

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

WILLIAM & MARY WHEELER

Interviewed by Julie Hunter
7 April 1989
OHRC accession #88-90-1,2

INTRODUCTION

This interview was conducted by Julie Hunter for the Oral History Research Center as part of "The History of Paoli, Indiana." The transcript has been edited by the Oral History Research Center's staff, and by the interviewee. The original tape and final transcript are kept on file in the Lilly Library. Copies of some interviews are kept at the Paoli Public Library and the Orange County Historical Society library. Duplicates of the tape and transcript may be consulted at the Oral History Research Center.

The reader should bear in mind the fact that this material is a verbatim transcription of an interview, not a written document. Very few persons speak with the precision with which they write. We have done our best to make the transcript easily readable, while remaining faithful to the tape recording.

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Interviewee (please PRINT)
my oral history interview with Julie Hunter,
Interviewer (please PRINT)
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OK to deposit here 4/5/91
-BS

In full accord with the provisions of the Deed of Gift, I hereunto set my hand.

<u>William C. Wheeler</u>	<u>4-19-89</u>
Donor	Date
<u>Julie A. Hunter</u>	<u>4-19-89</u>
Interviewer	Date

Oral History Research Center
Indiana University
512 N. Fess
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

INFORMED CONSENT

I, William C. Wheeler, agree to
Interviewee (please PRINT)

participate in an oral history project with the Indiana
University Oral History Center under the below terms.

- 1). My participation in an approximately two-hour interview is voluntary. If I agree to any future interviews on this same project, this signed form will apply.
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- 3). I understand that the purpose of this interview and the larger oral history project is to better understand local social change.
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William C. Wheeler 4-19-89
Interviewee Date

Julie A. Hunter 4-19-89
Interviewer Date

INDIANA UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

DEED OF GIFT AGREEMENT

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Interviewer (please PRINT)
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Date.

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In full accord with the provisions of the Deed of Gift, I hereunto set my hand.

<u>Mary Frances Wheeler</u> Donor	<u>4-19-89</u> Date
<u>Julie A. Hunter</u> Interviewer	<u>4-19-89</u> Date

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER
Indiana University
Memorial Hall West, Room 401
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

INFORMED CONSENT

I, Mary Wheeler, agree to
Interviewee (please PRINT)

participate in an oral history project with the Indiana
University Oral History Center under the below terms.

- 1). My participation in an approximately two-hour interview is voluntary. If I agree to any future interviews on this same project, this signed form will apply.
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Mary Frances Wheeler
Interviewee

4-19-89
Date

Julie A. Hunter
Interviewer

4-19-89
Date

PAOLI PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

Biographical Data Sheet

I. INTERVIEWEE/NARRATOR DATA

Full Name: William Charles Wheeler
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Address: Rural Route 1, Box 528, Paoli, IN 47454

Phone: 812/723-3236

Date of Birth: 1919 Place of Birth: Green County, KY

Sex: Male Ethnic Origin: _____

Education: High School.

Occupational History: Agricultural worker, occasional laborer, restaurant worker, Air Force bombardier (WWII), gas station co-owner

Special interests, hobbies, etc.: _____

Father's Name and occupation: _____

Mother's Name and occupation: _____

II. INTERVIEWER DATA

Full Name: Julie A. Hunter
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Local address: 117 E. 15th St., Apt. 2, Bloomington, IN 47401/812-336-7162
and phone

Permanent Address: 7800 Mockingbird Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76180/817-656-9670
and phone

Date of Birth: 1-24-62 Place of Birth: Hollis, Oklahoma

Association with the Paoli Project: Intern

Subject of interview: Life histories, WWII and associated social change,
political allegiance & philosophy.

Number of Tapes: 2

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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

INTERVIEWEE: William C. and Mary Wheeler
INTERVIEWER: Julie Hunter
SUBJECT: History of Paoli, Indiana
DATE: April 7, 1989
TRANSCRIBER: Norma Olmer

Hunter: This is Julie Hunter and I'm interviewing William and Mary Wheeler at their home outside of Paoli for the Paoli Project. Today is April 7th, 1989.

I guess to start this, you could both tell me the time about your early life. Where you were born, when, where your family was from, that kind of thing.

M. Wheeler: I was born in 1920, five-tenths of a mile down _____ from Paoli, on a farm, _____, sisters, and we had cows, milk, chickens to feed. I helped with the cooking and sisters helped feed the cows...feed the chickens most of the time. I would help with the milk and always had a big farm and _____ fruits and vegetables. And we didn't come to town very often. _____

H: Were they a full working-farm then? Did you raise everything you needed and...

MW: We raised most of it then. That's all...my father farmed and that was all _____ then.

H: How long had your family, on that farm, lived?

MW: Maybe about...about 1919, I guess. And in the _____ Farm, I think, around 1930.

H: So, it wasn't a farm that had been in the family...?

MW: No. My father worked for the man who owned the farm. And then he finally bought the farm; _____ he owned the farm.

H: Was your family from around here then? Your mother and father, both of them?

MW: Yes, both of them. Orange County; both of them were born in Orange County.

H: What about you _____?

WW: I was born in Graves County, Kentucky in 19 and 19, and my dad was from that area and my mother was from Horsecave, Kentucky. And they met through a postal-card exchange--which was a common thing in those days.

H: Like a pen pal, kind of?

WW: Yes. People would send postcards with scenes usually from their area; from the country they were in. And they would exchange, you know...and they'd get acquainted that way. And we had a small farm near Mayfield, Kentucky and at the start of World War I, I guess it was, my dad sold it and bought a bigger farm and went in debt for it. And about a year later, his eyes failed him...his eyesight failed. He had a...he didn't know at that time what it was, but it is very common now. It's macular degeneration of retina(?). And so, we saw some pretty tough times from about 1925 till '33.

H: Did your mother continue to work the farm?

WW: What?

H: Did your mother continue to work the farm?

WW: No, my dad did, but it was a struggle for him. Then in 19 and 1928, I guess it was, he developed emphysema and that...after that, why, we had a very difficult time because my mother had...with five children to take care of.... And we had...I don't know, what would be called primitive conditions now. We had no phones, no roads actually; when the weather was bad the only way to get in or out was to walk or horseback. Down on the Mississippi Delta...not the Delta, it's the Valley area, when you get rain down there, there's no rocks. The bottom goes out of the road; it's just impassable. Of course, now they're all blacktopped but at that time they...that was unheard of. The only road that was all-weather surfaced was U.S.45; it goes down through...it does go down through the delta...Mississippi Delta to--Mobile, Alabama.

H: What was your father farming?

WW: Tobacco and corn. Everybody usually had hogs, you know, for their own use.

H: Right.

WW: A couple of cows and, of course, horses was the power for the farm. Chickens; we raised turkeys occasionally--a few.

H: Did he take his tobacco some place to sell?

WW: Oh yes. We sold it in Mayfield, Kentucky which was county seat of Grave's County, and we also grew cotton. With Grave's County, Kentucky as the northern-most cotton-growing area in the United States. And we had two or three acres; that was an early

WHEELER, W & M

cash crop that came in earlier than tobacco. And we sold that at Fulton, Kentucky...Tennessee, Weakley County, Tennessee. But in the...I went to school at...in 19 and 34, my mother got sick and developed pneumonia and died. And then 3 months later my dad died. So there was five of us children left homeless within a period of three months. And right in the peak of the Depression.

H: Did you have any relatives?

WW: So the...one of the neighbors...I went... one of the neighbors took me in to live with them. And one took...another one took my younger brother. And my three younger...my two sisters and youngest brother were put under the care of the Lyndon Kentucky Baptist Orphans Home which is in in Kentucky. And my younger brother was adopted by a family in that neighborhood. The two sisters went to live with relatives and we grew up separately in that event. But I went ahead and finished high school. I was then thirteen when they died ...

H: Yes.

