

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JESSIE MILLER

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

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KNOXVILLE, TN
2003

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PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Jessie L. Miller on July 19, 2003, in Hickory, North Carolina, and I should also add that this is also part of the reunion of the 238th Combat Engineers; and let me say thank you very much on the record for having me at this meeting. It's really been a real pleasure to attend the business meeting and I'm looking forward to tonight's ... dinner. And, let me start off by asking: you were born on December 25, 1919 in Hagerstown, MD?

MILLER: Yes.

PIEHLER: And your parents were Florence K. Miller and Francis Miller?

MILLER: Yes.

PIEHLER: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents?

MILLER: Well, uh, my mother was from quite a large family and my father only had one sister. There were just two children in that family, and my father was a brakeman on the Western Maryland Railroad. And, my mother worked for many years as a – what would you call them – a home nurse, for people who needed nursing care in the home. And of course, I had one brother and two sisters, and as of now, I am the *only* member of my immediate family that is still living. My mother, my father, my two sisters and brother are all deceased.

PIEHLER: Now, your father—he never served in the military, did he?

MILLER: No. No, he never did.

PIEHLER: You're not sure where your parents were married, or the date they were married. Do you know when—do you know how they met? Did you ever hear any stories about them—how they courted?

MILLER: Well if I had heard any stories about it, from then until now I've really forgotten them!

PIEHLER: Yeah!

MILLER: I can't remember a whole lot about my younger days. All I know is that I was born in Hagerstown, Maryland. And I—we resided there until I was six years old and my father was transferred back to York again to continue working on the Railroad.

PIEHLER: So, you really grew up in York, Pennsylvania?

MILLER: I really grew up there from the time I was six years old and I still live there.

PIEHLER: You still live there?

MILLER: I still live there.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, you went to war from York and then came back?

MILLER: Yes I did.

PIEHLER: You never lived anywhere else?

MILLER: I never lived anywhere else.

PIEHLER: Since you lived in Hagerstown a little bit ... do you have any memories of ...

MILLER: The only—the biggest memories that I have of there is that there was a beautiful park not very far from the house and my mother used to take me down to watch the ducks, and so on, on the lake. I remember that much, and other than that, the only thing I remember about our family and the people who lived next door to us was that when I was born, the—well, it was two old maids and a brother [who] lived in the house next door. And when my mother told them that she was going to name me Jessie, they said “what in heaven’s name do you want to give a boy a girl’s name!” And, of course my mother said, “Well, it’s not a girl’s name totally, but if you don’t like that name, you call him whatever you want!” And so, for many, many years I was known as Jack, because their one relative was called Jack! And so they named me Jack. And, of course, that’s one of the things that I lived with through many, many years. Even when I got old enough to get a Driver’s License, I signed my driver’s license as Jack L. Miller (Chuckles) instead of Jessie L. Miller. (Laughs) So, the next big procedure came along (Chuckles) was that I got old enough and I met my darling wife (laughs) and wanted to get married and so I had to change it back then. And also, I had to change because I had my driver’s license as Jack Miller in Pennsylvania, and then I went into the service and (Chuckles) everything else changed! ... I’m now back to Jessie L., and (Chuckles) I’ve been that way ever since, but there are many people in my life that I still know who only know me as Jack.

PIEHLER: So growing up in school, you were Jack?

MILLER: Uh-huh.

PIEHLER: If I said to people: “You know Jessie Miller?” they might not know?

MILLER: No, no.

PIEHLER: And, now, in the Army you were Jack, or you were Jessie?

MILLER: I was Jessie. And yeah, I had to be!

PIEHLER: Yeah ...

MILLER: (chuckles) Yeah!

PIEHLER: Because you had to use your real name ...

MILLER: Yes, I had to.

PIEHLER: ... or your given name.

MILLER: I had to go through that whole thing, and then change all those things (Laughs) that I had under, under my (Laughs) other name.

PIEHLER: And this really stems from these two brothers—these two old maids and...

MILLER: And their brother—that lived next door to me. All this came about as...

PIEHLER: And they...weren't relatives, either?

MILLER: Oh no, no, just...next door neighbors! (Laughs) When I was real young.

PIEHLER: So you're—did you start school in Maryland, or was that in York?

MILLER: No I started school in York. I was almost six years old.

PIEHLER: Were you in—was there a kindergarten in Hagerstown?

MILLER: Oh, no. No, I went right into the first grade at six years.

PIEHLER: And that was in York or in ...

MILLER: That was in York, Pennsylvania.

PIEHLER: So, you never even started school in Maryland?

MILLER: No, I never started school in Maryland.

PIEHLER: Your father got transferred as part of the railroad, right? Didn't he?

MILLER: Yes, he was transferred from York, originally, to Hagerstown and then from Hagerstown back to York again, on the Western Maryland Railroad. He was a brakeman.

PIEHLER: He remained a brakeman; he didn't change?

MILLER: No, he stayed that way all his time. He was a brakeman on the Western Maryland Railroad.

PIEHLER: What do you remember since you've lived in York, and particularly, what are your earliest memories of York? You know, keeping in mind that someone might read this from York.

MILLER: (Laughs) Uh, gee. Well, my earliest memories of that was just living, you know, with my family, and ... there was a playground that I could go to and have fun with all the new kids that I learned to know. It was, well, maybe a half a block away from the house where we moved into.

PIEHLER: Do you remember where you first moved to, when you were in York? What neighborhood, or, what street?

MILLER: It was on the Chestnut Street, in the 700 block, I think the number was 716 if I'm not mistaken. And from there, I went to a grade school that went up to the sixth grade in school and that was called Ridge Avenue ... And to this day it is not a school anymore but the building is still there at the same place and it is now some sort of an art-type place where they – where people go learn how to draw pictures and stuff.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like it's an art center.

MILLER: Well, sort of.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MILLER: Sort of. Its not you know, not a *really* one, they just go there to learn to draw. It's not a very big building, (Laughs) but, it's still there, all in one piece.

PIEHLER: How long did your family stay—was it on Chestnut Street?

MILER: We stayed there until, uh, I was sixteen years old. And then we moved out into the country, and I finished going to school by walking about somewhere between six and eight miles every day back and forth to school. Because when I went to high school, there [were] no buses! (Laughs) And there wasn't much traffic on the road, either, by the way. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Now, do your parents own a car?

MILLER: Uh, did they?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MILLER: Oh.

PIEHLER: So, now, when your parents moved out of town, how did your father get to work? When he moved – you mentioned walking – when you moved out to the country.

MILLER: Oh. Well, by that time, when we moved out to the country I moved into the country with just my mother and we went – my mother and I – went to live with my oldest brother.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. What happened to your father?

MILLER: My father passed away a long time ago. I can't tell you when. I don't remember ... when it was, but it was a very, very long time ago.

PIEHLER: When you were young?

MILLER: When I was still real young.

PIEHLER: Was he alive when you moved to York, Pennsylvania?

MILLER: Yes, he was still alive when we moved to York but I don't know, maybe, maybe five or six years, I guess, after we moved to York.

PIEHLER: After you moved to York?

MILLER: He passed away.

PIEHLER: How did your mother make a living? Was it as a nurse there?

MILLER: She was what we called – way back then – was not a nurse but a housekeeper. She went to work for one of the gentlemen who owned – probably a lot of people will remember – the Stafford Biscuit Company who made all kinds of biscuits and things like that that were sent all over the United States. They had a great business, the Stafford biscuit company. And of course, the wife of one of the owners ... needed a house maid, and so my mother went to work for her, to stay in the house with her during the day and she cooked the meals there.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you were off on your own quite a bit, then.

MILLER: Yes, yes I was. Myself and my sister, and I had another sister and brother – they were both married – and then my younger sister, that was younger than me, then she got married, and I still stayed with my mother. But, when she was working there, at that place, I was with her. And, the rest of them were married and going and doing their own thing.

PIEHLER: So they were all married before the war; before World War II?

MILLER: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you—growing up, your family didn't have a lot of money.

MILLER: No we didn't. No we didn't! No, things were a little tough. And, like I said, uh, I don't know if I did or not, but, I really don't like to say this but I will: I did not like school! For one thing, because I love to work with my hands, and what they taught you in school was to work with your mind, (Laughs) and I didn't like it at all! And so, when I got to be sixteen years old, I folded up the school books and I got a job working with a plumbing outfit which was right to my great desire – to do things with my hands! And I retired when I was sixty-five from the pipe fitting and plumbing industry and where I was working when I retired was at the most famous place in the world right now – Three Mile Island! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Yeah, so it is very famous.

MILLER: And, to tell you, one of the greatest things was that I had been working at Three Mile Island before they started up Unit Two, and I got laid off. The only place I could get a job at that particular time in the Union was on the other side of Pittsburgh, at a Pilot Plant along the Ohio River. And so, I went out there to work, and the next thing you know, my wife called me after the accident happened and said "You're to report home right now – they need you at Three Mile Island!" And so, when I went to Three Mile Island, guess what my first job was: to go up on top of the reactor that was bad and measure for pipe to pump the water out of that particular thing! So, I happened to be the first guy on top of that reactor after the accident. (Laughs) Which is not a very famous first, but, most people do not understand the nuclear power business, for one thing. I do, and it didn't bother me one bit because I knew all of the equipment and clothing that I had to wear, and how long I could stay up, and all of the dosimetry and beepers and whatever they had on me, I knew which one was the one. When it beeped, I was gone! And so, I never got any more radioactivity to pass through my body than I was supposed to have. And as far as I'm concerned, I think that's why I look so good today yet. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Were you surprised at all? Given that you'd worked on the Three Mile Island Plant, were you at all surprised when you heard what had happened?

