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Interview no. 882

Ewing C. Waterhouse

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S: Now then, Mr. Waterhouse, before we begin on your experiences at Ft. Bliss, if I could, please, sir, get a little background information from you, can you tell me when and where you were born, please?

W: I was born in El Paso, Texas in 1905.

S: I see.

W: And I've been here ever since, except when I've travelled, and except the time that I went to Panama with the Army.

S: I see.

W: On construction. I went down there with General Lear, who had been at Ft. Bliss -- the commanding officer -- and when he was reassigned to [the] Panama Canal Zone, he took the whole office at Ft. Bliss with him, and I was one of the members of that group.

S: I see. So 1905, that makes you 88 years old, is that correct?

W: [Yes.]

S: And you pretty much have grown up here in El Paso, then.

W: Yes.

S: So you're very familiar with Ft. Bliss and pretty much the history from that time to this.

W: Well, [yes,] I've always been interested in it, because there was a lot of angles to it. The airport used to be over there right off of Fred Wilson [Fred Wilson Road]. And then, I used to take the street car from down here for a nickel, and go clear to Ft. Bliss, and then walk all the

way over to the airport. Airport, it wasn't any airport. It was just a level spot there, and they had these old Curtiss Jennies with an OX-5 engine, and then they had later -- that was during the time that Pancho Villa was acting up -- and then later, they had the old DeHaviland, uh, water cooled engine, liberty engine in [them] there.

S: Right.

W: And so, I used to go out there and spend quite a bit of time.

S: I see. Alright. Uh, if we could now, let's get to. . .this period of time that we want to concentrate on. During the late 30's and into about 1940, of course, the country was beginning to build up and expand. As you mentioned before we started recording, they pretty well knew we were eventually going to get into the war, and I understand that you were very heavily involved in a lot of these expansion efforts in Ft. Bliss and in Logan Heights and later on, you said, at Biggs Field. Can you give me an idea how you got involved originally with this effort?

W: Well, you have to remember that 1928 was a bad year. That's when the Stock Market collapsed [actually 1929], and that's when they. . .tell you about the Great Depression.

S: Right. That was nineteen twenty. . . .

W: But it didn't get to El Paso till 1930. And I was hunting for a job, and I had worked for architects. Uh, I don't have any formal training, but I was working on the

apprentice system, and I worked for some good architects, and I worked in the office with some real fine people. So that's the way I learned a lot of it. Plus the fact that I took other courses and over a period of years through experience, I got up. Well, in 1930, I went to work down in town for an art store: the Desert Art Shop. But in 1936, it folded, and then I was looking for a job, so I went to work for Ft. Bliss. They had an opening. And I went to work out there because I could draw, and I started in general, I went from 1936 to about 1939. Then I went to Panama with General Lear, and then I came back, and I was working at Ft. Bliss again, and then from there I went to Logan Heights. And it was over at Logan Heights on December the 7th when the Japs hit Pearl Harbor. And Monday morning when I went to work, I never saw so many airplanes in my life. They were all flying west.

S: Hmm.

W: So, from there, uh, then when the war started to close down, I went back. I went to Biggs Field, and worked there until 1946.

S: I see.

W: But to get back to Ft. Bliss, uh. . . the thing that we were doing out there to begin with, they were expanding the living quarters primarily -- barracks, officers' quarters -- and I worked on the bachelor officers' quarters at Ft. Bliss, and then I worked on those 212-man barracks. I

worked on the chapels, I worked on the swimming pools, I designed garbage cans.

S: (laughs) Sounds like you did it all.

W: And, uh, (chuckles) I [did] a little bit of everything.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And then, uh, let's see. (pause) Well, the main work that we did in the office that I was in was, uh. . . the commanding general, the way it worked, would put in for so many buildings. Uh, they knew where. . . that things were not good in Europe. They knew the condition of the world through information they'd picked up. So the idea was that these posts were all building up, getting ready. And this was two and three and four years ahead of time.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: I was amazed to find after I went to work out there that they had books, complete books, of all the layouts you could think of. And these were done fifteen years before.

S: Really? Hmm.

W: They knew exactly how to lay out any kind of an Army unit that you wanted, was in this book, including obstacle courses.

S: So, they had a plan already established, just waiting to be used.

W: Well, you could take what was in this book, and adapt it to wherever you were.

S: Oh, I see.

W: These were standard books, and they fit any kind of a condition. Of course, up at Logan Heights, they didn't take into consideration the difference in elevation of the hills.

S: Right.

W: But nevertheless, it worked.

S: It did work.

W: And that's what we were going by.

S: So these books were pretty much the foundation for what type of work you had to do.

