

## Arthur\_Eichorn\_September 18, 2006

Shannon Berndt: We are doing the Veterans Oral History with Arthur Marion Eichorn at the Henderson Public Library. Today is Thursday, June 8, 2006. My name is Shannon Berndt and our camera person is Ed Feldman. Welcome, and thank you for doing this project with us.

Arthur Eichorn: I am more than happy.

Shannon Berndt: First of all, let us go back to your childhood, and tell me what it was like growing up in the Bronx.

Arthur Eichorn: It was just an adventure. One thing after another. Anybody who says that growing up—I do not know how it is now, but growing up in the city is tough. It was a tough \_\_\_\_\_ (00:50) because you have got to understand because I was born in an apartment house and as such each apartment or group of apartments on that block developed a gang of guys my age, kids my age. The kids are not (\_\_\_\_ (01:10) animal man now. But at the time we were kids my age, and we simply, we hung around together. And I could tell you a story that comes to my mind, which relates to the depression era. We hung around---we used to hang around, winter, summer, or fall, in a candy store, which happened to be at the confluence of Reservoir over where I lived, was born and raised, and what's-it's, whatever it is, Bainbridge Avenue. And the---we would go in there to buy cigarettes, a penny a piece. And this one day we were standing outside. It was in February or January. And it was cold. And it was a wintry day. And we were all puffing on a penny cigarette, drag, taking drags like that and passing it around. I can see guys taking dope now, that is the way we smoked cigarettes then, if we smoked at all. And I happened to look up and I noticed an old gentleman standing off outside our circle because we were in a---oh, we got---we had gotten thrown out of the candy store. The guy said, I am sick of you guys hanging around here, get outside. So anyhow, I saw this fellow standing outside with us. And he was in rough shape. He had not eaten in two days, two or three days. And he said, I do not want to bother you---now you gotta bear in mind, my friend, this was during the depression. And he says, I hate to bother you guys, have you got any money? I have not eaten in two days. And he was so cold, Ms. Berndt, that there was steam coming out of his coat that he was wearing. He was---the weather had gotten to him that much. So I went around and each fellow—and between the three---the six of us, the six or seven of us, we had about fifty cents in hard cash, which was a lot of money in those days. Fifty cents would buy a lot of cigarettes, believe me. So we said to him---I said to him, can you make it? About a mile and a half away from the house because I knew of an all night lunch counter that was open. And here it was about 10 o'clock in the evening. And he says, yeah, and he says, I will make it. I says, well, follow us. And I says, here is all I could get, and I gave him the money. Oh, no, no, excuse me, I did not give him the money. I went down and this place was right near a subway station, this restaurant. I got a hold of the owner, \_\_\_\_\_ (04:07), and he came over and I says, I explained the situation to him, and I says, we do not want to get involved. Feed this guy. He looks as though---and first of all, if you can, dry his clothes off, please, because he was soaking wet. He was soaking wet from the snow and he was freezing. He was homeless. Well, he got a meal like you never saw in his life. I had never seen in my life, and I was hungry, too, I mean we were kids. And we had

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appetites like horses. I was eating all the time. And we fed him. And finally, I said, how much is that, to the guy. He says, forty cents or something like that. I said, fine, give me the dime back. Which he did. But the guy had no place to sleep that night. And he said, where am I going to stay? Where can I stay overnight? And I told him, well, I says, I cannot have you up to my house. My father will kill me if I bring you, a homeless guy. And then I thought of the police station. The cops knew us well. The 52<sup>nd</sup> Precinct in New York, which was another mile or so away, we walked with the guy down to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Precinct and this old Irish cop, he was the desk sergeant, he said, [in an Irish accent] and what do you guys want? And I explained to him the situation, this gentleman, I says, please give him a place to stay tonight. Do not lock him up, do not arrest him, do not do anything to him except for him to have a place to sleep tonight. And I says, and I am washing my hands of the whole thing. He says—and I understand completely—he says, now this is an old fashioned New York City policeman telling us this---giving me this line. So on the way out the cop comes over to me and he says, you did a good thing, sonny. And I says, I am glad to hear it. But those are the two---but I told you the---that story has bearing on the depression. It is an example of the depression and the---my stint with the FBI---with \_\_\_\_\_ (06:35).