MILLER: I had heard what had happened, but what I could not figure out was what caused it to happen, because as far as I was concerned, everything that I did was what I was supposed to do! And, you know, [I did] not do anything I wasn't supposed to do, because I knew what could happen if you overdid anything like that! And so, I followed the rules to the nth degree, and as far as I'm concerned, that's why I'm still here and in such good health. That's all I know.

PIEHLER: The Three Mile Island Plant was not the first nuclear plant you had worked on?

MILLER: No, I worked on Unit One, and then I worked other places and then I worked at Peach Bottom nuclear power plant two or three different times when they had shutdowns, and so on and so forth. Uh, I guess I was one of the guys because I loved my job and I was doing what I liked to do...: pipe work, and work with my hands. And so, I

had very little ... backlash from anybody, from any of the work I ever did. And besides that, before I started working on those kind of jobs, they had me teaching the plumbing trade by what they call “making white joints” with molten lead when we still used lead pipe. ‘Cause, I passed my test with the only “100” on the test that the man ever gave in all of the years that he had the plumbing exam in the city of York! He couldn’t find anything wrong with my white joint that I made! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: (Laughs) But you, you never finished high school, it sounds like.

MILLER: No, I quit in the tenth grade, because I did not like school, they were not teaching me anything that I wanted to do, and I didn’t—you know, it was just one of those things, that I didn’t like history, and arithmetic, and spelling and ...

PIEHLER: And you really wanted to work with your ...

MILLER: I wanted to work with my hands! And that’s what I did for the rest of my life from the time I was sixteen until I retired.

PIEHLER: Was there any sort of pressure? Because your mother wasn’t, it sounds like, making a lot of money. Was there any type of pressure to help support your mother?

MILLER: Oh yes. That’s another reason, too.

PIEHLER: Would you remember who you worked for first? The first company you worked for?

MILLER: I worked for a small plumbing shop called F.W. (Baylor?). ... I was the only apprentice boy, and he had, uh, he had four mechanics working for him. And so, I got to be shifted from one to the other. Whichever one of the four needed me, that’s who I went with and I did all the legwork and all the dirty stuff to start with. But I, I made up my mind that that’s what I wanted to do and I was gonna learn to do all of it. And, I did anything from running sewer pipe to water pipe and spouting, and putting on tin roofs, and shingles. He did the whole deal.

PIEHLER: The whole thing!

MILLER: The whole thing.

PIEHLER: Not just narrow plumbing – he did the whole thing.

MILLER: And ... he had two guys working for him that did all his plumbing work, and one guy did the heating work, and one guy did the sheet metal work. And I got to work with all four of them. (Laughter) Whenever they needed somebody to help them, that was my job.

PIEHLER: How did you get the job? That was ...

MILLER: Because the plumber that I went to work for was the plumber that did the work in the house where my mother was being a maid and housekeeper for the biscuit company family. And she said to the guy when he was in there one day—one of the men was in doing some plumbing work—and she said “My son is looking for a job to work with his hands and I think he should be a plumber!” And so, (Chuckles) he went back and told the boss, and the boss told ... him to tell my mother to send me over to the shop. And I went over to the shop and he hired me right away! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Do you remember how much you were making then?

MILLER: Hmm, what was I getting? Well, I think it was twelve dollars a week.

PIEHLER: Twelve dollars a week?

MILLER: Twelve dollars.

PIEHLER: Which, even then wasn't very good. (Laughs)

MILLER: No, no! (Laughs) Twelve dollars a week. And then, later on, after I got my plumbing license, and then after I did all that work for that man, he told me that he wouldn't give me the journeyman's rate, and sent me out on jobs until he was sure that I knew what I was doing. So, I had a buddy that was working out of the Union. When I was going to school I made, you know, friends with this guy, and I said to him, “You think you can get me a job in the Union?” He said, “I'll see what I can do.” And so, about two days later, he called me on the phone, and told me that I was to report to the Union shop, and they hired me, because of my credentials that I had. And so... from then on, I worked on the Union jobs and got the Union scale, which really helped out a lot.

PIEHLER: When did you go to plumbing school; you said you went to school with him?

MILLER: I went in the evening.

PIEHLER: Was this before the war?

MILLER: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, this was way back, when I went to plumbing school. And then after I got my license, you know, to be a plumber and pass, then the guy that ran the school, they decided to...you know, expand, and he hired me to be the teacher for the white joints and things.

PIEHLER: So that's where you got the “100” on the exam you just mentioned!

MILLER: Yeah, well, I got it before that...

PIEHLER: Yeah ... in school.

MILLER: When I went to school, yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Where was the plumbing school?

MILLER: In ... what they called the (Atrius?) Warner Building, which was a building next to the big high school that did all of the kind of work that I did: plumbing, and carpentry work, and masonry, and they had all kinds of machinery. They taught, you know, the guys how to run machinery and do all the outside carpentry work and cement work, and so on and so forth.

PIEHLER: Was this a public high school, part of a public school?

MILLER: Yeah, it was a, a ...

PIEHLER: A vo-tech, sort of?

MILLER: A vo-tech school along with the regular high school in York.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't pay tuition to go to plumbing school.

MILLER: No, no, they had that. It was all free to go there. And, of course, the plumbing school that I went to and learned the whole thing before I passed that ... I had been in the Union and the Union supported that.

PIEHLER: What Union were you a member of? Do you remember?

MILLER: Local 520 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I was also a member of the York local, but don't ask me what the number was. Now, I can't remember it.

PIEHLER: And do you remember the official name of the Union, is it the Plumbing?

MILLER: It's a pipe-fitter/plumbers union, 520.

PIEHLER: And I assume it's AFL – American Federation of Labor. Do you remember?

MILLER: I would guess it is, yes.

PIEHLER: Um, do you remember what year you joined the Union, offhand? Because this was before World War II.

MILLER: Well, the only thing I could go on is – I can't remember what year I went into the service.

PIEHLER: No, no, no—that's okay.

MILLER: You know, I was trying to think of that, and then I was gonna ...

PIEHLER: Yeah?

MILLER: ... subtract like four years from it.

PIEHLER: Yeah! So, ... it was in the late 1930's.

MILLER: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: I have been to York only once. I interviewed like two physicians there, many years ago, the McDougal brothers.

MILLER: Oh.

PIEHLER: And York has quite a nice downtown still, I think. I mean, from what I remember.

MILLER: Oh, yeah!

PIEHLER: What do you remember about, sort of, York in the 1930's and early 40's? Any movie theaters or any other things that you remember?

MILLER: Oh yeah, I used to—oh, I know! We can talk about a movie theater! When I was still a kid, and young enough, and I'd get a quarter, I'd go to the Ritz Theater every Saturday morning and I wouldn't get back home until sometime close to supper time. I'd sit there and watch the cowboy movies until they practically threw me out. Or, I'd leave and go home to get supper. (Laughs) You know, it only cost fifteen cents at that time! You'd get in, and I could sit there all day and watch the cowboy movies. That's what I liked to do. On almost every Saturday, that's what I did when I was a young kid.

PIEHLER: Did you play any sports growing up?

MILLER: Not many! Not many. Uh ... in the later years I got to join a country club and I learned to play golf and I was pretty good at it at one time. I played the championship – played two years. I didn't win it though, but I played in it two years. And now, the only part of golf that I could still do right now, with any good luck, or with any finesse, is to stand on the green and putt! Because my equilibrium for swinging the golf club is *nil*! (Chuckles) I could miss it easier than I can hit it! When I have to take a full swing, I just cannot ...

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm.

MILLER: ... stand.

PIEHLER: ... Did you go to church anywhere growing up?

MILLER: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Which denomination?

MILLER: Well now, let's see. Hmm. Oh goodness! I oughta have my wife here to tell me! United Church of Christ. (Chuckles) And ... we still go to the United Church of Christ, because, when you got married, you married into the family that was going, but not the same church.

PIEHLER: But the same denomination?

MILLER: Yeah, the same denomination. Yeah, United Church of Christ.

PIEHLER: Growing up, how far did you travel when you were a teenager, or as a young child? You had grown up in Maryland, were born in Maryland, you lived there, you moved to York. How far east had you gone before joining the Army?

MILLER: How far east?

PIEHLER: Did you ever, say, go to Atlantic City, or New York, or ...

MILLER: I don't really think, before I went in the service I went – I didn't go any place because I had to work and take care of my mother.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to Philadelphia, growing up?

MILLER: No, no.

PIEHLER: What about back to Maryland?

MILLER: No, never went back there either. No.

PIEHLER: And what about west? Did you ever make it out to Pittsburgh growing up?

MILLER: No.

PIEHLER: So really, you hadn't left really the greater York area.

MILLER: I was a right around home almost all the time. And, I really—well, to tell you the truth, I didn't have enough money to travel and it never, never occurred to me to run here and run there, cause I was too busy working and taking care of my mother.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. When were you drafted? Because, you listed on the pre-interview survey that you were twenty-four.

MILLER: Well, I ...

PIEHLER: Well, let me put it: were you drafted after Pearl Harbor or before?

MILLER: Oh, it was after that.

PIEHLER: After Pearl Harbor?

MILLER: Mm-hmm ... Yeah, it was after Pearl Harbor that I was drafted.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of enlisting before?