W: And they'd already been worked out. And I was just, I couldn't get over how smart somebody was to have all this stuff ready. And not only the layouts, but all the drawings for the buildings. If you wanted a 61-man barracks, they had it. Look in the book, and there it was.

S: That's amazing.

W: It gave the building materials, it told you the whole bit, uh, told you how to set the building. You always set the building six inches higher than the high corner. If you're on a slope, you took the high corner, and you set the building six inches above it. That's the floor line.

S: Right.

W: And then you, the building was flat for [the] floor. There was no steps. The men that were on the second floor had to go up some stairs, outside stairs. But the inside was all clean.

S: I see.

W: Just a big room so you could put the bunks down, cots for the sleeping quarters. So. . .another thing that I was amazed at. . .this is jumping a little bit, but. . . .

S: That's all right.

W: After I was working up at Logan Heights, which is really a part of Ft. Bliss. It came under their jurisdiction because of the Army.

S: Right.

W: The Biggs Field was under Army Air Force. But anyway, they, uh. . .part of my, one my jobs that I had there was the old DC-3, the McDonnell-Doug, I mean Douglas DC-3, the twin engine one.

S: Right. I'm familiar with that plane.

W: It, uh, they were figuring on invasion -- [of] course, this is all highly secret, and I was cleared for top secret work -- and I, uh, my job was to make drawings of the inside of a DC-3, and. . .they'd take a 75 or 155 millimeter cannon, a howitzer, and break it down, and then strap it into the bottom of this DC-3. And when they flew somewhere, they'd land and drop all this stuff out, and then the men would reassemble the gun, because they couldn't get the gun in the fuselage.

S: Hmm.

W: Well, I worked on that thing, and it was all [a] matter of balance.

S: Right.

W: I was working with some other people that were a lot more knowledgable about it than I was. But I did the drawings, and [it] was highly secret. No, I didn't even tell my wife what I was working on. Nothing. And when we got all through with it, and everything was fine, I'll be doggoned if Life Magazine didn't come (S laughs) with the pictures, photographs, the whole bit.

S: Everything. . . .

W: Exactly the same thing.

S: With all this secret material, huh?

W: And here I was, trying to be an honorable citizen, and a good employee, and. . .work this thing out.

S: Well, at least you know you weren't the one that told them.

W: No.

S: (laughs) Uh, [yes,] the DC-3 was known as the old C-47, is that correct? That was the military. . . .

W: Well, the C-47 was a larger version of the DC-3.

S: Right. Mm-hmm.

W: Same general gist.

S: Okay.

W: You know, at. . .at Ft. Bliss, lo and behold, old Donald Douglas -- the father, not the boy -- came over in a Navy prototype of a round-the-world airplane.

S: Uh-huh.

W: And when he got over El Paso, he had engine trouble, and down he came. Well, he was out there for about a week at

this. . . airfield that was on the other side of Ft. Bliss, along Fred Wilson Road there.

S: Right.

W: Now when I say Fred Wilson, I'm saying that it goes along by the cemetery, and then it makes a right angle turn, and comes down next to the airport today.

S: Right.

W: Well, from the, where the airport is today, over to Ft. Bliss, was flat. And that was the airport that the Army used.

S: I see.

W: And that was the same airport that they used when, the Villa, uh, insurrection came up. And Eddie Stinson was here.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And he had sold a Bolanca airplane, which was a. . . wooden airplane, wooden wings, wood everything, but beautifully done. And it had an Alsado engine in it, a six-cylinder vertical engine. And he'd sold it to the Mexican government, and he was out there using the field, too.

S: I see.

W: But, I'm jumping.

S: Hmm.

W: Back to Donald Douglas. He was here about a week, and I got to know him. I didn't, uh, wasn't, I was just a little kid,

[of] course, but, uh, I was around there and helping [them,] and they'd want something, and I'd go get it for [them,] and I got to meet a lot of really great people. Uh, Floyd Bennett -- North Pole. --

S: Mm-hmm.

W: There was Burt Balton came there, and I got to meet all those people.

S: Uh, Mr. Waterhouse, if we could get back to what you did at Ft. Bliss itself, you mentioned you worked on the bachelor officers' quarters, and later on, these barracks for the troops.

W: Yes, sir.

S: Can you give me an idea of what else you worked on and what you did, uh. . . .

W: Well, remember, we were a maintenance, uh, we'd get work orders [that] would come in. A screen door had to be fixed.

S: Right.

W: And then the plumbing was always, uh, fouled up somewhere. And it was a matter, part of my job was take care of the post map. We had a big cloth map, I think on Imperial drawing cloth, English. And the whole base, Ft. Bliss was laid out and put on that map, on that piece of cloth. And it was our job, my job, to keep it up to date, uh, get the buildings with numbers, because every building had a number.