Shannon Berndt: What did your father do for a living?

Arthur Eichorn: He was an inventor. Oh, and that leads me to another story. Do you have a moment to listen?

Shannon Berndt: Sure.

Arthur Eichorn: Okay. He had a lot to do with the patent office in New York---in Washington, my father. And somehow or other the Germans got a hold of my father's name. And of course you do not remember this, you were not even born and least of all I was alive, I was a kid, I remember the guy, I was seven years old, I think. But Dornea [SP] 07:11, a seaplane the Germans flew over to New York City. It was the biggest plane in the world at the time and it was captained---it was flown, the pilot, by a fellow by the name of Lankowski [SP] 07:24. Okay. And because of my father's affiliation with the patent office, that is the only thing I can think of, he had work to do with the patent office in the United States government, was that they got hold of my old man's name because he was---they---he was German, my father was german. So. My father comes home. He called my mother up. My mother was alive at the time and I remember. We were having company that night and I said, who is coming over? He said, your dad is bringing Captain Lankowski [SP] 08:01, the captain of the Dornea DOX [SP] 08:04. Fine, fine. And the doorbell rings or my father let himself in the house and he is preceded by this fellow in a naval uniform. Not ours. He was a pilot for Dornea [SP] 08:24. He was the captain of the DOX and he had a little model of the DOX for me. All right. That was in '31 or '32. Then we come around to '38 and my father says to me---my mother had died in '36, 1936, she was a young woman---my father says to me, he says, you remember this guy? And I looked and he hands me a newspaper and I looked at the newspaper and there was a headline in the New York Post screaming across the top. It says, Spy Flees to Canada, and then you continue the article on, and went further than that. It said that the

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FBI were chasing him up to the Canadian border and this guy fled to Montreal and he was flying over to the Pacific---over to Berlin. This is all before the war. And he got away. And lo and behold, he was assistant, Lankowski [SP] 09:37 was assistant, I think to the second-in-command, Goehring—you remember him, the fat guy...

Shannon Berndt: Right.

Arthur Eichorn: ...the big heavyweight, the second-in-command of Hitler.

Shannon Berndt: Wow.

Arthur Eichorn: And he got away. And he turned over everything that he had picked up at the patent office over here in the United States. He found out what he wanted and then we, the FBI, caught on to him, I guess, and chased him up to Canada and they could not cross the border because—you got an immigrant problem now, cripes, we did not have any immigrant problem then, but we came to the Canadian border and the guy was out of our jurisdiction. And it was none of my business. Hell, let them do their job. But you asked a question about my father. My father was involved with the patent office. He was an inventor. He was a newspaperman. My father also wrote. He was a published writer. As a matter of fact, Kay can tell you up there because she picks up them up off the Internet---oh, no, I was telling Kay about it, my wife picked it up off the Internet, my father's name. He had something published in 1912.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Arthur Eichorn: In a nickel-and-dime magazine. We call them nickel-and-dime then. They would be comparative to Readers Digest now, so to speak.

Shannon Berndt: Oh.

Arthur Eichorn: But back in those days, and—that is a long story.

Shannon Berndt: Well, the story you told me a few minutes ago was very interesting.

Arthur Eichorn: Which one? About the...

Shannon Berndt: The landlord of your...

Arthur Eichorn: Oh, the---down---when I opened the...

Shannon Berndt: Yeah, mm hm.