MILLER: No, because I was sole supporter of my mother I didn't think they would ever take me. The way they talked about it, and what I understood from, you know, when I registered and so on and so forth, the guy said, "Well, I don't know why you're registered, because if you're sole supporter of your mother they'll never take ya!" See! And the next thing you know, I get a notice to report! And, my mother said, "If that's what they want, you better go do it for your country." And so, I left and went, and she fended for herself the whole time I was in.

PIEHLER: Was she still working?

MILLER: Well, yeah, but she wasn't working for that person anymore. She was trying to get ... wherever she was needed out of the VNA. She, you know, signed up with a Visiting Nurses Association. And then, if they had someplace where they needed her, then she went to work there and it was sometimes for a while, and other times only for a few days, or something like that.

PIEHLER: When you were drafted, did you say to the draft board, "You know, I am the sole supporter for my mother," or did you ...

MILLER: They didn't ask me that question! (Laughs) And so all I did was answer the questions they asked!

PIEHLER: And, your brother, William Miller, he was also in the Army. He was also in World War II. What branch was he in?

MILLER: He was in the infantry, and he was over in the South Pacific. But I never heard or ... you know, I don't know too much about what he did. And also, my brother-in-law was the same thing. My sister's husband, he was drafted and he was over in the Pacific.

PIEHLER: But he ... both of them, you know very little about what happened to them?

MILLER: That's right. They didn't—they're like m—they didn't talk about it when they came home, and neither did I unless I was forced into it.

PIEHLER: But this is interesting! Right. Now, when did you start talking about World War II?

MILLER: Mainly, I guess it was when I started with the outfit and I got my, you know, papers that they were going to...start having reunions and how they ... get together all the time. And so I decided that, "well, I know all these guys, I might as well join up!" And so, then we started talking about stuff that we did, and so on and so forth. But after I got home I wasn't telling anybody what I did. I ... I just, you know, didn't have a whole lot of ambition to go out and do things. I just wanted to stay with my mother, because I'd been gone so long.

PIEHLER: When was the first reunion? You said the reunion was pretty important for you to start talking about it. What was the first reunion you went to, do you remember? How many years after the war was it?

MILLER: (Long pause) Somewhere in the neighborhood of five or six, I think. Because, like I said, I didn't want to leave my mother, and besides that, I didn't have a job that I could take off from and go do the things that I can do now. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, it wasn't until the 1950's that you started coming?

MILLER: Somewhere around there, I believe.

PIEHLER: But you had no interest, say in [the earlier reunions?] Because, I was just at this meeting and they said, you know, "the reunion fifty-seven years ago." You weren't present at those early reunions?

MILLER: No, I wasn't.

PIEHLER: ... It sounds like you didn't really have much interest in them.

MILLER: Well, not at first ... until I went. And then, of course when I got to see all my buddies again, and then, the next thing you know, they have me doing everything now! (Laughter) Which, I love to do! Well, besides that, we have—and I don't know whether you want this on your interview or not, you can erase it. But, we had too many things happen that were detrimental to this outfit being the way it is today, and we had people who decided they wanted to have reunions and they didn't do what they were supposed to do, and things were messed up, and it sorta was getting out of hand. And so, I talked to my wife about it, and we decided, if they would want me, I'll be permanent secretary as long as they want it. Because, one of the reasons is, that she's as excited about this as I am, and she knows how to do all the typing and these things like that, and all I do is sit and talk to her, and she does all the rest of it...

PIEHLER: I see.

MILLER: ...and then, we mail out all the letters, and do it together. And so...

PIEHLER: Explain about your partnership, your being secretary!

MILLER: Oh, yeah...

PIEHLER: Anyway, since you and your wife are the co-secretaries ...

MILLER: That's right.

PIEHLER: How long have you been the permanent secretary?

MILLER: Hmm ... (Long pause, then laughs) I don't really remember, it's been so long!

PIEHLER: So, it's been a while?

MILLER: Oh yeah, at least—at least fifteen, twenty years.

PIEHLER: Oh, that long? Oh!

MILLER: I think, yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So, it's not... recent—it's not in the last five years.

MILLER: Oh no! Oh no. No, it's been a long time. I can't remember when.

PIEHLER: And no one's been pushing to take your place?

MILLER: They don't want to! They keep saying, "if you need any help, we'll give it to you. You keep the job! You're doing fine!" (Laughs)

PIEHLER: (Laughs heartily) Oh! Going back to the war ... you were drafted. Had you given any thought to enlisting after Pearl Harbor?

MILLER: Nope! No, because I figured I shouldn't be there. Not—you know, not that I'm against going to war and fighting for your country, but, as far as I was concerned, I had to take care of my mother. And there [were] lots of other men who could go and do those things and not have to worry about it.

PIEHLER: When you did come into the Army; what's your earliest memory of being in the Army?

MILLER: Well, first of all, when I went in—and I was only in the camp in Maryland for a few days when I was loaded on a train and shipped out, and the next thing you know after we were going on the train for a while, the windows froze up! And I thought,

“WHERE am I going!?” (Laughs) And, of course, we wound up in Plattsburgh in the snow, knee-deep or deeper, and stayed there the whole winter. And ... (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, this must have been the winter of '42.

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Was it ... I guess it was early '42, then. And what else do you remember about, you know ...

MILLER: Going in?

PIEHLER: Going in, or anything about the sort of early training, too?

MILLER: Well, what I remember mostly was that I wasn't used to being told what I had to do (Laughs) and doing it whether I liked it or not. And so (Laughs), it was a little bit of a hardship, actually, for me to get used to being in the service. One of the worst problems was, was when we were Plattsburgh, New York, doing our training. We were going through an obstacle course. One of the things was, here we come to a tank trap and you had to jump across! Only, I missed it! Went down, sprained both ankles, and my platoon officer was ... mean and hateful as far as I was concerned, and he made me walk the whole way back to camp. And I wound up in the hospital. How I got back to camp without collapsing, I don't know. But, like everybody else that was in the service, when you were told to do something, didn't matter how much it hurt—you *did* it! And that's all there was to it. And, that's the way it was. And I made it the whole way back, and then once I got my shoes and socks off, I couldn't get them back on, my ankles puffed up so bad. And, I was in the hospital for four or five days, until they finally got them back down thin. But that was, that was one of the worst things that's ever—even D-Day wasn't as bad as that getting back to camp, walking with a full-filled pack and everything else, with two sprained ankles!

PIEHLER: Did that platoon ... officer who ordered you, did he stay with the unit?

MILLER: No, he was shipped out, thank goodness! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: (Laughs) So, he's not someone I'm gonna encounter at the dinner tonight.

MILLER: Nope, nope, nope! You will not. He got shipped out long before we went overseas.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. Now, you did your Basic at Plattsburgh, right? Basic, and then ... advanced? Was it...

MILLER: Most anything. We learned everything about building bridges, and laying minefields, the whole ...

PIEHLER: The whole thing.

MILLER: The whole thing. We ...

PIEHLER: At Plattsburg?

MILLER: At Plattsburgh. And then we were shipped to the other places, and we still kept on training and training, doing the same thing over and over. But, we learned the Basic part of it in the snow, in the wintertime, in Plattsburgh, New York.

PIEHLER: You were very close to your mother. How much did you miss your ... mother? When you were ...

MILLER: How much? I still miss her!

PIEHLER: Yeah?

MILLER: That's how much.

PIEHLER: This was the farthest you had been away from home, at Plattsburgh?

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you write her often, or?

MILLER: As often as I had time, yes ...

PIEHLER: You didn't like taking orders very much at first, you said.

MILLER: No, I didn't. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: What about the other things about army life? How did you like the food? What was your impression of army food?

MILLER: Well, up there in Plattsburgh, it was pretty nice. But...I never liked [the food] when you had to go out—like, we were out there in the reservation for a week and, you couldn't eat all your food before it froze in the plate, in your mess kit. You'd dip [the plate] in the hot water, go over and get it filled up. By the time you got to sit down, you could only eat about half of it and the rest of it was frozen! And so, what did you have: a half a meal and part of a cup of coffee, and that was your meal. That was—it was a little tough, I'll tell ya.

PIEHLER: What about ... you don't have a lot of privacy in the army. (Laughs) I've gotten the sense you get used to it. But, what was your thought? You know, you're always with other people.

MILLER: Well, I just made up my mind that this was it and you had to put up with it, whether you liked it or not. And so, I made up my mind to get along with all the guys and try to do the best I could and get back home safe. That's all I was worried about.

PIEHLER: Any other recollection, particularly of Plattsburgh, that you have?

MILLER: Well, yes, the one thing is I've always—I've *always* loved to sing, and we did find a place that was north of Plattsburgh where they had, every Friday and Saturday night, a band, and so on and so forth. And of course I got up there, and then, I was sitting at the table and while they would play, like I did here yesterday, and while the music was on I'd sit there and sing to myself. And then the next thing you know, the last night they had me up singing a song to the group. But... then...they'd get me up to sing. And about ... (A noise in the background, like someone entering the room) Ah, here comes the boss—play!

FEMALE VOICE: No, no! I know nothing about... (Laughing)

PIEHLER: Well, you were saying something I think...I can't even remember now what. Ah, I wish I—oh, singing! That you...liked to sing.

MILLER: Oh, in the bar, yes.

PIEHLER: Yes. Growing up, did you sing in any choirs, or ...

MILLER: No I didn't, I only loved to sing, and I sang for myself. And in later years I got a guitar and I learned one set of keys to play from one of the guys in the service, on his guitar, and then I bought my own after I got home again. And, ah, started playing, and I only played for my own benefit. Ah, but since we moved to our new home, they have a choir there, and I've been singing on the choir at Normandie Ridge.