S: Right.

- W: And whenever you wanted, if the work order came out, it came out with plumbing in Building 206 or something. Well, you look on this map, and we printed these in different departments, like electrical, mechanical, uh, plumbing. They all had these maps, so they knew where to go and do the work to help maintain the base. One of the funny things that came up was, we used to get into the bedbug problem.
- S: Hmm. (laughs)
- W: And the first thing that you'd ask them, "Well, are the bedbugs inside or outside?" If they were outside, it was up to us. If the bedbugs were on the inside, it was up to the people that lived there to take care of them.
- S: I see. (laughs)
- W: So you see, there's another angle that nobody ever thought of.
- S: No, I don't think anybody's ever. . . .
- W: Whether the bedbugs were in or out.
- S: And that made a big difference. . . .
- W: Oh, [yes.]
- S: . . . as to who took care of them.
- W: It made a difference whether the truck was going or whether it wasn't.
- S: (laughs) I wonder if those bedbugs. . . .
- W: And, well, it was just a daily maintenance problem was the, was the main thing. But then as the base, uh,-- I say base.

I keep getting into Air Force -- uh. . . Ft. Bliss. . .
somebody somewhere could tell in general where were headed.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And they were getting ready for it. And as the base, as the post built up, it was up to the commanding general to help select the site. We made the drawings and made out all the papers, and he'd sign it, and we'd send it in. And then the Congress would authorize it, and the first thing you know, why, the Corps of Engineers then would let the contract. It was a kind of a shift between the Post Engineer and the Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers handled all the big work.

S: Right.

W: For instance, when Biggs Field came along, uh. . . I can show you the section corner where it started over in Ft. Bliss. But, that was strictly Corps of Engineers. Over on Ft. Bliss proper, it was just a maintenance day-to-day, taking care of this and taking care of that. And we had two plumbers, we had two people there named Brown. There was a plumber Brown and carpenter Brown. And, uh, they were some characters.

S: (laughs)

W: Plumber Brown had been there for thirty-five or forty years, and he knew where all the all the sewer lines were.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: So if a line broke, they'd get him out of bed at two o'clock in the morning, and he'd remember that there was a tree over here, and that the line just missed the tree or something.

S: I see.

W: There were no records. They didn't keep records.

S: No records at all?

W: No. Underground things.

S: Hmm.

W: Well, when I got there, I could see right away that that wasn't going to work. So I started in --uh, with the permission of the officer in charge there, of course -- to start working up detailed drawings of all this underground.

S: Hmm.

W: So if a sewer line was stopped up, we'd know where to go dig for it.

S: That sounds like a pretty big project.

W: Well, it was [an] on-going thing where you'd do it day in and day out automatically, and it should have been done, but nobody could look that far ahead. They always depended on Plumber Brown. But Plumber Brown was going to retire.

S: Well, [yes.]

W: So then, it shook [them] up.

S: (laughs)

W: They didn't know what to do. [Of] course, you always had to say Plumber Brown or Carpenter Brown, because one was head of the carpenter's shop and one was head of the plumbing.

S: Mm-hmm. So you. . . .

W: And, uh, well, we maintained the buildings, the streets, the electrical, uh, helped with layout, new construction, and, worked on various things, all kinds of things there at the post.

S: I see.

W: I have to remember to say post, because that's what the Army would have called it.

S: Army calls it a post, Air Force calls it a base.

W: [Yes.]

S: Very good. Uh, if we could skip over now to Logan Heights. You did quite a bit of work at Logan Heights during all of this expansion.

W: [Yes.]

S: Can you tell me some of the things you did over there, what you got involved in?

W: Well, we worked in a building that's not too far off of the highway there, and it was a big building, and we had, oh, room for twenty draftsmen. We had field crews, and, uh. . . we did, oh, we'd work up projects to submit to Washington to get money for construction purposes. Well, I never had been around. I didn't even know, a thousand dollars to me was a hell of a lot of money. But when I got out there and got to working with [them,] well it was twenty million for this and fifty million for that.

S: Hmm.

W: I couldn't hardly write the words. (S laughs) I couldn't imagine such money. But that's the way it is. And we'd get, oh, the telephone [would] ring from Washington, and they had to have a report the next morning as to how much money they're gonna need, uh, for this or that, and we'd work our tails off. I used to work all day Saturday and all day Sunday. Nobody else did.

S: Hmm.

W: But I did, 'cause I thought I was helping the war effort. Well, anyway, then, that would go in. We'd get the money, and then we'd let the contract -- the Corps of Engineers. -- And then it was up to us to supervise the work, uh, to be sure that it got put in like the drawings called for.

S: Right.