WW: ...and then when I got out of school, jobs were very scarce in west Kentucky. And my cousin, who lived across the road here, they just come to Indiana from Kentucky. And he had a job and he told me if I wanted to come up and stay with them and help around the farm--they had a little farm across the road--that a fellow could find employment in farm work when I wasn't working for him.

H: When did you graduate from high school? What year was that?

WW: 1937.

H: And you came the following year to Indiana?

WW: I came ten days after I got out of school.

H: (laughs) Didn't waste any time.

WW: Yes, I came up here the 18th of May of 1937, and at that time Paoli about 25-hundred people. And the main industry was...were the Paoli Chair Company--which still exists--and the...about three small dairy operations. There was...

MW: _____

WW: What?

MW: _____

WW: Yes. There was Johnson's Creamery, Turner's Creamery

WHEELER, W & M

and...there was another one; I can't think which...what it was now. Turner and Johnson, they were locally operated and...Meadowgold had an operation. And then there was a place that wasa rather unique--it was called Andy's Restaurant. It was a Greyhound Bus stop and a 24-hour restaurant. And he owned a 650-acre farm out...about three miles out of town. And I worked for him for a time.

H: Yes.

WW: But he had a dairy herd and he raised his own feed. He had beautiful alfalfa fields back then. As was before, we had a lot of pests that we have now, you know. And he grew his own feed--corn and hay. And had about a 30-cow--dairy herd--and he brought the milk into town and he had an ice cream making operation. And he made ice cream and he sold it in his restaurant. And also he sold the milk and all that; you know, anything that he needed in the dairy product, why, he grew it himself. So it made what was then a great profit, because he was cutting out the middle-man and.... But he sold it, double-dip ice cream cone, one of those big ones with the blue containers on it, for a nickle which.... You can imagine in warm weather how that went; he really did sell ice cream. And I would work there all week and then come in town at night and spend half of it for ice cream and the slot machine. (laughs) It was a revolving situation then.

H: So you did some work on your cousin's farm? Whatever...?

WW: Yes, it was an apple orchard. This was a...where we're at right here now was an apple orchard. And across the road there was about 65-acres of apples and peaches. And some few blue plums.

H: Did they ship that through...out of here? I understand the basket factory was here because they were making them for the orchards.

WW: Yes, that was another industry. The Edgerton Basket Company that burned here in the war. And we sold most of ours locally; we put a roadside stand out there across the road from here. And so, when I wasn't working for him, I was working for Andy in the farm that was where I made what little money I earned; I didn't make very much money in those days to get along. But that's what we did but...that's what you do now too to get along. But then in 19 and 39 my school, Pilot Oak High School in Graves County was the big basketball power in west Kentucky and we went two games in the Kentucky state basketball tournament that year. We were beaten by Midway, which was near Lexington.

H: Yes.

WW: But I went down to the sectional and I ran into a friend of mine who had been working in New Jersey for White Castle restaurants and he wanted to know what I was doing; if I had a job. And I told him I didn't. And he said, "How would you like to go to work in New Jersey?" Why, New Jersey was one of those far-away places with strange sounding names to me but I told him I would try it. So, he had a friend who was a supervisor for White Castle in Newark, so he wrote and told him he had a prospect. So I went up to New Jersey and went to work for White Castle. In '39...I worked '39 and '40.

H: So you had worked about five years? here around Paoli?

WW: No, I worked from '37 to '39--two years.

H: OK.

WW: And then I went up there and I'd get to see a lot of the country, plus I'd get to go to New York for the World's Fair which was going on then. And over to Philadelphia, out to Asbury Park, Atlantic City, and...got a lot of travel, but there again our wages were low--but everything else was cheap.

H: What were you doing for them?

WW: Working in the restaurant; worked there...you know..?

H: Yes.

WW: Yes. Worked behind the counter. Worked there, oh... at that time they did not have such a variety of products and everybody worked chef work. On one shift you were fryer and on the next shift you had different duties and on the third shift you had everything. On the late morning shift you'd be by yourself; part of the time you'd have all of it. And so then the war began to loom more as a certainty and I was going to have to register for the draft. So, I didn't want to register in New Jersey because I had nobody...you know, I knew nobody up there. So I quit my job at White Castle and came back to Paoli.

H: Why did you think that it would make a difference to register in Indiana or in New York...in New Jersey?

WW: The only difference would be that I thought I'd probably go quicker from up here.

H: OK.

WHEELER, W & M

WW: I might. Because of the population density.

H: Right.

WW: And so I came back here and registered, and Charlestown, Indiana powder plant was just starting up. They were hiring construction workers; so I went up there and got a job.

H: Where was that?

WW: Charlestown, Indiana.

H: I guess I'm not familiar.

WW: Big...it was operated by E.I. Dupont. It was a huge operation; made smokeless powder. So in January of '41, I started to work for E.I. Dupont. And I lived here, right across the road, in a small house over there and with my aunt and uncle. And commuted to Charlestown which is about 60 miles by bus each day. Or I went in a car part of the time with different people.

H: Were a lot of people from this area doing that?

W: Everyone that was able bodied and wasn't in the service or didn't have a farm to take care of. And a lot of farmers did; worked the farm too. And where I was making about \$16.50 a week in New Jersey when I quit...I started out at \$12.50 and that was for 60 hours, and I got up to \$16.50, I believe. You'd get an automatic raise every six months; \$2.00 a week. I started out at \$33 a week at Charlestown, which was big money then, and I was doing pick and shovel work with construction. We were putting in water lines. I was working with the pipe lines group. We were putting in all that underlayment of pipe that...there was a tremendous amount of water used making gunpowder. And then after about six months of that, I got promoted to the patrol force--guard duty at the plant. And then when the plant went into operation, they couldn't use all the patrol people, so they put a bunch of us into operations, and I started...had the dipper operator in the making of smokeless powder. The first operation...well, it's the second operation on the powder line. You take the cotton; you take the guncotton that is the basic ingredient of powder, put it into the acid...mix it with the acid and then the next step after that is ringer operator. And that's where you ring after dipping it...I don't know what you call it. The chemical reaction takes place and you have to ring the acid...the surplus acid out of the cotton. And so I got promoted to a ringer operator and I did that about a year. And one of the fellows that I worked with from the start there--about right after I started on the patrol force--from Kentucky, went to the Air Force right after I went there. And he came back with his

WHEELER, W & M

commission and wings and all that stuff, you know. So me and a buddy of mine who were in that age group, we decided we'd like to try to get into the Air Force cadet system. So we went to Louisville and enlisted in the airforce.

H: Was he a buddy of yours from the factory? or from down...?

WW: Yes, he was from Madison, Indiana.

H: Yes.

WW: And so...that was in August of '42; and in January of '43 the airforce called me up. And five days later I was on my way to the airforce. And then after about 18 months of training, I became a member of a B24 crew.

H: Yes.

WW: And we went overseas to the 453rd bomb group at Attleboro, England. Old Buckingham Air Base was, at that time... the executive officer--the CO--was Jimmy Stewart, the movie star.

H: Really.

WW: And I've never met him personally, but I've talked to him in the.... Well, we were...the fad was to have an Eisenhower-type jacket made; at that time it was a must. It had a scarlet lining and...pretty fancy outfit. The tailor shop in Norwich, England--Stone Brothers, Ltd.--made these jackets and I was having mine.... You go in and get measured and then you go back for a fitting. And then you go back and pick your jacket up; they'd mail you a card to go and get it. So I went to pick up my jacket and I had to wait awhile--and it would be at the end. But in the waiting room... when I got there, there were four people there besides myself. And one of them was Jimmy Stewart; he was there for his fitting. So he had to wait longer than the rest of us, so everybody finally left but he and I. And so, we're not going to sit around and, you know, without saying something...just looking at somebody. So we had a bright conversation.

H: He was already famous by then?

WW: Oh yes.

H: And he had volunteered to...?

WW: Well, we had probably about a five-minute talk about just general subjects; army mostly. And then the girl came in with the samples of the patches that she could put on the jacket.

