and turned on the light. And you saved boxes, gift-wrapping, that sort of thing, you would save shirt boxes, or whatever, shoe boxes. And during the holidays if people wanted something gift-wrapped you would put it in the shoe box (laughter) or shirt box or whatever box you had. I mean these were, these were the days that I remember. I don't know, I have memories of my mother saying, “We did 200 dollars today,” or, “We did 150 dollars today.” That was a day's business.

PIEHLER: Which even then wasn't a lot of money.

BALLOFF: Well ...

PIEHLER: I mean, I mean it was a good living

BALLOFF: It was a good living.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: We thought that we were, we thought we were doing pretty good.

PIEHLER: It sounds like your parents always had an automobile growing up, and you had a phone?

BALLOFF: We had a phone, and everybody had a phone.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: It was—you went through an operator. I can remember ... when I went away to school, I would call home on Sundays and Mabel—I think Mabel was the telephone operator—

and after going through a Knoxville exchange when you got to the LaFollette exchange you would say—Mabel would ring 2-8-2, that was our house number, and, “Well Sam your mother is not home today, but I think they are over at the Sturms. I’ll call over there (laughter) and see if we can find them.” So, they really knew where everybody—where the family was.

PIEHLER: Well that’s ... long gone. You’re probably the last generation that can talk about knowing the telephone operator.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. She would find them. She knew where they were. (Laughter) And we had another—I don’t know if—I don’t ramble off ...

PIEHLER: No, no, no, please do.

BALLOFF: Our house ... was next to the Catholic Church. Now there were not a lot of Catholics in LaFollette. I guess, with the Italians that—we had some Italians that came in. They lived—they had their home in a little neighborhood, but, I guess, they were probably the Catholic group in LaFollette. I don’t remember any other people growing up in the Catholic Church, people that I knew. But anyhow, we were right next to the Catholic Church. And, and they had—a circuit rider would go—I think he would go on Sunday from Harriman to Norris to LaFollette or Harriman to Clinton to LaFollette, and he would make the, you know, the circuit. Some days he would start in LaFollette and some days he could start in Harriman, or wherever the second or third place was. So, he would tell my mother—‘course we were right next to the ... Catholic church, he would tell my mother, “Now I am going to have an early service next week” or, you know, “I will start at a certain time.” So, it got to be habit when these tourists going between Cincinnati and Atlanta would stop in LaFollette for the night and, and they would say, “Do you have a Catholic Church?” “Yes.” “What time is the service?” “Well, we’ve got to call the Balloff’s to find out what time the service is.” (Laughter) And for years and years and years I don’t think people realized that we were Jewish. I think that they thought we were Catholic because we lived next to the Catholic Church. And then later on we added a room in the back of our house, and we had an air—the first air conditioner that we had—we put that air conditioner in that room, and the Catholics had a summer school, and my mother let them come into that air conditioned room to have their program. So, we—growing up in a very unusual kind of surrounding. Very strong Baptist area, and, uh, and I guess, I guess my friends were Presbyterian, and I grew up in a Presbyterian, Baptist area.

PIEHLER: Well, what was the Presbyterian atmosphere like? What do you remember?

BALLOFF: I don’t know, other than that I went to that church a lot with my friends.

PIEHLER: So, you would go to church services?

BALLOFF: Not regularly. But they were our friends. And then, I don’t know, they were—my parents were very geared to our having education and meeting Jewish people, my mother. So, my brother and I both went away to private school in our junior and senior year. The Presbyterian minister knew ... that my dad was planning on sending us because some of the people were going to different schools like Kentucky Military. A lot of private schools around,

and he encouraged us to go to McCallie, McCallie is a Presbyterian school. And he was very instrumental in both my brother and I going to prep school there, which we did in 1937 and '38 and '39.

PIEHLER: So, you went to a Presbyterian ...

BALLOFF: I went to a private Presbyterian school.

PIEHLER: Not a private Jewish school?

BALLOFF: Not a private Jewish school. Nowhere in this ...

PIEHLER: How many Jewish students were at this school? Do you remember?

BALLOFF: How many Jewish students that were in that school? I think that there was one other boy who lived in Chattanooga. He was a day student.

PIEHLER: A day student.

BALLOFF: But we were boarding students.

PIEHLER: Boarding students.

BALLOFF: Yeah, in McCallie in Chattanooga.

PIEHLER: So, you having—in a sense, you had strong ties with the Presbyterian school.

BALLOFF: That's right. And don't ask me what, what the difference in what the Presbyterians believe, and what the Baptist believe, or what the Methodist believe. But that is what I grew up with.

PIEHLER: Well, I want to go back, both because we are sort of on this line of questioning, but also because of something that you had said earlier; what was it like to be this ... only Jewish family in, in LaFollette?

BALLOFF: We never had any reason to really ... know we were Jewish and that we dated and ran around with people who were not Jewish and, uh ...

PIEHLER: So, you would date Gentile ...

BALLOFF: Sure.

PIEHLER: You know, Gentile girlfriends?

BALLOFF: Sure.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like, correct me if I am wrong, that you were—your family was fairly widely accepted.

BALLOFF: Well, yes.

PIEHLER: Did you ever encounter any anti-Semitism?

BALLOFF: I don't think so. I don't think so. It might have been behind our back, but never was I ever in any anti-Semitic ...

PIEHLER: No one ever said something really ...

BALLOFF: There was never any negative anything, never.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit more about school? 'Cause you mentioned ... going to the Presbyterian Church, occasionally with friends ...

BALLOFF: Well, school was—in first grade, I don't know, we—'course, everything was near the school so you walked to school. After school, I guess, we played football, baseball, whatever the particular sport was.

PIEHLER: So, you played ... a lot of sand ...

BALLOFF: Well, I'll tell you. In 1937, we had a six man football team. And that—the school wasn't big enough to have eleven man football, and neither did we have equipment, so there was a league of six man football. And we, we played a school at Wheat, which is now Oak Ridge, and Robbinsville. There was little schools down in that valley. And we would go, 1937, 1938, and go down there and play football.

PIEHLER: How big was, was, for example, your high school? How...

BALLOFF: Our high school had about 200 ... at the most. Very rural, very rural. It brought kids from all around. We had a black ... high school in LaFollette, and they brought in kids from all over, all over the county.

PIEHLER: How big was the black high school? Do you know?

BALLOFF: Not very big. Not very big. And when integration came along, the—I don't know if the teachers were that excited about it because they had pretty—they had jobs. How good they were and how well they paid, I don't know, in the black community.

PIEHLER: So, some of the black teachers were leery about integration?

BALLOFF: Yes. Do you know the story of the, of the Clinton [Tennessee], the Clinton riot thing when they tried to integrate the other county schools?

PIEHLER: Yes, yes.

BALLOFF: You know of that story. That was in the '50s. Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact my ... sister lived in California and came—she use to come for visit regularly, and we—I drove her to the airport through Clinton with the tanks, with the tanks on the street because they brought in a guy and who really was a rebel rouser. Casper I think was his name. And they finally blew up the school. So we—I don't know how I got into that, but ... the black school in LaFollette, it was their school and they did their thing.

PIEHLER: Did you have many black customers?

BALLOFF: Well, we had a few, but those people ... did not have a lot of money.

PIEHLER: ... Where did they work?

BALLOFF: Well, they worked as a domestic. Most of them worked as a domestic.

PIEHLER: Most of them were domestics?

BALLOFF: And then when TVA and with Oak Ridge came about I think that they got jobs, a lot of jobs there.

PIEHLER: Did ... your family have ... a domestic growing up?

BALLOFF: Yes. Yes, I think most—a lot of families did.

PIEHLER: Where were they from? The black community?

BALLOFF: Yes, yes. And I imagine that is where most of the black female—that's what most of them did. And that might have been the big income for a lot of them. I don't remember—we had a black fellow that worked as a janitor in our store. And most of the guys, that would have been their occupation.

PIEHLER: I am curious to ask you, 'cause I get the sense that you have a lot of fond memories of LaFollette, and you sort of mentioned being in the outdoors a lot, let me ask a very general question, what did you do for fun growing up? You have already mentioned a lot of sports.

BALLOFF: Oh, we, well we had a Boy Scout troop. That was a big thing.

PIEHLER: You were a Boy Scout?

BALLOFF: Yes. And ... we did a lot of outdoors stuff. And we did what anybody in a small town would do, I guess. We always had a football place to play football, and a place to play baseball, and there was not a lot of—see we didn't, we really didn't get any water sports until they built the Norris Dam and the lake backed up and, and they brought in boating and they brought in fishing. We didn't have all that.

PIEHLER: And swimming, it sounds like.

BALLOFF: And swimming. There was a pool, there was a city pool and I will never forget it because it didn't have a concrete bottom. It had concrete sides. And you would go in swimming and you would be in mud. (Laughter) The bottom was mud. I can always remember that being not a good place to go swimming.

PIEHLER: It sounds like it is a very vivid memory.

BALLOFF: It was a better place to go swimming than in the creek.

PIEHLER: Than this, this half pool.

BALLOFF: Yes. And, and we did have, up near Jellico, we had a thing called Sandy Beach. And I don't have any idea of how much coal dust or how polluted it was—so that was our swimming place. They—our growing up was, was very normal, you know.

PIEHLER: Small town America.

BALLOFF: Small town everything. Have you interviewed other small town people?

BLAIR: No.

PIEHLER: I have.

BLAIR: You know what ...

PIEHLER: So—what about what about the movies. Did LaFollette have a...

BALLOFF: We had movies, yes. But, as I watch—I watch Turner Classic a lot, you know that channel?

BLAIR: Oh, yeah.

BALLOFF: And I think back to those movies that we saw—what we must have thought, 'cause everything was so glamorous. But when I see these old movies with the women and the hats and the big dresses and the guys with tails and tux and things, what we must have thought, because we were not, I mean—we had no, we had no connection to any of those things.

BLAIR: Do you remember the first movie you ever saw?

BALLOFF: No. No I don't. I just remember—I think they changed movies, like, every third day, and my friend Dick Sharp and I would go, we'd go to the movies that—that was our night's activity.

PIEHLER: So, you would go to the movies at night?

BALLOFF: Yeah. We worked during the day. I mean, I don't even know if they opened the movies during the day.

PIEHLER: Uh huh, so you don't have any memories ...

BALLOFF: Everybody worked, everybody worked. And, ... maybe on Saturday—Saturday was the big day—everybody came to town. I like—I have a picture of LaFollette, 1931. The sidewalks are packed.

PIEHLER: Did you go to any—it sounds like you couldn't go to Saturday matinees, is that a...

BALLOFF: Well, when I was younger ... before I could go to work, we would go to the movies. You know, they would have two features and a comedy and the whole thing. So, my mother would take us into the ... theater, I think it cost a dime, and I remember—I think it cost a dime if you were thirteen—whenever I—no, when you were ten, and I was very proud when I was ten I could go pay a quarter to get into the movie. (Laughter) But we had a lot of Westerns, that is what we mostly grew up with was Westerns. And uh...

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like, you remember things like Tom Mix and ...

BALLOFF: Oh yeah, and uh, Tom Mix and Hoot Gibson and uh, who else? Well, Gene Audrey came later and—I don't know, that was always the favorite movies.

PIEHLER: What about, did you remember any sort of war movies growing up? Did you go—did any stick out?

BALLOFF: Uh, no. No, I don't—what war movies were there—there was the War World I theme.

PIEHLER: ... Do you remember any movie like *All Quiet at the Western Front*?

BALLOFF: I don't remember it. I know I saw it, but I don't remember it.

BLAIR: Well, how did you get information? From, like ...

PIEHLER: Oh, hold that ...

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PIEHLER: I ...

BALLOFF: These new ...

PIEHLER: I know there I—it's just a lack of ... —your not the first person to comment on that, and I am beginning to think that the ...

BALLOFF: There's no problem with it. I ... have a lot of 8-track stuff.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I ... well one of the things I've thought of trying to get a little bit higher quality grade [for recording interviews], but one of it is we put a lot of primacy on the transcript. So while I shudder to think that someday they'll want to do a documentary on this and they will criticize the sound quality of this, but it's really—the transcript is paramount, paramount, though we save the tapes, the tapes are important, but I am thinking this summer that I may have this one intern really do research. I am also not a real tech person.

BALLOFF: I'm not either.

PIEHLER: ... But you're the second person I've interviewed—and so I can really tell that I am becoming very obsolete. (Laughs) 'Cause this was when I first started—this was much more state of the art.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. I have some stuff that I still ... enjoy that is of the past.

PIEHLER: But let me—Olivia was just ready to ask a question, so let me ...

BLAIR: Well, how did you get information from the outside your community?

BALLOFF: We had radio. We got a radio station in Knoxville.

BLAIR: Who was ... the person behind those, who talked to you, or who was the news ...

PIEHLER: What programs did you listen too?

BALLOFF: Well, I guess, we listened to more ... of the late afternoon serials or, you know—who was it? If we listened to the radio it was probably—it was more—what was some of the ...

PIEHLER: Well, I think that there was the *Green Hornet* and there was ...

BALLOFF: Those kinds of things. *Flash Gordon*. And then *Amos and Andy* were big and *Fibber McGee and Mollie* and those things. We listened to a lot of that.

BLAIR: So, there wasn't a lot of the Peter Jennings of today back then on the radio?

PIEHLER: Well, did you listen to—oh I am thinking a Lowell Thomas, is that someone you remember listening to?

BALLOFF: Oh yeah. Well, Lowell Thomas, that was television.

PIEHLER: Well, no he was—Lowell Thomas, he started in the '20s.

BALLOFF: In the '20s? I don't remember that. I don't know whether the Knoxville—I don't know—I do remember the clear channel stations that we listened to, music at night from—there was the New Orleans clear station, Chicago had a clear channel station ...

PIEHLER: WGN?

BALLOFF. WGN. And WWL—where was WWL?

PIEHLER: I'm not sure.

BALLOFF: At night there were a lot of clear channel stations, WFCM ...

PIEHLER: So, for music you listened ...

BALLOFF: That is what we listened to.

PIEHLER: What music did you listen too?

BALLOFF: Well, Big Band, the Big Band music channels. Of course, Knoxville in those early days had the Midday Merry Go Round. And a lot of people that ended up going to Nashville in country music came out of Knoxville, a lot of it. Chet Atkins is a local guy—who were some of the others? There were a lot of others, Mid-Day Merry Go Round. That was the big thing. Have you heard about them?

PIEHLER: I have heard about them ...

BALLOFF: I mean that was downtown. Gay Street had a big theater. That was the noonday show. And the big thing was to come to Knoxville. We'd come to Knoxville [and] you would either—you would go to the ... Tennessee Theater, that was the big deal. And the S&W was the cafeteria. That was the ... big trip to Knoxville.

PIEHLER: So, that sounds like a very distinctive memory.

BALLOFF: That's right. That's exactly—and that wasn't very often. When—I guess, the women came, but we worked ... I remember people going to Tennessee football games on Saturday and we didn't get to go cause we were [working]. We did go, there was a time, I think, when Tennessee played Kentucky on Thanksgiving Day on Thursday, and the store was closed and we went to see Tennessee-Kentucky football. But as far as Saturday games, we just didn't do it.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like, Saturdays, as you mentioned it earlier, Saturday was the big day.

BALLOFF: When I show you the picture of LaFollette on a Saturday of a 1931 you won't believe it.

PIEHLER: Well, it is interesting, my late ... stepfather he once talked about ... working the store in the '40s. I think it is Leesburg, Virginia he just said just the, the waves of people that just came downtown.

BALLOFF: You'll see the picture and you will just not believe it.

PIEHLER: Yeah. It's something—it sounds like it is something that we should scan into the computer so we can mount it into the interview. That would be great.

BALLOFF: Well, there is ... a museum in LaFollette that has a lot of the stories about LaFollette. I don't know. My mother ... and her friend Mrs. Carden did a lot of—the school, the school didn't have a lunch program. And I can remember my mother and Mrs. Carden making a big thing of soup and taking it to the school and serve lunch to the kids. Now, why did that come to my mind? But that was one of the big programs.

PIEHLER: Well, it sounds like that that meant the kids would have a meal.

BALLOFF: Yes. That was, that was ... they were very poor. The '20s and '30s were just, just hard to believe that there was just that much poverty. There is a ... museum in Norris called The Museum of Lenoir, of the Lenoir family, and there is pictures of—there's one book I remember of churches and schools and the homes were just nothing. I mean ...

PIEHLER: It sounds like you were aware of this pretty early in life.

BALLOFF: Oh, yes.

BLAIR: Did your parents ever mention the Great Depression?

BALLOFF: Well, you know, we were right in the middle of it.... But we might have been better off than maybe a lot of people in the community. So, we thought we were pretty good, I guess.

PIEHLER: Well, it sounds like you, for example, you always had food on the table.

BALLOFF: Yes.

PIEHLER: And you always had a car, and you had a telephone and a radio. It sounds like you were ...

BALLOFF: Well, that was not unusual for LaFollette. There were a lot more families more wealthy than we were because they were in the coal business.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so the managers were better ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, the managers and the doctors and the people connected with the coal industry.

PIEHLER: Your parents, what kinds of organizations were they involved in? Were they ...

BALLOFF: The Eastern Star, is that a ladies ...

PIEHLER: Uh huh, yeah. Your mother was in the Eastern Star.

BALLOFF: And my dad—I don't think my dad was a was a involved in any ...

PIEHLER: He didn't join anything like the Rotary or the Mason's or ...

BALLOFF: I don't think they had them. Maybe the Mason's, maybe the Mason's. Maybe I have a certificate.... I don't remember the Rotary or any of those organizations. They probably had them. See, I left home in 19—when I went to school in 1939. Let's see. I was there in '39, '40, Chattanooga and McCallie, '40, '41. And then I went to Vanderbilt for one year and then I went into the service in 1944, '43-'44, and then I didn't get out until '46, and then I went back to school. So, ... I was in and out of LaFollette during those growing up years.

PIEHLER: Yeah. You mentioned Saturdays as a very distinctive memory coming to town.

BALLOFF: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Anything else distinctive about LaFollette, for example. What [about] Veteran's Day and Memorial Day, or the 4<sup>th</sup> of July or ...

BALLOFF: I'm sure they had, I'm sure they observed those. I'm sure they did.

PIEHLER: But nothing sticks out?

BALLOFF: Nothing sticks out. I just remember always putting out the American Flag out in front of the store. We had a thing on the sidewalk that we mounted the flag on every day.

PIEHLER: Every day?

BALLOFF: We flew the flag all the time.

BLAIR: Did you have ... any other relatives that participated in World War I, or ...

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. In World War I?

BLAIR: Uh huh.

BALLOFF: Oh no, no. No, World War II, not World War I.

BLAIR: Oh, okay.

BALLOFF: I don't know, I don't know what they did during those—I don't know what Jewish guys did in World War I. I know they were in this country, but I don't have any stories. I don't know of any stories. I don't know of any stories. Now ... my father-in-law was a peddler also and ... he had a horse and a wagon when he peddled in western Kentucky. But it's always—when we get together, my generation of Jewish guys, we always talked about how did our fathers got to where—I mean there's just all kinds of stories that nobody really, uh—there was a story about a family in Kentucky, I don't know how true it was, that there were four or five brothers and somebody in Louisville put them on a train and said, “Now every time this train stops, one of you get off and get a job.” Now whether some jobbers, or whether somebody suggested they do that, I don't know.

PIEHLER: Well I interviewed, you probably know him, Milton Klein.

BALLOFF: Milton Klein?

PIEHLER: I don't know if you've ever met him.

BALLOFF: Is he a Knoxvilleian?

PIEHLER: Yes—well not originally. He's originally from New York, but I think if you saw Milton Klein you'd remember him.

BALLOFF: What does he do here?

PIEHLER: He is a professor at UT. I was asking about, you know, his parents, and he said frankly ... when we were growing up we didn't think to ask. I mean is that an accurate ...

BALLOFF: That's right. I know we sat around the table and talked business. I mean, I don't remember talking about my dad, boys on a boat, what kind of boat he came over on, what kind of, uh, steerage, or where he lived or what he did. Never talked about it. But he did talk about New York, that after work he would—I think his brother would give a nickel or a dime or whatever it would cost to ride the ... streetcar back to where they lived. And one day he took that nickel and bought an apple and he had to walk home, and he didn't—he just knew the streetcar line, and he was really frightened, because he really didn't really know how to get back. He didn't get on the right car because he spent his money for an apple.

BLAIR: So, you did mention that he did have language problems. How did he learn the English language? Did ...

BALLOFF: I don't have any idea. I don't have—I don't know. There was no schooling for those guys.

PIEHLER: Growing up, what was the language in the home?

BALLOFF: Well (laughs) it was English, but when there was something that they didn't want us to hear, it was usually Hebrew. They had—there were some things—I don't even know what they talked about.

PIEHLER: Would they speak Hebrew or Yiddish?

BALLOFF: Yiddish.

PIEHLER: Yiddish.

BALLOFF: You know, my dad took the *Daily Forward*.

PIEHLER: I was just ready to ask you. So ...

BALLOFF: Can you imagine the mailman delivering that paper to our house? And it was—I remember it had a pictorial section it was in a catalog, brownish—I remember looking at the pictures—but you know we never talked about what was going on in Germany. We never talked about that.

PIEHLER: It never came up?

BALLOFF: Well, why was it not in that paper? Well, why would there have not been some stories in that paper in the '30s about what was going on in Germany?

PIEHLER: Yeah. Did you read Yiddish?

BALLOFF: I couldn't read. No, I never had any training.

PIEHLER: ... Your father never brought it up?

BALLOFF: No, and uh...

PIEHLER: When did you have some sense of what was going on in Germany?

BALLOFF: Not until ... 1940, 1940 when I was away in school.

PIEHLER: So, that is when you had some ...

BALLOFF: That was when you kind of tied in what was going on.

PIEHLER: But until then, I mean ...

BALLOFF: We were just out in the country and isolated and I guess we did hear, ... we did get news, but the American news media was not saying much about the ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah ...

BALLOFF: I don't think. And there was some criticism about our, about the isolationists that didn't want to get involved with it.

PIEHLER: Related to that, in terms of just what was going on, what do you, how did your family, ... [your] mother and father feel about Franklin Roosevelt?