W: So, we had all those buildings in Logan Heights to look after, plus the sewage, and when I say sewage, I'm talking about water and sewage. We used to allow 60 gallons of water a day per man, and we were right down at the salt level then. How they're gonna take care of all these people here when they. . .and then El Paso, I understand, uh, supplies, Juarez with water. They tell you over here to stop, to cut down on the water, but then they give it to them.

S: Hmm.

W: Which is all right in a way, but, there's only just so much of it.

S: That's true. That's true.

- W: But anyway, uh, it went along, and. . .troops came in, and they got hold of McGregor Range, and then they had maneuvers, and training periods, and so on, and then, of course, after December the 7th, there was no question where we were headed.
- S: Right.
- W: And in the meantime, why, these other people were all training and they'd go on overseas. And it was just a daily. . .housekeeping job is what it amounted to.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: You think that's recording properly?
- S: I think it is. I tested it before, so I think we're in good shape. Uh. . . .
- W: Have I given you the picture you could. . . .
- S: I think so. You're giving me a pretty good picture.
- W: You can see, uh, I had a very minor part in the thing.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: Except I was. . .I was head of our office, and I had 80 people under me. I had, uh, draftsmen, and, oh, stenographers, and (pause.)
- S: Mm-hmm. I don't know that I would. . . .
- W: I [also] had field crews, and. . .I remember one job that came up from Logan Heights. We had to build a ramp out there next to the railroad tracks, to run the tanks up on.
- S: Right.
- W: So to put [them] on the flat cars.
- S: Mm-hmm.

- W: They'd come up on the ramp, and then go from the ramp, uh, alongside of the railroad track and they'd hop over on the freight cars.
- S: Right.
- W: Uh, flat cars.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: And, oh, it's just endless, the things that came up.
- S: Well, I doubt if you could say it was a small part. That sounds a pretty major portion of a rather large effort.
- W: Well, it was a matter of keeping track of it.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: And then, of course, we had, uh, usually over us we had a captain, then a major, and then he in turn -- that was as high as it got in our office -- then he in turn was directly responsible to the Corps of Engineers, the, uh. . .oh, not the commanding officer, but the officer in charge, say. And he was in Albuquerque. So we worked, our office was a subsidiary of the Albuquerque office.
- S: Right. Okay. Umm, let me ask you one more question here. You mentioned that you were required to submit certain reports to Washington, and that would be how they determined how much money you would receive for these projects.
- W: [Yes.]
- S: Can you give me an idea how long it would take between the time you submitted the report until the time you got the approval, let's say, to go after a certain project?

- W: Well, I'm just guessing, but it was surprising how quickly a lot of that happened. I'd say three or four months.
- S: Really?
- W: And sometimes, it seemed like it was less.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: At the time, I didn't keep records of it, because I didn't have any particular reason to. The people in the front office did that.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: But, uh, we'd get these calls from Washington to submit a proposal for certain things, and, uh, the amount of money. And we had to estimate it all.
- S: Hmm.
- W: And we used to do that sometimes in six or eight hours, and that was gone. And then we wouldn't hear any more about it, maybe, until somebody called on the telephone. But they didn't call me. They called, uh, like the major, who was in charge.
- S: Right.
- W: And, uh, he kept track on where we were in our office, and I'd give him reports, and it worked on this. . . regular Army stuff.
- S: Right. I see. Okay. So, at Logan Heights, you got involved in a lot of the designing, and then later, the day-to-day upkeep of the place, I guess.
- W: [Yes.] They, uh, on the designing part of it, most of the work that I did when I was at Logan Heights. . . well, first

of all, over at Ft. Bliss, I did a lot of design work for the chapel and a lot of things that would come up that were not in these books.

S: Oh.

W: But then, when we got over to Logan Heights, it was just a matter of supervisory.

S: I see.

W: In other words. . . Hedrich, a man [that] was an architect in Ft. Worth, he got all the government work. And he was the one that laid out Logan Heights. And, uh, but most of it was based on these books that had already been printed.

S: I see.

W: And then after that, it was a matter of our office supervising the work, and getting after the contractor, and working out extras because of different conditions that came up that they couldn't cover and, you know, it was, uh, like on a slope of a piece of ground there. The building might be shown level. And it was, the floor. But maybe down at the end you'd have four feet of fall. So the extra material in there. And also, we took care of, I forgot, uh, William Beaumont.

S: Oh, okay.

W: That was part of our job, too.

S: So, you were involved in William Beaumont as well.

W: And we used to have to submit. . . well, we'd get a request, say, from the commanding officer at Logan Heights, and I remember one of [them] came up. They wanted a fire station,

and they wanted a fire engine, because [it] had built up.
You have to remember that all that stuff was done in wood.