WHEELER, W & M

Some of them were fairly expensive; so I chose the most expensive one. And I told her, "Put this one on. I'm not going to have but one of these jackets made." So....

H: Why were they called an Eisenhower jacket?

WW: An Eisenhower jacket, yes.

H: Do you know why they were called that? Or...

WW: Yes, because he designed this jacket for himself.

H: OK.

WW: It was a little bit sporty for the army at that time, you know. It was hard for him to get away with it. So when he started wearing them, all the officers in the army tried to get one. So...

H: How long were you stationed in England then?

WW: I was in England about eight months. Spent a month in Ireland in some last-minute training--gunnery training. Spent a week in the Hebrides because of weather; and also a week in Greenland because of the weather. Which was very interesting.

H: Did you meet a lot of...I suppose you met a lot of people from all over the country by being in the Air Force.

WW: Oh yes.

H: Did you also know people from Indiana or Kentucky that happened to be...I guess I'm interested in how many people from this area actually got over there.

WW: No, not really. My brother was in the 9th Air Force; he was over there the same time. We got to see each other two or three times.

H: What was the war like here in the United...I understand they were drafting and....

MW: I know they had sugar coupons, or shoes and gasoline. I don't remember too much about it, really. I was working on the farm and, let's see, we didn't have a radio until...I don't remember what year. But I was out of high school _____. I _____ much about it. I know there was a scarcity of a lot of things. I worked at Charlestown too, about three years, _____.

WHEELER, W & M

H: Was that the same powder factory?

MW: No, in the plant. I lived in town and had my aunt and uncle living in town. And I stayed with them during the week and they had a daughter that worked down there too. Their daughter and I _____ and part of the time we were _____.

H: Were there a lot of women working in the factory?

MW: Yes, there were a lot of women working. Yes, there were...I don't know how many busses...how many people went from around here. They started at French Lick and picked up passengers all the way down. _____. We went Highway US 150 and we picked passengers up all the way clear to New Albany. And occasionally there were one or two rode from New Albany on the bus.

H: One.

MW: New Albany is just cross the river from Louisville, Kentucky.

H: Yes.

WW: Red, white, and blue bus lines.

H: Is that what they were called?

WW: Yes.

H: Did people have a real sense of patriotism? Is that why they were involved in...I mean, did they feel like going to work in the factories with supporting the war? supporting the cause?

MW: I think a lot of them did.

WW: That was a part of it, yes. We worked a lot of hours. It was basically for the money, but...for a livelihood. It was a chance to get ahead, but a lot of things we did did involve patriotism because they worked swing shifts and extra hours and nobody questioned the conditions, you know. And we now have all these safeguards and...we were not a riskfree society at that time like we try to be today.

H: Do you think that had a little bit to do with patriotism? That, you know, "if the boys were over there fighting then there was nothing that you could be asked to do here that was too much" kind of thing. Working longer hours, or not really worrying about the...

WHEELER, W & M

WW: That's part of it. But to me, that is just a...just the right thing to do. It don't matter what it's...if you call it patriotism or what, it's just.... I'm a great believer in right and wrong myself.

H: Was that how you viewed the war then? World War II?

WW: You mean World War II?

H: Yes, that there was a right...

WW: (laughs) Oh, once a year.

H ...cause and a wrong cause.

WW: If there ever was a right and wrong cause, that was it.

H: Well, I agree there; I guess I'm just _____

WW: And I think there's a right and wrong for everything. But I'm also a believer in this Founding Father. He said, "My country, may she always be right. But my country, right or wrong." Words to that effect.

H: Yes.

WW: So I'm, you know.... But I don't know, I haven't the facts, but of all those boys that I knew in the service, I never heard any of them really question, you know, the situation. And we were a diverse group. Even in that ten-man crew... we had one from Texas, three from Ohio, two from Indiana....

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

WW: But I knew lots of dads and...

H: Do you think the attitude was that you were there because your country decided that you needed to be? rather than that you were, you know, anti-German or...

WW: I was anti-German. Was anti-German philosophies, not the _____

H: Right.

WW: Yes, I never...my country, you know, I didn't even have to....

I've always been an avid reader ever since.... I learned to read when I was about five-years old. I could read the newspaper when I was about five. Read a lot of stuff, you know. When I was a kid I had to ask... everybody in the neighborhood knew that I liked to read, and they knew that, you know, the fact that I learned to read so young. When they were cleaning out their attics in the spring --spring housecleaning-- they took out their old books and magazines and throw them in what we called a gunnysack, and send me word that they had some books for me. And I remember...the _____ education was from the time I left home to where...you know, you don't know what you'll get out of somebody's attic. You get _____ culture, (laughs) History of the Kootnae Indians with a translation and all that stuff. I can remember Predictions and Predilections of Nostradamus and all that stuff. (laughs) But I read a lot of diverse literature.

H: Probably wouldn't have been reading that in the Kentucky schools.

WW: What?

H: You probably wouldn't have been reading that in the Kentucky schools.

WW: I knew more about that than my teacher did when I was in school; I read so much. (laughs) Do you know, what I did was...I sat in the old-fashioned desk with the desk come back on it? I'd have a Zane Gray western book right there in here.

H: (laughs)

WW: That was when I was in high school. I'd be reading Zane Gray and the teacher would be up there lecturing. And she would ask me a question and I wouldn't know what she was talking about; I was riding along the Brasos River with Zane Gray. (laughs) Well, leading up to...you know, I never thought I was obeying my country's idea, it was just an idea that something had to be done because Hitler was out for world domination. I don't like world domination anyway.

H: Do you think people here in Indiana had a real...were they talking about it? Were they..?

WW: Sure.

H: ...I don't know, listening to the radio real frequently?

WW: This is Quaker country here too.

H: Yes.

WW: They're pacifists but they were not pacifists then.

H: But also religious.

WW: _____

H: Freedom, I guess.

WW: But there were several of these Quakers who didn't _____. But many of them did. Mary's brother was killed in the infantry in the Phillipines; her only brother.

H: I'll be darned.

MW: He worked; he did a lot of work for the Quaker church.

H: Why did he decide to go?

MW: He was drafted; he had to.

H: And he couldn't...?

WW: He could have taken conscientious objector status.

MW: Well yes, he could have done that.

WW: But because very few people did that in this area even though it was Quaker. I don't know...we were just discussing it yesterday at the restaurant.

One of my coffee-drinking buddies was a retired state policeman who was also in the Air Force and we were together for a while there in training. And he was a prisoner-of-war, of course, overseas. And we were talking about the Oliver North situation. And he said, you know, people...he said that what this country needs to wake the people up is a good bomb attack on some of their cities. Cause that would make them change their tune on some things Oliver North, you know.... And that's the feeling that a lot of people of my generation had about that, because once you've seen a city that's been bombed--like London--and I saw it several times... It can... it can happen here, and it might happen, but I think a person who will take cover behind a conscientious objector law, either he's never seen that...he don't know what could happen, or what it is.

H: Do you think people were more aware of that possibility even though there wasn't television? Did that...seems to me that that would be a way that more people....

WW: I don't think so; it was something else. It was before the

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advent of "there are no rights or wrongs." It was just what most people...and also it had to do with Christian morality, I think. Which is, to me... is sadly lacking in the judgments made today. Of course I know that is a question now-a-days, but having had 70 years to contemplate on this thing and see part of it first-hand, I'm trying(?) to see things go like they are myself.

H: Do you think the world... I was going to ask: I've heard that life changed a lot after World War II. That there were more cars on the road; there were more, I don't know... people moved to cities more.

WW: Oh yes.

H: Worked in _____, television, telephones, all that kinds of...

WW: The big thing was the shift of the black population--to the big cities you know.

H: From the south up to Chicago, like that?

WW: Yes, we're still feeling that, so-called ghettos.

H: How did that affect life here in Paoli? I assume you came back to Paoli after the war or...?

WW: Yes. How did it...? It didn't affect life here too much.

H: Were more people working in the factories or...?