BALLOFF: Oh, they loved him, yeah, because they didn't know a lot of stuff about him other than he came along with all of the government programs, I mean TVA, the WPA, the CCC program. You know what that is?

PIEHLER: Uh huh.

BALLOFF: There were a lot of programs that came around about that time and he was the president. So, they [thought] he was responsible for doing all that. You know we had the C—you know about the CCC.

PIEHLER: No, well you know, it sounds like you remember—these were not—well, you had already remembered the impact of TVA. What about the other programs—it sounds like you, you ...

BALLOFF: I remember the CCC. They had a camp within LaFollette up the valley, and I think there was a Jewish officer that was—maybe a captain. And I remember going up to the camps.

PIEHLER: Really?

BALLOFF: Yeah. And there were ... a lot of people out of the East—out of the Northeast; a lot of families.

PIEHLER: Did they ever come to the ... store?

BALLOFF: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: What about, you mentioned having outsiders coming to Seder. Did you ever have any more coming from the CCC camp.

BALLOFF: I don't think, I don't think we did. I don't remember that.

PIEHLER: What about this army officer who was Jewish. What do you remember?

BALLOFF: I just remember his—he, he invited us up to the camp, and we—I have pictures of us in the camp. And I don't—I know the big project they did when they built Norris Dam they established the water level of what the high water level would be when the dam—like, I think it was 1020. So the CCC, their project was to cut out all the trees [and] do all the clearing that was below that.

PIEHLER: Oh, wow.

BALLOFF: You know, a valley, a whole farm had to be destroyed. And ... they did a lot of that, not destroying homes, but they did a lot of ... clearing out because ... they wanted the lake to be clean of all the trees, and buildings, and whatever. But then I have—what happens with the CCC in the Smoky Mountains, building roads and building—another interesting thing, and I never really—my wife alerted me, they had a group of people that did portraits, that did murals, and our post office had a big painting of a group of CCC men who came and did this art.

PIEHLER: Actually that sounds like that ... was the WPA, it sounds like.

BALLOFF: That was the WPA. That was during that same period.

PIEHLER: But you remember putting the mural up?

BALLOFF: I remember it in the post office.

PIEHLER: In LaFollette?

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Oh, wow.

BALLOFF: And ... then I didn't realize—in reading about the CCC, people in the Smokies, they ... brought engineers who built the bridges and ... they brought ... nursery people who did the plantings ... and a lot of that—brought in a lot of—and I wasn't aware of that.

PIEHLER: But, it sounds like, you were fairly aware of these programs? I mean, the CCC is not a distant thing. You would actually visit ...

BALLOFF: Well yeah. We were right there with them, and, you know, we have a lot of heritage. You know, we have names that aren't typically Campbell County, names of these boys that came out of the East and married these girls and, and I can't think of any—I know there was a lot of, uh, Pelizzaris, a lot of names that, that you would not normally find in a rural Campbell County.

PIEHLER: So, some of the CCC-ers stayed?

BALLOFF: Stayed.

PIEHLER: They married locally, and ...

BALLOFF: That's right. And a lot of TVA engineers did. See, they created the town of Norris. And that—those engineers lived there, and they had a weekend of parties and dances and they kind of mixed in and married a lot of local girls. Some big things for that area. But Oak Ridge, when that came along in '40s ...

PIEHLER: Well, let me—‘cause you were still—while Oak Ridge was growing, you were at Vanderbilt, and you were in the service, but still it strikes me that this was a very distinctive memory when you did get back here, what was happening at Oak Ridge and—but what do you remember about when they started building Oak Ridge?

BALLOFF: Well, course we didn’t know what they were doing. We just knew there were a lot of workers. We had no idea what they were doing. I [nor] anybody, I don’t think, other than the top levels of our people knew what they were doing. The—we really didn’t know anything about Oak Ridge. The Oak Ridge city, I think, opened in 1955. The government owned all the land and they controlled it. And we opened a store in 1955 in Oak Ridge when the city was opened to the public.

PIEHLER: When it opened up, in a sense.

BALLOFF: When they opened up the city.

PIEHLER: What, what were the rumors? ‘Cause it was so big you couldn’t—so what were the rumors?

BALLOFF: I was hitchhiking, I remember I was coming home on a weekend furlough and I was hitchhiking home and, uh, this guy picked me up, and he was a worker and he said—and I was in uniform, and he said, “Well Sam, you know, we really can’t talk about this, but,” he said “I think they’re making synthetic tires.” (Laughter) But, but he really had no idea of what they were doing.

PIEHLER: So, he was pretty like ...

BALLOFF: He was a worker, he was a worker. But he could only tell me because I was a soldier.

PIEHLER: But he still figured out, he, he—it sounds like he didn’t have a clue to ...

BALLOFF: Oh, no. But have you not interviewed people who grew up around the area, who lived through that period?

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, we have. And what was your hunch? Did you have any sort of hunch?

BALLOFF: I had no idea.

PIEHLER: You had no idea?

BALLOFF: Nothing.

PIEHLER: But, it sounds like, this really ...

BALLOFF: Well, you know, even the people that ... worked there didn't talk about it much, about what was going on, even within the city.

PIEHLER: It sounds like this—the company—the arrival of Oak Ridge was even better for your business, for your father.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. That—I mean TVA and Oak Ridge—I mean the '30s—things were pretty good around the late '30s, early '40s. I don't know what was going on around the rest of the country, but things were beginning to happen. And then, you know, under Roosevelt we got the ... rural electrification. What is that called? REA?

PIEHLER: Yes.

BALLOFF: We had people who worked in our store—and LaFollette had its own power.... It supplied power to the city of LaFollette, but if you lived outside the city of LaFollette you didn't have any electricity.

PIEHLER: So, you remember growing up and you'd take these rides?

BALLOFF: Yeah, these people had no electricity.

PIEHLER: So, in other words the city lights would stop.

BALLOFF: That's right. It was very limited. And, I guess, that's the reason we turned out the lights in the store was to conserve electricity. That was part of it. That was ... that was quite an era.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned coming to Knoxville was a big deal, and that your parents would take this Florida sojourn. Where else had you traveled before ... really going into service?

BALLOFF: Not much. Not much.

PIEHLER: Well, let me ask how far north had you gone before?

BALLOFF: How, how what?

PIEHLER: How far north had you traveled before going into the service?

BALLOFF: Well, you know we had family in New York, and we use to go to New York. That was the only trip we really ever took. And my mother—I guess, we went up on a train, and my uncle lived in New York and we would go up. I went to the 19—was the World's Fair in 1939?

PIEHLER: Oh, yes. So, you went to ...

BALLOFF: And I saw ... the first television. And, you know, World's Fairs in those days were—that's where they introduced a lot of new stuff. I mean of late, the World's Fairs, I mean when something new comes out it's out, the World's Fair doesn't show it.

PIEHLER: Well, ... the World's Fair of '39 was very—for historians is very—I mean, it is an important World's Fair. Besides television, what else do you remember about the World's Fair?

BALLOFF: Something about the automobiles. Were they showing—diesel engines, ... was that in the '30s.

PIEHLER: I am the wrong one to ask about automobiles. (Laughs)

BALLOFF: I think ... that is what General Motors might have been showing.

PIEHLER: That wouldn't surprise me, because I know they showed diagrams of, sort of, cities of the future with the freeways.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... How often would you make it back to New York?

BALLOFF: In the summers.... And I can remember getting on a bus, and I loved the music, and I'd go to the theater, get in on the bus in the morning and driving on a double decker bus and go downtown to the Paramount. And I remember Frank Sinatra and his first early years singing with Tommy Dorsey.

PIEHLER: At the Paramount.

BALLOFF: They have a movie and then they would have a show, and ... that was a big thing. I mean for me, man, that was big time! To go downtown, and there was no fear of anything. They would give me my money and—let's see I'm already—I guess I was already eleven or twelve years old and I would walk around New York.

PIEHLER: So, you would also have memories walking around New York.

BALLOFF: Yeah and I love'em. I remember the planetarium and—was the planetarium there in the early ...

PIEHLER: Yes. That was the planetarium.

BALLOFF: And the Museum of Natural History. That was my favorite.

PIEHLER: That was your favorite place to go?

BALLOFF: But, the World's Fair—I just remember the television, I don't ... remember going out there, I just remember being there.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Yeah, well it was down in Queens. It was down in Flushing.

BALLOFF: Well, I guess, we took the subway every day. And I think, the first, the first exposure I had to the ocean was my aunt took us to Coney Island. Now I just remember Coney Island and Jones Beach.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like ... it sticks out. What do you remember about ...

BALLOFF: Nothing, other than being in the water and [being] fascinated with the waves.

PIEHLER: How ... old were you the first time you saw that beach? Do you ...

BALLOFF: I could have been eight, or nine, or ten.

PIEHLER: So, you were very small.

BALLOFF: Yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you went to New York not only when you were older, but also when you were very young?

BALLOFF: Yes. You know, you asked me about my travels I forgot that we did anything like that, but we did in the summer, and we'd go up there almost every summer. And I can remember now that we talk about it. I remember getting on the bus and going downtown.

PIEHLER: At a very early age, it sounds like.

BALLOFF: Yes, yes. I wish ... my mother were around to—she just remembered every little detail of just everything we did, and so much so that we would double-check on her memory sometimes. She would say that we were so many years old and when we went to New York and we would say, “What year was it?” And then we would say, “How old were we?” She pretty much knew what—and I have a whole, I have a whole printout of an interview that she.... So, I have a lot of stuff up there. You'll have to come by my house some time.

PIEHLER: Yeah, no that sounds ... we would love to at some point.

BALLOFF: What I am going to do, I'm going to maybe come see you sometime. I'll drop off the pictures of LaFollette in 1931.

PIEHLER: Yeah, we will have to make an arrangement, because we would scan it in. Yeah.

BALLOFF: I don't have many pictures of LaFollette.

PIEHLER: Do you remember where you were when ... the attack on Pearl Harbor came?

BALLOFF: No I don't. December 7. Where was I? 1942.

PIEHLER: '41.

BALLOFF: '41. I guess, I was in school.

PIEHLER: But you don't have any distinctive ...

BALLOFF: I don't remember exactly—I know where I was when Kennedy got shot. I remember that, but I don't remember ...

PIEHLER: Well since you raised—normally we go in order, but where were you in the Kennedy assassination?

BALLOFF: I was in the store. I know exactly what part of the store I was standing in.

PIEHLER: Really, what part was it?

BALLOFF: I was in the back part of the store. And I remember that. I do remember—I don't remember ...

PIEHLER: Did you shut the store down during the Kennedy assassination that day?

BALLOFF: I don't remember.

PIEHLER: But you remember distinctly ...

BALLOFF: I remember, I remember the town. But, Pearl Harbor—I was in school in December in '41. December of '41. December of '41, I was in prep school in Chattanooga in 1941.

PIEHLER: And, I guess, one thing that I—before we leave LaFollette and growing up, what was it like going to prep school having come from this very small town?

BALLOFF: Well, that was—a lot of the boarding students came from small town. So we—so there were more, sort of, my kind of guys. They came from little towns in Mississippi, and Alabama, and North Carolina. And, McCallie had a lot of day students, but they were from the prominent families.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like there was a real division ...

BALLOFF: There was, there was.

PIEHLER: Between the people of the small towns and...

BALLOFF: The boarding students and the day students.

PIEHLER: And the boarding students, in the form of character, they were not necessarily the elite? It was the day students that were really the ...

BALLOFF: It was just a different group of guys. And see, we didn't associate—they came to school in the morning and they went home in the evening if they weren't involved in sports, and so we really didn't get to know them. But we were entertained a lot. We'd be invited out to dinner at their homes.

PIEHLER: Okay, so it wasn't that much of a ...

BALLOFF: I guess, we were sort of a novel [group] ... to those people. (Laughter) I mean coming out of a small town and we—the school had a system where they graded you on your military, and your athletics, and your scholarship, and your attendance. That all—a whole bunch of things went into your rating, and ... they rated you. I was sort of in the middle rating which meant that I had to stay on campus. So, they had a deal where they would bring ten bells to make sure that those of us who couldn't get off the campus had to report to the study hall. So that was—I just remember sitting out on the wall on the main road and waiting for the bell to ring so we could check in. But that—it was good. It was good. I go back, I still go back. I go back for reunions and I go back for homecomings.

PIEHLER: So, you have very fond memories.

BALLOFF: I have good memories of it.

PIEHLER: Was it—you had mentioned you had ratings in the military. Were you...

BALLOFF: They had—it was—now some of the prep schools were ... military. And they had to follow certain government regulations. Ours was sort of a semi-military. We had a gun. We carried rifles, but we didn't do any military classes.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you had, in a sense, had a junior, or what we would now term as an ROTC that their—so you would do ... some drill ...

BALLOFF: We would do the drilling, and the marching, and all that sort of thing, but we didn't have any military classes.

PIEHLER: And did you wear your uniform?

BALLOFF: We did wear our uniform. Yeah.

PIEHLER: You did wear your uniform all the time?

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. That was a big deal.

PIEHLER: Did you have room inspections?

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Oh goodness yeah. We had inspections. All kinds of drills and everything else.

PIEHLER: So, it had a strong military—it sounds—it had a military ...

BALLOFF: It had a military atmosphere.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

BALLOFF: But like I say, there were no military classes. Now you had schools like Castle Heights, Tennessee Military Academy. That was ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, that was very ...

BALLOFF: And I think those guys might have gotten a commission. No, no, no. Not out of high school.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because you said growing up, even though your father got *The Forward*, you never really talked about what was going on ...

BALLOFF: What was going on.

PIEHLER: What was going on in Germany. You said it was only in the prep school that you had some awareness of what was going on. What kind—thinking back, not what we know now, but what you knew then ...

BALLOFF: It was what I read in the papers. I don't remember any of the class discussions—I don't think ... that group would have even brought it up.

PIEHLER: Were you—you said you went to Vanderbilt. Now, you went to Vanderbilt initially as a civilian.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Not in the ASTP.

BALLOFF: Not in the what?

PIEHLER: Not as part of the ASTP.

BALLOFF: No. That was definitely ...

PIEHLER: I just, I just want to make sure.

BALLOFF: That was an army program. Army Specialized Training...

PIEHLER: Specialized Training ...

BALLOFF: Army Specialized Training Program.

PIEHLER: I'll come back to ask you about that.

BALLOFF: Okay.

PIEHLER: ... Let me make sure, Olivia, before we really fully move into the war, do you have any questions about pre-war questions that we might have missed? I'll give you a second to ...

BLAIR: Alright. Actually think I have two more, both during your college years. First one, what was your focus in college in as far as academics?

PIEHLER: My focus in college?

BLAIR: Uh huh.

BALLOFF: I thought I wanted to go in—I thought I wanted to be an engineer. I had good math grades and ... as a freshman I took some ... courses in the engineering school. And then I took the regular freshman courses at Vanderbilt in English and math and all that sort of thing. And I, I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure. And then the second year, I was only there one quarter before going into the service. So, I really—when I came back I went into the business administration. And that's ... what my degree was: Arts and Science degree with a major in math. And that was about it.

And, you know, I go over to the Pond Gap School and read to the kids, and I see their math. These are first graders that are doing, doing a lot of math. I'd talk to the kids who are in high school who are doing calculus. I mean in my days differential integral calculus were 4 and 500 number courses. Now the kids are doing it in high school. Well, I don't know. Whatever it is in.

PIEHLER: But originally you had wanted to be an engineer.

BALLOFF: I thought I did. But there were ... not a lot of Jewish engineer students in 1941. There might have been a restriction on that.

PIEHLER: You seem to have had some awareness of that. Is that ...

BALLOFF: Yes, and medical school too. But that wasn't the reason I didn't pursue [it]. But I just know that there were not a lot of Jewish engineer students at Vanderbilt in those days.

BLAIR: Um, did you have any girlfriends or ...

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. (Laughter)

BALLOFF: Before I went up to school most of my girlfriends were not Jewish. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: How did your mother ...

BLAIR: How did your parents ...

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: Did your parents like that, or did they ...

BALLOFF: My parents, you know it's—I don't know, this is not—there's a lady in New York who's an actress who grew up in LaFollette. And ... I kind of dated her. We didn't have girlfriends, I mean, we went out as a group. Nobody had any certain girlfriend. Now why did I bring that up? (Laughter) Oh, we were talking about this last night. My parents, knowing that we grew up in an area where there were not a lot of Jewish people—and we dated girls that were not Jewish, and we always said that if you marry a girl they would prefer that we married a Jewish girl, but if we didn't there has—there can only be one religion in a marriage. You can't have the wife going—practicing one religion and so, so they—I don't know if they objected to—I don't think that they would have had objections to our marrying girls who were not Jewish, although it would be fine if we did. They said, “You got to have one religion in a marriage.”

PIEHLER: That was very clear to you very early ...

BALLOFF: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: It sounds like they really thought this out.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. I mean, I think that is one reason why they wanted us to go to Chattanooga, because it had a bigger Jewish population than Knoxville at that time. And then that was, uh—the other schools—there were a lot of boys from LaFollette that went to KMI .... And we did belong to the Jewish congregation. The Sunday school, we went to the Sunday school.

PIEHLER: So, you did go, you did go ...

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: One question that I should ask you, were you Bar Mitzvahed?

BALLOFF: Oh, yes.

PIEHLER: You were Bar Mitzvahed?

BALLOFF: Oh, it was an ordeal. (Laughter) I mean a rabbi, I mean, I know I—it was all memory, what reading I did was all memory. I mean the rabbi came up from Knoxville, or we went into Knoxville and I was scared to death—I mean I was frightened. There was a bearded

nice guy, very strict, and I knew a little Hebrew, but most of it was memory. It's—and you know there's a speech that went along with it. You went through the whole thing?

PIEHLER: No, no. See ...

BALLOFF: Where did you grow up?

PIEHLER: I grew up in New York, but I am a convert so I can fully relate to the whole—I was like petrified when they asked one day to do an Aliyah. So ...

BALLOFF: That's frightening.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I guess, my fantasy is when I retire maybe then I will try to do a Bar Mitzvah. But I'm realistic ...

BALLOFF: Well, I did it and, you know, Bar Mitzvahs are Bar Mitzvahs. They are a big, big, big thing.

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah.

BALLOFF: I think my mother made a sponge cake (laughter) and we might have had a bottle of wine, Morgan David wine. And, uh, we probably just had, we probably just had our family. That was it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

BALLOFF: Because we didn't know a lot of—even though we belonged to the Knoxville Jewish congregation, we were just country boys, not inclusive to a lot of stuff. So, it was not a big deal.

PIEHLER: Well, also it's interesting because I've done interviews—I actually interviewed, um, James Pointer who is from Norris. And, you know, now with the interstates and automobiles we, you know, Americans, have more automobiles than people. He sort of said when I asked him how often had you come to Knoxville. And he said, "I didn't come until I was twelve."

BALLOFF: Where did he grow up?

PIEHLER: He grew up in Norris, but he came ...

BALLOFF: In Norris?

PIEHLER: Yeah. He came from a very poor family, and just before ... the dam, you know, TVA came in, he...

BALLOFF: He came there before TVA?

PIEHLER: Yeah, he came—he lived there before TVA.

BALLOFF: Oh, that was, that was really poverty.

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah. No, he—I was sort of stunned when he described it. Because he described—you know, he described TVA coming in and putting in latrines for people. And he was describing it in so [much] detail, I finally said—I had to ask one of the obvious questions, “Did you get one of these latrines?” And he said, “Yes.” And I said, “What did you use before this?” And he said, “We just used the woods.” And, and I never thought of a latrine as sort of a step up, at least for America.

BALLOFF: Things are relative.

PIEHLER: Yeah.... I mean it was—I mean you can verify ...

BALLOFF: And I would go—and I was very aware of that. When I would go into a mining camp, I could talk to my costumers. These people would be happy if they painted their house. You know, whatever it got to do with—if they could do it just a little bit better, there was pride in that. I’ll tell you a project, talking about poverty, in the 19—in the early 1950’s there were a group of Vanderbilt medical students who came into Campbell County and had Health Fairs. And ... what they did, they ... went to these mining camps and they created a community organization for health service ... they lived there during the summer, and on Wednesday a doctor would come in. The students would do an eye check, a urine check—they couldn’t prescribe medicine. They could do all of these ...

PIEHLER: Diagnostic ...

BALLOFF: And then the doctor would come in and see the patients that needed to be seen, and he would prescribe medication.

PIEHLER: And, it seems, the doctor basically was there, in many ways, was there to look at the questionable cases and write their prescription.

BALLOFF: That’s right. Or whatever. So—there was a nun, Marie Carillo who is still up in the mountains up there—who came to the store and she had heard that I had gone to Vanderbilt. She said, “Sam, we need a builder. We need—we don’t have a building. We don’t have a place—we don’t have a clinic.” So, I knew of a guy that was making mobile homes and trailers and I went to him and I said, “Do you, do you think...”—he was, he was from Philadelphia, he was very civic minded—and I said, “Could you make me some sort of, could you make a clinic we could put in the mountains?” And he said, “Yeah, I have had some experience with that.” So, he converted one of his trailers, one of his mobile homes into a clinic with ... hot water ...

PIEHLER: Oh, hold that ...

(Tape paused)

BALLOFF: So, I—we raised the money and we bought this thing and we took it in White Oak ... and they had health fairs. And every Wednesday they'd bring in people and they would bring in babies who—with dirty diapers that had not been bathed. Now we are talking in the '50s already. And they just didn't have—they, they did that service for the people. The nuns—and they had seen people that had never seen the doctor. And they had a Jeep, and they would go up in the mountains and bring in this person who didn't believe in doctors, who might be sick. So, I would go home thinking that was severe.

PIEHLER: How long did the clinic continue?

BALLOFF: Well, they ... functioned for quite a while. They ... left Campbell County and followed the boundary of Tennessee going west, and I think they ended up somewhere north of ... Hartsville, pretty close into Nashville. Whether they still do it or not, I don't know.

PIEHLER: Yeah, well, this sounds like—well, you were involved in this. So, this was not a distant ...

BALLOFF: And I have some pictures and articles that—the paper—the writers wrote about what they were doing.