S: Hmm.

W: And it was a fire hazard. So. . . we would submit these projects to get different things. Well, he tried to get the fire engine first, and he couldn't get it. They wouldn't give him the money for it.

S: Hmm.

W: Well, we foxed [them.] (S laughs) We built the building, and then we told them, "Well, we got the building, but we don't have the fire engine for it." So then, they had to give him the fire engine.

S: (laughs) Well, I guess that's one way of getting the job done.

W: [Yes.]

S: Uh, you did mention that although these books were the foundation for most of your work, there were occasions when the books didn't cover something. Can you give me some examples of that?

W: Oh. . . .

S: You've already mentioned the difference in elevation. That, I guess, would be one thing.

W: (pause) Well, these books were just ideas. They were sketches. They gave you the areas that you could work in. But they assumed that the person that is using the book knew how to use [them.]

S: Uh-huh.

W: And that's where you'd have to think in three dimensions, see, to simulate all this stuff and make it work. The main thing I was always concerned about was water.

S: Right.

W: And, uh, as a matter of. . .[a] lot of that stuff was left up us. It wasn't on the book. You had to work out. . .I used to have to work with the City Water Department here, uh, to see if they could supply the water. The first question they ask is, "How about the water?" And if you didn't have the water, you didn't get anywhere.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: I also worked on prisoner of war camps.

S: Oh. Okay.

W: At the, uh, using some of these buildings that were in the book. But you could, if you found out what the housing was -- the number of persons -- then it was a matter of looking in there to see. . . .

END OF SIDE A

S: Now, before we had to change the tape, you mentioned that you also worked on some facilities that were used as prisoner of war camps. Could you tell me a little bit more about that, please?

W: Well, we had. . .it was after the Japanese, uh. . . raid on the Hawaiian Islands, of course.

S: Uh-huh.

W: And they rounded up, you know, they had [them] at, I think it was Palomar, was it? No. . . up in California. They rounded [them] all up and herded [them] over there, which a lot of [them] was a bad deal.

S: Right.

W: But anyway, we were working on one for Lordsburg.

S: Lordsburg, New Mexico? Uh-huh.

W: That's the one that I worked on.

S: I see.

W: But it was never built.

S: Oh.

W: They decided to. . . we didn't have enough occupancy or whatever. I worked on airfields, too. I worked on the one at Deming.

S: Hmm.

W: I worked on one at Carlsbad, Alamogordo, and it was all out of Logan Heights.

S: Right.

W: And then I worked on, uh. . . those are the main ones.

S: That airfield at Alamogordo, was that the same one that's used as the Air Force Base today?

W: Well, that's the gist of it. [Of] course the runways are longer and more substantial, and especially when you use jets.

S: Hmm.

W: You've [got to] have more runway to get [them] off.

S: Right.

W: Unless you use rockets as boosters.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: But, uh. . . .

S: Okay. Uh, you mentioned. . . .

W: Uh, [yes,] the. . . I'm not sure. . . I know working on [them] because the British were going to come over. The British were about to be run off of the islands, and we were. . . the whole thing was designed around the British aircraft.

S: I see.

W: And their operation. And some of the buildings were so flimsy that they had ropes to help hold [them] up.

S: Ropes. (laughs)

W: In case of wind.

S: Uh-huh.

W: But Alamogordo really came about later from, uh, the. . . I would say. . . from going to the moon, and with the development of different rockets. You remember old Colonel Stapp was in that sled. . .

S: Right.

W: . . . at Alamogordo.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And it was an experimental. . . oh, I can remember, too -- I forgot that one -- we did a lot of work at White Sands out of that office.

S: Okay.

W: The Corps of Engineers, remember, were the prime source of operations. We were just merely a subsidiary. But we were

closer to it, and they'd look to us to do certain things for them because we could get there and get the information, and get it back.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: I worked on a lot of buildings up there for the Navy in White Sands.

S: I see. You also mentioned that you did a lot of work over at Biggs Field. Can you describe some of that for me?

W: Well, it was our job to work out of Logan Heights. Ft. Bliss, say.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And I can remember the day we started. I can take you out there and show you the brass monument that we worked off of. It was nothing but just desert.

S: Right.

W: We took that point, and we chained off of it, and laid out the whole bit.

S: I see. And what day was that, do you recall? (W leans closer to hear better) Do you recall what day that was?

W: No. No. No, I don't remember.

S: Well, that's not important. Go ahead and. . . .

W: But anyway, uh, I remember when they didn't have a chance to get. . . the pavement down. In other words, a bomber. We had B-24's and, uh -- which was the main thing -- B-25's. But the B-24 was the principal one. And everybody that flew [them] said they were all right. They looked awful flimsy to me.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: But anyway, that's what they were training on. The runway, of course, was the key to the whole thing. But. . .they didn't have time nor the equipment to get the compaction, the sub-compacted grades built up to take the wheel load.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And the impact load. So, they were using. . .we experimented with soil cement. . .