WW: Life was more insulated here to some degree cause nobody wanted to come here and start a ghetto, you know. When I came back in 19...I got home May the 30th, 1945. I was the first non-wounded veteran to get home, because being a bombsite bombardier with a 1035 MOS, there was no need for me without retraining. And then when the war was winding down... so they didn't want to retrain unless I wanted to make a career out of it. I did have a chance to stay in, and I figured to go to pilot training--to retrain for a pilot.

H: You considered doing that?

WW: Yes, I'd already applied for that, because I didn't know about the discharge system. Well, nobody did; they just sprung it on us suddenly. I had orders to go to San Antonio--Randolph Field.

H: Yes.

WW: That's...I believe it's San Antonio; wherever it is. Randolph Field.

H: Yes. It is there.

WW: And on Monday...and on Thursday the rumor got started just as we were beginning.... the rumor got started that there was a new discharge system that they'd set up and that anybody whose name was on the bulletin-board notice in the orderly room was eligible for discharge--and my name was on it. So 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon--it was on Thursday--why, I already had my bags packed and my footlocker was already in the orderly room to be shipped to Randolph. And then one day, there my name was on the list, so at 2:00 o'clock we reported to this building and the guy got up and said: "Gentlemen, the War Department has come out with a system for discharge. You've got as much as 85 points, you go with how we...." how they arrived at the points, " ...why you're eligible for discharge and we'll give you 10 minutes to think this over. If you want to stay in and...at your present grade..." And I was a first lieutenant then. "If you want to stay at your present grade for another year, there's no guarantee that you'll go any further than that. If you want to get out, you can sign 'Yes, I want to get out.' Write your name, rank and serial number on this paper and next week you'll be on your way home."

So that's kind of sudden for a guy that's...I'd been in about two-and-a-half years. And the army's not a bad place, I don't think. Now the Air Force...the Army Air Force. And I think a lot of these people who don't know what to do with themselves would be much better off if they went in the service today, than they would be trying to figure out whether to push drugs or not to push drugs or something.

But anyhow, that's how suddenly I got out of the service.

H: What made you decide to write "Yes"?

WW: (laughs) Well, that's another story but... I'd had a run-in with a base commander there because I failed to keep an appointment. I had...I don't know whether you know about flight pay or not, but we used to get flight pay if we got in so-many hours flying in 3 months, period. And this was in late March, and March was the end of the quarter and I didn't have all my flight time in. And so I had an appointment with this Major for, I believe, it was Saturday afternoon about 4:00 o'clock. And he was a very-much of a stickler; in fact, he was the worst officer I ran into in the service. And I lacked about...I lacked an hour-and-forty minutes having my flight time in, and it meant something like four- or five-hundred dollars, which was big money in those days. And so, I went down to the flight line at 1:00 o'clock; it was damp weather, it was March. And there was

weather front moving; there wasn't any flying going on. But I kept hanging around, and time came for my appointment... Just about time for my appointment, they decided to send up a weather ship to fly out towards New Orleans; to fly up over the clouds and report on the weather. And so I went over to talk to the pilot and he said, "How much time do you got to have?" And I said, "An hour-and-forty minutes."

He said, "Well, get your chute and in 5 minutes I'll take you... I'll get it for you if we have to shoot some landings."

So, I got my parachute and I just...you know, it was the time I was supposed to be talking with the Major I was flying to get the time in. I got it in, and it...and I made about 4-hundred bucks. And so the next morning, bright and early, as soon as the orderly room opened up, I went over and... This Major had a Captain--a _____ for an orderly...

H: Yes.

WW: That tells you something. If you know military, that tells you something. Most of them have a top Sergeant; but he had a Captain out front. And so I went up to him and I just... we didn't have too much military courtesy. The fact that we'd been overseas, you know, we didn't do a lot of saluting, and so I just walked up like I walked up to anybody and I said, "Captain, I was supposed to see Major..." I can't think of his name now.

"...yesterday, but I was out on a flight and I couldn't make it."

Boy, he _____ He said, "Soldier, do you know how to ...Lieutenant, do you know how to report in a military fashion." Of course, I'd seen that coming...trouble there.

And I said, "Yes sir." And he said, "You go back out and you come in."

There's a whole bunch of civilian employees; a big office, you know. Everybody's looking by that time; I'm embarrassed to pieces--and mad too. And so, I _____ and report in military fashion. And he said, "You're...the Major is waiting to see you. He wants to see you."

So I went in and the Major, he was (pause) mad. And he red lined my pay at me; do you know what that is?

H: I've heard of it; I don't remember.

WW: You can't draw your pay until you have a hearing. And I had 9-hundred or more dollars coming, you know. Biggest check I'd ever gotten cause I hadn't been paid all...I'd just come back from overseas-- in February, and this was March. So when this discharge thing come up, that got me out of all that. I just...

H: (laughs)

WW: I didn't even have to go back to see the Major. (laughs)

H: How did you _____?

WW: But I've never been sorry, really, because if I had gone ahead and trained for a pilot, I'd have graduated just in time for Korea. So....

H: Had you seen enough war by that point, do you think? or do you...?

WW: Well, yes, I didn't... decided to go back than to see another war. Especially in a cold climate. (laughs) So, that really was one of the factors although I had...I did have mixed feelings, I guess now. Cause I had no job back here; nobody really had spoken the past year, you know. I hadn't met anyone _____. And so... I was there about three days before I left. Everytime I'd go by the orderly room I'd think back over then to rescind the order, but I didn't.

So I came home and everybody was.... There was no brass bands or anything like that; we didn't have any celebrations, but everybody was more than affable. But people have always been friendly. To me, you know; I went through school as an orphan, through high school which a lot of kids didn't do. I've always known lots of good folks. Well, most of the people I've ever known have been good to me.

H: I thought there was something.... I may be confusing this with something else but I thought that at the Paoli Courthouse... the square, they had some kind of Decoration Day for returning war veterans? Am I confusing that with...?

WW: No, that's right. That was years later.

H: OK.

WW: That was after everybody got home.

H: OK.

WW: Yes, there's a monument there; and we still have a Veterans' Day thing once a year. But my cousin who's...the same one that was responsible for my coming up to Indiana in the first place, he was in the Air Force and...Okinawa, I believe. Well, he wrote to his mother...I'd gotten home before he did. I got home, like I said, the first non-wounded veteran. There were a bunch of fellows here that had been wounded and were convelescing; and there were some in the hospital and some in the.... But he wrote to his mother and said to tell me if I

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hadn't gone to...hadn't gotten into anything, not to get in any big hurry; we'd look around and see if we could get into some kind of business when he came home. So we ended up buying a service station. But the local bankers advised me not to buy it because no one had ever been able to make a go of it; they didn't think we'd make it.

H: Where was it located?

WW: Where the M & M Upholstery is now; it's a shop...

H: Yes.

WW: It was a Marathon Oil Co. Station. So, when he came home.. .he came home in January in the next year; that was January of '46. So in February of '46, he and I bought the Marathon Service Station and the upshot of it was that my brother and I bought him out in that fall. And my brother and I continued in the service station business for 36 years.

H: Had your brother gotten up here by then? or this wasn't the brother that was adopted down in Kentucky?

WW: No, this was my brother who was next to me in age.

H: OK.

WW: It was... he was like myself, he was raised by three different households. I lived with three different families when I was growing up; they were all nice to me and I got a lot of help. I made a lot of friends through them; still in contact with the people.

H: Were they relatives or just people that you happened to meet?

WW: One of them were but the other two were not. Neighbors and acquaintances.

H: Yes.

WW: But, I don't know, the fact that I was thinking about my younger brother...he did come up here after my brother and I went into business. Well, he was quite a bit younger; he was quite a bit younger than that and we brought him up. He came up on vacation and we asked him if he'd like to work with us when he got out of school. And he said he would, so he come up and stayed a year and then he was drafted. But instead of being drafted, he enlisted in the Air Force; and he had a six-year hitch. It was in the Air Force _____; it was a six-year

hitch...