PIEHLER: And, is that a retirement community?

MILLER: It's a retirement community and, all I could tell you is, it is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me in the later years. There is nothing that I couldn't ask them and they'd do! I get all my meals there. We don't do any cooking, we live in our own private apartment, and, they take care of us. Whatever we have to have, they take care of. They have a big dining room there, and they have a café, and they have groceries in there. ... If you need salt or pepper or something – you know, some sort of thing like that – they have that all lined up. And, ah, they have big cases of soda. And, you can also go there and eat if you want to. We are allowed thirty meals a month, my wife and I, on our ...

PIEHLER: On your plan?

MILLER: Whether it's in the dining room, or whether it's in the café, that's how many we can have a month.

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

PIEHLER: In this retirement community, it also sounds like you have your own apartment.

MILLER: Oh yes.

PIEHLER: You just don't have a kitchen?

MILLER: We have a kitchen; we can make anything we want in the kitchen. It has a refrigerator, and a stove, and the whole works! And, of course, both of us eat cereal for breakfast (Laughter) and that's all we have, and ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MILLER: ... cereal. We eat that in our own apartment. And, ah ...

PIEHLER: But any times that you want—if you don't want to cook, you just go?

MILLER: Oh, we don't want to cook! (Laughter) We just go! We just go. And if we run out of meal ... there, we just go outside to a restaurant. (Laughter) Well, we've had a lot of company, you know, come. And friends, and relatives and so on and so forth, to show what a wonderful place it is. And it, oh I can't tell you how much that [Mary Jane] and I are both in love with the place.

PIEHLER: It also sounds you very much like the people who have retired there with you. Is that true?

MILLER: Yeah! Oh, yeah, they're great – the people that are there. You don't have any problems making friends, and, you know, doing things with the people who are there. And, uh, you just—once you go in your own apartment, there you are, and you're by yourself and nobody, nobody to bother you or anything else, unless you get ill or you need some assistance.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. I'm curious. In your retirement community, [is there] anyone you grew up with? Or, anyone you've known for years? From York? Any old friends?

MILLER: Yeah. Well, there was only one person that was really a friend, so to speak. ...The one lady that lives there now used to be the ... secretary of the church where Mary Jane is the secretary ... now. And so, (Chuckles) you know ...all the other friends I've made, most of them are with the group that I sing with. We have a good time. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, how often do you talk about World War II? I would think there are some World War II veterans along with you. Does World War II ever come up in conversation?

MILLER: Most of the guys that are there that were in World War II don't even want to talk about it.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So you don't sit around...

MILLER: No! They don't. I've had two men come in and go over some of the things that I have, like the book. I have (Ernie's?) book, and I have John's book, the first one he wrote. He hasn't sent me his second one yet, and I have been hearing that other people have read his second one, and one of these days, if I don't soon get one, he's gonna get a nasty phone call! (Laughter) (Laughs) "Why don't I have one of your new books!?" Why do I have to show people your old one?" (Laughter) But I have, you know, all these records and everything else. I have a whole cabinet full of stuff. And actually, [of] all of the books that they've written so far I have one [of each].

PIEHLER: Yeah. After Plattsburgh, where did you go? Where did you and the 238th go? Going back to ... World War II?

MILLER: To, ah, Elkins West Virginia. Elkins, West Virginia.

PIEHLER: And further training?

MILLER: Not much, because it wasn't very long after that 'til we were gone! (Laughs) On the train and leaving for the (Laughs) England!

PIEHLER: And when did you arrive in England? Do you remember?

MILLER: That, I can't tell ya.

PIEHLER: Wait, for just a second. How long were you in England before D-Day?

MILLER: (Pauses) Well, not much longer than maybe a month ...

MILLER: Might have been a little longer than that, I dunno. Things went so fast, and you were so busy that it's very hard to remember. You know, exactly what you were doing, and so on, and so forth.

PIEHLER: Well, what are your memories of England? Do you have any memories of England, or the voyage over?

MILLER: Well, I don't have many memories of England because we were...so busy doing things and getting ready, that I didn't...get to see anything except...the place where we were training and South Hampton Harbor. That was one of the worst experiences I've ever had in my life.

PIEHLER: What was so bad; what happened?

MILLER: Well, they put us on these landing craft that were lined up side by side ... and there you stayed. You weren't allowed to get off. You weren't allowed to do anything but stay there. And we were there, I don't know how many days and nights, on these landing craft, and what it was, was my platoon and three trucks full of stuff. And you didn't even have a chance to use the bathroom, or the toilet room, or the whatever they called it in the Navy—you had to go over the side, and so on and so forth! And all these things were lined up side by side. Guys this far you could see (Gestures), people that far you could see. You could walk right up and talk to anybody, but don't dare try to get off and go on the land. (Laughs) (Coughs)

PIEHLER: So you remember ... these ships were so flat, that basically they had erected these temporary heads over the water.

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like you were out there a while.

MILLER: (Coughs) We were there, I'm not absolutely sure, but it was close to three or four days or so, before they finally started moving us out. Then, we were going across the channel, and the next thing you know, the landing craft was turning around and heading back. Now what's going on? But we didn't go back very far until they turned around and headed back for the beach. And, I guess the reason I'm here today is, that we landed on the easiest one. But at six – 6:47 A.M., I touched French soil. And I was first, with my half ... of my landing craft, I was the, ah, the leader of the second squad in the B Company, and my platoon officer gave me the ... right hand side of the landing craft to be first off of, and he was first off of the left hand side. And, I was – I was on the beach before he was, I know that! Because, I was in less than up to my waist, and I think that the other side got off it was deeper, when they got off, and they had a bit of a struggle getting in. And, I wasn't, I wasn't there very long until he came up to me and said "Take your squad. Go up the road. We need a bridge built." Well, I had no idea what kind of a bridge it was, so I took my squad and we were going up along this line of vehicles and tanks and God only knows what kind of vehicles was lined up almost the whole way back to the beach, at that time. And I got up there, and all it was, was one of the culverts was blown out and I needed six pieces of tread way to put across, and I took some guys went back, found a truck loaded with, uh, the tread way, and we carried 'em up, and they, the ones that I didn't take with me, I told them to start gathering up junk and throw it in the hole, because that's the only thing we could have—there was no other stuff around to put this tread way across, and so we had to fill up the center of the hole so that the middle piece—it took six pieces to go across, three on each side. And...we got that built, and then in the meantime, a medic grabbed ahold of me and said "Could you help me?" I said, "what do you need me for?" He said, "well, I hate to tell ya, but, I don't (Laughs), I don't know how to take the ammunition out of a rifle and I need [to, because] the...Fourth Infantry guy, who's laying on the road back there, got shrapnel in his leg, and I have to put his rifle on his leg. Would you come back and take the ammunition out of his rifle for me?" So, while my guys were still working on the bridge, I went back

with him and helped him get this guy straightened out and get the rifle put on his—helped him to get the rifle strapped to his leg, take the ammunition out of it for him.

PIEHLER: Why was he concerned? Why didn't he just take his rifle away?

MILLER: It wasn't a German, it was an American soldier!

PIEHLER: I know!

MILLER: He needed the rifle to bandage his leg up!

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

MILLER: The shrapnel—in the bones!

PIEHLER: So that's why he needed to unload it; he wanted to use the rifle after.

MILLER: He wanted to use the rifle as a splint to put on his leg.

PIEHLER: Anything else you remember about the first day, that first day in France?

MILLER: More than when after we got the bridge built, and got things, then we started moving on up the road, and that's about all we did the first day. In fact, while I was there I only saw one dead soldier – German prisoner, and he had been run over by the tank already, and there wasn't much left of him. But that's the only, the only thing as far as I was concerned, the only ammunition or fighting or whatever that was going on, was going on up the road further than where we were, and the shells from the ships were flying over your head. And they're loud! That's the damndest sound I ever heard in my life. 'Cause, we'd never heard it before we got there! (Laughter) They sure make a noise when they go over your head, I'll tell you that! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, that noise sticks with you then?

MILLER: Yes! Yes it does! I was glad they kept on going! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: In terms of both the Battle of Normandy and then the Battle for France, what memories do you have? What's your closest call that you had? What was the closest call you had in terms of getting wounded or killed? Does anything stick out?

MILLER: (Long pause) Oh, yes, there was one. There was one! And that was when we were moving toward Saint Lowe, and of course we ran into all of the...big battle that there was going on at that particular time. And all the planes going overhead—I never saw so many airplanes in all my life overhead! And of course, we got stopped on the road, and I told all the guys, "get out of the truck! Get in the ditch along the road! Stay there, until you're told to come back and get on the truck." Because, nothing was moving and we were that close to the very front line that my helmet when I was laying in the

ditch alongside the road—I didn't know until later, ' cause I didn't even feel it—but a shell from a German rifle hit me, straight up, right on the very front, right above the thing. And, I didn't realize it was there – didn't even feel it! But it made a mark in the thing and you could tell it was a shell. And I wanted to bring that helmet home and the buggers wouldn't let me! That was the only thing that I ever had that I wanted to keep, because of that particular thing! And then, they wouldn't let me have it.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I just did an interview with someone, an Army nurse who complained that they didn't let her keep her helmet, so I've just heard the same story. You're the second veteran this morning who's told me that!

MILLER: Yeah, I'd sure like to have that.

PIEHLER: So, you're saying that was your closest call?

MILLER: That was the closest call that I came to being wounded, as far as I was concerned. You know, by alien fire.

PIEHLER: When were you ever the most frightened? Was there any moment, you might not have even been in the greatest danger, because you didn't even realize this bullet...