S: Uh-huh.

W: . . .which is a mixture of cement dry-form mixed with, say, sand and gravel, and not mixed wet, but mixed dry.

S: Hmm.

W: Then you'd roll it, then wet it. Hopefully, it would turn into a kind of a concrete, and give you a good runway, which was quick and fast.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: Then later, they came in and took those out, and put in a good runway.

S: Did those seem to work very well, or. . . .

W: Well, it seemed like there was too much maintenance. They were always into problems this way or that. But I didn't get into it too much. My main job was housekeeping.

S: I see.

W: And, uh, when I worked at, uh. . .I'm mixing this up, but it's the same way at Ft. Bliss or Biggs. At those two places, we had a carpenter shop, plumbing shop, electrical

shop, motor pool, maintenance people, but, uh, back to using the same word as housekeeping.

S: [Yes.] Okay. Uh, you mentioned an interesting story before we began recording having to do with this painting about the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

W: [Yes.]

S: Could you relay that again for me, please?

W: Could I what? (leans closer to hear better)

S: Could you tell me the story about this painting, uh, on Custer's Last Stand, that was in the Officers' Club?

W: Well, the 7th Cavalry and the 8th Cavalry, you know, were always in this area.

S: Right.

W: And the 7th Cavalry was, uh, the fact that it was at the Little Bighorn was, uh, it was quite something, you know, well, Custer's old outfit, or something like that. Well, this painting had been done on this tarpaulin off of a Army wagon.

S: Right.

W: And Anheuser-Busch had used it, and maybe they'd paid for it. I don't know. I'm inclined to think that they did. But it wound up as a gift, say, to the 7th Cavalry. So, they were over there in those old buildings on the other side of the parade ground, and up in the attic was this picture. And it was rolled out instead of. . . I mean in instead of out. They thought they were protecting it, but

[it] didn't do any more than just crack it. The paint was very heavy on it.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And then they decided that. . .they were always taking up (pause) well, each officer had to contribute so much a month to the Officers' Club.

S: Right.

W: And they were always over-subscribed. (S laughs) They always had forty or fifty thousand dollars that they had to spend by July the 1st, or they were going to lose it.

S: Oh, [yes.]

W: So, the idea was that they were going to get a new Officers' Club, which they did. And in this Officers' Club, the 7th Cavalry was going to put this painting. And of course, it's up to the Post Engineer to be sure that the painting got up, and so on.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: Nobody had any idea how they were going to do it. (S laughs) But nevertheless, that was my job. And that's when I came up these cup hooks to hang it up in the. . .and we just built a frame with some plywood backing -- heavy -- to take the weight, 'cause it was a real heavy, it's a great big painting. I'd say it was, uh, oh, as big as that whole panel there.

S: Hmm. That's pretty good size, all right.

W: It was pretty gory, with blood and thunder all over it, and I had to measure it and be sure the measurements and get the

frame built, and get the thing installed, and then hang it. I had to get, oh, maybe ten or fifteen people to help lift it and keep it from being damaged too much. But the cup hooks were the key to it, 'cause you could hang it right over [them.] And if you didn't like it, you could take it down.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: But, like I told you, it was. . .it was [ironic] that it was only up just a few weeks, and they had that fire.

S: And the whole thing burned down.

W: And it's gone.

S: Huh. That's too bad.

W: Burnt down. But anyway, the Officers' Club -- I'm jumping, of course -- with all this money coming in, they were always with quite a surplus.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And that's what determined getting the painting out and getting it up.

S: I see. So they had the money to do it, and they did it.

W: And they had the money, and it didn't have to go through Congress.

S: Uh-huh. (laughs)

W: It was a private fund at the Officers' Club.

S: I see. Very good. Let me jump back just a little bit.

You've probably been asked this question many times by people. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was obviously a very significant event in our history. Can you tell me, do

you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the news?

W: Well, that was on a Sunday, [yes.]

S: Right. Yes, it was.

W: I lived at 145 Porfirio Diaz.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: And, uh, unfortunately. . .[of] course, with the time change. You have to remember, that made it around 12:30, one o'clock here. [10:55 a.m., El Paso time]

S: Mm-hmm.

W: I'm just guessing.

S: Mmm, pretty close.

W: But it was in the middle of the day, and I had just turned the radio off when this thing hit the radio.

S: Hmm.

W: And then people were phoning, talking on the telephone, and then I went back and turned it back on again. That's when you get the aftermath of it.