H: Yes.

WW: ...during the Korean War but he became an instructor; and then eventually he got into NASA. Stayed with NASA until he retired last...about a year ago January.

H: When and how did the two of you meet? Did you meet in Paoli or...?

WW: Yes, we had seen each other occasionally. I mean just, you know, _____

MW: Well, I had a cousin and he had a cousin that ran around together all the time you know. I was with my cousin _____

H: Kind of crossed paths. Yes. Now and then.

MW: _____

H: Did you... I guess, did you...? I am confused; you said you lived about five miles away, so...

MW: _____

H: OK. So you didn't live across the street or anything like that?

MW: No.

WW: People in this area are greatly similar to the ones in west Kentucky where I grew up. They...although they're mostly a lot of Baptists and Church of Christ in that area, but people are tolerant of other people. You know, it's a "live and let live" type community and the Quakers are like that, I mean, basically.

H: It seems like there's a lot of... just thinking of all the churches in this area: the Quakers and the Mennonites and the Amish and the Baptists, I guess, and the _____ of Christ.

WW: The Mennonites and the Amish are "johnny-come-lately," really. They have only been in this area twenty years or so. We never heard of them when I came here. But that's all right with me. I mean, I don't... I know a lot of them and they're nice people. I don't agree with that Amish style of living but that's their business; it does have a point, I notice that. I lived that life, you know, for a number of years and I know it....

LONG PAUSE

H: When were you two married?

MW: In '47; October of '47.

H: And what had you been doing. you know, just between high school and...?

MW: _____ about 21 when I was at Charlestown. And then I worked down _____

H: At the _____?

WW: _____

H: OK.

WW: _____

H: OK.

MW: _____ I worked there a year, or less than a year? It was almost two years. And then after I got married, I didn't work.

H: What kind of work did you do at the Furniture Factory? Finishing or...?

MW: Oh, yes, _____. Sanding, and little odd...just different jobs. _____

H: Was that... were there any kind of difference between, you know... the town kids to do that more or kids from the country did that more?

MW: I don't think so. There weren't very many young people working down there; mostly older. I mean, people that had families; I didn't have any family. _____ half-a-dozen _____.

H: And you were still living with your parents then?

MW: Yes.

H: Did you have friends in school that were doing the same kind of thing or...?

MW: No, _____. Some of them were married _____ and had their family, so they were _____. I was 22 before I

was _____. So I really don't know what the others _____ were doing. I suspect they _____ had their families _____.

H: Did your _____ friends come from _____ instead of going into high school from neighborhood kids to, I guess, more children from Paoli?

MW: _____. I had to travel around. _____

H: And that was a one-room school house?

MW: _____ We could ride a school bus; a high school bus. And class mates _____ travel around in the country school, I don't believe we had any _____. My sister and I started first grade together; so my sister and I started high school together. And _____ these friends and few acquaintances when we got to high school.

WW: You know, Kentucky has a reputation of being a backwoods state and it's always been a poor state. Kentucky covers a range from metropolitan to backwoods. And the part I grew up in, although it's _____ was _____, and opportunity was limited-- it was very limited at that time--; it's now that the area around the Kentucky dam(?) and Barkely(?) dam(?) is really a thriving area now. But even at that time, the school system was so much better in that part of the state. One out of two of us were a thing of the past in that... when I went to school... I went to a country high school, you know, and I was amazed how many one room schoolhouses there were in existence in other parts of the state....

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

H: ...accused you of being a hill-billy or...?

WW: Oh sure, they were always calling me a hill-billy. And the hills are so much bigger here than I'd ever seen.

H: (laughs)

WW: And then, when I went to eastern Kentucky, I could see why. Because they're more familiar with eastern than central Kentucky which is fairly rough.

H: Do you think there's much difference in the way of life in Indiana or Kentucky? I've heard it's, well...wait, let me start that again. Between southern Indiana and Kentucky, because I've

heard it said that southern...that Indiana is more like Kentucky than it is like, say, the northern part of the state.

WW: It is, but is there too much difference in the rural life in any part of the country. We have lived in Florida a couple of times and I think small towns are pretty much the same the country over. I can't say that with certainty but I know that was in... the ones I was in down there. But, yes, you're right, this part of Indiana is pretty much like Kentucky. But I think it's pretty much like Illinois...southern Illinois, and northern Missouri. (Long pause) I wouldn't think of living anywhere except a rural area. I don't want to live in town; I like this location here.

H: Why is that? What is it that you value about being....

WW: I don't like the congestion, the noise, and another thing--the crime.

H: Knowing your neighbors out here.

WW: Yes. Now we don't visit our neighbors too often, but if we need anything we'd go ask them, you know.

H: Has that changed in Paoli? That people...?

WW: Yes, that's changed in my lifetime--greatly. People don't visit any more like they used to.

H: Why do you think that is?

WW: Television, mostly. The one big culprit too. That's the big culprit in our society. I think this country would have been much better off if television had never been. Radio is a medium that would have supplied anything we needed, and it left things up to your imagination. When you see it, you don't know, you know.... You hear a guy talk on radio and you make your own... you haven't seen him in a personal appearance, you make your own image of what he looks like. You see him on television, 9 times out of 10 he's disappointing. (laughs) Or worse.

H: I was thinking... even listening to stories on the radio, it involves a lot of imagination for you to fill those things in that television doesn't.

WW: Sure. Yes, we...another thing, when I came to Indiana I was somewhat of a self-taught guitar player. I got good enough to play in the high school band. I'd gotten good enough to play in the high school band and so, when I came up here, I met a family who had a family band and I played with them, you know.

We used to play at parties and square dances and house warmings and....

H: Was that the family up above Exum's(?) house?

WW: Yes. Yes, that was the Flemings family.

H: Right.

WW: And that was my second home when I came to Indiana. They had four sons and the family band; and I played in the band with them. And then on weekends, if I had the time, why,... and I usually had a little time on weekends. For about two years there, why, I'd go over there and Mrs. Flemings was a great cook and (laughs) we had some great times.

H: Was that all before the war? or some after?

WW: Yes, the war ended over there. Kenneth, one of her boys was one of the first ones to go. And two of them eventually... three of them eventually went. Her oldest son was...didn't go; he went to Chicago to work and he was doing quite well financially but he went out to take his son to school one morning --his young son-- and he was a smoker, and when he stepped into the...the garage was attached to the house. When he stepped into the garage... the boy was already in the car waiting for him... before he got into the car, he lit a cigarette. When he did, the thing blew up. The gas main had leaked...was leaking under the garage...

H: Oh, my God!

WW: ...and was full of.... It hurt him severely; it burned his earlobe off and he got some third-degree burns around his neck and he got a pretty good-size... at that time, a big settlement from the city. And he invested it in an Edsel agency. You remember the Edsel?

H: It's an automobile _____?

WW: And he bought an Edsel agency and was revamping it and getting ready to open up. And the day before he was supposed to open up--to have his grand opening--he went out to see how they were getting along, and got out of his car, and dropped dead with a heart attack. About 50-years old. The other boys are still living; I see them...two of them quite often. We visit.

H: They've stayed in Paoli then?

WW: Yes. (pause)

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We have two children: a son and a daughter; and three beautiful little granddaughters. (laughs) And my daughter and her husband, who is a pharmacist for Hooks Drugs, live right over here in this adjacent house. They've gone visiting today. And our son teaches school here in Paoli; teaches school here in town at a local school.

H: At the high school?

WW: They teach in the elementary. The Throop School.

H: Yes.

WW: We've always lived --except for two times we moved to Florida-- we've always lived right in this...right on this hill here somewhere. Well, we built three new houses--and remodeled a couple. This is our retirement house; we like it.

H: You gave the other one to your daughter?

WW: What?

H: You gave one of the houses to your daughter and...?

WW: We sold it to her, yes.

H: It's nice having her near by.

WW: Yes. Yes, she was over here; she was telling us what to say when... two big talkers; she likes to talk. She went to IU.