MILLER: No, I didn't even feel it! I didn't know it until later on.

PIEHLER: But, any moment you were particularly frightened?

MILLER: Not that I realized, no. I don't think so.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MILLER: I don't really think I know of any time that, you know, I was really, really frightened. Other than that, it's just one of those things. (Tape stops.)

PIEHLER: Well, we just took a brief pause. I know it's a little out of context. Your wife came in and she looked up on the plaque of the 238th association, and you were Secretary-Treasurer from '54-'55, '59-1962, and 1984 to the present, 2003, so that's quite a long stint of service there! Particularly, 1984 to now. I can't remember a lot from the early eighties! (Laughs) Oh, my.

MILLER: You don't wanna hear it! I even got two guys now that tell me, any time I need help, they'll help me, but they don't want anybody else to be Secretary-Treasurer! (Laughter) Well, after all, there were times in between those times that she gave me there, that our treasury got down, and so help me, I have not ever been able to figure out where all the money went to! Of the guys that had it, that messed it up! I mean, heck, we've got a lot of money in the treasury now! In fact, I don't even know what we're ever going to do with it, that's the problem. We're gonna have to figure out, someday, somewhere to donate this money to. Because, I don't want it! I want it to go for

something that'll *mean* something. Because, see, I'm supposed to get it – not that I'm bragging – but I'm supposed to get money for being Secretary-Treasurer. Well, to this day I have not taken one cent.

PIEHLER: It's all volunteer [work]!

MILLER: It's all because I love this bunch! And I'm doing it because I want to!

PIEHLER: Well, going back to the war—I know we were sort of jumping around a little. What other memories do you have of the unit, and the 238th? Someone said earlier today, you did three things. I mean, you built things, you transported people, and you also spent time, your fair share, of fighting the enemy. Often, sometimes, as infantry, like at the Battle of Aachen?

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What are your memories...that really stick out about your war experiences?

MILLER: Well, I don't know. I don't really have [many specifics], you know. Except that I made up my mind that I was going to do what I was supposed to do, and I did it, to the best of my ability, and I am sure that the reason that this outfit has been together as long as they have is that 99 percent of the guys feel the same as I did. They were fighting for their country, and they had to do what they had to do, whether they liked it or not. And we did it, and we're still here to talk about it. And that's all I can come up with. And I am just so glad that finally—finally, there are some people like yourself who are interested in what we did. And, I don't know if this is going to get on there or not, but I can't say too much for the powers that are in power today. It [doesn't] look to me like they know what they're doing. They don't do anything to try to end this thing, they keep it going on and on and on. To me, if I'd be in charge, there would be no more [Iraq]. It would be nothing. My feeling is, that if the people of [Iraq] are dumb and stupid enough to listen to that idiot, and let him to them what he did, they don't deserve to live anymore than he does. And so, why have them on the face of the earth. I'm not, you know, a killer, or anything else, but when it comes to something like that, I cannot see why the people who are in power cannot do something to either make them do what they're supposed to do or else, go with him, if he ever has been killed, I don't think so.

PIEHLER: You mean Saddam Hussein?

MILLER: He ain't dead. He's hiding someplace. And he has some idiot that wants to keep him alive—and he's as bad as he is! And so they both should be gone. As far as I'm concerned, I can't see sending our men over there to fight for something that's not going to be of any consequence when it's over. Like we did. We fought the battle, it was over. We defeated the Nazis, and then, it was all over, and things calmed down, and now it's worse than it ever was.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, when you were in Europe fighting, what did you think of the enemy?

MILLER: Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't think they wanted to fight any more than we did, because it didn't take anything for them to give up when they had a chance. And so, it was just one of those things. I don't think they were in favor of Hitler one bit. He was...doing this, and they didn't like it any more, being in the service for him, than we liked (Laughs) being in the service and going over there trying to calm him down and get rid of him. That's the honest truth. It's just as easy as that. And, I can't see any difference in that and this and the other thing. But, uh, what I can't understand now is that they still are over there and they are being killed and being wounded and hurt (Coughing) and so on and so forth, for nothing. Because, they haven't done anything yet, as far as I'm concerned, except drop a whole lot of bombs. But the guys on the ground haven't accomplished anything. They're in a worse state now than they were when they first went over.

PIEHLER: It sounds like from the way you also talk, you were eager to come home. You were to get this job done.

MILLER: Oh yeah, I was ready to get it done, get it over with, get rid of the opposition over there, get it done, and come back home to live a normal life like I had been. And that, up until this other thing started, and that got me so upset that (Coughs) I don't know what I'm doing half the time. Because I can't believe the dumb stuff they're doing.

PIEHLER: Did you feel this way when they first started the war in Iraq? Did you think it was a bad idea?

MILLER: Yeah! I don't think they should have sent anybody over there. They should have sent planes over, and got rid of them. Oil fields and everything else.

PIEHLER: You mentioned... Had you thought of staying in the Army after the war?

MILLER: No. Me, I didn't really like it. And I did not want to be a career soldier. I only went because I had to, and I did what I was supposed to do, and then when it was time for me to come home, I wanted to come home and live a decent life.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of using the G.I. Bill at all?

MILLER: No.

PIEHLER: Do you remember, what do you remember about coming home? I mean, how did you come home? Does anything stick out?

MILLER: I dunno, I almost hate to tell you this. But, the man that's now my commanding officer, we don't like very much. And the reason being is, that every one of us, from our invasion on D-Day to the end of the war, we worked our butt off to get it

done and get home. And then, to have him volunteer us, because we were engineers and workmen from anywhere from cement finishers to pipe-fitting and plumbing, and whatever, it was all in our service, and we were put in to build a redeployment camp, for guys that were going home who had less points than we did! And there we are, working our butts off building a redeployment camp for them to go through, to go home, and we're still there!

PIEHLER: Which redeployment camp did you build? Cigarette camps? Do you remember?

MILLER: Yeah but I can't remember. I don't know where. I don't really know which one, but the only one that sticks out is—I guess, maybe that's because that's the kind of Cigarettes that I smoked—the only thing I can think of is Chesterfield. But I'm not sure.

PIEHLER: You're not sure?

MILLER: I'm not sure, but it might have been Lucky Strike Camp that we did.

PIEHLER: But it's one of those camps that everyone...

MILLER: It was one of those camps.

PIEHLER: But, it was in France?

MILLER: Yep. Yeah. And I, I was the only, like I said, I was the only plumber in the whole outfit, and I got to be in charge, and I even had German soldiers working for me, doing the work.

PIEHLER: And this was volunteer. You were volunteered. I've been told about the West Point Colonel. This was the colonel who was assigned to the unit after D-Day? Is that...

MILLER: You see, Mrs. (Massolio?), her husband was the commanding officer. We all loved him, 'cause he was a regular guy. And not a horse's ass like this one, pardon my English. He is a horse's ass. That's all I can say. All military men from West Point are, as far as I'm concerned. I haven't ever met one yet who didn't think he was king's shit. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I've heard.

MILLER: And you can't tell 'em anything. You can't talk to them sensibly. They don't believe you.

PIEHLER: I've gotten a sense that the Colonel was the West Pointer. Were there any other West Pointers in the unit?

MILLER: I don't think so. No, not that I know of. There might have been. They were regular, in the regular Army, but I don't think any of them were West Pointers. 'Cause most of the...other officers that we had, except one or two that are around here – like E.J. Miller, and, ah, the guy that was handing out the pictures of the bridge that we built, and the rest of them were from California. Well, there [were] five or six of them; five or six of them out there – they have their own reunion every year.

PIEHLER: Yeah?

MILLER: And, I can't blame them for not coming in here because they know—well, none of 'em liked that guy to begin with. That's why they don't show up. I know why.

PIEHLER: No!

MILLER: Those ones out there, they hate his guts, and that's why they don't want to come. Because he tries to take over and run the show his way, and he doesn't believe a damn thing you say. He won't – he don't take that to heart, or anything else. And it's just one of those things that we got shoved on us that we don't like but we can't do anything about it. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And this goes back to the war?

MILLER: Well, yeah.

PIEHLER: How long were you building this camp? This work had to be quite a big project.

MILLER: Yeah, well ... a couple months. A couple months we were working on it. One of the things was that all I had was straight pieces of pipe. I had no fittings. I had to Jerry-rig; what I call Jerry-rig. If I needed an elbow, I had to take plastic or something, and, not plastic, but board that you could run around and put things and pour concrete elbows. Make it concrete! The sides and the bottom, you know, concrete. And then put a concrete slab over the top, so that the thing—I had...no fittings. You had to, if the pipe had to go around a corner, we had to bend it, and when we'd run the pipe up to a sink, or something like that, I had to get the welders to weld the stuff together, put the faucets on and everything else. I mean, it was a mess. (Laughs) It was really a chore to figure out all the stuff that you had to do in order to get the plumbing work done. 'Cause, like I said, I was the only one there that knew anything about it.

PIEHLER: I'm curious about your unit. Because, in talking to you, it seems like it made a lot of sense to put you in combat engineering, because, you had worked with your hands. You had worked as a plumber.

MILLER: Oh yes, all of us.

PIEHLER: So most of the unit had come into this unit...

MILLER: They were in construction work or some sort of construction.

PIEHLER: So most people—did you have anyone in the unit who had no construction background that you remember?

MILLER: Well, now, I don't really know. 'Cause I never bothered to ask, or anything else.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but it sounds like most people ...