BLAIR: So, did the doctors come from your hometown, or did they ...

BALLOFF: No, the doctors ... really came from Nashville, and they were involved with them too, you know. But there was a lady, there was a lady Dean that didn't want to associate Vanderbilt—you know that was the years with the drugs and, you know, the kids that lived out in the mountains, and they, they thought maybe they might—and they lived with these miners, and they thought that they might—what are they called, you know, the students that were ...

PIEHLER: Hippies?

BALLOFF: In the hippie group. And what years are we talking about?

PIEHLER: Those were—that was more in the '60s.

BALLOFF: Yeah. And the, the university thought that these students might get out of hand and maybe try medical things that they're not allowed to do.

PIEHLER: So, in the '60s, it sounds like, Vanderbilt wanted to cut back on this, not ...

BALLOFF: They wanted—well, they had a reputation of being a school of specialists, and I think they wanted these kids—they got ... a grant from Macy's or somebody to study rural medicine, and, you know, they had nurse practitioners ... and they started that program of nurse practitioners that could prescribe and then doctor people. So, I'm already in the early '60s.

PIELER: I guess, ... one obvious question, why Vanderbilt?

BALLOFF: I guess ... I went because my brother went. I just kind of followed in his footsteps.

PIEHLER: And your brother, do you know why he picked Vanderbilt?

BALLOFF: Well, there were ... a lot of—evidently there was some people at McCallie that encouraged him to go to Vanderbilt. A lot of, a lot of those, I think, were going—a lot of them went to University of North Carolina, and a lot of them went to Davison which was a college in North Carolina and, and Vanderbilt. Or they ...

PIEHLER: Uh huh, those were the ...

BALLOFF: They kind of encouraged those. Not everybody went, but I went and was accepted. But, I had good years there.

PIEHLER: ... What do you, uh, what do you remember of your first year at Vanderbilt. Now you were going...

BALLOFF: I remember it being very hard. I mean very—I studied, I studied, I never studied so much. I just—I had a lady, I had a girlfriend, and—that was Saturday night. That was a big deal, Saturday night. Other times I studied. And Sunday we went to the Jewish community center to play basketball, and then we went back and studied. Monday was chemistry and English. (Laughs) I struggled through Monday. I remember that, I will never forget it. That was hard.

PIEHLER: What year did you enter Vanderbilt again?

BALLOFF: In the fall of '41.

PIEHLER: The fall of '41.

BALLOFF: ... I went through '41 and '42, and then ... the fall of '42 is when I enlisted, and I went into the service in the ... spring of '43, early part of '43.

PIERLER: And did you ever ...

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Sam Balloff on March 12, 2004, at a home on Downing Drive, in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler ...

BLAIR: And Olivia Blair.

PIEHLER: And you were saying you enlisted, and you had mentioned—as you mentioned earlier you ...

BALLOFF: See that was—those years they said if you enlist you can finish your college education, and you'll get a commission. That was ... that encouraged us to enlist.

PIEHLER: That was, sort of, your hook.

BALLOFF: That was the pitch. After you had gone through the navy and the army and all these—and everybody, and everybody was signing up for something. Everybody, I mean there was no hesitation, and, uh ...

BLAIR: Does this include your brother?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: Does this include your brother?

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. My brother and my four cousins were all in the service. So I enlisted thinking I was going to finish my education, and that was December. And in February I got my orders to report to Fort Oglethorpe. I was (laughs), I was in the service, and then I went to Fort Bragg went through military—artillery training and then I signed up for ASTP. But then they dropped the program.

PIEHLER: Did you actually get sent to a college for ASTP?

BALLOFF: No, no.

PIEHLER: So, so you weren't one of those people who were in college ...

BALLOFF: There was a ... meteorology [program] at Vanderbilt. The navy had a program and ... a lot of guys came into Vanderbilt in that program.

PIEHLER: So, you remember ... these people when you were just a civilian student?

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah. They ... drilled and they—they don't—well, they came later. They came and maybe—but they came later, but they were not there when I was there.

PIEHLER: Okay.

BALLOFF: But when I came back after the service, after I was discharged, there were ... some fellows in school who had come to Vanderbilt in that program.

PIEHLER: In the meteorology program.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: You started Vanderbilt before World War II started. How did the war change Vanderbilt, what do you ... remember?

BALLOFF: Well, I just remember when everybody was going through this thing in the fall of '42. The whole campus was just getting in gear to go into the service.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so it sounds like that was the dominant ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, that was the thing. They stopped ... all the athletic programs because there was—they stopped the football program, and I think they stopped the basketball program right after that. Although they might have still—I think—I don't remember during the war. It seems like some of the guys that were in that navy group of meteorologists might have been involved in back up sports, but it wasn't a big thing. It wasn't a big thing at all.

PIEHLER: 'Cause sports really got deemphasized.

BALLOFF: It really did.

PIEHLER: Which, it sounds like it was pretty noticeable?

BALLOFF: I remember ... I had a friend who was manager of the Vanderbilt basketball team, and he went into the service and said, "Sam would you like," here I was just a, I was just a freshman, he said, "would you like to be the basketball manager?" And I said, "Yeah, I guess I would." So, we played Kentucky and Kentucky beat them like 100 and something to twenty something (laughter) I would say. Kentucky had a huge program, and I made a mistake: I missed the final score by one point. Kentucky people were all upset with me because that was a record or (laughter) I don't know, but I had good experiences there. I did.

PIEHLER: So, you were basketball manager before going, you said, into the service?

BALLOFF: I did, and you know I've gone back to look in that scorebook and we can't find the scorebook from 1942. (Laughter) I mean, it was a bad year, it was. They had a gym at Vanderbilt, but it was very small. It was just a small gym, and the seating was a little balcony around the top, so when they had a big game with Kentucky they would either go to one of the high school gyms ...

PIEHLER: It was that small.

BALLOFF: It was that small.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, did you have any hazing at Vanderbilt, freshman hazing when you got there?

BALLOFF: ... yeah, they did. The fraternities did, and the big thing [was] we had to wear freshman caps.

PIEHLER: You had a beanie.

BALLOFF: You had this cap, and if—if in that first year they played Kentucky came in to play Vanderbilt in Nashville or any other school, I think all freshmen had to wear a cap, you know, a freshman cap. So, if you could get one of those caps that would get you out of rat court. That would excuse you from a rat court on a Monday night 'cause you could get one from Kentucky—from a visiting, a visiting team.

PEIHLER: What was rat court?

BALLOFF: Well (laughter), I mean, uh, (laughs) they line you up, find something wrong with something you did, and they had paddles, and everyone got paddled.

PEILER: This was in the fraternity?

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

BLAIR: What was the name of your fraternity?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: What was the name...

BALLOFF: ZBT.

BLAIR: ZBT.

BALLOFF: ZBT, and every—but all fraternities did it. Some of them were more—were worse than ours. They were, they were kind of—you know it—you had to—let's see. (Laughs) If you had a—if you went to a gym dance, I remember—and some guys would, kind of, stuck you with a date—you had to go where he'd gone or some kind of thing like that, and if you didn't do what they said then you got paddled or something like that. So, we ...

PEIHLER: And Monday was the day of reckoning.

BALLOFF: Monday was, Monday night was reckoning—was the big night. “What did you do over the weekend?” I mean, not anything that had to do with reckoning. I just remember what we had to do, what we did. The guys would rent a car, and in those days if you reversed—they put the cars up on blocks and then put it in reverse and that would run the speedometer back. (Laughter) Now they actually did that thing. You'd see cars out on the campus with the back wheels propped up on some cinder blocks with the motor running (laughter) because the speedometers would run backwards, I suppose. Well, I don't know, ... we had—it was good years.

PEIHLER: When did you join the fraternity? Was it your freshman year?

BALLOFF: My freshman year.

PIEHLER: Your freshman year.

BALLOFF: In your ... freshman year you're just a freshman. I mean you had rat courts and you'd have courts every Monday night that they'd find something wrong, you know. You didn't wear your tie, or you didn't do something. You know, we would go to class with a coat and tie and, and anyway—I remember one English ... teacher required the girls to wear ... hoes, I think, and gloves, maybe.

PIEHLER: To class?

BALLOFF: Yeah. The girl that I eventually married, the girl, my wife went to a girls school in Nashville, Belmont, and they—I mean, when you'd go out, they'd have a chaperone with them, and they would have hats, and gloves, and hoes, and the whole thing. Those were ... good years.

BLAIR: Who generally chaperoned the girls?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: Who generally chaperoned the girls? Did they ...

BALLOFF: One of the teachers with the school. Yeah, and of course, the girl's dormitories were ... restricted. I mean, the girls had to be in at a certain hour, and even—I know it was before the war. I don't know if after the war—after the war I don't know if they were restricted or not, where you had to check in or check out or not. And it was good, because when they opened up the dorms—Vanderbilt was kind of in the city. They had a lot of people just wandering in and created a lot of problems. Then it got pretty liberal. I don't know what it is now. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, in some ways, it's very interesting because I know when I used to be at Rutgers we would be much more focused on—we went to all the people at Rutgers and got them to do a lot of the Rutgers traditions, and life, which was—as students I think we were—it had been both in some sense amazing, it was such a different world and, uh ...

BALLOFF: So, where did you go to college?

PIEHLER: I went to a small liberal arts college in New Jersey, Drew, and then I went to do my graduate work at Rutgers. But you know, for example, we didn't—we had unlimited access to all the dorms, and we ...

BALLOFF: Did you have fraternities, or were ...

PIEHLER: We had no fraternities at our school.

BALLOFF: What years are you talking about?

PIEHLER: This was in the late '70s. And our school never had fraternities ...

BALLOFF: Well, uh, let's see my son went to Michigan in 196—what, something, and the fraternities were kind of not the thing.

PIEHLER: Well, because in your—I get the sense that in Vanderbilt fraternities were a very dominant presence.

BALLOFF: Well, it—a lot of women and a lot of girls, you know—I've lost two wives to cancer. I've heard a lot about sororities and all that sort of thing. My first wife was from a small town and the sorority was important to her because she—it put her into a group right away. My second wife went to college in a town—in her hometown, and she didn't need that because she already had her friends. So, fraternities and sororities can fulfill a need for an out of town person, especially a small town person.

PIEHLER: But you had joined because it sounded, because—why did you join a fraternity?

BALLOFF: Well, my brother ...

PIEHLER: Your brother ...

BALLOFF: ... and, uh, I just followed in his footsteps. And it was good. I'm glad I did, because I mean, I would say 80 percent—75 percent of Vanderbilt students belonged to a fraternity. It was a big fraternity campus.

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit about—one of the things that struck me is, coming from an outsider to live in Tennessee, I've been corrected when I call East Tennessee, Eastern Tennessee.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You actually lived in—and I am curious to hear your thoughts, of these places in the '30s and the early '40s, in a sense, LaFollette, but you had—Knoxville was the nearest [city] you had a connection to, then Chattanooga and then Nashville. What, sort of, sticks out in the differences between those places? What are the similarities also?

BALLOFF: Nashville—well there again it was a case of people from out of town who either lived in a fraternity or lived in a dorm as compared to those who lived in the city, and it was really different groups. Of course, another thing, when I came out of the service and went back to school, you had veterans like me and then you had people who had entered Vanderbilt in 1943 and 1944, but in 1945 they were, you know, they were college students, juniors and seniors, and then you had all these veterans who were there with wives and children and all that—not me, but a lot of them. But it was different, two different groups of people. There were veterans and there were the younger people. I mean we were ... already three or four years older, and uh ...

PIEHLER: And how did that go, as far as ...

BALLOFF: Well, it had its problems. It had its problems with dorm living and all that stuff.

PIEHLER: What kind of problems had emerged?

BALLOFF: Well I don't know if the, if the—I don't know if the problems was in the groups, but ... dorm living, I mean, there were rules that freshman got first choice, and there were a lot of veterans in—had to go out and search out where to live and couldn't live in the dorms. Things like that, but I don't think there was ever problems with the younger people and the veterans. I don't ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, but you didn't, you didn't clash.

BALLOFF: We just didn't clash, but we didn't, we really didn't socialize together a lot, so ...

PIEHLER: In many ways—it sounds like your describing you met in the classroom, but otherwise you went your separate ways.

BALLOFF: That's right. Yeah. It was, it was a different group, and they—plus you had the locals, the locals who were very—I mean, much—I got into college, but the Nashville people were really very nice, and especially the female, the younger Jewish girls of Nashville, I mean, we were kind of—all of us courted those sort of girls. So, that was good. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And you mentioned going to play basketball at the gym.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you go to services of any ...

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah, we went. Matter of fact we had a very prominent rabbi in Nashville, Rabbi Marx ... who went to one of the bigger congregations in New York. And he was—he had a son that was in a fraternity. So, we went to—we went pretty regularly to the services. 'Course, ... that was sort of a social time for us too. It was good.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you had very fond memories of college before the war and after, after the war.

BALLOFF: Oh yeah, I had good years. I've just been lucky all—other than loosing these members of my family, my memories have been pretty fortunate. I've had—things have happened that just have been very good for me.

PIEHLER: Before we leave—put you in the service fully is there, since you really have many fond memories of Vanderbilt, and you remember some things distinctively, like what classes you had on Mondays that first year, what else do you remember about Vanderbilt that first, before going in the service, that comes to mind? Because it sounds like you had a heavy dose of work, but you had a heavy dose of fun. You went to dances, you went ...

BALLOFF: We had, yeah, we had our regular, you know, our prom dances and that sort of thing.

PIEHLER: And you never drank ...

BALLOFF: At fraternity parties.

PIEHLER: At fraternity parties. Yeah. Any sort of alcohol that ...

BALLOFF: Oh, shucks, yeah (laughter), oh, yeah. I'll tell you, when all, when all these—in 1942, let's see, I forget the year, when all the guys, when all the older, the seniors left and had gone into the service they said—course, I was a freshman, they said—and the first quarter sophomore—they elected me president of the fraternity, and here I am a country boy, I'm a country boy in a ... very social kind of a school. So, I'm the president.

PIEHLER: Of the fraternity?

BALLOFF: Of the fraternity, and ... they said, "Now you go—we always have a spring party—a fall party—a campus party and when a fraternity had a party the whole ... campus was invited." So, well I said, "Well, you know, I don't know what to do about drinking." They said, "Well, we have an alumni who has a liquor business (laughter), and you just call him and he'll, you know, he'll supply you with what you need." So, okay, we had our campus party, and I didn't know how to fix drinks. I just never, I just didn't know what to do. So, I remember we had an upstairs, and ... I was mixing the drinks and I would put about half of bourbon and (laughter) half coke. I mean I didn't measure out anything, and the word really got around the campus (laughter) pretty, pretty fast. They're having a big party over at the house. I got to be pretty popular (laughter) for serving drinks! But that was ... always a big party. But they had ... a tent, they put out a tent out on the lawn, big party. They still know how to entertain. I go back for homecoming and reunions and—I'll have to take you back sometime and show you how, how they live. They know ...

PIEHLER: They know how to ...

BALLOFF: My wife always said they always know how to throw a good party, even today. I don't know whether Tennessee does that or not, but it's such a ... small campus.

PIEHLER: Yeah, there is also a feel of going to a smaller campus; I sometimes miss that, um...

BALLOFF: Well, you went to Rutgers you ...

PIEHLER: Well, see my, but my college was very small. We only had two thousand people. So I sort of [know] both worlds.

BALLOFF: Did you have a campus party, or did you have a hang out?

PIEHLER: We—it's a different era, but ... there were a number of smaller parties and I—there would be gatherings similar to what you had described.... Even though you weren't in LaFollette, how did the war affect your father's store in terms of—it was good for business, but how did the rationing affect, and the price controls affect his ...

BALLOFF: Well, they worked through it, I guess. I don't know I was gone all that time.

PIEHLER: So, you really ...

BALLOFF: No, no.

PIEHLER: You never heard complaints from your father about rationing or ...

BALLOFF: I know that they did it and I know that they—I don't know whether Oak Ridge workers got some kind of compensation, some better deal, I don't know, I don't know.

PIEHLER: And you weren't on scholarship going to Vanderbilt?

BALLOFF: No, no.

PIEHLER: So, your father was able to support ...

BALLOFF: Well, I was on the G.I. Bill.

PIEHLER: But initially, your first, first ...

BALLOFF: The first year, yeah.

PIEHLER: Your father was able to pay tuition.

BALLOFF: That's right. And the private school too.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and you didn't have to work in Vanderbilt.

BALLOFF: No.... But after the war I ...

PIEHLER: You had the G.I. Bill. Yeah, yeah.

BALLOFF: But my dad—when I worked as a freshman, we would work, we would work during Thanksgiving holidays, Christmas holidays, we'd always come home ...

PIEHLER: When you came home you'd go back to work.

BALLOFF: Go back to work, and, uh, I think I got paid twenty-five dollars a week or something like that. 'Course I lived at home (laughter), and I was single ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, so that sounds like that was a good thing you had studied while ...

BALLOFF: That was a good job.

BLAIR: How long would that twenty-five dollars last?

BALLOFF: Well, living in LaFollette, I mean, going to Nashville, we—I didn't spend a lot of money. I didn't spend a lot of money.... We'd have a date, go to dinner, go to a movie. 'Course, I guess it was, like, in those days that was a lot of money. You might have spent five, or six, or seven dollars on a weekend. It's hard to believe that prices were like they were. I mean, we lived through all that.

PIEHLER: Well, I sort of thought that I would never feel this, but I even think that some of the prices even in my—you know, my growing up ...

BALLOFF: Well, the '60s were reasonable prices.

PIEHLER: Yeah, no, exactly. Even ...

BALLOFF: You can buy a car at a reasonable price. You know, now you can get a big deal on a car for 30,000 dollars or something like that. I mean the first house that I owned was 8,000 dollars in LaFollette. We took the ... coal stove out of the—it was a little old house that had a coal burning stove in the hall, and we took it out, and they—in those years there was a thing called—it was an electric panel, a panel that you put in the wall and it ... didn't heat, it wasn't like a—if you stood in front of that unit you'd get warm, but if you moved (laughter) over here you didn't get warm.... It's called some kind of special heat, but you had to get certain restriction—had to get certain, uh, privileges—you had to get certain rights from TVA to install it, 'cause it consumed a lot of electricity.

PIEHLER: It doesn't sound like a good candidate—it didn't work very well.

BALLOFF: It didn't work good. Some kind of ... a big panel sat under the window, but my first house was like 7 or 8,000 dollars.

PIEHLER: ... Did you buy it under the G.I. Bill too?

BALLOFF: No, no, uh, I don't know how we financed it.

PIEHLER: I'm gonna—hold on just a second.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

(Tape stopped).

PIEHLER: You'd mentioned ... enlisting ... and then reporting ...

BALLOFF: Everybody was good.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and instead of finishing college you ended up finding yourself going to basic training.

BALLOFF: That's right.

PIEHLER: When did you report to basic ...

BALLOFF: I went to Fort Oglethorpe in February of 1943. In the spring of '42, and I went into the induction center, and then they sent me to Fort Bragg.

PIEHLER: So, your induction was actually at Fort Oglethorpe.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: What do you, what do you remember, what your first real ...

BALLOFF: Oh, I have memories. There was a guy there that, that was in the, in the quarter master. He was issuing clothing. He was issuing all of our clothing, and he says to me, "Sam, if you'll help me, I'll get you, I'll get you a permanent job here." Because he knew that I grew up in LaFollette in the clothing business, and he felt like I knew a little bit about it, which didn't amount to anything. So, for the week that I was there I worked every day and every night and thinking, "I really got to get out of this—I'm going to get a good job here." Well, when the week was over, I was shipped (laughter) out and I went to Fort Bragg. I mean it was—I went to Fort Bragg. That was the ... army field artillery replacement center. And I trained on a 240 howitzer from World War I. It was a big gun, eight inch, uh, had four parts, and you had to pull each part with a—I mean just a huge gun. This was the biggest gun the artillery had at the time from World War I, and you had ... to pull it with ... a track, and it took forty-five minutes to put the gun in place. You had to dig a hole, put the plate in, mount the—oh, it was a whole.... Went through that, and in the meantime applied for ASTP, and was accepted, and it was on my record that I was to go somewhere, and then they closed the school, then they closed down that program. So, they—I was classified as "attached unassigned." They sent me to the Seventy-Eighth Division, and ... I stayed around there ... and did all of, you know, grave registration and machine gun work and all that sort of thing.... And they finally assigned me to the Seventy-Eighth Division, and I went to Fort Bragg, Fort—Camp Pickett, and ... did my basic training, and then we ... went on maneuvers in Tennessee, and, let's see, went through all that stuff.

PIEHLER: So, you did the Tennessee maneuvers?

BALLOFF: Yeah, down near—down between ... Murfreesboro and Lebanon, and ... then we went to a—then we left New York in October of '44, October of '44. Went to England and got ready to go to Europe, and we left November the 13<sup>th</sup> on a landing craft, a big landing craft with some of our artillery pieces, and landed in La Havre ...

PIEHLER: I hate ...

(Tape Paused).

BALLOFF: We were in England for about a month, and that was an experience. I mean, ... I was a truck driver—well, I'll go back a step. I'll tell you how lucky I was. When I was on maneuvers in Tennessee, we had a captain from Oklahoma, and when they—says, “My wife was coming into visit in Nashville. Is there anybody here that ... knows anything about Nashville?” Well, see I had been, I had been there a year in school. So, I volunteered to help. He said, “Well I'll need somebody to meet her at the airport, and somebody, if you can find her a room, it would be convenient,” and that sort of thing. Well I—my sister was in school there, and so my mother knew the clerk ... at the hotel, and we got her a room, and, uh, got the wife a room, and then I drove them around Nashville. I think they were there for maybe a weekend, and when I got back, when we got back for maneuvers we were given a ten day furlough, came home, came back, and the orders were that every private, which I was at the time, was being shipped to Africa for an invasion in Africa. And he gave me a T-5 truck driver's rating which kept me in this country with that, with his unit rather than going to Africa like every private did. I got to stay with that group.

PIEHLER: This was the Seventy-Eighth?

BALLOFF: That was the Seventy-Eighth. I was already in the Seventy-Eighth unit.

PIEHLER: ... They were going to pull ...