S: Right.

W: But the actual, the first strike was early in the morning.

S: Right. A little before eight o'clock, I believe, on. . . .

W: [Yes.]

S: . . . Sunday morning. Can you describe what the mood at Ft. Bliss was when this news broke?

W: Well, they were excited. It didn't affect me too much, because I didn't have sense enough to know the

possibilities. But they thought they were going to be invaded on the west coast.

S: [Yes.]

W: And the next day when I went to work is when I saw all those airplanes going west.

S: Everything was going west.

W: They were all day long. They landed right down there at the old Biggs Field, and fueled, and then took off again, and they'd come right over where I worked.

S: I see.

W: But, they were really perturbed. There was no question about that.

S: I imagine so.

W: Because they knew how unprepared they were, and they didn't know. . .the Japs once again, uh, Yamamoto understood the whole situation. He didn't want to get into it in the first place.

S: No.

W: Because he'd been attache, uh, Naval attache in Washington. And he knew the American people, and he said that they'd have to clean it all up within three years or they were gone, because the industrial might of our factories and so on, that the Japanese couldn't keep up with [them.]

S: [Yes.]

W: They didn't have the oil, they didn't have the steel. They had stockpiled it, but not on a long ten-year war or something.

S: Right.

W: It was a matter of a quick war, and us suing for peace. But that didn't work.

S: No. [Yes,] Yamamoto was one who realized it.

W: The people were pretty well perturbed about it, I mean, the people that I [was] around. If you talked to the average guy -- the garbage man or the mailman -- he didn't pay too much attention to it, 'cause he didn't know anything about it.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: (pause) This is just me, now. I could be wrong, but the American people as a whole really don't keep up with too much.

S: Hmm.

W: They'll keep up with the cost of a dozen eggs, or they know they're hot or they're cold, or they'll know when the taxes [come] around.

S: Right.

W: They understand all that, but as far as anything scientific or worldwide. . .[of] course it's all changed here, with the television and with all the printing presses going. If you are inclined to try to keep up with it, you can.

S: Right.

W: Because they'll publish it, even if it's wrong.

S: (laughs) That's true.

W: But, uh, it seemed like that the general feeling was that they didn't know just how the thing was going to turn out.

But the gist of it was they were figuring on getting the west coast, uh, whipped.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: You take in Lower California, Baja. I have a friend of mine that was quite an expert on it. And the Navy rounded him up within 24 hours, because he'd been to Baja. He knew the climate, he knew the temperatures, and he knew the terrain, and they thought, well, maybe they'll land down there and go up towards San Diego. But that didn't take place.

S: No, it didn't.

W: Then they had some logistic problems, such as water. You take an army invading that place, it's just like in this Persian Gulf thing. [If] it hadn't been for those [desalinization,] where they de-salt the Persian Gulf water?

S: Mm-hmm.

W: Make it drinkable?

S: Right. Desalinization.

W: They'd have been in a hell of a shape.

S: Yes, they would've.

W: Because you're still back to 60 gallons a day, maybe. I don't know what it is in the field.

S: I know they were drinking quite a bit over there. Uh, let me ask you another question. Let's jump forward a few years now. Can you describe the feeling at Ft. Bliss when we got the news that the war was over? What went on? Was it joy, was it relief, or just a general feeling of celebration?

- W: Well, (pause) wasn't it July the 16th [1945] when they set that bomb off at Trinity Site?
- S: That was. That's correct.
- W: And it was in August. . . August. . . .
- S: Right. August the 6th.
- W: . . . when it moved up to another notch, and they hit Hiroshima.
- S: That's right.
- W: And then it was three days later, I think, when they hit Nagasaki.
- S: That's correct.
- W: Well, I think after that bombing of Hiroshima, uh. . . I know there was a lot of tension as to, are the Japs going to go the long haul and make us invade, and have a real bloodbath, or are they going to use their head and save what they've got? [Of] course it [was] the Emperor that kept entering into the thing. He didn't say anything, [Hirohito.] But old Tojo was the one that caused the problem. But, to answer your question, uh, it was a kind of a wait and see deal: "Well, if that doesn't wake [them] up, I don't know what will."
- S: Hmm.
- W: But when it was over with, why, it was [an] idea of relief, mainly.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: But you take, when you get inertia going, it's hard to stop it. (coughs) In other words, you're at high pitch, you're

getting this done, you're getting that done, and then all of a sudden it just stops.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: But you've got all this inertia weight that's moving, and you can't stop it. But, after that, of course, when the signing of the treaty on the Missouri, [it] was after that that it just kind of wound down, and they were closing this and closing that.

S: So, they began closing things pretty shortly after the surrender was signed.

W: [Yes,] it didn't seem to me like it took [them] too long.