MILLER: They knew what they were doing and of course, when they came in, if you had any thing, I presume the way they worked, if you worked at any part of construction at all, even if you only dug ditches, you were a construction worker and you were there, and you had to learn how to maneuver all this equipment and put these bridges together and so on and so forth. By the way, when we were back over there, we went over one of our bridges that – the (Bailey?) bridge, that was still in use.

PIEHLER: It's still in use?

MILLER: Yes.

PIEHLER: Well, where is it?

MILLER: Oh, I can't remember. If Ernie James was here he could tell ya, because he knew...by the bolts that went in, what the numbers were...

PIEHLER: So a group of engineers, veterans, went over to France? When was that?

MILLER: There were six of them. Six of us.

PIEHLER: When did you go over? When did you go back?

MILLER: Uh, when we had the—when did we go? I forget when it was. (Calls to his wife) "Mary Jane? Do you know what year it was when we went over?"

MARY JANE: 1997.

PIEHLER: So, you went back in 1997?

MILLER: 1997.

PIEHLER: And one of your bridges was still in use!

MILLER: Mm-hmm. Yep.

PIEHLER: I mean, you actually physically saw it?

MILLER: Oh yeah, yeah! We walked across it!

PIEHLER: Were you surprised it was still there?

MILLER: We certainly were, yeah! Because it was the only one in the whole place—and you know where we traveled. From D-Day ... on the beach and clear into Iceland and Germany where we were when the war ended. We went over the whole thing.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So you traced the whole route?

MILLER: We traced it, every day we'd do something different

PIEHLER: What was it like to go back to these old places?

MILLER: Really, it was something. It was something. And actually, the only place that we really got welcomed by everybody...was Belgium. Germany, we did not even wear any parts of our Army outfit, insignias or anything else; we just dressed in regular old clothes when we were in Germany, the whole time. Well, John Long told us, you'd better not do this, because you never know who might not like you when they see an American flag, or some insignia on your jacket or something like that, what somebody might do to you. So we had taken extra clothes along, just to wear while we went into the different places in Germany. And, oddly enough, it really wasn't all that bad. I think he made it worse than what it really would have been.

PIEHLER: You think John Long was more suspicious than ...

MILLER: Yeah, he was more suspicious than he should have been maybe, and then again, maybe not. (Voices in the background) Because we don't know, the ones we saw all the time. But, all the ones we were in contact with and so on and so forth, seemed to be half-decent people, but they were not like the Belgians. We couldn't buy anything to eat in Belgium!

PIEHLER: Really?

MILLER: Oh no, they fed us good. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And it sounds like they were genuinely happy.

MILLER: Oh, they were just so happy, and in fact ... I have two different families in Belgium that I'm in contact with constantly. One is a mother and father and their son, and he works for the Belgian government. [He] travels all over, mostly in Africa and that part of the world, for the government, and then the other one, he is an aeronautical engineer, and he and his family live in California now, and his mother still lives in

Belgium, and we had to go meet her. She's a hoot 'n a holler! (Laughter) Oh, she is something else! She pounds on that piano and sings G.I. songs and all kinds of (Coughs) ...

PIEHLER: I've heard [about] the families, but how did you meet these families? Had your unit known them during the war?

MILLER: No.

PIEHLER: So this is after?

MILLER: This was after, when we started going over there about the bridges and so on and so forth. We got to meet these people. And in fact, the one that the son goes to Africa on safaris and stuff like that for the Belgian government, his mother and dad live right across the street from where we built one of our bridges under fire with the Germans on the other side where the bridge ended up. Next thing you know, we were one of the best-known outfits (Laughs. Laughter) that fought the war! Well, you know, there's not too many of them that have had a reunion every year.

PIEHLER: No, no, no! You are a very unique outfit.

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You are a remarkably cohesive outfit.

MILLER: This bunch of guys, I'll tell you—they're something else. They'll go through hell and high water for every—any one of us. Any one! Doesn't matter who they are. We're all alike; we're all alike. And we stayed together and we did what we had to do *together*, and that's why we're *still* together! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: When did you get to see your mother? ... You got to stay in France longer than you and the rest of the unit wanted to, because of the Colonel. How did you get back to York?

MILLER: Well, they finally got us to, you know, be discharged and sent back and of course, I came back on a boat, the same as I went over, and we landed in New York, and they transferred me to Indian Town Dock, and then I was discharged from there, and got on a train, and rode back down to York, and went in the house to see my mother.

PIEHLER: And she was probably glad to see you.

MILLER: Was she ever! Oh yes. Yes. In fact, if I can remember correctly, we both just bawled. We didn't cry, we bawled!

PIEHLER: Had you written your mother regularly when you were in France and Germany?

MILLER: Well, not every day. Once in a while, I would say.

PIEHLER: Did any of your letters survive the war?

MILLER: No, I don't have any of them, and in fact, I, you know, never gave it a thought after I come home to even ask her if she saved them, so on and so forth. ... It wasn't too long after I came home [that] I got married, and it was shortly after that that my mom passed away. And after that, I lost my brother and my other sister. And I had already lost the other sister before that.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. How did you meet your wife?

MILLER: That! That is a hoot n' a holler. That is something else. When I came home from the service, my mother said to me, she said, "Now you have to go over to New Jersey too see your sister. She wants you to come right away."

"Well, Okay," I said. So, I went down to the bus, bought my ticket, and went to New Jersey on the bus. Didn't go to see my girlfriend! (Laughter) Went to New Jersey to see my sister!

PIEHLER: Where in Jersey was she living?

MILLER: In Hackensack, New Jersey. And so, we had a good time, and I stayed for a week and a half. (Laughter) And I came back home, and I said to mom—I said, "Well, I guess today I'd better go down and see Jane Louise," [that] was her name, "I guess I'd better go see Jane Louise before I get in trouble." Well, I had already been in trouble, because Jane Louise found out that I was home and I hadn't gone there! So, I went down to her house and I went up on the front porch. I rang the doorbell, and [when] she came to the door, she said, "It's about time you came here! Because, I want to tell you, I don't ever want to see you again in my life!" And [she] slammed the door right in my face. (Laughs) So, now I'm without a girlfriend. I'm ostracized from the community, so to speak. But, it just so happened that a friend of mine was going with a friend [of Mary Jane's], and Mary Jane worked in a doctor's office on one side of the street, and this girl that lived close to her worked across the street, in another doctor's office. So, they walked back and forth to work together. And so, Johnny, the guy's name that was the boyfriend of this other girl, was telling her that I got thrown off the front porch and didn't have any girlfriend. Then, of course, one of my main things back at that time in my life was, I was a real hip-hopper, and I loved big bands. And we had what they called the (Valencia?) Ballroom, in York, and every Saturday night they had one of the big bands, all during the winter months, you know. Didn't have them during the summertime, but all during the winter months! And that was my place for Saturday night! And so, Johnny and his girlfriend, [who] was a friend of Mary Jane's, wanted to go to this dance, and John wanted me to go, and he said to Margot, "who can we get a date for Jessie with, to go to the dance Saturday night?" And so, she asked Mary Jane to go, and that was it! (Laughs) ... Well, Mary Jane had been married before, and they have—we have a son to her first husband, and...

PIEHLER: What happened to her first husband?

MILLER: Uh, something...that had to do with the Polio vaccine, and he was in the hospital with it, and they—at that particular time it was like an epidemic, and they didn't have enough stuff to give him, and he didn't last long enough until they could get enough stuff to help him—the penicillin, to help him out. And he passed away, and here she was with...this little baby. And so, she was living next door to where her family lived, and of course, she could get out to go to the dance and so, she said she'd go along with me to go to the dance to see the big band and have a dance and so that's how we got together. And, it didn't take long before we were married! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And you've been married ever since!

MILLER: We've been married ever since!

PIEHLER: So you were married in 1946?

MILLER: Mm-hmm. Yep. And we had ... my daughter's here now, and she works at the University of Maryland Hospital in the trauma unit, and she was an Army nurse at one time.

PIEHLER: Really?

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Oh, well we want to interview her! You'll have to make sure! Where does she live?

MILLER: She lives in York.

PIEHLER: Oh, well I will definitely have to ...

MILLER: I don't know, if she ... I just saw her not too long ago.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, not at this time. Your daughter just had come in, we had just taken a little break and she actually ... got a degree in nursing and became an Army [nurse] — was in the Army Reserves for a while.

MILLER: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: And your stepson—he ended up getting a doctorate in Physics?

MILLER: Yes, yes.

PIEHLER: Did...your stepson—did he ever think of joining the military?

MILLER: I don't think you would have *ever* gotten him even interested in it!

PIEHLER: Really?

MILLER: No. He had no—in fact, he hardly ever asked me anything about it.

PIEHLER: He never, growing up, he was not...

MILLER: No, he was not even *slightly*, as far as I'm concerned, not even *slightly* interested in the stuff that I was doing, because he was in another world, all alone. And, of course, like I said, I don't know how long he's been retired, but, uh, he got out of his position that he was in, and now he's living in Florida, now. He first moved to New Mexico; then he didn't like the weather out there anymore, so now he's down in Florida. I don't know either.

PIEHLER: So, your stepson has never been to any reunions, has he?

MILLER: I don't think we ever took him, not that I can remember.

PIEHLER: And your daughter—how often has she come to reunions?

MILLER: Well she comes every year, now.

PIEHLER: Yeah?

MILLER: She didn't before, but she comes every year, 'cause she's the driver!
(Laughter) (Laughs)

PIEHLER: With your daughter, I mean, how much do you think the fact you had been in the Army influenced her decision to join?