BALLOFF: They were taking—they were sending troops down there. So, that was just the draw of the luck—just a lucky thing, another one of the lucky things that happened in my life, and I missed all that.... I stayed with the division; I went through all those maneuvers and everything. We landed in Le Havre on December the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of 1944, and then we went into Germany.... [We] stayed in Belgium during all the B-2 bomb deals, and all that sort of thing. Uh, I have so many good things happened.... When we were in Belgium—there was a movie I saw, not to long ago, an old movie about American troops moving into Europe and they would ... find houses for us to live in and they put us in a little house in a little town in Belgium, and we lived with this family, and the Germans had just been driven out and they had—I don't know how they made the arrangements, but my group of eight or ten or twelve guys lived in this house, and, and, uh, and the grandparents were there, their children had been killed by the Germans, and they had the grandchildren. And we lived there for about a week, and I have in there—we sent them packages after the war, you know, some clothing and some money, and I have a Christmas card that the family sent me thanking us for ... doing what we did for them. It's ... in here somewhere. Uh, there.

PIEHLER: Oh, they sent it to you, to ... LaFollette, Tennessee, “Technical T. S. Sam Balloff.” Oh and they initially sent it to you, to your service address.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: Service, service battery 309<sup>th</sup> ...

BALLOFF: Artillery, yeah. And I—that was ... a great experience.

PIEHLER: Oh well, they sent—yeah, they sent you one, they sent you one with a Santa Claus and the kids.

BALLOFF: She's alright. I'm alright.

PIEHLER: See I, I think it might be time for you.

BALLOFF: I got a lot of old stuff from the war. They sent me a Christmas card.

(Tape paused)

PIEHLER: But you were, you were, you were saying, um ...

BALLOFF: We were—and then ... we went into Germany and ... then we were just north of the Battle of the Bulge. Our artillery fired into [by] Germans that were trying to get into the Bulge. That was December the 16<sup>th</sup>. It snowed that day. That was the beginning of the winter.

BLAIR: Now what does this say?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: What does this say?

BALLOFF: "Greetings," I don't know. That must have been their names. D-I-E-U. That was their ... family name which is a French word for God. You know what their job—their house was right near a railroad, and the safety gates was always closed, and the truck—they would go out and manually raised the gate. We would come in at night, whatever we did over there and, uh, it was muddy. It was December, and our clothes would be clean and our shoes would be dried every morning when we would get up. That was quite an experience.

PIEHLER: So, this family was very happy to have you there?

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: I mean, they, you were just not boarding with them. They, they really ...

BALLOFF: Oh, we supplied them with food, and all of those, and a lot of stuff.

PIEHLER: But they also reciprocated some of that stuff.

BALLOFF: Yeah. It was good ...

PIEHLER: I mean, they went beyond just ...

BALLOFF: Well, there is a movie that I just saw, and I don't, and I just got into the movie and it was some troops moving into Germany, and, uh, and they were housed in, in—I mean we went into a house that ... the food was still on the table. They just moved up—the Nazis went—some agency from the service found out who were Nazis families and moved them out and ... they put in the soldiers. So, what can I tell you about the war? I mean ...

PIEHLER: Well, let me back up a little bit.

BALLOFF: Okay.

PIEHLER: All the way back to your first training experience at Fort Bragg.

BALLOFF: Okay.

PIEHLER: First, who was in your initial, sort of, in your barracks, the first, you know, at Fort Bragg, who—what do you remember about the group you were with?

BALLOFF: Fort Bragg. They had taken students, they had taken a group from Vanderbilt and a group from the University of Ohio. There were a bunch of college guys that had just done what I had done and had gotten in the service and, and we—I was in there with a bunch of college guys at Fort Bragg, and we ... were very big into ... sports. And ... on the weekends we'd run obstacle course, but we went through a pretty strenuous basic training.

PIEHLER: What do you remember about your sergeant at Bragg? Does anything ...

BALLOFF: They were okay. They were okay until I got assigned to a service unit going—when we were going overseas, and he was bad. He was bad.... And going over from this country to England and you were in a convoy, and there was blackout lights and that sort of thing, and, you know, the boats would change locations, positions and all that. And, this sergeant they kept telling him, you know, if we catch you out on the deck we could throw you overboard or some kind of thing. I mean they, they were really ... that angry.

PIEHLER: And they were not just joking?

BALLOFF: No.

PIEHLER: They might really have ...

BALLOFF: But he did things that—I don't what he did.

PIEHLER: But, we were talking a little bit about the sergeant going overseas and causing a lot of animosity, but your sergeant ...

BALLOFF: But I can't really remember what he did. But it was not a happy group, we were not a happy group.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like you—your basic training at Bragg—I don't know what the word is, you didn't necessarily, well you seemed to indicate that you even enjoyed parts of it, if that's the ...

BALLOFF: You know, that was part of service. We did—I don't ever remember anything that he had any criticism of me. Did our, you know, we did what we needed to do. I know, I have never had ... any guns. We never had any guns in that house. A lot of guys in our neighborhood were hunters and all that sort of thing.

PIEHLER: This was in LaFollette, yeah.

BALLOFF: Yeah, so I don't know anything about guns. So, they issue a carbine ... in the first week. You know, they take it out of the box it's got all that, what was it, packed in some kind of grease and everything. They issued these things and, "Clean them." And at the first inspection he found some little oil in the barrel in the gun. And I get charged with destroying government property. That was (laughter) the first or second week I'm in the service, and we go—and it was just ... discipline, part of the discipline problems I suppose. So, about the first or second week I was in the service I was cutting grass with scissors out in front of (laughter) our barrack. That was my court-martial for destroying government property.

PIEHLER: But it was very formal.

BALLOFF: But it had to do with cleaning, cleaning the gun.

PIEHLER: He didn't make you sleep with the gun or something?

BALLOFF: We, we had the gun and, uh, and we had a, a big inspection every Saturday morning, I mean a strict inspection. You had to lay out everything on your bunk in a certain way and your underwear and your cosmetics and all that sort of thing, and your gun and your boot shined and I remember we use to, uh, on Friday night we would take all the beds out of the barracks and scrub it down with water and mops and a lot of times you would ... make up your bed on Friday night and sleep on the floor cause you wanted (laughter) to make sure you had everything just right, and you had a locker at the foot and everything. Your underwear and your shirts had to be just in a certain place. So, it was pretty strict.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned sports ... Bragg ... there was quite an inter-competition between bases. You didn't play in one of those teams did you?

BALLOFF: Not before, not at that point. No, not at that point.

PIEHLER: Did you play later on?

BALLOFF: Later on, later on ... the American army had worked out some sort of deal with the English. That so many G.I.s could go to school in England. Shrivingham was the name of it, and I took the test and I passed it, and I was allowed to go to England after the war ended to this

school. I went for—I guess I went for about three months and we had competition there. They already had athletic competitions there. Matter of fact, our school had a football team and played—I didn't play, but they had a football team and had a boxing team. I went out for boxing, and we competed with different units around England.

BLAIR: And how did that go?

BALLOFF: That, well, that went pretty good.... You know, we always had professionals or semi-professional coaches, and I went out for boxing and we did ... compete with some British groups of boxers, but they didn't have a heavyweight so I didn't have to compete. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, you never did box.

BALLOFF: I did the training.

PIEHLER: You did the training, but I was going to ask you what was your record.

BALLOFF: I didn't do good. I was too slow. I thought I could, but I was too slow, but we had competitions. But during the war I don't think ...

PIEHLER: No, so at Bragg you don't remember ...

BALLOFF: There were not any, but what we did do, ... we'd just go out on the obstacle course and just do it. I mean, that was about all we had to do really.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned earlier you had actually learned how to fire an artillery—you had mentioned firing this, this, what was it, even to you at that time, an ancient piece.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What was, what kind, can you be more specific about the training you got and your sort of ...

BALLOFF: Well, this gun, this 240 howitzer, like I say you had to pull three or four parts by a big track, and you dug a hole and you put this big plate in there, and you mounted a fuselage in this plate, in this thing, and then the shells were pretty big things that had a claw on it. And it took four guys to pick up the shell to carry it to the fuselage and put it on the track and roll it up to the—were you closed—then you had to put a powder, depending on how far you wanted to shoot they had different powders that you put, that you put in behind the shell and then, then you fired it. And when you fired it there was all kinds of percussions. You had ... to really dig a hole and get back in the hole when you fired the gun. So it was a really primitive—by the time, by the time we got to Europe, and I was on a smaller gun then, they had, they had mounted that on ... a track to make it—it was more mobile. They could ...

PIEHLER: So, you didn't have to ...

BALLOFF: I was gone before then.

PIEHLER: In many ways everything you learned ...

BALLOFF: Was gone.

PIEHLER: I mean, did anything you learned have a real application when you actually got into the ...

BALLOFF: Well, well, I would say most G.I.s did, but most of us that took the training on that particular gun didn't. Because they had a 105 howitzer that was pulled by a truck and, and they had a 155 howitzer, and the guys that trained on that took that on into ... Europe. But as far as those of us on this 240—it was obsolete.

PIELHER: What else did you, in a sense, learn at Bragg? Do you remember?

BALLOFF: Well you learned discipline more than anything. And you learned to take care of yourself, and that was the—a lot of maneuvers and a lot of gas drills, gas mask drills and, and it was more to teach you to take care of yourself and to do your job.

BLAIR: What do you feel was your most valuable training that you carried in Europe?

BALLOFF: My most valuable training. I guess, guess the ... discipline of ... how to put a gun up and put it in place and how to fire it. And then you had to communicate with forward observers. They—in those days, artillery, even in Europe, they had these little—you had to have a forward observer. You had to have somebody see the shell land, to make sure the shell was landing in the right place. So, so if you overshot your target when your practicing, you had to learn how to adjust to either ... change the angle of the gun or the amount of powder and that sort of thing. So, you had to learn to communicate with forward observers. They did it by radio.... All I was a cannoneer. All I had, all I had to do was get the shell in the gun. That was all I had to do.

PIEHLER: You were aware of this larger process, but ...

BALLOFF: I knew everything that was going on.

PIEHLER: But, but when you were actually in it, you were—it was just putting that shell in the ...

BALLOFF: Getting the gun in place, getting the gun in the right position and, and ...

PIEHLER: But you didn't have to worry about aiming it or ...

BALLOFF: Or adjusting it.

PIEHLER: Or adjusting it, or ...

BALLOFF: That was something else, and that's what we ... did. And, see, being in the infantry division, we supported a regiment of infantry. So, as they moved and they needed ... gun power if they were going into a town, I mean it was—if they were going to take a town in Germany, you had to, I mean it was, you had to have the air force go in and drop these bombs, but in the end you had to have some infantry go in there and clean up the town. And it took the air force, it took the artillery, it took the support of everybody to, to get the town in the condition to go take it over. And the poor infantry guys, they would ... go from house to house, I didn't have to do that. I got lucky again. We lost a lot of people.

BLAIR: Did you had any buddies that you were ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, I lost a few friends ... being hit with the shells. You know, ... as the war went along, I don't know whether this, I don't know whether this developed during the war, but they developed equipment that could pick up the trajectory of a shell that the Germans shot, and by ... doing something with coordinating that, the direction of that shell, they just about decide where it came from, and then you would put ammunition into that.

PIEHLER: So, you remember a lot, you had times of counter-battery.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Um, but how often would a shell land in your own battery?

BALLOFF: Well, it would, it would depend, you know—I don't remember a whole lot, I don't remember a lot of—well, by the spring of '45 the Germans were pretty well retreated. I mean, they, uh, we weren't getting—after the Battle of the Bulge, I think there was mostly offensive. There was not a lot of incoming shells in our—we generally didn't have to contend with them.

PIEHLER: But during the Bulge ...

BALLOFF: During the Bulge, yes. But the Germans were just concentrating on getting into—was it Antwerp, was that the ...

PIEHLER: That was the goal.

BALLOFF: There was a big vehicle [supply area] there with fuel. They were running out of fuel, and they needed fuel. They were using horse drawn everything.

PIEHLER: I want to sort of—after you—back up sort of more to your time in the States—after Bragg, you then went to ...

BALLOFF: After Bragg, I went to ... Camp Pickett.

PIEHLER: And you had mentioned, sort of, having a variety of duties initially. 'Cause I think I remember—if you remember, grave registration?

BALLOFF: Well, when I—when they put me in the Seventy-Eighth Division I told you I was, I was—it was called ... “attached unassigned.” I was attached to that unit, but I wasn’t involved in ... the nomenclature of what that unit did.

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

PIEHLER: ... So, I’m curious to know what you were doing—you had mentioned, I think, grave registration and another ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, well, I was “attached unassigned.” So, in a unit everybody got a job. Everybody got a job, whatever that job might be. Well, they didn’t have a place for me. So, they sent me to all these different schools to learn to do different things, and one of them was grave registration.

PIEHLER: And where did you go? Was it school internally?

BALLOFF: It was, it was—you just—you went to class and it was what you did with the body, you know, how to identify—how to get the tags or whatever identification and put it in a bag and send it—then somebody would pick it up and take it back.

PIEHLER: How did you ...

BALLOFF: I just ...

PIEHLER: ... This could have been your job.

BALLOFF: Well, I got a job. I got a few jobs like that where we—they ...

PIEHLER: You did do some gruesome ...

BALLOFF: They were picking up some dead bodies.

PIEHLER: And this was at—with Camp Pickett?

BALLOFF: No, no. This was in Europe....

PIEHLER: So, you did use this training in ...

BALLOFF: Yes. And the machine gun training, and—this truck I was on had a big mount to put the machine gun on it and ... I never did use that. I never had to use that ‘cause we—so many of these convoys we could go straight by the Germans. Well, you’ve seen that in the movies and things. But, and we were strafe a couple of times, but you’d get out of your truck into a ditch rather than try to shoot the gun. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: That seemed discretion seemed to be the better part of valor, it sounds like.

BALLOFF: Get out of the truck, because you know you would be lined up on the road and so it was easy enough for the Germans to just strafe the whole road.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, in graves registration—because I think you're the first or second person I've interviewed that had any sort of experience, I mean, how did you feel about that sort of assignment?

BALLOFF: Well it ... was tough. I didn't pick up a lot of bodies. I didn't do a lot of that, uh, I—there was one, there was one home I went into where ... this family had kept the body, just kept the body, wouldn't leave it there to—and it was clean and we picked that up. That's the only one I really remember, but I remember going into this home and getting this body.

PIEHLER: It sounds like—were you detailed to this when you were overseas because you had had this training?

BALLOFF: Well, evidently, evidently, in fact, when ... you have a record of all the stuff you do, what you call ...

PIEHLER: I know the ...

BALLOFF: And that was on my record. So, when they needed somebody, I guess, they found ... me.

PIEHLER: But you didn't do this regularly?

BALLOFF: No, no. I was—I don't remember where, it was a little German town, I don't remember the name of it, but if I read, if I read that again I, the name of the town would come up.

PIEHLER: And one other school you had mentioned was machine gun.

BALLOFF: Machine gun and grave registration and, what else did I say? Something else I believe. 'Course they made me a truck driver. I became a truck driver with that episode back in the States, when that captain gave me that rating, that T—and I had never driven a truck. I didn't know anything about a truck.

PIEHLER: So, you got the rating before you'd even driven a truck?

BALLOFF: I got the corporal's rating before I went overseas only because this captain appreciated what I had done for him, and ... I didn't know anything about a truck. I knew how to drive, but I—a corporal truck driver is suppose to know something about an engine, and I didn't know anything. I knew where to put the gas. I knew how to change the tires, that sort of thing.

PIEHLER: But, but that's the extent of the ...

BALLOFF: That was the extent of my knowledge as a truck driver. Matter of fact, we were driving somewhere in North Carolina and I had—and there were—the truck just stopped. The mechanic finally said, “Well, you’ve got a vapor lock.” Well, I didn’t know (laughter) what a vapor lock is.

PIEHLER: We—I’m curious, I want to go and sort of—so at Camp Pickett when did—what happened after Camp Pickett? Was that in the maneuvers, or ...

BALLOFF: I think we left Camp Pickett to go on maneuvers and I think, I’ll have to read the book again, and then we came back to Camp Buckner ...

PIEHLER: And was that in ...

BALLOFF: After the maneuvers.

PIEHLER: And it was the maneuvers that you got this, the rating. Is that...

BALLOFF: No I got the rating, yeah, uh, let’s see, I got the rating when—no, I didn’t get the rating until we came back after maneuvers.

PIEHLER: After maneuvers, and that’s when ...

BALLOFF: After the weekly furlough.

PIEHLER: And that’s when you got this ...

BALLOFF: That’s when I got ... I volunteered my services.

PIEHLER: That’s when you suddenly became a corporal.

BALLOFF: That’s right.

PIEHLER: And a truck driver.

BALLOFF: And a truck driver. And ... when I got overseas they—I just did different things. I would—if they needed somebody to deliver groceries, you know, rations or ammunitions, well, I did that.

PIEHLER: Let me just—I want to ask you about the first time you drove the truck, but I first want to ask you, you—I’ve interviewed a lot of people who did maneuvers, people who did maneuvers in Louisiana—it’s very stark. They, they—you did maneuvers sort of literally in your backyard, so to speak.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: What was that like, sort of, tramping through ...

BALLOFF: Well, it was, it was rough. I mean, we had that big gun we took our training on and lugging that thing ...

PIEHLER: So, you were lugging that big ...

BALLOFF: We were lugging that big thing around, and ... it was tough. I mean, it was cold, and it was wet, and it was everything else.

PIEHLER: What parts of Tennessee do you remember being in?

BALLOFF: I remember being between Murfreesboro and Lebanon. That was the big maneuver area. And it was kind of, uh, it's a rolling country. It's not mountain. It's more rolling. And it seemed like to me we camped out near a farmhouse and the lady was a dairy—and the lady supplied us with milk. Yeah, she let us—I don't—I just—I remember that. But the rest of it was tough, and I can remember putting the gun in position and falling asleep leaning against a tree. You just got so tired, ... the living was tough. We slept in tents, we dug latrines, we did the army thing.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and it sounds like you did a lot of moving. (Laughter) Did you move around a lot?

BALLOFF: We moved around a lot. But—how did it happen? I think the—we went into, to one of the schools ... in Lebanon or Murfreesboro to get, to take a shower. They would take so many guys in and we'd take—we'd go to a gymnasium, it was either in Lebanon or Murfreesboro, and get a shower.

PIEHLER: So, the shower was free once a week?

BALLOFF: The shower was free once a week. Yeah.

BLAIR: Did all this maneuvering effect the way your body was getting fit or did you lose a lot of weight during all this?

BALLOFF: I've always been kind of large, I mean big. I don't remember my weight changing too much. We had food, we had food. They always had, you know, a kitchen and a place to eat. That was, that was just as important as everything else was hav[ing] a kitchen and water supplies and that sort of thing. I can remember, I can remember going through the chow line and they had two big barrels of water, and you would, you would wash out your—whatever that little dish is, that can, that ...

PIEHLER: Mess can.

BALLOFF: Mess can, and then ... you would rinse it out, and then it seems like you could take ... some of that water in your helmet and shave. That's what (laughs) you would use. Seems

like—and that's the only hot water we had, normally, but there's the whole thing. I think that's the way it went. Well, let me ask you. Have you interviewed other G.I.s gone through this ...

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

BALLOFF: Do they remember ...

PIEHLER: No the maneuvers, the—I've interviewed more people who have gone through the Louisiana maneuvers.

BALLOFF: Yeah, well that was kind of tough.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Some of them ... even said that they hated that even worse than even being in the field for real.

BALLOFF: Yeah. Well, that discipline and training, that was what it was all about, and you learned to, you know, to—it's a growing up thing. But it is remarkable, it's remarkable that the Germans had the best air force, had the best artillery, had the best trained soldiers, and they took a bunch of guys like us and made soldiers out of us, and we won the war.

PIEHLER: Did you feel that at the time?

BALLOFF: Well, not really at the time, but I knew the Germans had the air force. I mean they had—I remember the first jet that I heard fly over us. They came—and then the B-2 bomb they were shooting out over towards England. That was another experience. I mean you'd hear those big motors and you knew as long as the motors ran it would keep going, but if the motor started sputtering and shutting off you knew it would come down. I mean I can remember those things.

PIEHLER: That's a, that's a—were you, in terms of the B-2, were you ever in harms way?

BALLOFF: Not really, like I say, the only time you would figure was [when] sometimes they would run out of fuel and sputter, and you know, then you knew it was going to come down, but as long as it was over your head it just wasn't going to drop it was just going to keep, you know, going.

PIEHLER: But you ...

BALLOFF: You knew it was there.

PIEHLER: But you did see them, literally.

BALLOFF: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: And what about the jets, sense you mentioned the jet, I want to, I want to—what was your reaction to the jet?

BALLOFF: We didn't know what it was. You heard it and it was gone.... But that was during the end of the war. That was already—that could have been ... the spring of '45 I believe, but I just never understood the Germans. I just never understood the Germans. I mean they were running out of fuel, they were running out of people, they were running out of things, and they're killing people, they're killing people, you know, in ... the camps, in the concentration camps. What—I just don't understand how all that could have been going on, and I didn't know about that. We ... did see a lot of liberated camps, people going back.

PIEHLER: Displaced persons.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Well, let me ask you a question while we are still in the States. You weren't sure where you were going to go overseas. What did you think of the enemy, and when you were in the States where did you want to go? I mean ...

BALLOFF: While I was in the service I didn't have any idea.

PIEHLER: You didn't have—"I want to go to Germany. I want to ..."

BALLOFF: No, no, and you didn't have a choice.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, that's, that's ...

BALLOFF: I mean, I don't think I even thought about it, but I know that when the war ended in Europe, they ... were thinking about sending our group to Japan because they were ... turning in their heavy stuff and being issued lighter stuff and then—but I left to go to school in England so I don't know what happened to them.

PIEHLER: Yeah. What, I mean—you raised—what did you think of the enemy?

BALLOFF: Well, I don't know if I ever ... thought about the enemy. I just knew we had to do what we had to do, and I don't think I really thought about it, and I didn't know anything about concentration camps at that point. We didn't know anything about that.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like you, didn't give it even a lot of, of thought. Is that ... a fair ...