H: Did she?

WW: A year-and-a-half; before she got married. She quit school and got married.

H: Did she marry someone from Paoli? Is that...?

WW: Originally; she's been married twice. Originally she married a local boy and they lived together, what was it, about three years?

MW: Something like that.

WW: And...he was in the service when they got married. They went to Germany; stayed in Germany about a year-and-a-half.

MW: Two-and-a-half.

WW: Huh.

MW: Two-and-a-half.

WW: Two-and-a-half. She worked for the government: insurance department. And when she came home, she worked for an insurance company --and real estate-- here, in town. And she still works for them part-time when they need help. She a pretty good insurance person.

H: Are the three beautiful granddaughters hers?

WW: Two of them. One's the other son's.

MW: She's only three-months old, the youngest granddaughter. They've been married 13 years and had the first baby two days after Christmas.

WW: They'd been teaching school 13 years, and _____ more than that.

MW: More than that.

H: They had all the children they could stand, I guess.
(laughs)

MW: (laughs) There must have been some reason.

WW: (long pause) What other questions have you got on the agenda there? Any other line of thought?

H: Well, I wouldn't mind hearing a little bit more about how you think things changed after World War II. In Paoli...

WW: In Paoli?

H: ...especially if....

WW: Well, part of that was...part of that change was due to my... due to the aging process. I was, you know, getting older and went to work, and such institutions as Andy's...you know, the ice cream parlor.... Those things had changed; had gone out of existence. That was our gathering place, you know; everybody gathered there. But then some of us...there were several casualties from the service in this town; and it was probably more due to the fact that we were getting older than it was anything else. The younger people probably went along somewhat the same way that we did ten years before. But now it's all different because... less due to, I think, mobility; every kid's got a car. I never had a car till I was 21-years old; I didn't know how to drive a car till I was 21. And I didn't even expect

to own one, you know.

H: I've heard that the square itself changed a lot from being grocery stores and....

WW: Center _____, yes, the things started to move out to the edges more. And people, instead of spending their Saturday nights in the town, they went to Bedford. To the Golden Corale, or something like that, you know. Or even maybe to Bloomington. Like, to see a show or something like... the kids, daughter and son-in-law, went to see... went to Bloomington just recently to see something; what was it?

MW: No, they just went out to a restaurant.

WW: Well, Nancy and the girls went with Ann to see some kind of a show. The Nutcracker Suite, wasn't it?

MW: Oh, that was last Christmas.

WW: That was Christmas, yes. Well, Christmas hasn't been so long ago. I wouldn't have thought of that, you know....

H: To go up to Bloomington for the day?

WW: The possibility was a world away. Of course, Louisville's only 50 miles and they go to Louisville quite often. Maybe just go to Louisville to eat. And if we went to French Lick we thought it was great. (both laugh)

_____. But myself, coming from a rural area like I did, that was great to me, you know, to be able to go to _____ every night almost; we walked to town. Just a mile to town.

And just to show you... a little incident of how we used to entertain ourselves. My cousin, Chester, had a '33 V-8 Ford; well-used but you could run an old car. But one afternoon he came in, and my brother and I were over his house, and he came in from town and he said, "How would you like to _____ go to the show tonight?" Incidentally, movies was our great thing; they had a local theater and they showed... they had the same movie on Sunday and Monday, and Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday and Friday. A Western on Saturday with a serial and cartoons; extra cartoons. And then... so we had five...four changes of movie a week. And a lot of time, if we could get the money, we'd go to all of them because standard price was a quarter; admission was a quarter -- twenty-five. But on Wednesday, it was two-for-a-quarter. Pal night, you know. So, Chester came in and said, "How'd you guys like to go to the movies tonight?"

Yes, we would, but we didn't have any money. He said, "I've sold a cord of wood...a rick of wood..." We used to call

it a cord but it was a rick. "...downtown. If you want to help me cut it, we'll split the money and..." Sold it for 3-dollars, and deliver it. He said, "We'll split the money. I'll take a dollar for gas and we'll go to the movies tonight."

So we... bad weather, you know, but we'd get our tools and go down over the hill and find a tree that would make the desired amount; cut it down. Why in about three hours we've got a cord of wood; and he takes the back seat out of his car and...

H: (laughs)

WW: ...and ricks that wood in there. (laughs) And he goes and delivers it and comes back, and we put the back seat back in the car and go to town to the movie. Go there to Andy's and have a Coke afterwards. And that was a big evening's entertainment. And also works off a lot of excess energy. (both laugh)

H: Surprise you didn't fall asleep during the film.

WW: What?

H Surprised you didn't fall asleep during the movie.

WW: Yes. Oh, I wouldn't fall asleep during the movie at that time. Stay awake for two days. Now I fall asleep watching the news. But, you know, in my little world...in my scheme of things, I think we were better off -- much better off-- with that sort of environment than people are in the inner-cities where there's nothing they can do sort-of spontaneously like that. You know, like... you couldn't go down to the White Castle or... and get a job at....

H: Work for a few hours...

WW: Work for three hours and, you know... and I think it's tragic that all those people left the farms and went to the cities that became jammed up like that in the undesirable neighborhoods, ghettos and slums.

H: Do you think that the character of Paoli is changing? I've heard that, say in the last ten years, more people... more city folks, say, from Louisville and Bedford are moving back to Paoli to kind of have that kind of....

WW: Lots of... a lot of people from places like Chicago and Indianapolis live around here.

H: For just summer homes? or...

WW: Like _____. This woman that converted...

suddenly converted to Christianity and _____ overnight. Islam or somewhere?

MW: Yes. There's a lot of people move from the cities...

WW: My daughter, she's... Nancy's 40, isn't she?

MW: Yes.

WW: 40-years old. She likes to talk to people, and she got acquainted with a lady recently who's...I think she said, 50-years old. And her and her husband just got tired of the so-called rat-race and quit their jobs. And she had what would be called a lucrative job; I think she was making about 30-thousand a year...

MW: Working for the air lines.

H: I'd call that lucrative.

WW: ...working for the air lines, and her husband was making even more. And they came down here and started their own enterprise. What are they doing?

MW: They make some kind of furniture or something, I think.

WW: Yes. They didn't want to raise their children in that atmosphere, and they were either in Chicago or Indianapolis.

MW: Chicago, I think.

WW: Chicago. And I've known several of those people, you know. When I was in the service station, I knew everybody for a mile around; most of them. I enjoy talking with people and I liked the service station because of that. I liked about everything... when an out-of-state car came in, I found out where he was from, if he talked at all. Some people won't talk. (laughs) But....

H: Do you see that as regenerating Paoli, in a way. People moving from the city back out here in the way that some...?

WW: Is that changing Paoli?

H: Well, yes. Or...?

WW: Yes, it's changing. Especially noticeable in, I'd say, in such things as unions and the school system.

H: Local unions? in the Chair Factory or wherever?

WW: No, they're non-union. But there are unions around in the area; teachers' unions for one.

H: Yes. And what effect do you think it has had, like, on the school system? Do you think it's...?

WW: Well, I think it's changing our school system. For our small-town type, it has more big... they want to run it more like a big-city operation would be, which I don't think is feasible for a small town.

H: What about development in Paoli, too? Like Paoli Peaks or...I've heard of this recreation area they're thinking of starting south of town.

WW: Oh, it's a good thing, I think. That was Dr. Graber...it was a Mennonite...

H: Mr. Graber--Dr. Graber.

WW: My son, he's a great skier; he instructs out there after school.

H: Really?

WW: And him and a daughter... when Nancy and her first husband lived in Germany, Edward went over to visit them, and he learned to ski in Germany; it's Austria, over there. And so now he's become an avid skier. I mean, he just took a trip to Utah only last month for a week, skiing. He goes somewhere about every year.

H: Do you think that those kinds of things are making Paoli less of a rural town and more, I don't know...?

WW: More urban?

H: And it seems like both of those things are tourist....

WW: _____ good?

H: Well, they're to bring tourists into the area.