MILLER: I really don't know. She never really said, but she just liked the nursing bit of it, and so that's where she wound up after she went, you know, and got to be a registered nurse. Then, I presume, she decided that if she got in ...

-----END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Jessie Miller, on July 19, 2003, in Hickory, TN, and I should add that this is part of the reunion, the fifty-seventh reunion of the 238th Engineers. So, did your daughter ever ask you about your service growing up? Was she more curious than your stepson?

MILLER: No, she never really talked that much about it. I guess it just didn't interest her a whole lot.

PIEHLER: For instance ... do you remember the first reunion she came to? How many years ago?

MILLER: Oh boy.

PIEHLER: Was she a young—did you ever take her as a child, growing up?

MILLER: Oh, yeah. We had to take her, I guess. I don't know. I'm not absolutely sure.

PIEHLER: Sure.

MILLER: My wife could tell you that better than me! (Laughter) Because, I don't keep good track of that sort of thing. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: After you got married ... did you buy a home?

MILLER: Not right away; not right away. We lived ... with Mary Jane's parents. We had the third floor. (Laughter) Mary Jane and I and Bob had the third floor to ourselves, and then we ate with them. And then, uh, there was a house that they, her parents—one of the parents, I'm not sure, I think it was her mother—that her parents owned a house, and they were renting it to somebody. And, the people that were renting it finally decided they didn't want it anymore, and so then we took it over. ... That was about a block and a half away from where we were there, and so, we lived there for quite a long time. ... Then when we—Susan got to be ready to graduate from the grade school to go to high school, she politely told us that she did not want to go to the city high school—that she wasn't gonna go to school if we were gonna still live there, she would stay at home!

PIEHLER: Why wouldn't she go to the city high school?

MILLER: She didn't like the people, 'cause the city high school was mainly a bunch of rough people, and she just decided from what she heard from the girls that she knew that were going there, probably, that she didn't want to go there. And so, in the meantime, Mary Jane's parents wanted to move from where they were, and move away from the city. And so they got me—being in the construction business, [I] knew houses and which ones were good and which ones were bad, and so they elected me to find them a place to live. And so, we saw in the paper where this one house was in the suburban York district, that was for sale, and they bought that one. And then, before the year was over that Susan was to graduate from grade school to go to high school, the house next door became available. ... The two houses looked almost alike, for just certain little things were different. So, right away we sold that place on the West-Southwest end of York, and moved up beside her parents. So there lived and she went to the suburban district's high school. Bob had already been out of school.

PIEHLER: He had gone to the city high school?

MILLER: He had gone to the city high school.

PIEHLER: And did he have any problems?

MILLER: No, he didn't have any problems. No ... I would say boys are a lot different than girls, and some girls have goofy ideas. (Laughs) And so my daughter had the goofy idea that she didn't want to go to the city school! And so, right before it was time for her to go, we found a place so we could go move into the suburban area, and we lived there the rest of the time until this ... community.

PIEHLER: How long have you been in the retirement community?

MILLER: Oh, we haven't even been there a year yet.

PIEHLER: Oh, so it's very recent that you've moved!

MILLER: Yeah, it's recent that we moved. We waited a long time, because of the fact that the Methodist home – the Methodist church home that was there that they were bringing ours, and put this big apartment building in – was the church where she was a secretary. And she got this notice in the mail that this place was going to be built, and so on and so forth, and she brought it home. And I said to her, “When are we moving?” (Laughs) So, I wanted to get out of fixing things in the house! After we had lived in this one for so long, it was getting to the point where there wouldn't be many more years until we woulda had to replace the furnace, and the bathroom, and the whole bit! I was ready to get rid of it, and move to something that was brand new. And so I said, “When were we moving?” So, we put our name in, and when we put our name in, we were number one on the list. We were the first ones to sign up to move into one of these apartments. We waited for quite a long time because it was still not even above the ground yet. They were still doing the underground work when we signed up. And so, we had to wait that long before we could get a chance to move in. But we were the first people to move into this new apartment dwelling. And now it's about, I guess, maybe 70 to 75 percent filled with senior citizens. (Laughs) And, most of 'em are really great people, really! We're having ... a lot of fun with them.

PIEHLER: You'd mentioned that.

MILLER: ... Like I said, I got—they have, the community has a choir, and I've decided that I'd like to sing. So, I've finally got someplace where I can get on, get on to sing without too much trouble! They were willing to have me because, actually, there was another guy that moved in right after us, and he and I are the only two tenors in the whole thing. For men! And, the rest of them sing bass or baritone or whatever, you know. In the choir, they didn't have any tenors. (Laughs) Now we've got another one; there's three of us now.

PIEHLER: Speaking of music, did you ... like big bands before the war? Was that something you went to?

MILLER: Oh, yeah! I went every week—every week that there was one, either in Hershey, Pennsylvania, or, they had them at the...what was it called—the Valencia Ballroom.

PIEHLER: Yes. So you were a regular there?

MILLER: I was regular. I was there every Friday and Saturday night.

PIEHLER: Any name—big-name acts that you remember particularly?

MILLER: What, the bands?

PIEHLER: Yeah, any bands that ...

MILLER: Any one that you should ...

PIEHLER: So, Tommy Dorsey, the whole ...

MILLER: Oh yeah! Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller, uh, what, I don't know. Whenever there was a big-name band, I probably saw at least 75 percent of them, while in my time a-going there.

PIEHLER: Did you ever ...

MILLER: Either there or at Hershey Park – they'd get it in the summertime. ... In the wintertime, I went to the one at the Valencia at York.

PIEHLER: Did you ever ... see a U.S.O. show when you were in the service?

MILLER: No.

PIEHLER: No? Never saw one of the big bands in service?

MILLER: No, I never did [see] that. I never got to see any of them.

PIEHLER: Did you, um ...

MILLER: The only one I can remember that was anywhere close to where we were—but we were so busy doing it—was Hal McIntyre.

PIEHLER: But you didn't have time to ...

MILLER: No. No, didn't have time to go.

PIEHLER: Did you buy your first house with the G.I. Bill? Do you remember?

MILLER: I don't think I bought either one of them on the G.I. Bill. I go—I got a loan from the bank.

PIEHLER: For both of them? What about—you've been very active with the 238th, but what about any other veterans' organizations? Have you ever joined any others?

MILLER: Well, yes. I belong to the American Legion, but I've only been in their facility in York once.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. When did you join the Legion?

MILLER: Two days after I come back from the service. My buddy was home at that time, and he says, "You gotta go join the Legion." And then, afterwards, I got talking to some people, and they said to me, "Well, why don't you join the VFW?" I said, "Well, I might think about it." And so, one day, I just didn't have anything to do, and so I went to the VFW, and I went in there and saw all these young people, and women, and young girls. What is this! "They can't be veterans! (Laughter) What are they doing in here?" So, I talked to the guy, to the bartender, and you know [he said] "Oh, we take anybody." I said, "Oh, okay." So I drank my beer and left, and that was the last time I was in *there*!

PIEHLER: When was that?

MILLER: Why do *I* want to associate with all those people when they don't know anything about me and I don't know anything about them!? And if they're a veteran of foreign wars, they can join, but not all the kids off the street, and whatever! But, as far as I was concerned, the way I understood later, when I got to talking to people about it, and they wondered why I'd never joined, and I told 'em why, they said, "well, they had to let them in, because for some reason, the vets in York was never a very operative business. Most of the guys went to the American Legion."

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. Then, you said you only went to the Hall once ...

MILLER: Yeah!

PIEHLER: ... in all the years?

MILLER: Yeah, I was only in one day, and that was sometime shortly after I got out of the service. Uh, the guy that was in charge of the veterans' affairs in York, wanted people to come in and interview, so on and so forth, and I went in for an interview. And, seemed to me like he wasn't too much interested in men other than the ones that fought in the infantry. So, he and I didn't get along very well either. (Laughter)

WOMAN'S VOICE: Excuse me, I need to get this check signed so that Mary...

(Tape stops)

PIEHLER: So you were saying this guy wasn't—this Secretary of Veteran's Affairs in this state wasn't very interested in non-infantry?

MILLER: That's right. So, I don't know. He must have ... And, and, you know, all the stuff I read about that he puts in the paper, not very much of it interests me ... at all. I just, I never went back. I never—well, I did go the one time that they had, they had the French Legion honor thing. Uh, went down to the—and they had a guy there, an officer from France pin these medals on you. And, somehow or the other, mine got lost and I don't know where it is. [I] have no idea what happened to it. And ... Mary Jane and I, we—when we moved, we went through every drawer, every box, every thing we could think of to try to find that medal, and I have no idea to this day whatever happened to it! Whether, somebody in my—was in my house was looking at it, and stuck it in their pocket, or whatever. I have no idea.

PIEHLER: Yeah?

MILLER: I have no idea, it's gone. And, she wanted me to go back; last year they had them there, handing them out again. She wanted me to go back and tell them that mine got lost somehow. I said, "I'm not gonna mess with it at all. It doesn't *mean* anything to me." I don't know; I just don't like all that folderol. I never did. (Laughter) I'm a *regular Joe*! I love my guys, and I go to the reunions, and I'll do anything under the sun for them. But, as far as doing things for the rest of the thing, I just don't want to have any parts of it.

PIEHLER: It also sounds like—there was an expression I've heard: "you didn't like a lot of Army chicken shit."

MILLER: No!

PIEHLER: Would that be an accurate ...

MILLER: That's it!!! No, I didn't like it! (Laughter) No! (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You've heard that term! I'm not the first one to utter that! (Laughs)

MILLER: No, I know. No. *No!* No, there was an awful lot of things that I had to do when I was in there, that I didn't think was necessary. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: After the war, where did you get—did you get or old job back, or where did you work when you got home?