S: Did you have -- at that point, now, we're talking, okay, the war's over -- did you have any idea what the future of Ft. Bliss might be at that point?

W: Wait a minute. (leans closer to hear better)

S: The future of Ft. Bliss, after the war was over. Did you have any idea what might be going on here at Ft. Bliss after that?

W: No, I had nothing.

S: Okay.

W: In fact, I figured that if the American people used their heads any, and the military would keep on its present course, they wouldn't have as many enlistments.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: They wouldn't have had a standing Army of so many millions, or thousands, uh, but the people were kind of war weary.

S: Mm-hmm.

- W: They'd had that thing in Europe going. Then, when it was over with, the concentration was on the Pacific. And I think the reasoning was excellent. When you read that strategy -- how they worked that -- and General Marshall never has gotten complete credit, as much as he should. He was the only, one of the only honest people in Washington.
- S: Hmm. (laughs)
- W: He's just like old George Shultz when they were questioning him on that Congressional investigation. He was sitting there twiddling his thumbs because he knew he hadn't done anything. But he had information on everybody in there.
- S: Mm-hmm.
- W: All these people who were doing the questioning. (smiles)
- S: (laughs)
- W: So, I think that Marshall was the one that guided the thing, and then the Marshall Plan. . . .
- S: Right.
- W: . . . to keep the Communism out. And it worked. So, there's been some really wonderful people that have contributed.
- S: Right.
- W: Uh, it never occurred to me that they'd develop rockets like they have, and I went to Roswell to see. . . oh, the rocket man.
- S: That would be Enrico Fermi?
- W: Uh, [I'm] sorry. Lindbergh flew over there to see him.

S: Uh-huh. Oh, Werner von Braun, that's who we're talking about.

W: [Yes,] he was the rocket, uh, Goddard was his name.

S: Oh, Goddard. Okay. I've got you. I understand.

W: I went to see those. Well, it never occurred to me that they'd develop anything like they have with these smart bombs with a television camera in the front of [them,] and fire one of [them] from the Red Sea, and it was in the air an hour and thirty minutes before it ever got to Baghdad.
(smiles)

S: (laughs)

W: And then those four that they fired from the Persian Gulf [came] in from two directions on [them.]

S: [Yes,] it's, uh. . . .

W: I can't imagine all this stuff.

S: It is pretty amazing.

W: But, of course, getting back to it, the key to the whole thing was the chip. And if Kennedy hadn't insisted on going to the moon, and beating the Russians, you wouldn't have had the chip.

S: Hmm.

W: Because you can't land on the moon without the chip.

S: No.

W: There's no way for you to think fast enough.

S: True.

W: You can't do it.

S: No. So you worked at Ft. Bliss until 1946.

W: I was at Biggs Field.

S: You were at Biggs by then. And then at the end of 1946, what happened then?

W: Well, the man, Major Daeuble, that I worked with -- Carroll and Daeuble, architects -- he was my boss at Biggs. And he and Carroll decided to go into [the] architectural business here in town. They got me to join up with [them.]

S: I see.

W: So, I left Biggs Field, and went to work for them in '46. And I worked for them until 1969.

S: I see. And then retired at that time?

W: [Yes.]

S: Okay. Very good. Well, Mr. Waterhouse, I want to thank you for the information you've given us. I know the Oral History Insitute will be most grateful. This is the kind of information we're looking for for our project, and I think you've really provided us with some valuable. . . .

W: I hope I've covered it. . . .

S: I think you have.

W: . . . the way you wanted. I could tell you all kinds of things that, uh, oh, I ran into the Chief of Staff over here at Ft. Bliss.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: He's Colonel Street over here. And he, uh, I met him over in Luby's, and I was talking to him, and he knew I'd been out there at Ft. Bliss for a long time.

S: Right.

- W: And I told his wife -- they were sitting there -- and I said, "Well, the only thing I have any credit for during the war is that I memorized all the invert sewer elevations (S laughs) in Ft. Bliss. And they liked to [have] fallen through their chairs.
- S: (laughs) I imagine so.
- W: And the reason why I memorized them, because I didn't want to have to go look [them] up all the time.
- S: Right. Well, it makes sense. But, in any case. . . .
- W: But, I used to know all the water lines and sewer lines and all about the buildings, and. . . .
- S: Very good. Well, I want to thank you again. Again, I think you've provided us with some very good information, and I think it's going to be very helpful to people who are doing this research.
- W: Well, it's a little disjointed.
- S: That's all right. It didn't have to be in any necessary order.
- W: I've got a lot of it in mind, but I can't get it over to you, like I would like to.
- S: That's all right. I think you did very well, and thank you again.

END OF INTERVIEW