BALLOFF: I think ... survival is what we thought about. How we were going to get through the day. How are we going to get through the night, and what ... we have to do to make this happen.... Like I was saying earlier, ... we got the Remagen, to the bridge and ... our infantry was going over, I think, I don't know what tank outfit it was, but it was carrying our Seventy-Eighth infantry guys over the bridge, and once they got over there they needed supplies. So, have you seen the movie about ... how the signal corps built these pontoons?

PIEHLER: Yes.

BALLOFF: You know, and they were just sitting targets out there 'cause the Germans were pretty much in—they were in on the banks on the Rhine River and these guys were out on the end of a boat being shot at. But ... they built a bridge, and then I drove a truck over, over that pontoon bridge carrying ammunition. I was scared to death. I mean they were shooting at everything.... But by the time we got that bridge built, they had pretty much destroyed what was on the banks of—of that side of the Rhine River. Matter of fact, there's—one of my buddies—we had a ceremony where they mounted a plaque on the entrance to the bridge honoring the Seventy Eighth Division as being the first infantry division to cross the Rhine River, that part of the Rhine.

PIEHLER: When was that ceremony? Did you ...

BALLOFF: I didn't go, but cousin went back later and took a trip down the Rhine and stopped at that; there's a picture of that of those two, uh—well, what are those? The two big structures with a mounting of the Seventy-Eighth Division.

PIEHLER: I said I would back up and ask this because after the Tennessee maneuvers, doing this favor was a crucial turn in your, in your army life.

BALLOFF: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: But you had no training as a truck driver or experience.

BALLOFF: That's right.

PIEHLER: So, when was the first time you drove a truck in the army?

BALLOFF: I drove a truck in—when we, when we—I'll have to read, but I think after the maneuvers we went to Camp Buckner, and we still did, we still did drills and stuff and I drove a truck moving soldiers to and from different places in convoys.

PIEHLER: And how did that ...

BALLOFF: I drove a truck pretty good. I was a pretty good truck driver.... But I didn't know anything about the mechanics.

PIEHLER: Yeah. But you were able to take the truck.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I drove a big ... GMC. It had eight wheels in the back. It had double wheels. There's a picture of one in there, and I drove that, and then—I did pretty good. The, the—we were in Bournemouth, England and we had to go up to the ... northern part of England to pick up our guns and our trucks. So, they took us on a train, they took us by train. Liverpool, what's up there, Liverpool, Liverpool, that's where ... they docked the boats. And so they ... would take the frame of a truck and put a motor on it, and the trucks didn't come in all ready to go when, when—they were shipped in boxes. They mounted the ... motor and the cab, and the rest of it they just put in the bed of a truck. So, they took all of us truck drivers up there

to pick up the trucks. So, coming back, we'd start off with a convoy. This was the first experience I had with riding in a Europe convoy. That, maybe, twenty trucks, just as soon as they'd get a truck put together we'd—they'd line you up in maybe twenty trucks and you'd start back to Bournemouth where ... where our units are.

Well, (laughs) you had, at night you'd have to drive at blackout, and you know blackout driving is—two little, two little tailgate lights that you, you'd just had to follow that tailgate which, which put you to sleep sometimes 'cause you—it's all blackout and ... you're in a war zone and you're going through these little villages and—I'll never forget, we—as you come into—if your convoying twenty trucks when you approach a little English village, everything kind of, you know, you slow down and you, and you're lined up when you get into town. Well, the first truck takes off pretty fast. It's like when you stop at a red light here, if you're about the eighth car back, you don't start for a while. Well, by the time we get to this little town, the convoy's completely destroyed. I might be following one truck or two trucks (laughter), I don't know, we were all dispersed. So there's a policeman at an intersection, and this guy had me—we stopped and he says, you know, "We're trying to get to Bournemouth." And he gave us some directions and we drove maybe an hour or two, I don't know. We drove and we came back to the same guy (laughter) and we came to someone, and he said, "You know, you guys, there's an army camp, there's a British army camp here. You ought to spend the night, and then tomorrow morning you can take off." But we were tired. It was ... a full day. Which we did, but that was my first experience with driving a blackout in England.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, how ... receptive was the British army camp?

BALLOFF: Well, they were pretty good. They were very good. Before or during the war, there were—it was okay. After the war it got a little touchy, but ... I was in school. I was at that school. And, ... they were very nice to us. We were there for quite a while. Every—we had to take two courses. I took a business course and a math course I think, and then the rest of the day I was free to go the races, or to go wherever. The war is over and things were going pretty good. So, that was a good experience.

PIEHLER: When you were ... in the States you mentioned ... doing additional training in—you were part of now the cavalry for the Seventy-Eighth. New people were coming in. What was that experience of, sort of, an existing division with, sort of, a new group?

BALLOFF: Well, they just kind of—they had a job and ... they had—they, uh, they just—I don't remember. You just—somebody would come in and be a cannoneer or be a truck driver and they just did their job. We really didn't, the only people you really stayed with were the guys that, that you knew from, from the early days, and ...

PIEHLER: So, the early group, you were close to?

BALLOFF: Yeah. Yes.

PIEHLER: And in some sense, these were the ...

BALLOFF: You didn't have time to really ... develop all that—you know, you had your job to do and you're in a battlefield, you know, you're in a combat zone. You just do what you had to do.

PIEHLER: Now when—just so I can go through, after Tennessee maneuvers you go to this, the other camp.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And then where did you go after ...

BALLOFF: There, we went to a port of, of deportation ...

PIEHLER: Of embarkation.

BALLOFF: In New Jersey.

PIEHLER: Did you go to Camp Kilmer?

BALLOFF: Went to Camp Kilmer and that's where we left from.

PIEHLER: Okay.

BALLOFF: And it's funny, ... I told you I had an uncle in New York, and when I was at Camp [Kilmer], we could ... get a weekend pass. I'd go into New York, but then in ... just, like, one weekend we got orders to ship out and we couldn't tell anybody that we were going to ship out, and they kept wondering, where is Sam? Where is Sam, and I was on my way! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And luckily you were gone.

BALLOFF: We were gone. We were on the ... ship, an old—the name of the ship that was in there I think was just like a passenger ship. It wasn't very ... nice.

PIEHLER: I mean ... what do you remember about the voyage over?

BALLOFF: I just remember ... the blackout and the, uh—you know, I don't know, I don't remember what we did during the day. I don't know what we did during the day.

PIEHLER: Well, people often remember—I'm curious, how crowded was this ship?

BALLOFF: The ship was pretty crowded. It was, it was. The crowded ship was when we came back. We had—they had taken an aircraft carrier and taken out all the bottom, all the airplanes and all—they put bunks and there must—I don't know how many thousands of troops there were in the—and, well, you know, about the point system.

PIEHLER: Yes, yes.

BALLOFF: So, I had fifty something points. So, as time was going on they were lowering the points and I thought I was going to go back to Kassel, but they dropped the points and then I left from England and came home, and we were just a bunch of guys that were in school. So, they put us in the back of an aircraft carrier back near the kitchen, and we carried garbage. That was the alumni trip back I remember that. And I remember, we were on this aircraft carrier, and we weren't allowed to go on top because the sea was too rough and, I guess, with this many troops it could get out of hand. So finally one day they say, "You know, the sea's a little calm. X section," or whatever section we were in, "can go up."

PIEHLER: Could go on deck.

BALLOFF: So, we get on an elevator up, and, you know, we are on an aircraft carrier and ... it's calm, ... but the way it tilts, you just wonder how they landed planes on this thing. So, this guy I am with—I don't know who he was, I said, "Let's go look over the side." So, we kind of—there's no rail. There is a net down there which ... would catch the planes [that] had they fallen off the deck. We didn't know this. So, ...we're crawling out on the side of this aircraft carrier to look over the side and everybody's kind of laughing, because, I mean, you could stand up because they had these huge nets so it would catch a plane if it fell out.

PIEHLER: But you didn't know that.

BALLOFF: I just remember that.

PIEHLER: You didn't know about the net until you got close to the ...

BALLOFF: I didn't know about the net, and I knew there wasn't a fence around where (laughs)—so that was quite an experience too. And then when ... we landed even in New York ... we carried garbage for the whole day off the ship. I mean, we're just skipping around. We're just moving around here.

PIEHLER: Now you mentioned, when you ... landed in England—you've already talked about this convoy, your first convoy.

BALLOFF: Bournemouth, England.

PIEHLER: Bournemouth, England also driving on the other, different side of the street.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you take to that?

BALLOFF: Yeah. It was hard. It was hard. And, you know, nothing—we rented bicycles, and I had never rode a bicycle with the brakes on the handle bars—that was an accident too. Where you stop the brakes going down a hill, and you'd stop the brakes too much and go to the side. That was—but we rode bicycles going around there.

PIEHLER: So, you hadn't used the English bicycles with the hand brake and you flipped off the bike.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yes, that's right.

PIEHLER: How long were you in England before, before you ...

BALLOFF: We were in England a month. We were there a month.

PIEHLER: And you had mentioned that the relations with the English was very good during the war itself. Could you, could you talk a little bit more about ...

BALLOFF: Well, they had ... a recreation center and they had dances and everything. They had groups and they entertained us, and you know what—I don't ... remember where we lived when we were in Bournemouth, I don't know what housing we had. I don't know whether we lived in barracks or we lived in a house, I don't remember.

PIEHLER: ... Did you meet any English civilians when you ...

BALLOFF: I met a lot of, yeah, at the, at the parties you met the ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BALLOFF: And it seems like I went to a ... Synagogue. Seems like I went to a Friday night service.

PIEHLER: A Friday night service in England with, with ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: I'm jumping ahead, but you'd said the relationship did not last after the war. What ...

BALLOFF: I think the only thing—I never had really any problems, but it seems like a lot of English girls were marrying black American soldiers. Have you heard anything about that?

PIEHLER: Yes.

BALLOFF: And that caused a lot of resentment I think. I don't know if it was with the—you have heard about that?

PIEHLER: I have heard of the ... tension.

BALLOFF: There was tension.

PIEHLER: Did you have any encounters when you were in England with black troops that you remember?

BALLOFF: ... Most of the black troops, during the war, were convoy—were truck drivers. There were—I don't think there were any black infantrymen. There might have been a special unit or two, but most of them had to do with ... headquarters and moving supplies much of the time.... Even during the war they ... had their black troop at Fort Bragg in a separate area, and we used to go over there, I think on Sunday and watch that drill. I mean, they really put on a show when they ... would drill. That was a big thing on the weekends, to watch the black troops ...

PIEHLER: Really? To watch them drill?

BALLOFF: To watch them drill. I don't know what was so great about it, but we use to do that.

PIEHLER: You would, you would do that a lot 'cause that's on your free time.

BALLOFF: Yeah, and you know, they had movies on these bases and we spent away a bit. I—they had a lot of beer halls. I didn't drink any beer so, I guess, movies—that's what we did. I wrote a lot of letters home. I wrote the letters, I mean my family has copies, has the letters I wrote. Crazy things like that.

PIEHLER: Are you still—so the letters still survive?

BALLOFF: I've got them.

PIEHLER: Oh, wow. Oh, that's wonderful.

BALLOFF: But what do you say? They censored your—you couldn't tell anything pertinent, but you really didn't know anything. You probably, probably knew more about the war from the *Stars and Stripes* that you got a day or two later as what was going on. I didn't know about that.

PIEHLER: Where you a regular reader of the *Stars and Stripes* when you ...

BALLOFF: When we were able to get them. Yeah.

PIEHLER: So you—but it sounds like when you were able to get them ...

BALLOFF: Oh, sure.

PIEHLER: You, you were trying to get one.

BALLOFF: You kept up with stuff, and we didn't know the war was over. Not that day.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Where, where you were?

BALLOFF: Where I was? We didn't know.

PIEHLER: You mentioned going to services in England, and a general question about being in the services, how often were you able to go to the services when you were in the service?

BALLOFF: Well, I guess, it depended on where you were. I didn't go too much during ... my training. When I—I had a brother that was in the navy in Norfolk, and when I was stationed at either, was it Camp Pickett? Either Camp Pickett or Buckner, Camp—it had a train—I went through to Norfolk, and I would go there on the weekend when I could.... I have ... four cousins and a brother who were all in the navy, who were all commissioned officers. I'm the only (laughs) ...

PIEHLER: You're the only one that did...

BALLOFF: I'm the only corporal in the whole family, and we'd have these family gatherings, and everyone would be in uniform, you know, they were all, they were all lieutenants, but they had gone through the, the ninety-day wonder thing. How we won the war with those kinds of men, I don't know. (Laughter) My brother, my brother was in the amphibious forces, and he spent his army time, his wartime, trying to—you know these landing craft that ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: Trying to mount guns. What kind of, what kind of firearms, or what kind of guns could they put on a landing craft to protect that landing craft, and that's what he spent most of his war doing.

PIEHLER: He never got deployed overseas?

BALLOFF: He ... was going to go to Africa, but he had a—he was on a ship and he got an attack of appendicitis and they took him off—took him back to Norfolk and they operated on him, and he spent most of his time in this place. But the rest of them had good ... services. We're ... very lucky. We're ... six males, six guys. The youngest one is ... seventy, the [second] youngest one is seventy-four and the oldest is eighty-four, and we are all still around—we've all gone through the war.

PIEHLER: Well it sounds like ...

BALLOFF: We've all gone through the war.

PIEHLER: It sounds like another group, I have a whole group to interview, uh ...

BALLOFF: There's, Melvin Sturm, is he mentioned in that book? He was ... a naval officer, and he knows more about the naval history than I do, but he was in the Pacific.

PIEHLER: Did you ever encounter any chaplains when you were ...

BALLOFF: Yes. I did.

PIEHLER: Could you tell me about, about those encounters?

BALLOFF: I—we had our ... Passover service ... at a castle on the Rhine River, and ... I went to Passover—to services, and I have pictures of that captain who was the chaplain.

PIEHLER: And was he a Jewish chaplain?

BALLOFF: Yes, and he conducted a service, and he married a Jewish girl who had, who grew up in LaFollette (laughs) can you believe it.

PIEHLER: Really.

BALLOFF: She came later on. She came after I left and lived in—her father was in the sugar factory, he was—I don't have something to show you, and they moved to LaFollette, and he marries this girl, and he's the one who conducted the service in, in Germany.

PIEHLER: So, he's ...

BALLOFF: Small world. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Any, did you ever go to a service where other than a Jewish chaplain conducted a Jewish service? Do you remember any ...

BALLOFF: I would imagine that we had prayer services when we did certain things as a group.

PIEHLER: As a group.

BALLOFF: Yeah, and some chaplain just lead the service.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So, and so there was.

BALLOFF: It was never—I don't ever remember just having a rabbi conduct the service for the Jewish boys. Maybe they did. I don't remember.

PIEHLER: Except for Passover, this Passover ...

BALLOFF: That's right.

PIEHLER: That was very ...

BALLOFF: Somewhere I've got a picture of that. Somewhere.

PIEHLER: Did you—in many ways, did you grow up with very little overt anti-Semitism?

BALLOFF: Right.

PEIHLER: I mean did you ever ... encounter any ... at the boarding schools, or Vanderbilt?

BALLOFF: No, no.

PEIHLER: What about in the military. Did you ever ...

BALLOFF: No, never did.

PEIHLER: Never even just ... in the barracks?

BALLOFF: No, never did. I don't think anybody ever, I don't remember even talking of religion or anything.

PEIHLER: Yeah, now they knew ... would people have known in the service, for example, that you were Jewish.

BALLOFF: Was it on our nametag?

PEIHLER: It was on your name ...

BALLOFF: It was on our nametag, but I don't know anybody ever looked at, you know, looked on our nametag to find out. I don't remember encountering anything like that. Have you in any of your interviews?

PEIHLER: Yeah, some have, some have not. It really ranges. That is why I am partly asking, 'cause I've found that there is a full range.

BALLOFF: Do you find that, do you find that it—I feel like a lot of us that grew up in small towns, and maybe we didn't hear a lot of anti-Semitism because people didn't know we were Jewish. Maybe, but I find that people that come from the larger cities where Jewish people really had their little ...

PEIHLER: Conflict.

BALLOFF: Conflict, yeah. You might have heard, maybe—would that have been true?

PEIHLER: ... It's been very interesting. I'm not sure. The most extreme case of acceptance I have ever heard was a retired judge who was growing up on the Jersey shore community, and the Ku Klux Klan bought the white sheets from his father.

BALLOFF: (Laughs) Is that right?

PEIHLER: And he had invited him to join. I thought that was probably the most extreme case.

BALLOFF: Well that—I could see where that—I can see where that would be possible. I can say that even LaFollette had—I'm sure we had Ku Klux Klan, but I never—they never surfaced or anything, but I'm sure that if, if they if they needed some sheets or something like that, they'd come to our store.

PIEHLER: They'd come to your store. (Laughs)

BALLOFF: You got that, it would be hard for an outsider who hadn't grown up in a small town to realize how—what a nice life we had.

PIEHLER: So, in some ways you, you speak of a lot of affection when you speak of that small town.

BALLOFF: My brother still lives up there, and I go out there about twice a week just to—he lost his wife. I lost my wife, so, he and I, and we get together a couple of times.

PIEHLER: In many ways it sounds it ...

BALLOFF: I was there last night.

PIEHLER: So, in many ways you have a place in your heart for LaFollette.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Oh good—I had an eightieth birthday part in LaFollette out in a barn, and I had all my old LaFollette buddies plus my family, and I still—I'd love to take you out there. You wouldn't believe it. I mean, it's the most—if you got a night, give me a call some time.

PIEHLER: No, no that would be, that would be a lot of fun actually.

BALLOFF: I would love to do that.

PIEHLER: Yeah, 'cause I, I'm so new to—I've only lived in Tennessee for five years, and I ...

BALLOFF: Well, you've never seen anything like it. And the people—it's like I say, they all—my dad had that store there from 1919—1918 to 1990 so, we were in business there for all those years.

PIEHLER: Yeah, which is long, as I said for retail it's a very long while.

BALLOFF: It's a long time, and ... my generation grew up there, and my kids grew up there, my brother's children and my children all grew up in LaFollette. And I think—and they love to go back. As a matter of fact, my daughter who lives in Alexandria, Virginia—when I talk about going to visit my grandson, she said, "Dad I'd rather bring him down to our surroundings—bring him down to LaFollette and let him see our people." And we still got friends out there. She comes down more than I go up there.

PIEHLER: Now I want to—how did you get from England to ...

BALLOFF: On a landing craft.

PIEHLER: On a landing craft.

BALLOFF: We were on there for seven days on a pretty big landing craft. They had a poker game that started about the first day and went the whole seven days. (Laughter) And you know, guys with fatigues with, you know, the big pockets here and big—the winners would just stuff—we're doing—we're playing poker with American dollars and English pounds, French francs and German marks, you know, and ...

PIEHLER: This is English ...

BALLOFF: And you learned the exchange just by playing poker.

PIEHLER: And you had this money even before you got landed?

BALLOFF: Well, ... yeah, I mean, if you were lucky enough to win. But some guys, some guys were really gamblers, but they were afraid to leave the game. They'd just stay there even (laughter) even because they had wiped out a lot of people and the other guys were angry.... But, the navy had ... French—I don't know what kind of money they had. It was a lot of different ...

PIEHLER: So, that's how you had French and German money before you even had landed.

BALLOFF: That's right.

PIEHLER: Did you play poker? Were you...

BALLOFF: A little bit. I'm not a big gambler.

PIEHLER: But, you, you ...

BALLOFF: You had to do, do something to pass time.

PIEHLER: But it is also—you described to me as to—it struck me from the movies a quintessential scene the poker game or the crap game aboard the ship. So, you did see that?

BALLOFF: It was mostly crap game. There wasn't much ...

PIEHLER: But there wasn't much ...

BALLOFF: There might have been a poker game, but most of it was dice.

PIEHLER: Most of it was dice.

BALLOFF: Yeah. And, and, and some guys knew how to play the dice. I never, I was never—I'm not a big gambler.

PIEHLER: Were you seasick at all on either one of the voyages over?

BALLOFF: No, I never was. I was lucky. There was a lot of sickness, but I wasn't—lucky, and ... from this country to England, we were—I don't remember how ... many days it was, but it was a pretty long trip.

PIEHLER: Now when you landed on the continent, where did you, you land?

BALLOFF: Le Havre.

PIEHLER: Le Havre.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And how did you—you were a truck driver. So, how did you, you ...

BALLOFF: They say, they asked, uh, "Has anyone here had any experience with the French language?" Because we were laying on these trucks and going to pick up some ammunition and taking it to some other place on a map. Well, I had taken French in college for, like, two years. I didn't know any French, but I kind of—I thought, "Well, I'll try." So, anyhow, I kind of volunteered, and went along with this convoy of trucks, and we got so screwed up, but at that point, at that point the Americans were pretty well established in that part of France. So, all the roads ... had already been checked for land mines. So, everything was kind of roped off. You had to stay within certain boundaries because of the land mines and that sort of thing. So, it was not that difficult. We did make a few bad turns, ... but we got to the unit. We got to the unit.

PIEHLER: You got to a ... unit.

BALLOFF: Yeah, but my French didn't go very far (laughter), and then we got into that part of France where, uh, where Belgium, and Germany, and France all came together. So, the language is all screwed up. Flemish?

PIEHLER: Uh huh, yes.

BALLOFF: But it is a mixture of German and Belgian and ... and French, and we had a Jewish boy who was in our outfit and, I guess, there the Jewish and the Germans were kind of ...

PIEHLER: Were very similar, yeah.

BALLOFF: And ... he would talk to these people and he'd get a few words, but he was always agreeing with them. Anything they'd say (laughter) he'd agree with. He was not really knowing what they said, but he knew a few words, but we got along pretty good.

PIEHLER: I guess, how—since you raised this one Jewish boy, how many Jews were with you in your unit?

BALLOFF: Well, I was, I was—very friendly—I mentioned in there, the—this one—he, he just passed away. He lives in, he lived in North Carolina, and we visited each other, uh ...

PIEHLER: You stayed in touch after the war.

BALLOFF: Yeah, ... but he just passed away. He was married; he was married before he got into the army, and when we were stationed in—where were we stationed? I guess at Fort Bragg, his wife rented an apartment, and I had dinner with them a couple of times. I got to know his wife pretty well.