WW: Oh, you mean the...

H: Like the recreation area; the ski slopes.

WW: And the Patoka Lake is another thing. You know, that's 11 miles from here; that's a new lake. You haven't heard of Patoka

Lake?

H: I think I've heard of it; I guess I don't know very much about it.

MW: About Patoka?

WW: Well, I don't... mean the pronunciation, but...

H: Patoka.

WW: Yes, that's... they're contemplating --in fact, it's in the planning stage-- building a big resort hotel... motel, with a golf course and a bunch of things. Tillery(?) Hill is the name of the place.

H: That's what I've heard.

WW: Yes, Patoka Lake.

H: OK.

WW: No, I think that is... that has helped. Especially the Paoli Peaks has helped the town financially. It brings in... like one Saturday this winter, we had 5-thousand skiers out there. And skiing, it's not a poor-man's sport any more, its... unless you have all your gear, it's expensive. And if you buy quality gear, that's expensive.

H: For sure.

WW: But, I think skiing is one of the better things.

H: Do the skiers come into town and eat, get gas, that kind of thing?

WW: Yes. Let's see, where did I...?

MW: Stay in motels...

WW: Yes, and a couple of people have opened... you know, got extra rooms they rent to skiers. This year... I go to the Ritz Restaurant, which is west of town, about... well, it's just right straight north of the Peaks. You can look out the window of the restaurant and see the skiers. And so I talked to... I see these people come in in ski gear, you know. You know that they're skiers, and I talked with several families from Tennessee that were up here. And Kentucky. Some farther away than that, but I'd say the majority I talked to this year --and that might affect probably 5 different groups-- were from Tennessee. And

then at another restaurant out here, the last fall, there was a bus load of boy scouts from my old neighborhood in west Kentucky, around Paducah.

H: Oh, really?

WW: Did you ever hear of Paducah, Kentucky? Named for the big Indian chief Paduke.

H: Huh.

WW: It's near Kentucky Lake and Dam; did you ever hear of Kentucky Dam?

H: Yes.

I guess I have one last question. Mr. Exum said I had to ask you about your politics.

MW: (laughs)

WW: Politics?

H: Mr. Hall. Yes. He said you were a confirmed Democrat until you moved to Indiana...

WW: In a country... in west Kentucky... did you ever hear of Fancy Farm, Kentucky?

H: No, I haven't.

WW: Well, any politician... you're not a politician. Any politician who's worth his salt knows about Fancy Farm, Kentucky. It's a... even people like Carter... I'm not sure Reagan went there; he didn't have to. But Carter was there, and I think Mondale went down there. It's a Catholic community in west Kentucky that's Democratic to the core; Republican is a bad word there. If you're a Republican, you sneak through town when you go through it. (laughs)

We used to play their school on our basketball.... I was a small-time basketball player in high school. That was the highlight of my school, was playing basketball; I liked it. I'm a Larry Bird fan, incidentally. But when I grew up... in our community, there were only about 3 people that would admit to being Republicans. And you know, if you were... if a child is fretful, his mother will say, "You better be good or the old Republican will get you."

H: (laughs)

WW: (laughs) But... when I grew up, the Republican party was

the party of the blacks. You don't know it as that now; you probably don't know that fact. But that was the black... all blacks were Republicans in our area. And incidentally, west Kentucky has a high black population. We had black neighbors; and I grew up, you know, with.... Just over the fence were a family of blacks; and played with them and we played every day when I was a small child, you know. But we still... it's taboo about associating.... We didn't eat together --which I could never understand why we didn't eat together. We played together, but when it came time for meals we went to our house... if we were playing at their house, we went to our house for dinner...lunch, or whatever you want to call it. And they went to their house. And I asked my mother: Why do we have to do that? And she said, "Well, it's just because that's the way it's done," you know. And because, the reason you'd get it, if you broke the code you'd be ostracized by your white neighbors, probably. At that time, of course; that no longer exists and I'm glad. But....

H: Did they come to your house, too? Or was it...?

WW: Yes, we had....

H: Just either way it happened?

WW: My parents were hill-billy musicians --if you want to call it that. My mother was a music teacher of piano. And my dad played the violin, self-taught, and the cello. But anyhow, we had a negro... and I never used the word "nigger" in my life because after I got big enough to know words... because I hate...I think it's terrible....

END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

WW: ...five-string bango player. And he sang and that sort of thing. And for a couple of years, when we were living in this particular location, he would come over... he couldn't afford a case to put it in, he brought it in a pillowcase.

H: Huh.

WW: And the three of them would play music; my mother would play the piano and my dad the violin and Jim Taylor played the bango. And he would sing songs; and he sang in the negro dialect and I couldn't understand half of what he... just a word now and then, you know. But that's the kind of atmosphere I grew up in early, when I was 8... 7 or 8 --or nine, along in there. And then, when I grew older, the party changed. They've changed

180 degrees in my lifetime. What used to be Democrat is now Republican.

H: If the Republican party was mostly black, was there...? I mean....

WW: No, it wasn't mostly black; it.... Most blacks belonged to the Republican party.

H: OK. OK. But you didn't.... I guess what I'm trying to get at is that if most blacks were Republicans, and Republicans were a dirty word in that area...

WW: Yes.

H: ...it didn't...

WW: It still is. (laughs) Most people....

H: ...it was OK to play with them still?

WW: Most people don't have... I don't know, they don't realize that politics have changed that much. They're beginning to; a lot of them are.... I think there was... you know, that last election really proved that. But the Democrats have got too far left for me; I'm a sort-of-the-right of the John Birch Society. (laughs) That's not my statement; I heard a friend say that one time. I thought it was pretty good.

But I'm not really a Republican, but I'm closer to a Republican.... I'm an Independent; I like to think I am.

H: Would you vote...?

WW: You know, "no man is an island."

H: Yes.

WW: What did you say?

H: Would you vote for the candidate then, rather than the party?

WW: Yes. Locally especially; I vote for.... But I never really took politics seriously though. When I came to Indiana, I had never voted; I knew nothing about it because I was only.... There you had to be 21 to vote, so naturally I hadn't voted; I was only 18. But after the war, a friend of mine was running for... wanted to be nominated for sheriff on a Republican ticket. And he came to me and asked me if I'd vote for him. I didn't know anything about primaries. When I went to vote, I told the

clerk that I wanted to vote for this certain person. She said, "Well, you have to register Republican to do that." So I went and registered. I registered Republican; that's the reason I'm registered Republican, but I do believe in most of the things that... basic things. But my family, you know,... I had an aunt out in Houston who died a year ago maybe, but she could not understand me politically. She thought I was way out somewhere. (laughs)

H: Why was that? What kinds of... did she think you were...?

WW: What?

H: What kinds of issues did she think you were way out there on?

WW: Oh, on race; she was very racially biased. But incidentally, she had a son who agrees with me; we get along quite well. And we were talking in her house and she said, "Well, you see, I never heard anybody talk like you do about politics." (laughs) And her son was talking right along with me; he was agreeing with me. But Exum and I get along pretty good in politics; he's conservative. You know, you don't know how other people view you, but I like to think of myself as being conservative and average and... I don't know what the word is for it, but (pause) sort of middle-of-the-road. I think that's one of the faults of this country; it can't seem to take a center position. They've got to have something far-left or far-right.

H: Do you think you're as conservative as most people in Paoli? or more so or less so?

WW: Oh, I'm more conservative.

H: Are you?

WW: Yes. Yes, I think so.

H: What kinds of things make you think you're conservative? if that's not an odd question. (laughs)

WW: I don't know whether I...

H: Or, I guess, what kinds of things would you say you're conservative about? Family, or... I don't...