MILLER: Well, I went—I went to work for the same company that I worked for when I went in the service. Didn't stay there very long. Uh, well, I just—I just wanted to work someplace else, so I...started...working out of the Union hall. What I wanted to do was to make money. And, I couldn't make enough money working for the same company

that I did before, because things were costing an awful lot more. And, I had, you know, a lot more bills to pay and I needed more money. And so, I decided to work out of the Union Hall, and of course that's where I retired from.

PIEHLER: So, you stayed in the Union? The Union Hall is—in other words, you would go out to different jobs. The Union would send you.

MILLER: Oh, yeah. I was working all over the places. You know, even as far as from Pittsburgh, you know, to York. That's a couple hundred miles.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, now that's a long distance. No, that's not a ...

MILLER: Oh, and I lived in a trailer and did my own cooking and all that kind of stuff when I was there working at the power plants out there.

PIEHLER: Were you ever a Union officer? Did you ever get elected to a Union office?

MILLER: No. I didn't wanna be. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: And did you ever, ever have to go on strike? Were you ever in any strike when you were in the Union?

MILLER: Well, we were—we were out ... on strike one time, but I never had to. Because I lived in York and the Union Hall was in Harrisburg – outside of Harrisburg. You know, they took the guys up there mainly. And, I guess, a lot of them liked to volunteer to do that kind of thing, 'cause they got paid and didn't have to work. That was one thing. I didn't want to walk a picket line, and do that. That's not my cup of tea. But, uh, I never volunteered to do it, and they never, you know, forced me to – so I never had to do any of them.

PIEHLER: Did you—when you retired, did you miss working at all?

MILLER: No! (Laughter) No, I was tired of it. I had enough. I loved my job, but I had worked hard and long, and I was ready to quit.

PIEHLER: Mm-hmm. So you were not one of those people who had to be taken out of the job kicking and screaming, were you?

MILLER: No, no. No, and especially, not when I could quit with the pension that I had! I don't need to worry. (Laughs) The people, people can talk about the unions all they want, but the one I belong to must have been the best one in the world, because I had no problems whatsoever. We ... never had big Union battles about wages or anything, and so on and so forth, that I can recall. It had some problems once in a while with the non-union people trying to take over your jobs and so on and so forth. But ... I just thought it was the greatest thing, and of course like I said I retired with a pension that ...

PIEHLER: You're happy with your pension?

MILLER: I certainly am! I have done all kinds of stuff with my pension and I still can't spend it all! (Laughter) Not that I'm a millionaire!

PIEHLER: Yeah!

MILLER: But I can't spend it all.

PIEHLER: But you feel very comfortable?

MILLER: I'm very comfortable with what I get, and, you know, my pension is my money, and it's in my bank account. It's the only one I have! The rest of the bank account is in both of our names, but I have my *own* with my pension money. (Laughter) And I spend that, and I do with it what I want. And that's what I told Mary Jane, that this is the way it's gonna be, cause I worked for it and it's *mine*. (Laughs) And so, we're compatible again, and so it's *mine*. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... You've been very active, particularly in retirement, with the 238th. You've started to sing in a choir. Is there anything else you did in retirement? You started playing golf—when did you start playing golf? Was it in retirement?

MILLER: Oh no, that was—I played a long time before I ...

PIEHLER: Before retirement?

MILLER: Uh-huh.

PIEHLER: Is there anything else you did in retirement that ...

MILLER: Well not—to tell you the truth, other than singing on the choir, and being Secretary-Treasurer of this outfit, that's about the only work or anything that I do other than having fun! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So what have you done for fun? What are some of the things that you've done for fun?

MILLER: Just associate with people! I love it. Like, I'm sitting here talking to you!

PIEHLER: Yeah?

MILLER: I love to talk with people, and that's what I do out there. I see people, and I sit down on a bench somewhere – talk to 'em. And when I'm not doing that, I'm either watching some sports of some kind on TV, or playing my guitar (Laughs), and I keep myself content every day, seven days a week.

PIEHLER: And you—the guitar, just to follow up, you learned how to play the guitar in the Army, you said?

MILLER: I learned a set of chords ...

PIEHLER: ... but someone ...

MILLER: ... from one of the guys in my—one of the boys in my squad. And he taught me one set of chords to play most of the ... old-time hillbilly songs, and so on and so forth, and that's the kind of stuff that I'd play and sing.

PIEHLER: So he was from the South.

MILLER: No, I'm not—*he* was. He was from the South.

PIEHLER: He was?

MILLER: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You've been in York almost your entire life, except for your very early memories, up until six, and in the service. What's been the same about York and what's different?

MILLER: Oh, I don't think there's *anything* the same, anymore! (Laughs) ... It's just, so much hustle and bustle all the time! Everybody's flying here, flying there—you can't hardly keep up with them, for one thing! This is another reason why I'm happy in the retirement home—I don't want to be flying around anymore! I'm getting to the age where I *can't* fly, actually, and, the thing that's getting to me is the fact that I can't bowl and play golf as much as I like to. Cause that was—that was one of the things that I actually retired to do!

PIEHLER: Is to bowl more?

MILLER: Well, I was, until last—last year is the first year that I didn't bowl in at least four nights a week.

PIEHLER: Really? So, you were a real bowler!

MILLER: I love it! I love every—every ball I roll (Laughter) is a new experience, and I love all of it! It doesn't matter how bad or how good it is! And, uh, the reason now that I am not bowling as much as I'd like to is because most of the people who bowl now don't wanna have five people on a team! They wanna have three or four so they can get done in a hurry, and for the life of me, I cannot figure out why everybody is in such a hurry to get their life over with! And so, I can not bowl that fast anymore. And so, I am now bowling on a five-man team that *needs* me because they had seven men on the team, and all of them had over a 200 average, and they couldn't win the league that they were

bowling in because they had to give away too much handicap! (Laughter) And they bowl three games a night. And so, that's the way I like to bowl, but they want me because my average isn't over 200 anymore! (Laughter) And I give them some handicap, and they don't care what I bowl! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So you're still bowling in a league?

MILLER: I'm still bowling in a league, yes.

PIEHLER: ... Have you been a bowler all your life, or did you ...

MILLER: No, not all my life, I started bowling after I came and got out from the service.

PIEHLER: Back from the service?

MILLER: Mm-hmm.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like you were—were you in leagues?

MILLER: Oh, I was in 'em! I loved it! ... In fact, in three different bowling establishments in York at one time I was in one of the leagues that I bowled in, out of the four a week, three of them I was secretary of. And, I kept all the records—from this house, and this house, and that house. And, well, I don't care much about going into this thing, but I decided that the people that bowl nowadays don't care about records and don't care about what they're supposed to do and what they're not supposed to do! And so, when I would talk to them, and try to get them to do what they were *supposed* to do, they would give me a rough time, and tell me that I was an old foggy and didn't know what was going on! And so, I just gave up all three leagues of being secretary of [them] and decided to get out of it, because they didn't wanna do what they were supposed to do, just like people who drive cars on the highway nowadays—they don't do *anything* they're supposed to do! (Laughs) That's the way I feel about it; I have never seen such terrible driving in all my life as what's on the highway today. It's absolutely atrocious. I'm so glad I can sit in the back seat where I don't see what's going on half the time, because, if I'd be driving, I would probably be running people off the road, just to get them out of the way and try to save somebody's life.

PIEHLER: Is there anything else I forgot to ask you or anything else you'd like to talk about?

MILLER: No ... I can't think of anything. We have gone through almost (Laughs) as much as has happened in my life! (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Well, I really appreciate you taking the time, and I appreciate you! I don't know how many people at this reunion I'll get to, but I appreciate it! It's a good start! It was a good start to talk with you, the permanent secretary. I have a feeling you are going to be secretary-treasurer for life!

MILLER: Yes! Yes, I even have two guys already that said that I cannot give up the job, that they will help any time I need it. (Laughter) But, in fact, what they told me was, that I've been the only one that does the job right! (Laughter) So, it's one of those things. I can't believe that I have done all of it right, but they seem to think so. And, like I said, when I took the thing over there was no money in the treasury, but now we're pretty well off. We have over five thousand dollars in it!

PIEHLER: Which is a good sum of money.

MILLER: Yes, for us, because we don't know what to do with it to begin with. (Laughter) If you're—like, your job, if your thing [Veterans' Oral history Project] needs some help let me know and we'll donate something!

PIEHLER: Well, I might take you up on that offer at some point. Well thank you again, and I really appreciate it.

MILLER: You're welcome! I—you know, it's been a long, long time, and actually this is the first time that I have ever been asked you know, a whole bunch of questions about what I did, and how I liked it, and so on and so forth, and I feel a lot better now that I've gotten all this junk off my chest!

PIEHLER: Really? (Laughter) So I'm really the first one that's really sort of gone through the whole—you never, like, sat down with your son and daughter and ...

MILLER: No.

PIEHLER: Because, I remember my late father-in-law, and I regret I was going to interview him, but then he passed away. But one day, my wife and I—we sat and talked to him, and he told us about his Korean War experiences, and he talked for about an hour. So, you never really had done that with [anyone]?

MILLER: No, nobody seems to care! [Nobody] that I know, anyhow, or that I'm in contact with.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Well, I am really glad, because this is what we collect! I—we are really glad! And, normally I do this with my undergraduate students. ... But thank you again!

MILLER: Well, you're quite welcome.

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