PIEHLER: So, you got to know him even before you went overseas?

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: And this was at Fort Bragg, was way back before your ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, we—I have pictures of he and I doing work together in, uh, in Germany. And we kept in touch. But the Seventy-Eighth division had a reunion in 1978 here in Knoxville, but not many of my, not many of my outfit came, but I ran into a lot of Seventy-Eighth Division guys. That was in 1978, that's already thirty-five years ago.

PIEHLER: That was—actually, for a World War II unit, was actually still on the early side for these big reunions.

BALLOFF: Yeah. There is a—I have a Navy friend who was captain, a graduate of Annapolis and they still ... have gatherings and get together quite often, but we don't.

PIEHLER: After—you mentioned doing this assignment when you were driving around France much like England and getting lost, when did you actually get deployed on the line, so to speak? When ... did you go from La Havre to, you mentioned ...

BALLOFF: We went ... from Le Havre to ...

PIEHLER: To this region in, in ...

BALLOFF: In Germany. That's where we went. Germany was a hot—what's the name of the town? What was the town? What was the town? We slept in a barn. There was a barn there, and we found a barn there, and we slept, we slept in the loft of a barn, about five of us, six of us.

PIEHLER: But you weren't in France very long before you were deployed?

BALLOFF: Right, just passed through.

PIEHLER: And did you ... remain as a truck driver, or ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, all during the war.

PIEHLER: All during the war, but you also had—you were also involved in the artillery, I guess.

BALLOFF: Yeah, I—see, we would deliver ammunition and food, so I was around. We had ... three units, one on 155 howitzers, so I kind of got ...

PIEHLER: So, you would come and bring ...

BALLOFF: Bring supplies to all of them. But at this point, I'm not ... shooting any guns at this point by the time I get to Europe.

PIEHLER: So, it's really only in training that you ... had the experience of loading weapons?

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Yeah. All of my training was that.

PIEHLER: This is such, this is such a basic question, and I know I could find the answer in printed sources, but I am curious, did you have any heat in the truck?

BALLOFF: No.

PIEHLER: No, so it must have been cold to drive.

BALLOFF: Did we have heat in the truck? Well, the truck had a canvas top. It was not a cab.

PIEHLER: So, you had no cab. This, this was a canvas top.

BALLOFF: I don't believe we had heat. I remember at night when we ... would check in at night we'd sleep, if we could, on the hood of a truck, because it had heat, because the motor was hot.

PIEHLER: Because the motor was hot.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: But they didn't bother to put a heater in.

BALLOFF: I don't think so. You know I don't think I have ever really thought about it. I don't think so. The ... night of the 16<sup>th</sup>, I think that's the night that it started snowing, we had, the night before we had—we did our deal. We did what we had to do, and we were—we had this big camouflage net that you, you put over the truck. So, the camouflage net was in the back of the truck and it was dark, so we didn't need to put it up. It was all folded, and we slept on that as a mattress, on that ... netted thing, and that night it snowed. That was the first snow, and we're

sleeping on top of this thing and, and you wake up and the truck—everything was full of snow, and we're, and we're actually stuck to the netting cause you'd froze. I guess, we were in a—we made a—somehow or another we had made a sleeping bag by taking a blanket, by taking a blanket and laying it down and then taking the second blanket and laying it down and folding it over each side to make a sort of sleeping bag.

BLAIR: How common was frostbite?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: How common was, was frostbite? Frostbite.

BALLOFF: Frostbite? I didn't have that, but ... the infantry did. They couldn't ... get the right footwear. They issued boots and that wasn't good, and they issued Arctic, you know, rubber things and they were airtight and your foot would sweat, but it was sloppy, it was muddy, it was cold.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, 'cause this scene was very, your first snow was very vivid, because you had mentioned very early in the interview.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And also this huge snowstorm came and, and you slept through it. You didn't wake up until the morning.

BALLOFF: The morning.

PIEHLER: You didn't, even though ...

BALLOFF: I mean, I tell you, when you slept, you didn't have problems.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: You were very tired.

PIEHLER: Which I think—'cause I think people reading this transcript will think, "What do you mean you slept through a snowstorm," and literally covered, not just by a little snow, you were literally covered with snow. You were that tired to sleep through that, that change of temperature and precipitation.

BALLOFF: You know, normally, and I don't know if I normally did that or not, but we would have to stand guard. We would have to walk guard every night, or maybe every other night for two hours. So, if you had the guard duty from two to four ...

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

BLAIR: I saw, um, what was it, Tom Hanks.

PIEHLER: *Saving Private Ryan?*

BALLOFF: I didn't see that. About the landing, about the landing at—of the, of the, the—that, that part of the war where they landed on the beach. Is that the movie? I didn't, I didn't go see that.

PIEHLER: Well, let me just put on the, the standard greeting. This begins an interview with Sam Balloff at a home on Downing Drive in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler.

BLAIR: And Olivia Blair.

PIEHLER: And you were just saying that night you apparently didn't have guard duty when you were at the ...

BALLOFF: I don't remember, but normally we'd walk guard for two hours. And—I know what we did—I know I did—I don't think I did that night, but I know I remember walking—we built a little, we built a little thing out of logs and had a fire in that, and when it would—when you were up—when you were on a guard duty you'd kind of sit around that fire. I remember we were—our trucks ... were, sort of, parked on an abandoned railroad, and the idea was not to put things in a line to kind of stagger them because if you would get them strafed—you didn't line up trucks in a line, you sort of scattered them for protection, but we never got strafed or anything like that. But then, if you've seen some of the movies, there was a heavy fog, heavy fog ... and I don't know the right—the air force could not fly, could not protect troops, ground troops for a long—there was a heavy fog that—right after the snow, I think and, and I just remember, running around in the fog. I guess, it had to have been in the snow, the weather, and everything, and then—I don't remember what day it was that the sun came out, and the skies cleared, and the sky was just full of bombers with the vapor trails like a, like a—I'll just never forget it. It was like a—and when I see planes in the air you'll see one—like yesterday, I saw one plane flying with a vapor trail. You can imagine, like, hundreds and hundreds of planes flying into Germany.

PIEHLER: In a sense, it strikes me why it's so memorable was that you'd never seen anything like that.

BALLOFF: Never.

PIEHLER: Before or since. That the sky was just ...

BALLOFF: Full of aircraft with vapor trails. It was that cold, I guess, and the motors were that hot. That was something.

PIEHLER: During, during the early days of the Battle of the Bulge, what were you doing specifically?

BALLOFF: I was just doing my daily rationing and—but ... when I would go to a gun replacement, it was some kind of reaction that—we were shooting, we were shooting to the east and all of a sudden we are shooting to the south. Why, you know, we feel like, we felt like there was a line of Americans. And, and all of a sudden we are firing into Germans, to the east, and all of a sudden the guns are firing ... to the south, and I was like, “What’s going on?” and that was the firing into the Bulge.

PIEHLER: So, you were aware of that, that ...

BALLOFF: Well, we really weren’t aware of that. It was what ... the Germans were trying to do at that point. I just knew that the guns were shooting in the direction ...

PIEHLER: That was the sign that something was not going right.

BALLOFF: Something was not going right.

PIEHLER: I’m mean, ‘cause you weren’t even in a gun crew, but you knew that ...

BALLOFF: Right, but I was ... involved with all of the gun crews.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and you ...

BALLOFF: Every day.

PIEHLER: And they, it sounds like they said something. Did they say something?

BALLOFF: “Something’s going—something’s happening.”

PIEHLER: But when, I guess, when did you have a sense, and where did you get it initially, what exactly was going on?

BALLOFF: I guess through the paper. I don’t ...

PIEHLER: You just sensed ...

BALLOFF: Maybe the word came down.

PIEHLER: But, but you had a sense ...

BALLOFF: Well, see that lasted a few days, that Bulge thing. That—I don’t even know how long that lasted.

PIEHLER: But the tilt of the gun was a very ...

BALLOFF: You know, you had to change—they're on wheels. You would have to turn them around, and ... that was—I don't know how long that lasted. But you know that story about Patton and Bradley?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: Cracks up and all that sort of thing. I don't know, I don't know what day it finally ended.

PIEHLER: But, you in a sense, you did not have—did you have any fears that your unit might be overrun, or any rumors...

BALLOFF: We just—you know, I don't remember. I think we were ... I'm sure we were aware that there were Germans out there and things were happening, but we went about our duty.

PIEHLER: What about—later on this is what happened, but were you were aware of it at all that the Germans had landed an elite unit that wore American uniforms [but] were German soldiers?

BALLOFF: I had heard that.

PIEHLER: You heard that?

BALLOFF: We heard that, and when you would walk guard at night, you know, you had to have the password, and—was that the movie I just saw on Turner Classic of ... the Germans infiltrating with the Americans? And they spoke English.

PIEHLER: So, you were aware of it ...

BALLOFF: Well, I don't know if I was so much aware of it at that point. I just, but they were much aware that you had to have a password and you have to, you have to check in.

PIEHLER: That was very important?

BALLOFF: Yes, and I'll tell you one incident that comes back. They, they had a system of, of identifying ground forces.... If there was a German or American flight in the area, you know, a combat aircraft, you would have to identify ... that you were an American troop so these planes wouldn't drop anything on you. So, they had—I think this is right—they had a color of the day, each day they had—so you would burn a smoke pot, orange, whatever, or red, whatever that color of the day was, and you also had panels, color panels that you would put on top of your truck to tell your American air force that you were Americans, you're not German, you're not German trucks, 'cause these guys had no ammo. So, about the first or second day that we are in this little town, well, now I can't think of the name of it ... there was an alarm, and somebody started identifying themselves by burning a one of these pots, these smoke pots. Well, we ... continually talked about poisonous gas. You had to carry gas masks, poisonous gas—had to carry gas masks. So, we see this smoke pot burning with this color on it not knowing why, so somebody sounds, you know, they have an alarm or they sound a gas alarm. Sound a gas alarm,

we put on our gas masks, and we weren't even ... in Europe a week and you start saying, "Gee, gosh, they're already, they're using poisonous gas." Well, what they're doing is they're identifying themselves, and while we're out ... in this town, ... this big convoy of tanks come through this little town, and these guys said, "What are all you guys doing ... what are you doing?" "Well we've got a smoke alarm. We got a gas alarm." He said, "That's not a gas alarm, that's a smoke pot identifying your position." Had (laughter) you ever heard anything like that?

PIEHLER: No! I've heard about gas alerts being sounded, but you're the first to explain how they, how someone could sound that and why. And, and these tankers, they must have looked at you as being very green.

BALLOFF: Oh, and these guys are in a—'course they are in white camouflage suits, and of course the tanks are—you couldn't hide a tank in the snow, so they had camouflage things too, but there was a lot of action going on. What's the name of that town? It had a lot of action, and it—and there was a, not too far from where we were was a crossroads which they called—it was called the Eighty-Eight—the Germans zeroed in on that crossroads, and any time anything American went through there they'd just lob a shell in there. So, you'd have to get through that intersection in a hurry, but in the snow and ice it was hard to do.

PIEHLER: Well, I guess, can you convey some sense as to what it was like to drive during, you know, December, January, in the coldest winter?

BALLOFF: Yeah, oh goodness. It was bad, I mean it was bad, and, blackouts; you couldn't drive with your lights on. So, you tried to get in as much as you could during the daylight, but in the winter the days are shorter, so it makes it tough.

PIEHLER: And what were the conditions of the roads like?

BALLOFF: Well, the roads were pretty bad. There was, I mean, you—if you're on the main highways, I guess, it was okay, but if you were in the backwoods like we were in little towns—what is the name of that town? I can't think of the name. But like I say it was just a little farm town, and it had a barn, and we all lived in the barn. I can't remember the name of it. I haven't talked about the prisoners of war. I've seen prisoners that we, uh—there's what I drove (shows picture). And it got stuck plenty of times.

PIEHLER: 'Cause this is a picture, and this is the yearbook of your division, and it shows a bunch of G.I.s trying to push the truck out, and that was, that was a very common ...

BALLOFF: That's the kind of roads we had. Normally.

PIEHLER: Now when you, when you were driving you said a lot of your job, particularly in the Bulge, was going between these units and resupplying them. Were you in a single truck or in a small convoy?

BALLOFF: In a single truck.

PIEHLER: So, you were, sort of, out on your own?

BALLOFF: They left you out on your own.

PIEHLER: And you didn't have anyone else out with you?

BALLOFF: I had a, yeah, I had a driver, yeah. They, we ...

PIEHLER: You had two drivers?

BALLOFF: We paired off.

PIEHLER: Otherwise, that was it?

BALLOFF: That was us. You're out ... by yourself. But that didn't happen all of the time.

PIEHLER: And, in a sense, if something happened, that was it. You were surprised ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, but you had a machine gun on there. This is cousin of mine [that] ... took that trip down the Rhine (shows picture), and there's the entrance to the bridge that they had rebuilt. That's the memorial. I'll just leave all of this here.

PIEHLER: Well, I think I'd rather make an appointment. Maybe come over to the University for lunch one day and we'll Xerox up a storm 'cause I, I just, I don't think that I would lose it but I don't, I don't want ... I don't want to be the case of, of where you ...

BLAIR: So, are these original houses in the picture from the war?

BALLOFF: I don't know? I tell you, that is a very wealthy area right in here. There—we ... moved into a ... that was ... where the bridge was being bombed, whatever. That was another experience. The Germans ... wanted to destroy the bridge.

PIEHLER: Yeah, at the Rhine.

BALLOFF: And the Americans wanted to keep the bridge to use it. So, the Germans had, had machine gun emplacements on the bank of the Rhine River, and when—I mean the Americans did, and when the Germans would try to come in to destroy the bridge, they would just automatically set off these machine guns not to shoot at the planes, but just to set up a web so that the planes wouldn't go through it. And here we're walking guard and all this was going on. We're in this little town on the ... west bank of the river. Every house—they were very big homes, has a wine cellar. Every G.I.'s drunk (laughs) and you're trying to walk guard and you're trying to stop Germans, I mean it was, it was quite a different world up there.

PIEHLER: I guess, one question that I want to make sure I ask, um, what was sort of your most vivid experience overseas, or in the army general? What, what—and particularly, what was the closest call you had?

BALLOFF: The closest problem I had?

PIEHLER: The closest call you had in terms of risk. Your danger.

BALLOFF: As a matter of fact, not any one for certain.

PIEHLER: You had no ...

BALLOFF: Just crossing that bridge was, was pretty ...

PIEHLER: The pontoon bridge, the pontoon bridge.

BALLOFF: Yes, the pontoon bridge. Now what they had done, ... they had burned smoke pots there to hide the bridge, and ... you thought maybe the weather was bad, because—but they were burning pots to protect the bridge.

BLAIR: How much smoke was being emitted from each pot?

BALLOFF: A lot, you just—enough to make you think it's a foggy day.

BLAIR: Just from one.

BALLOFF: Well, I mean they had, they had them all along the river, 'cause those—they wanted to ... to hide the bridge. But I wouldn't think that the Germans knew where the bridge was exactly, I mean, with all the technology that they had they knew where their bridge was.

PIEHLER: In terms of ... either your carbine or the machine gun on the truck, did you ever fire either one?

BALLOFF: I fired the machine gun at a plane once.

PIEHLER: Once.

BALLOFF: Once. I never had the occasion to, to do my carbine.

PIEHLER: So, you never had to ...

BALLOFF: No, the plane was coming down just ...

PIEHLER: Just straight.

BALLOFF: And we were in a convoy.

PIEHLER: Now you mentioned ... this identification, this smoke pot and the, and the things on your truck. Did you—were there ever cases of misidentification or friendly fire?

BALLOFF: I'm sure there was.

PIEHLER: But you don't know ... for sure?

BALLOFF: And I don't know of any another time that we had to use that because, like I said, the war was beginning to wind ... down, and once we got into ... rural pocket of Germany, you'll see in this book, the Germans were just—you were more, you were more—you were as much concerned as to what to do with the Germans prisoners than you were fighting the war, because they were surrendering and they were just ... giving up.

PIEHLER: ... You mention[ed] ... a few minutes earlier—I hadn't mentioned prisoner of war. When was your first encounter with captured Germans?

BALLOFF: Well, ... January of '45, ... they were already—see these infantry guys, they would capture Germans, and they didn't know what to do with them. I mean, they didn't want them to get away from their unit. I mean, if you march a bunch of German prisoners five or six miles, you've got to get back and get with your unit, and they didn't want to do that. So, if there were artillery stuff around, they'd say, "Take these guys". You know, "do something with them." So, sometimes ... we would march those—I have pictures, I have memories of ... snow-covered field with barbed wire with, with prisoners in there. I don't know what they did with them. I don't know whether they fed them. I don't know whether they housed—I don't remember housing. I don't remember any place to house them. So, I really don't know what they did with them.

PIEHLER: You just, sort of, saw them on the ...

BALLOFF: I saw them in an enclosed wired kind of thing.

PIEHLER: You never actually transported prisoners did you?

BALLOFF: No, but ... I saw guys—you'll see some pictures in here of ... prisoners being marched, Germans being marched to a prisoner camp, but like I say, I don't know what they did with them.

PIEHLER: You never took a surrendered prisoner did you?

BALLOFF: No, no, no. We came in contact with a lot of German civilians, ... these little villages always had Germans, but it seems like CIA or whatever agency it was could identify the Nazi families and move them out, and we never had any encounter with ... German soldiers or Nazi families. The only thing I remember—a jeep these guys that drove jeeps, and they had to put their windshield down not to create a reflection. It was part of the camouflage, but they had occasions where the Germans would string piano wire across the road and so their jeeps with their ... windshields down had a lot of injuries, had a lot of G.I.s injured driving jeeps. So, they

got the idea of putting an iron, putting a steel arm on the front of a jeep. I don't know if you've noticed in the movies, and that was to break the wire so that they could drive through.

PIEHLER: This problem with wire—when did you, when did you, sort of, learn about this. Was this still when the war was still going on?

BALLOFF: Yes, but see I'm in a truck.

PIEHLER: Yeah, oh yeah I know, you're, you're ...

BALLOFF: It's, it's the guys in the jeep that ...

PIEHLER: But you were really aware [of] this ...

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah, you heard stories about guys being decapitated—I don't know how severely they were hurt, but they—you know, it's blackout and you're driving in the country and your driving a little jeep and slowed down. And there's a wire ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, in a truck you would just ...

BALLOFF: So, so they ended up mounting a big iron arm on the front of the jeep. If you see that in the movies sometime, you'll know what it's all about.

PIEHLER: When you were, when the breakthrough occurred, how did that change your sort of daily, you know, routine?

BALLOFF: When the what?

PIEHLER: When the break—when you passed Remagen and when the Germans were surrendering ...

BALLOFF: Well, it was easy going. It was just a matter of keeping everybody fed and supplied and—we moved fast. It was the rural, rural valley, it was suppose to be an agriculture area, but we moved through that—and also the *autobahn* was pretty much intact. The bridges was destroyed, but seems like we use to ...

PIEHLER: So you drove on the *autobahn*?

BALLOFF: We did. It seems like we did a little bit.... I don't really remember that, and I was thinking when I see all of these problems with the interstate, problems in this country, ... how engineers didn't study the Germans, and I don't know how, I don't know how efficient their exits and entrances were, but we have a lot of—some envelopes in our interstate that they would have done better. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, I also think that Knoxville is a particularly misconfigured. You mentioned earlier this displaced persons and encountering them.

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: When did, when did—any, any particular memories where you ...

BALLOFF: No, no. I just remember people walking away ... from Germany.

PIEHLER: And back.

BALLOFF: Back, those going back into Belgium and France.

PIEHLER: When did you have some sense of ... the full extent of Hitler's régime in terms of a Holocaust?

BALLOFF: Not until later on.... I don't know when I first heard about it, but seeing ... these displaced persons, you didn't know whether they came from concentration camps. They couldn't have. They couldn't have because—it had to be ... people who just lost their homes. Just going back to their homes, because the Germans, the Germans had displaced an awful lot of people. I don't ... really remember all that.

PIEHLER: So, you never encountered any smaller slave labor camps or, or ...

BALLOFF: No.

PIEHLER: No, or any other major concentration camps?

BALLOFF: No, no. I didn't go that far in. I don't think ... there were—I don't know where the concentration camps were or are, but I don't think there was any, there was—I don't know if there was any between ... the German border and Kassel. We went through Cologne and it was pretty well destroyed, Cologne, and—you know, I was talking earlier about forward ... observers in the artillery. They didn't destroy churches or high-elevated buildings, because they used those for observing.

PIEHLER: I mean, the cathedral in Cologne was one of the few things that ...

BALLOFF: That stayed.

PIEHLER: That stayed.

BALLOFF: And the Germans needed that to direct their firing into the Americans. So, they had to save the higher elevated buildings.

PIEHLER: It strikes me that [because of] your training in the artillery you remained, in the war, very conscious of artillery. I mean, that's also your war in that you were delivering to them and supplying to them, but, but you hadn't forgotten ...

BALLOFF: Everything is field artillery. Anything I identified with—anything I did was field artillery.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So, you very much were committed.

BALLOFF: My whole war experience was field artillery, ... which is away from the front. I guess, there were guns maybe four or five miles from behind enemy lines, but if they needed to take a village, if they needed to take a town and they needed artillery, then that was our—we would supply them.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, 'cause it strikes me that it was pretty easy to get lost. Did you ever get a chance where you got really close to the front line and didn't realize it?

BALLOFF: You never knew where the front line is, or was. You just never knew, because it would change. Like this town I am trying to think of Schmidt, Germany. It seems like—I think the Twenty-Eighth or Twenty-Seventh Division was there. They would take the city and then the Germans would take it back, and then there was a lot of casualties, a lot of casualties. Just fighting ... the part of the fighting that was, that was I think most ... prevalent was around ... that part where the Bulge was, somewhere back around in there. They had all kind of trouble.

PIEHLER: So, it strikes me as—when you think of combat you think of the Bulge and you think of Remagen, and much of it was, from your prospective, you were just moving and, in fact, by March and April...

BALLOFF: By March and April, yeah, yeah. But January and February, or December, January and February we were pretty—we didn't move very much.