WW: That's one thing. I don't drink or smoke. I could have done either one; nobody really told me not to. That was my own choice. I don't require a lot of fancy clothes or anything like

that. I like nice things; I like things to be orderly. I think that's part of it. Probably conservative, I don't know. But I don't think... I don't want to be fancy; I think anything beyond reasonable. And there you get into what is "reasonable." Then, if you don't have a yardstick, you cannot establish reason. Is that right? So, I maybe get beyond reasonable... what is reasonable, and you've got "vanity and vexation of spirit." There's the old quotation from the Bible. But also, you get into snobs and beatniks; somebody trying to go one way or the other--too far.

Nobody asked me to come to Paoli. I liked it here, but I don't try to change it, you know. I'll go along with the majority, whatever they want. I don't go down to the town board and try to get something... although there's somethings I'd like to see different.

And I have got so much more in worldly goods than my parents ever had, that I almost feel guilty sometimes. But I didn't... I don't feel guilty, I'll take that back. I worked hard for it, I don't.... I put in lots of hours and I never belonged to a union, and I think unions have thrown the country out of balance because they have so much power. Witness the Eastern Airlines; the thing that's going on right now. And I think they were once a good thing but the horse and buggy was once a good thing, but I don't want to go back the Amish way.

H: (laughs)

WW: I like the old Chevy. I think two things are overdone in this country, and that's air travel and television. I think many people travel by air would be better off if we had a good rail system, or the old Greyhound Bus was still making it's... You can't even go to Louisville by Greyhound here.

H: Really. There's not a station in this town.

WW: Yes, you go by way of Evansville--or Indianapolis.

H: You can't go from, say, Orleans to Louisville?

WW: What?

H: Doesn't Orleans have a bus station?

WW: Yes, you can go from Paoli to Bloomington, but you can't go from Paoli to Louisville. That route's been disbanded -- discontinued.

And I get very put out by people who say that the young people don't have any opportunity anymore. I think, if I were a young people now, I could make a million dollars very easily in a reasonable length of time-- by really working.

H: So you think there's more opportunity than....

WW: Oh mercy, yes. I do. You know, again, that's debatable. Knowing what I do --what I think I know-- I think it's much better than.... And I don't think that working in a fast-food place is derogatory or demeaning; I think it's great training for anybody. It was for me. You put your year... bunch of the people, in the black community especially, hollering about the fact that so many fast-food places employ people at low wages. If they didn't, your hamburger would be expensive. And it's a stepping-stone to a better job. One of the boys that I trained to take my place in New Jersey in 1940 retired last year as a Vice President at White Castle in charge of the New York department. So, if you have ability... I think, if you've got ability it will out, regardless of what you study. And another thing, and you may not agree with this and I'm not saying anything personal or anything, but I think that education is over-emphasized. I mean, formal education. College, and college _____ college, full-time... life-time students, I think, is a surplus. It's been made, in my opinion... it's too easy to get into college...

H: _____ stay there. (laughs)

WW: What?

H: It's not easy to stay there.

WW: Well, you're maybe...maybe you're thinking of one facet, or one college. I think some colleges, it's easy to stay there-- if you can get the money from some source.

H: I think at some point it involves sacrifice to... especially if you're staying in for post-college education. Just even by doing that and not having a regular job, and not having opportunity to make real wages, you know.

WW: A professional student.

H: Well, there's an end in sight. You want there to be an end in sight, but it's a lot of years of living on very little money and spending all your time reading.

WW: Well....

H: I think it's for a purpose, for a lot of people still. I guess my view, too, is that the world's a more technical place so you need more technical knowledge....

WW: Yes, I realize that, but there's still.... Even though it has lots of... there's lots of jobs that are not going to be operated by computers.

H: Yes.

WW: It's going to take physical... and there's got to be such a differential between the pay of the so-called technician and the guy who takes the lower job --I'm not talking about fast-food, I'm talking about the support jobs for the technician, somebody to get the.... If there are no lower jobs than the technician, pretty soon he's going to have nothing to be technical about, because somebody has to procure the raw materials and all the wherewithall to get up to that computer stage. And I think that instead of raising... I won't say the Federal judges --as Mr. Bush is screaming about now. The hope that lying on the top jobs like that is so that the man who is earning the lower wage --say 8-dollars an hour or whatever, compared to 60-dollars or 80-dollars an hour for a lawyer-- so he'll be able to share in the American dream rather than having to be subsidized. And if you can keep raising Federal judges and those kind of people, there's never going to be anything but a huge differential. But now you see what my politics are. (laughs)

I don't think the minimum wage should be raised; I think the top wage should be held. Hold the line on the top wages and then the minimum wage will come up. But if you don't, you're never going to have anything but a disparity... a tremendous disparity. Naturally, if these people can't share in the American dream because the thing is so thoroughly.... You know, the medium cost of a house --three bedroom house-- according to Washington, is something like a 134-thousand dollars; maybe more even. Which is... I've just been reading in our local paper before you came in, there are any number of nice houses around here for sale for less than 30-thousand dollars. Very nice houses. Two bedroom, and one of them was a three bedroom; and I know the houses and I know they're plenty nice for habitation. We never had anything so good when I was growing up.

H: Having just... over spring break I visited some friends who live in Washington, D.C., and I couldn't afford to eat there. I could never have afforded to live there. You know, it's hard... and that was just after the Congressional pay-increase thing had been vetoed. It was so hard to sympathize with anyone in Washington needing a raise when already... And the few times that we did go to a restaurant --and it was just a medium-priced restaurant, you know-- dinner was 20-, 25-dollars. And the restaurant would be filled with lawyers and Congressmen and you'd overhear their conversations. It was the kind of thing they did every night, not the once-a-month kind of thing that I would do. It's so hard for me to be sympathetic with....

WW: We had our crew reunion in Bethesda, Maryland, last year. And I have a friend who's on the Interstate Commerce Commission. So he invited... he wanted us to come down and stay with him a couple of days. And we did. So Mary and myself, and Ralph Walker --who's one of my old crew members, who got there early-- we went down and had lunch in the Interstate Commerce dining room. And they have their own chef, their own pantry, their own kitchen, and _____ numbers when they're all there. Place for twelve people, wasn't it? at the table?

MW: Thought _____ had 6 were there, in the group. It was a big long table _____

WW: Anyway, it was elaborate by any standard. And if you know anything about Washington, the Interstate Commerce Building is a huge thing. But you know, they have a dining room... the original dining room. And the meals are subsidized; you know that? Like, they'll pay 5- or 6-dollars for a meal that would cost you 14-dollars... 20-dollars on the outside. No, I don't think they need... there's no shortage of applicants but people who think they're in the know --and there again, I think they're so far out of touch with reality that they don't know.... Like John Chancellor, for instance, who makes a tremendous salary that.... They say you can't get good help for those kind of prices; but I think you can. And if you don't pay more, then these people will quit government and go to private enterprise. Well, private enterprise can only absorb so many people. When they go to private enterprise, chances are they just displace someone else; he might even be better in government, you don't know. I don't believe there's any indispensable man.

And another thing I don't like to hear is someone being over-qualified for a job. If you're over-qualified for a job, then you take a job that you're over-qualified for, somebody's going to notice that and you'll get a better job. I think, if people would adopt the way that we were when I was digging ditches or cutting bushes and whatever job came along and took it.... Sheep herding; I did that one time. And then, when something better came along, or somebody came along and offered you a better job... if you were doing a good job, then they did. So, I doubt if we'll ever get back... but if we could, you know.... You don't remember... you probably don't remember, unless you made a study of it, you wouldn't know much about the Great Depression, but I had an uncle who was making the big wages in St. Louis as a carpenter one week, and the next week he was out of a job and no chance for a job. And he was back working for a dollar a day. And glad to get it. I don't know whether the country could stand... we're such an urban nation now, I doubt if we could stand it. It was largely rural in '29. (long pause)

WHEELER, W & M

Well, I don't know, I guess that just about sums up....

H: Can you think of anything else?

WW: Huh?

H: Can you think of anything else? I can't think of anymore questions.

WW: Probably could think of something, but I'll let it be.

H: (laughs)

WW: Might not be recordable.

H: I'll turn this off. (Machine off.)

END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

END OF INTERVIEW

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