PIEHLER: Yeah. It sounds like you had a sense of real routine the way you described it in those months.

BALLOFF: I'm trying to think of the name of the river. There was a dam that the Germans tried to destroy.

BLAIR: The Ruhr River?

BALLOFF: Pardon me?

BLAIR: The Ruhr River?

BALLOFF: The Ruhr River. That's in here, the dam. They tried ... to destroy the dam to flood out a lot of American advances, yeah, and that's where we were. We were ... just to the west of that, of that river.

PIEHLER: I want to make sure that I ask some mundane questions about life ... when you were in the field. How often ... would you get a hot shower once you were deployed ... from this December to V-E Day?

BALLOFF: They took us somewhere ... in Holland to a gymnasium to take a shower and that must have been, I don't remember, like January or February some where in there, but that's the only time we ever had a shower. The rest of the time we got water out ... [for] shaving and—they were ... very strict about not having beards, not having anything on your face for lice or anything like that. But you are living in a ... barn and you're—I've got some pictures of that barn. It's a—it was warm. It had a stove. A lot better off than a lot of guys.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't, you didn't sleep in a foxhole very often.

BALLOFF: I was either in a barn or a house or on the ground. I don't know if I slept—that's infantry guys.

PIEHLER: What about meals, how often would you get a hot meal?

BALLOFF: We'd get a hot ... meal every day. Every day. And if I could—if the meals were pretty good—I don't remember complaining about food. I don't ...

PIEHLER: So, you didn't have to [eat] K-rations or some ...

BALLOFF: Oh, yes we did. Sometimes we got K-rations and then they had C-rations. There were two of them. There was one of them that had a chocolate bar and a—yeah we got a lot of that.

PIEHLER: But, it sounds like, more often than not at least you ...

BALLOFF: You know, I take that back. Maybe we didn't get a hot meal every day. Maybe we didn't.

PIEHLER: But, it sounds like, you did get a lot of hot meals.

BALLOFF: Yes.

PIEHLER: I mean, it wasn't the exception.

BALLOFF: We had a kitchen that went along with us. And we would deliver those rations to that kitchen.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I know for, I know for an infantryman, hot meals are rare.

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: Is a rare ...

BALLOFF: No, no. I'm wrong. We didn't get a hot meal every day. I didn't know you were going to be asking me these types of questions. (Laughs) Well, that's a very—that brings back a

lot of memories that I hadn't thought about. Well, if you want to copy this, just call me, just call me, and I'll come down to the university. I'll go down there. I don't go down there very much. The only—I've been going down there to the Clarence Brown Theater is about the only time I go down there.

PIEHLER: Yeah, we're not far from the Clarence Brown in the history department.

BALLOFF: But I do—someday I want to take you guys out to LaFollette.

PIEHLER: Yeah, we would enjoy it.

BALLOFF: I just love the history of LaFollette.

PIEHLER: ... V-E Day is a ... very distinct memory, it sounds like, for you.

BALLOFF: Yes.

PIEHLER: I mean, and one of the things, one of the things you brought with us that you actually encapsulated, the *Stars and Stripes* from the ...

BALLOFF: What's the date on that paper? I don't know if that came out ...

PIEHLER: This is the Tuesday, May 8, the Germany edition of the *Stars and Stripes* and it's the extra "Nazi's Quit" and it says "Stalin Gives Order," and when I was struck when you said to us when you first shared the paper, you ... didn't know the war had ended.

BALLOFF: I don't—that's what I'm saying, I don't know the date on that paper, and I don't know the date that they actually ...

PIEHLER: No, there was ...

BALLOFF: I mean, was there one day when the Germans...

PIEHLER: Yeah. Yeah it was May 8.

BALLOFF: It was May 8?

PIEHLER: Yes.

BALLOFF: It was—is that May the 8?

PIEHLER: Yeah, that was when the paper came out.

BALLOFF: But I don't know, I don't know when I received it either.

PIEHLER: But it's ... really—you knew what was going on because of ...

BALLOFF: Because of *Stars and Stripes*.

PIEHLER: What about the radio? Did you ever have...

BALLOFF: No, no.

PIEHLER: You were never able to listen ...

BALLOFF: The radio we had we listened to—Thanksgiving—I guess, we were in England, Thanksgiving, and ... I think we listened to a football game that weekend on a radio, but we didn't have a radio when we were in Germany.

PIEHLER: After V-E Day, ... what happened?

BALLOFF: Well, ... that's when our outfit ... started preparing to go to the Pacific.

PIEHLER: Right away?

BALLOFF: And I don't—and somewhere in there ... I took the test and was able to go to school in England.

PIEHLER: So, you weren't doing occupation duty?

BALLOFF: No.... They were looking for people to do that.... As a matter of fact, I was corporal at that point and a guy says, "You know, we'll make you a staff sergeant if you'll stay on," but everybody wanted to go home. I mean (laughs), I'm not being—you had to sign up for a certain period of time and they make you a Staff Sergeant or I don't know what else.

PIEHLER: This is before, before V-J, V-J Day.

BALLOFF: No this was after, after V-E Day.

PIEHLER: After V-E Day, yeah, but not before V-J Day.

BALLOFF: By V-J Day, I was gone, ... I was in England.

PIEHLER: But you could have done ...

BALLOFF: When was V-J, when ...

PIEHLER: In August.

BALLOFF: Yeah, I was already in England.

PIEHLER: You were already in England. So, in other words, you were—I should ask, because what you—did you expect to go to Japan? Initially, I mean.

BALLOFF: Well, I really didn't know because all the stuff I had accumulated was in a ... barracks bag in Kassel with my unit thinking I would go back and get it. (Laughs) I mean, I had—I think I had a gun. I think I had a German gun. I think I had—I know I had that, I'm almost sure of this, the paratroopers when they, when they drop, they were given silk maps. Have you heard of this?

PIEHLER: Yeah. Yes, yes.

BALLOFF: And they—'cause a silk map could, they wouldn't destroy easily, and I had a couple of those, and I could, and I ...

PIEHLER: In that barracks bag?

BALLOFF: In that barracks bag and I never went back.

PIEHLER: Never went back to get it?

BALLOFF: Never went back to that unit. I left to ...

PIEHLER: But you ... were destined to go back to it.

BALLOFF: I thought I was, yeah.

PIEHLER: Well, let me ask you because you have talked a little bit about the school, but I should ask in a systematic way. How was it that you got, you got sort of plucked out to go?

BALLOFF: I took a test. I took a test. I think they took maybe two or three guys from my unit.

PIEHLER: Your battalion unit.

BALLOFF: But I never, I never saw those guys when I got—it's a whole new group when I got over there.

PIEHLER: Was it your battalion or the whole division?

BALLOFF: It was by battery.

PIEHLER: By battery, it was that low that they ...

BALLOFF: Yeah.... And I don't know whether every battery had that opportunity.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but your battery did.

BALLOFF: My battery did.

PIEHLER: And you were pulled out and sent to which school?

BALLOFF: It is called Shrivingham?

PIEHLER: Shrivingham.

BALLOFF: It's in England.

PIEHLER: And what did you study there?

BALLOFF: Well, we, we were required to take two subjects, that's all, and the rest of the time you were free. I mean the only reason for it was to was for the guys that had the points, you know, that you had enough points that you might ... get to go home. I guess, that had a lot to do with it because, like I said, while I was there the points dropped and I—rather than go back to my service, I went home. I stayed in England 'til about—let's see, August, September, October, I think I stayed in England through maybe January.

PIEHLER: January.

BALLOFF: Maybe ... December.

PIEHLER: December of '45.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And you had mentioned there was more tension in England after the war.

BALLOFF: Just those, just those black and white ...

PIEHLER: That was ...

BALLOFF: That ... caused a lot of it, and I think that might have turned a lot of them against the American soldiers. I don't know, but I didn't have that problem in England. We were in a different kind of atmosphere. We use to go to the ... horse races, Bath, the school is near there, and we would hitchhike there on the weekends and go to the races, and that was another experience. You know they'd ... have betting. A guy set up a board and would list the odds and that sort of thing. That was, that was—and we, I saw a lot of England. I got, we got to go into London a lot, and—what else, I don't know, we just had to get through the semester.

PIEHLER: Who were your teachers? Were they ...

BALLOFF: They were ... professors from probably—I don't know where they were from. I just remember the boxing instructor (laughter) ... was a little—I was about a hundred and ninety pounder and he was, like, a hundred and sixty-five and he was so fast, he beat on me so much

(laughter), I just—when we fought the English, that the English company or whatever they were, they didn't have a heavyweight, so I didn't have to fight, and I was so relieved (laughter) with that.

PIEHLER: Now, were your instructors Americans or English?

BALLOFF: Americans.

PIEHLER: They were all Americans. This was all American faculty?

BALLOFF: Yes. It was ... a good experience. The food was good, and—it's a part of England—it's funny, I went back to England—that's a whole story, but ... we went to Oxford and stayed in a bed and breakfast and on our way down to the Cotswold area we went within, we went within the vicinity of Shrivingham, and I was in a rental car, and I told my people I went with, I said, "Let's drive through Shrivingham and I'll show you ... where I went to school." and I had all this literature about it, of my courses and everything. So we drive up to the entrance and there's a guard at the gate, and I walk up the hill, I said, you know, "I went to school here. Can I show my friends around?" And he said, he said, "Get in your car and leave." He said, "You're not supposed to be here." And (laughter) I'm trying to explain to him, "No you just can't do this sort of thing." Later on, I'm in the, I'm in Plymouth and we go to a Rotary meeting. I'm in a Rotary. And I tell the guys, and the guy tells me, that's, that's the top secret army space for the English army is Shrivingham, and (laughter) you don't know—and that was my experience.

PIEHLER: You offered to go back to your, your old college

BALLOFF: "Go back to your car and get out of here."

PIEHLER: Your old English college and ...

BALLOFF: We had a—that was a good trip.

PIEHLER: You mentioned going all over England. You went to London a lot.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It sounds like ... you went back to England later, after the war.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you liked being in England. Is that ...

BALLOFF: It was, it was—well, this was a crazy experience—through the National Trust they've taken the old cottages, the old castles and converted them into rentals. They were updated. So, this couple from Chattanooga invited my wife and I to go. Three couples, and we had a three-bedroom—it was, it was a—I have a book on it, it was a ... 1,200-acre estate built in

the 1400s or something like that. Big castle, and then it had all these farm houses, a lot of these utility houses, and we stayed in the dairy house, and they'd taken that house and converted it into a living board room. So, we lived there for two weeks, and they had ... updated it, and we had a car, and it's in—are you acquainted with England?

PIEHLER: Just a little bit.

BALLOFF: The Cotswolds was the southern part of England, and we drove around and looked at all the little towns, and had a—it was a great experience.

PIEHLER: I'm curious since you sort of have this—you got to know it reasonably well in the service, how—what do you remember about the England that you knew as a serviceman versus the England that you came back to years later?

BALLOFF: I really—not a lot of difference.

PIEHLER: Really?

BALLOFF: They were really—we were in a little community on the second trip. Matter of fact, we went into a bank to cash a check, a little bank and the fellow I was with was from Chattanooga, and, you know, they were very inquisitive. They wanted to know all about America. “Where are you guys from?” and then he said, “Well, I am from Chattanooga.” But there was a guy in the back office started singing the Chattanooga Choo-Choo (laughter) and he was singing this song. And then we got to be very friendly, and told us—they invited us to their home, and we—but we didn't go, we had to get back to the wives, but ... they were very friendly everywhere we went.

PIEHLER: So, ... that friendliness that you had experienced last time ...

BALLOFF: Well, I don't know if that fixed—after the war, the only negative thing that I heard was that these ... English women were marrying a lot—was there a lot, I mean, was there a lot of that—'cause that is the only thing I remember hearing.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, 'cause you had mentioned being invited the second time around, did you ever—were you ever invited the first time you were in England, either before going overseas or ...

BALLOFF: I think I was.

PIEHLER: Were you ever invited to someone's home?

BALLOFF: Remember I think I told you about going to a service.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: I think I was invited out. I think—I'm almost sure I was. I can't remember where or anything about it, but those days just, those days in England were just a getting ready to go to Europe.

PIEHLER: And then, and then when you were ...

BALLOFF: That big trip that we took up there.

PIEHLER: Yeah. And at Shrivingham you had mentioned that you had to take two courses. What were the two courses?

BALLOFF: I took a law course and a math course, and business law, and they didn't grade anything. There were no grades.... I guess, it was just a kind of a rest, a chance to—I did get a chance to go back to Paris during the war for a rest and whatever, and—oh, it was Thanksgiving, and, you know, I don't smoke, and I had accumulated all these cigarettes. (Laughter) They kept saying, keep your cigarettes and when you get, if you ever get to go to France you ... can get anything. So, we went back to a—I got this two or three day furlough to go back to Paris, and that was Thanksgiving weekend, and—no, no, no, no, it was after the Battle of the Bulge, it had to be, it had to be in January or February. They ... had restricted every G.I. to the barracks because a lot of guys in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne that were ... involved in the Battle of the Bulge, all of their records were destroyed, their headquarters. So, you had G.I.s from the 101<sup>st</sup> all over Europe unknown to anybody. So, on that day I was in Paris they restricted everybody to the barracks, and I didn't—I just gave the cigarettes away, I never did ...

PIEHLER: So, your chance to ...

BALLOFF: That was the only thing that I had to go through Paris with, cigarettes.

PIEHLER: And to spend a day in Paris in the barracks.

BALLOFF: Yeah. I did go one day to the base of the Eiffel Tower. At that point you couldn't go up to the top, but you could go to the first landing, but that's all I remember about Paris.

PIEHLER: And then being restricted.

BALLOFF: And being restricted to the barracks.... We listened to some game, but that had to have been in January or February.

PIEHLER: Was it football or baseball?

BALLOFF: It must—well, it seems like we listened to a football game somewhere I imagine. Well, that was in England before ... the war. Yeah, that was Thanksgiving.

PIEHLER: Before going over to the ...

BALLOFF: Getting things—you know, I never sit down and write this, ... what dates, I have to refer back to these books.

PIEHLER: ... It sounded like, because you had been offered a staff sergeant, you were very eager to get out of the service when you had the first—is that a ...

BALLOFF: Me and everybody else at the time.

PIEHLER: And you described ... going home on the aircraft carrier.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Where did you arrive?

BALLOFF: In New York.

PIEHLER: ... And then what happened after you arrived in New York.

BALLOFF: They sent me to Camp Atterbury in Indianapolis, and that is where I was discharged.... I just came right—that was in ... February.

PIEHLER: February 1946.

BALLOFF: February 1946.

PIEHLER: And, and then you came ...

BALLOFF: It was January of '46.

PIEHLER: And then you came back to, to where, to LaFollette?

BALLOFF: I came back to LaFollette, and then I entered Vanderbilt that ... spring quarter.

PIEHLER: That same spring quarter you were able to ...

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And you talked a little bit about coming back, ... how had you changed since ...

BALLOFF: Well, I was—the biggest change I could see was in my schooling, because I told you before [when] I was a freshman, I studied, and studied, and studied; I really studied. When I came back, I didn't have a problem at all. It was—I was three years older, and—I don't know. The only course I had trouble with was psychology.

BLAIR: That was my major. (Laughter)

BALLOFF: I had trouble with psychology. I had a friend and he said, I said, “Just tell me the crib courses. Just give me—just get me back in school, and he suggested that course, and that gave me more trouble than anything. (Laughter) That was bad, but I had good years there.... I had good years, and, like I say, I go back there too. I told you I went back to McCallie I go back to Vanderbilt. I go to both. I’ve got good friends there.

BLAIR: Having been so close to your brother before the war, how often did you get to see him when you got home?

BALLOFF: How often did you see my brother before the war?

BLAIR: After the war.

BALLOFF: After the war. Well, ... after the war and after school, we both married and lived in LaFollette and was in business with my dad. So, our families grew up together. So, we were together a lot.

PIEHLER: So, the war didn’t change your relationship, in the sense, because you had described to us you, in a sense, were following your brother.

BALLOFF: Yeah, and I’m still doing it.

PIEHLER: ... The war was a disruption not a ...

BALLOFF: He’s, like, eighty-four, and ... anything we did we did as a partner, the business, the boat, whatever we owned we owned as a partner.... We just always had that relationship. And like I say, I go out there when he’s well maybe a couple of times a week, and you’re just talking about LaFollette. When I go up the country, I mean, I can go up there tomorrow and drive up the valley and park the car and just sit up there and look at the mountainous view. And then spring comes along and it gets better, and I have—I’m losing a lot of my buddies out there. They’re dying off, but like I said we had a ... birthday party out there and we had 150/60 people, just had a big party. The whole—all my old buddies.

PIEHLER: I’m curious about ... being in Vanderbilt. Did ... you join any veteran’s organizations?

BALLOFF: No.

PIEHLER: You—was the American Veterans Committee active at all on campus?

BALLOFF: No, no, no. If it had been, I would have known about it, because I was, sort of, active in the politics in the campus, so I knew what was going on there.

PIEHLER: What were you active—where you in student government, or ...

BALLOFF: Yes, I was.

PIEHLER: ... What office did you hold?

BALLOFF: I ... was on the honor council, I was on the student senate, and I had—I don't know, I just got involved in the politics, and so I knew what went on there. And I had good years.

PIEHLER: So, coming back to Vanderbilt ...

BALLOFF: It was great. I really was.... When I went back, I didn't think I would get involved as much as I did.

PIEHLER: So, you were active in student government.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you go back to living in the fraternity?

BALLOFF: Yeah, I didn't vote.

PIEHLER: Were you at—did you become—you had been president of the fraternity.

BALLOFF: I was again, ... and I stayed pretty active.

PIEHLER: ... Were you involved in anything else? You said—I mean, those are enough but did you join any other organizations or ...

BALLOFF: I was a member of ODK. Do you know that organization? It's ... sort of a society. It's not a ... Phi Beta Kappa kind of society, but it's an honorary society.

PIEHLER: For, I think, for business administration.

BALLOFF: Not necessarily, not necessarily. Just for the whole *cum laude*. I had good years I hold there. I still have a lot of friends I go back to. The best friendship I had I guess—the guys that entered my freshman class, in the class of '45, a lot of them went into med school, and stayed out of the service and got their commissions later on. So, ... when I would go back to Nashville in the 40s and the 50s ... I knew a lot of young doctors who I—had been my classmates.

PIEHLER: And ... those friendships you—it sounds like ...

BALLOFF: I kept those friendships.... A lot of them are retired now and, but when I go back down there I, I have a good, I always have a—I love to go back to Nashville, but I don't think I'm going to live there. I'm just going to stay right here.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you—in terms of people you served with, how ... many did you stay in touch with? You mentioned your one friend.

BALLOFF: You mean in the service?

PIEHLER: The service, yeah.

BALLOFF: Just that one person.

PIEHLER: Just that one person.

BALLOFF: Yeah, because most of those guys ... were from the east.... I think the first couple of years out of the service I had numerous cards and Christmas cards, but then we just kind of grew apart.

PIEHLER: But you did mention going to a reunion.

BALLOFF: Well, we had it here in Knoxville.

PIEHLER: And did you have a part in that reunion or ...

BALLOFF: I did. I helped with the organization. That was in 1978, and it was unusual, and I remember it because we were the Seventy-Eighth Division in 1978, and we had ... a committee here in Knoxville that put it together.... But none of my outfit came. But it was a good reunion.

PIEHLER: Was that the first reunion of the division?

BALLOFF: That's the—I—that's the only one I know of. And we have a ... publication, and sometimes I'll get a card from somebody. I guess my name is listed in there from, you know, from the old days, but not very much.... I've just been lucky I've stayed kind of healthy and been able to participate in all those things.

PIEHLER: Well, let me...

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

PIEHLER: If Olivia has any questions that she might have missed—I know ... you've answered a lot of her questions.

BALLOFF: You know, I apologize I have hearing aids, but I still don't hear too well, and I attribute that loss of hearing to that 240 howitzer that I fired.

PIEHLER: So, you think that that ...

BALLOFF: I mean, I don't know what else in my life, unless I'm just getting old and losing my hearing. I think it had a big affect.

PIEHLER: When ... did you start having hearing problems? Was it ...

BALLOFF: Well, I, uh ...

PIEHLER: Did you, I mean, did you have a ...

BALLOFF: I didn't have it after the war. It's been later on in life.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but it wouldn't ... surprise me—I mean, that ... howitzer ...

BALLOFF: I mean, when you fired the thing it just made all kinds of repercussions.

BLAIR: How did your experience during World War II affect ... the way you viewed future wars?

BALLOFF: Oh, goodness, I hadn't thought about that. How did it affect my thinking of future wars? Well, I think they're ...

BLAIR: Or maybe how you've handled things during—about whether we go to war or ...

PIEHLER: Or maybe another way is, what did you think about Korea and Vietnam? Did you ...

BALLOFF: Well, that's what I am thinking about. That's what I had—'course they were more political than religious, but religion has been so—the basis for a lot of wars, the differences, don't you think? I don't know. We're, I guess, we're blessed with being a strong supportive country, but maybe sometimes we don't need to be so supportive. Yet, I don't know what we should do down there [in Iraq]. What do you think we should do down there? What do you think we ought to do down there? Do we need to send troops down there? We had had troops down there before.

BLAIR: Sometimes I think that people need to let things pan out for themselves so they have their own culture, their own way of doing things. A democratic government may not always work for them—fit it in to that country.

BALLOFF: Well, democracy is not their way of living. It's not their religion, it's not their—but I don't know. Are we ... to protect the world? I mean, are we, are we to—can we do it? I mean we keep spending money, money, money. I just know that when we went into this thing with what we spent in World War II. It said—it seems like I read somewhere the cost of World War II. Maybe it was something else I read, but we spent a lot of money over there in, in Iraq in the war. Should we be there? Should we be in, should we be in, uh, in Iran, or Iraq, or Afghanistan or anywhere? But see I'm, I don't know, I don't know. I know in Rotary we had a program to eradicate Polio. So, we go into these countries and try to help people, and they don't seem to—it doesn't seem to, it doesn't seem to ease the tension that's created with so much—and I don't know what's created the tension, whether it's religious believing, or political, or whatever. I don't, I don't know.

PIEHLER: I wanted to ask, um, one thing you mentioned earlier in your interview about opening your store, opening a store in Oak Ridge shortly after it really does become an open city. What was it—I mean Oak Ridge was then very much identified, it still is, but even though I think my sense is as an atomic city. What was it like to have a store in Oak Ridge particularly with the Cold War at its height?

BALLOFF: It was a successful store.... Of course, I met a lot of nice people. I had a cousin that lived over there, but—no, no, not at that point. I didn't know too many people, but it just brought—it was just a whole new customer base that came into our existence.

PIEHLER: And how did it differ from its base you used to ...

BALLOFF: It was a different customer. They were not—they were a different customer, and they still are. They're a, they're a—we keep telling a story about a scientist who came into a store who was buying a suit or buying a shirt, and he wanted to know the thread count of a shirt, and he had a little magnifying glass where he could test (laughter), you know, the thread count of the ... fabric, and we don't ever get involved with things like that.

PIEHLER: See, I've heard that for sheets but not, never for a shirt.

BALLOFF: Well, for a shirt.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

BALLOFF: You've heard that for sheets?

PIEHLER: Oh, yeah, for sheets.

BALLOFF: Well, for sheets that's sort of a ... given thing. That's on the label.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but not for a shirt. (Laughs)

BALLOFF: Not for a shirt or, or the fabric of a suit.

PIEHLER: Yeah. No, I know.

BALLOFF: And that's when we talk about our Oak Ridge customers, that always comes up. But ... they're very hospitable people. We, I mean, I had an occasion—my daughter—my son, we thought about his going to Webb [private school], and I have a friend who ... called me when he heard about all this discussion about ... David going to Webb, and he said, "We've got a neighbor that are from Sweden and they're going to go back for a year. Why don't you rent the house," which we did, "and let David go to Webb for a year from Oak Ridge." And we had a great year there. We really did, and you know—are you acquainted with any Oak Ridgers, or ...

PIEHLER: I've gotten to know a few.

BALLOFF: Well, I'll take you—if you want—if you're a stamp collector or a Bridge player or musician or anything—they've got a group out there that you can participate in. And, I guess, the fact that so many outsiders—they need to create something to bring people together, and they've done that.

PIEHLER: So, you found it very much a—there was enough to create a community very consciously.

BALLOFF: And, you know, they are very conscious of their school. When you talk about school—although I understand that Maryville has great ... schools. Matter of fact, I was talking to some people last night about Maryville schools.

BLAIR: They're excellent.

BALLOFF: They're very good, and—it was a good year. My wife enjoyed it. We lived right across the street from my cousin. So, it just brought the two families—there are three children in each family and we were always ...

PIEHLER: It sounds like you made a very conscious decision that you wanted to be near family.

BALLOFF: Right. And still do.

PIEHLER: There is no accident about this.

BALLOFF: I still do that.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, 'cause—had you thought while you were in Vanderbilt, “well maybe I'll, I don't know, work for a department store, or maybe I'll do this, or ...”

BALLOFF: When I graduated from Vanderbilt, a general shoe company, Genesco, was at their top, and they were interviewing all kinds of Vanderbilt graduates of any kind, engineers, anything, and offered them a job, and I didn't even want to interview. I thought that my parents needed me in the business. They had developed a pretty good business and a good relationship with the community, and I felt like that was the place I needed to be. There was a lot of security in that too. Maybe there was some fear going out into the world. I knew I had the comfort of going back to my family.

PIEHLER: But it, it sounds like—I mean, have your family put—in particular you father and mother pushed you to do this.

BALLOFF: No, they had not, but I ... know how much they suffered. I had not suffered. I know how much they gave up to afford to send us to, to private school. I—that's always a—that was, that was just foremost in my mind. They ... didn't travel very much. They ... didn't do much, and I know that they gave up a lot so that my brother and sister could go ... on to college. I mean, my sister went to Michigan. She went to a private school, and that was a big thing for her. So, when I graduated, business was good in LaFollette, and they needed me, and ... my

brother graduated from law school and passed the bar and went to LaFollette thinking that maybe he could practice law in LaFollette, but, he found out that the retail business at that time was a little better than the law practice, so he got into business too. And that's where we've been all our lives.

PIEHLER: Well you said ... that the LaFollette store, which—and then you opened up a store in Oak Ridge.

BALLOFF: And then I opened up—we opened up two stores in Knoxville.

PIEHLER: Two stores in Knoxville. Where were the two stores in Knoxville?

BALLOFF: One was in Downtown on Clinch Avenue and the other one was in West Town Mall. We went into West Town Mall the year it was built.

PIEHLER: In 1972?

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And you remained in the mall until 1990?

BALLOFF: Yes. No, when, no, we—let's see. We closed the Oak Ridge store in '75. We had a twenty-year lease there, and we opened a second store in Knoxville. So, we closed that store... West Town until 1987 when the lease ended, and we moved out on Peters Road. There's a little shopping center out on Peter's Road where Circuit City is. We were there three years. In the mean time, both my boys were just not interested in the retail business, and one went into accounting and the other went into politics.

PIEHLER: Were you disappointed that they didn't want to ...

BALLOFF: No, I wasn't, because the retail business changed.

PIEHLER: I guess, because—I mean, my mother was in—both my mother and father were in retail, ... and in fact ... the companies they worked for went under in the '80's and '90's. What changed about retail? What made it—it sounds like it was much tougher.

BALLOFF: Uh, I think, I think the big change in retail came when ... the discounters started creating—and I don't even remember what stores I'm thinking about, but discounters kind of came into the business. Your major department stores ... started competing with the discounters, and the major department stores were discounting legitimate things that we would kind of sell. I mean, if we had ... Hartman Luggage, which is a nice luggage, they would have Hartman Luggage and then they'd have a special where they would mark it down a third or whatever, and we were continually—they were continually taking these better branded things that ... we developed and discounting [them]. And I think the department stores, their downfall, kind of, started our downfall. Although, some department stores have done well, some have not done

well. There's been a lot ... of stuff happen here in Knoxville, stores coming in and stores going out. Miller's was a big old, reliable thing, and then—who replaced Miller's?

PIEHLER: ... It was long gone when I was ...

BALLOFF: It was gone.

PIEHLER: Yeah, it was long gone before I was ...

BALLOFF: Yeah, you weren't even born when that all happened

PIEHLER: But they were at the old UT conference building weren't they?

BALLOFF: Yeah, yeah. Well, that was originally built by Rich's of Atlanta. They built that building, and then they stayed—they didn't stay long, and then Miller's had a big store on Gay Street, and then they bought that and moved to Henley Street.

PIEHLER: Yeah, it's my understanding, I think it's Proffits, or one of the department stores, or Dillard's bought them out.

BALLOFF: No it wasn't Profits and it wasn't Dillard's, it was another store. It was a ... the holding company called Rapid America or Rapid something. Anyhow, they bought Miller's and then they went out, and then Dillard's came in bought that. But there's a name in there that's out of business that, uh—and I don't know how well Dillard's is doing.

PIEHLER: Well, one thing that I—since I've asked you about different customers, first in LaFollette with the coal mining and farmers, then with the scientists and professionals, what about Knoxville as a sort of customer base.

BALLOFF: Well, Knoxville has been a great; it's been a great town for us. It's been a great place, in our Clinch Avenue and then our West Town Mall, and we ... had the blessing or the advantage of having grown up in Campbell County and, kind of, serviced Campbell County in the retail business and Claiborne, 'cause a lot of Claiborne people traded with us. And then we opened a store in Oak Ridge and we made an acquaintance with Anderson County, and then all—and Morgan County and all those counties. So, ... we had a pretty big base of ... people that wanted some quality things. We ... kind of upgraded when we came to Knoxville, and we did well. We had great clients, but then ... our suppliers, the people that made the better clothes, started having financial problems. The big names, they're all gone. They're not there anymore, and now I work part time at the Joseph Banks [store]. I work two days a week, four hours a day, and stuff comes in with their label with, God, they're made in China or offshore! And what you do, you get a designer who goes offshore and puts his name on something and makes it, and tries to make it legitimate, but I don't know what a label is anymore. To be made in—you know, they can make a shirt for five dollars in China and they bring it into this country and mark it eighty or ninety dollars and have it at half price or 75 percent off who, who knows what they make. I don't understand it. I don't understand it at all.

PIEHLER: One of the things you had mentioned, you met your first wife ... when you were at Vanderbilt, and she was at Belmont. Did you meet her before the war or after?

BALLOFF: After.

PIEHLER: After the war.

BLAIR: What was her major?

BALLOFF: Pardon?

BLAIR: What was her major, or what was her ...

BALLOFF: Well, she didn't finish college. She went ... one year to go to Belmont and then she went one year to the University of Indiana, and then she just—we got married. I'll tell you a funny story. I'm in Castle Germany after the war, and they had the Bob Hope show to come to Kassel, Germany, and it's a huge castle. It was Wilhelm's Castle, I think. Huge, I mean, just huge, the lawns and the patios and everything. Well, the show is on the patio with Bob Hope and Ingrid Bergman, and it was a great show.... So, we go early and there is about six or seven rows of benches, and we take the benches. So, about thirty minutes before the show starts, MP's come along and said, "You got to move, these are for the officers, ... these benches are for the officers." But he said, "you can, you can move up and sit on the steps that go up." There was about four steps that go up to the balcony, to this patio. So we do, and we're scattered all on this. During the performance these 20,000 G.I.s that are back here in the field are with their cameras—'course everybody's got a camera, Germany's full of them. They're taking pictures of Bob Hope and Ingrid Bergman; taking all these pictures, and it was kind of annoying because they kept stepping over us, and all that sort of thing.

So, okay, the war ends, I go to school, I meet this girl, and, uh, she invites me to Henderson, Kentucky to her home, and I meet her brother, and we start talking about things that, "Yeah, I would be—I was in the war." We were the same age. "Yeah, I was in the war, and, I was in Germany, yeah." "Where were you when the war ended?" "I was in Kassel," and I said, "You know, well I was in Kassel ... did you go to the Bob Hope Show?" He said, "Yeah I went, and I took a lot of pictures. He was a camera buff too. So he showed me pictures (laughter) of Bob Hope and Ingrid Bergman climbing over—I'm not in the picture, but there is a lot of G.I.s on the—and I end up marrying his sister. (Laughter) That's a small world.

PIEHLER: That is a very small ...

BALLOFF: So when he—he's supposed to be sending me pictures of that show, but he hasn't sent them to me yet.

PIEHLER: Now, is this your, is this your first wife?

BALLOFF: My first wife, and she died of cancer in 1977, and then I was single for nine years, and I married a lady and she died of cancer three years ago.

PIEHLER: How did ... you meet your second wife?

BALLOFF: She was a friend; she was married to a friend of ours. She was married to my brother's roommate in college, and we kind of knew her. This roommate was—this fellow was a very successful real estate person, and we didn't see him very much, but ... we kind of got together and, and he died. So, she and I got married, and we were married from '80, we were married from '86 until ... 2000, and then she died of cancer. In the meantime I lost my son to cancer. So, it's not been a—other than those three deaths in my family, everything has been—I've had a pretty good life.

PIEHLER: It's an observation, but it strikes me as that, you have a hard time with—you want to stay busy in retirement.

BALLOFF: Yes.

PIEHLER: Is that ...

BALLOFF: Right.

PIEHLER: 'Cause you mentioned just in passing, you know, it came up, you work in Joseph Banks Store, and it strikes me, not so much for the money, but more to have, have a hand in ...

BALLOFF: It is sort of my therapy. I mean, I see people, I see my old customers that I haven't seen, and if I didn't do that I don't know where I'd be.

PIEHLER: And then you said, and you were involved with reading, uh ...

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: At school.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: At a school. What else, what else are you active ...

BALLOFF: Well, I ... play tennis on Monday and Friday, and I play golf on Wednesday. I haven't played golf this year yet. And then sometimes on the weekend I go hiking. Do you like to hike?

PIEHLER: I do like to hike. My wife and I have talked for now for a year that we need to go hiking regularly.

BALLOFF: Well, you been anywhere lately hiking in particularly?

PIEHLER: Oh, we haven't been in ages. We—the last time we were we were in the Smokies was in August.

BALLOFF: Well, we—my wife and I, we go to Frozen Head State Park which ...

PIEHLER: See, we've been to Frozen Head about two years ago.

BALLOFF: How did you like that?

PIEHLER: We loved it, we thought it was ...

BALLOFF: Now in April, the first week in April, there is a spread of white trillium out on one of the trails, and I use to take a group up there ... And if I go this year, I, I ...

PIEHLER: Actually do let me know, because I think I will finally have a break that, I mean that weekend.

BALLOFF: I think it's—the last year I went there was too late. We went the second week in April and the trillium was gone, and I'll tell you a secret too, I don't know if you know this, but you're not suppose to relate—someone found a pink lady slipper, which is—is it a pink lady slipper, that's so ... unusual? And the guide said, "Don't tell anybody about it we don't want anyone to be looking at it."

PIEHLER: We'll probably have to ... delete it from your transcript. (Laughter)

BALLOFF: Do you know Margaret Stevenson? Have you ever heard that name in Maryville? The lady that hikes so much.

BLAIR: I've heard—but she's not a member of the Striders Club or anything like that?

BALLOFF: She's hiked the Smokies a lot, and I've hiked with her a lot. I guess, over the years I've hiked every trail in the Smokies.

PIEHLER: Oh, wow.

BALLOFF: On the Tennessee side. I haven't been to North Carolina, but we go to the Frozen Head.

PIEHLER: And you ... mentioned being very close to your brother still.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And ... closer, and it sounds like, close to your sons, and you mentioned being [near] your grandson, so ...

BALLOFF: And that's one of the reasons for the reading, because I want to grow up with these kids. I can relate to my grandson better.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, how much—we talked a lot in the interview about, you don't know about your parents, and their lives. I mean, really, you don't ...

BALLOFF: I don't.

PIEHLER: How much do your grandkids, for example, how much ...

BALLOFF: They don't, they don't ask.

PIEHLER: They don't ask. So, I guess, when I'm curious when your, when your sons and your grandsons read this interview, how much might be new to them?

BALLOFF: Not much.

PIEHLER: Not much? Because you said ...

BALLOFF: Because they know what I've told you. They know that from my mother.... She, she ...

PIEHLER: So, your ... sons will know, but your grandsons they won't? They'll be ...

BALLOFF: I don't know. I'm hoping. I'm hoping. Matter of fact, I—these cousins, these cousins of mine I have mentioned—I've talked about when we get together video taping just our conversation, because we tell all the LaFollette stories. I mean we've got so many LaFollette stories, and we've got some good war experiences.

PIEHLER: I think I'll have to take a tape recorder up when we go up through LaFollette.

BALLOFF: Okay.

PIEHLER: 'Cause that would be, and I have—a student of mine from the class wants to do some work on the coal mining.

BALLOFF: Really?

PIEHLER: Yeah, he's from that area, and his parents, his grandparents were actually coal miners and we were talking one day after class and I said, "Oh, well you'll have to do an independent study if you want to do something about the coal miners."

BALLOFF: Well, I know the coal mines of Campbell County all up in there are abandoned now.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah. Well, let me make sure, Olivia did you have any questions?

BALLOFF: She had a whole list of questions.

BLAIR: I don't know. I think we've ...

BALLOFF: But you asked me about the, about my thinking about the war. I'll have to think about that.

BLAIR: Yeah, it just seems like we just sort of picture: we're the parents, and all the other countries seem to be, kind of, our children and we want to take care of all the children that are out there, but sometimes you have to let children learn for themselves, and ...

BALLOFF: I guess.

BLAIR: You can't ... police every time they do something wrong.

BALLOFF: Yeah, that it's wrong. I have a little theory on that too. I mean there's two rights. Not everything is black and white, and then there's two rights and if they don't agree with me that's okay. They may be right too.

PIEHLER: Well, is there anything we forgot to ask or ...

BALLOFF: I could talk—I love to talk about things, but I, I mean every phase of my life other than the loss of these three people has been—I've just been lucky. I got involved in politics in the university and had good years there, I had good experiences in all my retail businesses, and I've had good family ties.

PIEHLER: It's also striking that, I'm struck by your—it sounds like you had good timing in retail and getting out of retail. Is that a fair...

BALLOFF: Oh, yeah. Oh, definitely.

PIEHLER: You didn't try to hold on to it when it—you got into real troubles.

BALLOFF: I'd gotten out—they built, they built a center in East Knoxville, East Town ...

PIEHLER: East Town Mall.

BALLOFF: And we opened a store there, and we were very leery about it. So, we had a kick-out clause that said at the end of the third year if they weren't happy and then we weren't happy then we could end the lease, which we did. And that was a bad experience, but ... other than that, everything was on top. I had this thinking that I'll have two good stores, one for each son and then I'll just have a place to just hang out, but they weren't that interested. And, you know, when I was growing up, everybody would just say, boy, my dad, "how lucky you are." Your boys are in the business because that ... generation thrived for having something for their kids, I guess, especially for the Jewish people. That was—the idea was to keep family together and have the business, and pass it on, and, I guess, other families do too. So, it's ... quite a history.

PIEHLER: No, we really, we really appreciate it.

BALLOFF: I hope, I mean I—there's a lot of questions that you asked me that I don't know the answer to.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and that's even better to ... take it under the ...

BALLOFF: I have thought of some, I can go to some files I have can give you a lot of history. I can go ... back to my, to my mother's grandparents I think, but I can't remember all this stuff.

PIEHLER: But you've remembered, you've remembered ...

BALLOFF: There's so many—you know as you get older and, and you get—it's a geometric progression, you get families that just grow, and grow, and grow. And we have a family tree of just my mother and her brother ... and the six children, but now, the six children have children and those children have children. Golly, they just get so spread out it's just hard to keep up with everybody. Although, we do have Bah Mitzvahs, and we do have weddings, and everybody comes. Matter of fact, there's a big one in Denver, and I—everybody will be there. It gets bigger and bigger. Are you big on family affairs?

BLAIR: Well, on my mother's side. On my dad's side it's more holidays. We get together a lot more on my mother's side.

BALLOFF: That's good. How about you? You have a lot—you have brothers and sisters?

PIEHLER: I have ... one sister and a number of stepsisters. So ...

BALLOFF: And where are they?

PIEHLER: They're mostly in New Jersey.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: They're mostly in New Jersey, and ... we sort of feel like we are on an isolated outpost out here. (Laughs)

BALLOFF: It's a—there are a lot of people that don't think there is Jewish people in Tennessee. They use to think that. Maybe now they are a little more liberal, but ... we're still novel.

PIEHLER: Yeah.... When I tell people how, how ... old the Jewish community is here or particularly in a place like Memphis which has a very large ...

BALLOFF: Yes.

PIEHLER: I mean, even by ... the United States' standards a fairly large Jewish community. People are a little surprised.

BALLOFF: Did you read the article a couple Sundays ago about the Bar Mitzvahs, and they talked about the number of Jews in Knoxville, and the—was the front page kind of a story ...

PIEHLER: I don't, I don't remember off ...

BALLOFF: It talked about this, you know, His reading, His reading and all that sort of thing, and ...

PIEHLER: I remember the story, but I don't know if I actually ...

BALLOFF: But, on a side note, he gave a—I think we're one percent of the ... population.

PIEHLER: When I—coming from the New York (laughter) area originally, it's a very different—well, one of the things that was striking to me is—I never realized the difference until you were very conscious of the converts of Judaism, but even before I converted down here, as in New York, you were very conscious of the Jewish holidays even if you weren't Jewish.

BALLOFF: Sure.

PIEHLER: Particularly, particularly Rosh Hashanah, and Hanukah, and you—in fact at my college which was a Methodist school affiliated, we got Yom Kippur off 'cause the college chaplain thought since about the third of the student body was Jewish it was important to let everyone get ... this day off.

BALLOFF: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So, we got it all of. So, you would become very conscious of, you know, of holidays.

BALLOFF: That's, well, I—some of the private schools closed on the holidays.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

BALLOFF: I have a, an affiliation with the, uh, the Catholic high school in sports. One of my ... college employees has a son that plays basketball for Catholic.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

BALLOFF: And then I have a doctor friend in LaFollette who has a daughter who has a daughter that plays for Webb. So, when Webb girls play, I go early, and then after the girls' game I go over to Catholic (laughter) because it's not too far apart. And I live right in the middle, between, you know, these two. So, I've been going to Catholic's basketball game all this summer—this winter, and I didn't go to the state tournament, and they got beat. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: One thing, very quickly, I forgot to ask way back, what rank did you make as a boy scout? Do you remember?

BLAIR: Oh, yeah.

BALLOFF: I didn't—I don't remember the different ranks.

PIEHLER: You didn't ...

BALLOFF: I didn't make Eagle. I didn't make the big one. I didn't make the big one.

PIEHLER: Yeah. It sounded like you really liked the hiking and the camping.

BALLOFF: Oh, I do. I'm not big on camping but on good on hiking. But, I—we hiked up to—last spring, this couple that I know are—they're much younger than me, Ramsey Cascade. Do you know, around...

PIEHLER: No, no.

BALLOFF: It's a pretty hard walk. It's four miles uphill, and they asked me to go and I went. And I was ... usually about five, or six, or seven yards behind 'cause they're younger, but coming down, and I have trifocals, I have to kind of look where I'm walking, and I walked into a tree! (Laughter) I mean I'm—you know, as you're coming down some of these trails you've really got to look where you're going, and I'm not concentrating on what's in front of me. I'm just "What's down there?" So, that's the last time I went through Ramsey Cascade. But there's ... a like up at Frozen Head, up to the tower. It's six miles. I haven't done it yet.

BALLOFF: That's a hard hike.

PIEHLER: We did, we took a much more—the one time we went to Frozen Head, we took a much harder hike than what we had envisioned. We had a three year old and ... our friend was pregnant at the time, and we were in the middle of this hike, and I'm thinking. "What we do now; what did we get ourselves into?"

BALLOFF: Well, if I go I'll call you.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, please do.

BALLOFF: It will probably be on a Sunday.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that would be ...

BALLOFF: Yeah. And you can come along too. (Laughter) Well, did we do alright?

PIEHLER: Yeah, we did—I think we did ...

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