Arthur Eichorn: Oh, yeah, well, I was scared. I mean, for the first time in my life I knew these guys were German and I knew they were hooked up with Kurt---what was the guy's name? He had the \_\_\_\_\_ (11:43) Kurt something-or-other. And he wore a Nazi

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uniform. Aw, he had a meeting down on Madison Square Garden. And I opened up his desk drawer and I found this Nazi swastika. And as I said, it was not a print. It was not a painting like those things are. This was a \_\_\_\_\_ (12:06). It could have been used as a Nazi flag. And it was a red background with a black swastika and a white circle, and the black swastika was emblazoned on the white circle. And I lifted that up and I saw this map of all the military installations in the United States, and I said to myself, I know this guy is up to no good. I gotta tell my old man about this. And that is when they called the FBI.

Shannon Berndt: So there were like Nazi---active Nazi groups in that area?

Arthur Eichorn: Oh yeah.

Shannon Berndt: And it was called the Bund?

Arthur Eichorn: The Nazi Bund, B-U-N-D. And Kurt, what the devil was his name? Oh, and you know, I will think of it when I am [overlapping voices]. He was the head of the New York area, the New York City, that is, Bund. And every summer they would have two weeks vacation. The Bund would meet up in Albany or Taska, New York, someplace like that. They would have their meetings down at Madison Square Garden. This is how well known they were. It was in all the papers and there was nothing we could do about it, except that when the police would---of course the Nazi Bund would rail against the Jews, of course. Everything to do with the Jews. And some of the New York City policemen who were assigned duty at Madison Square Garden tried to get in and break up the meeting, they were beaten up. The Nazis had their own SS men there all as Americans. They had the Americans at the meeting in Madison Square Garden, 15-20,000 people, all heil Hitler, heil Hitler, sieg heil, and stuff like that. And two weeks in the summertime they would go away to the Bund meeting up in the Cattskills, New York, and they would have their meeting up there instead of going to Madison Square Garden. They would have their meetings out of doors and you cannot get them away from New York. There was no thing as air conditioning in those days. And it was just a breeze blowing and we were along the Hudson River—they were along the Hudson River, not we—they were along the Hudson River and it was cool. And it was beautiful. And they would come back to the city, and this \_\_\_\_\_ (14:49), who tried because our name was Eichorn, tried to get us involved. And my father said, no way. I do not want it. He says, I hate the Nazis. And then we call the FBI when I come across the flag, the swastika and the map and I told my father about it, and the map of New York with all the military installations, and he called the FBI and he says, we are on to that guy. We know all about him. He says, just rest in peace. Do you not do any more. And he told us. So I--he says, well, you did your job. And I think perhaps the FBI man might have asked my father, by the way, your name is Eichorn, are you a Nazi or something, because he did not know. During the war my father did not hoard. Everybody was hoarding. Food. They grabbed cans of spam, which I had a plethora of in the army. Spam. I did not want to see any more. And my father—I got home one furlough and my father says, I got something you will like. He says, open that back

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closet door. And I opened it and he had a closet full of spam. And I says, what the devil do you want me to do with that? I hate that stuff!

Shannon Berndt: What were you doing before you were drafted?

Arthur Eichorn: Well, good question. I was a high school student who enjoyed this weather. Of course it was not this hot. So I played hookey, hookey being you did not show up for class. And I would find some guy like Mr. Feldman there who was of the same thinking that I was and we would not go to school, and we would get away with it. Finally, finally I was asked to leave high school—yes, I was, in 1942 or somewhere around there, '41 maybe. I was supposed to graduate high school in '41, I think, '42 or '41. And they called my father and me. I will never forget. And I was thrown out of high school. And then fortunately we went to war—in my case fortunately. But I was not old enough, you understand. I was 17, perhaps 16 or 17 at the time. And so the first thing I did was down to enlist. This was after the war---after Pearl Harbor. I was still a kid. I brought everything of reference. I referenced the war about everything and I was not old enough. And I went down and I enlisted in the Marines, but I was not old enough. But the Marines did not give a damn. You were---we were cannon fodder. That is what we were, we were cannon fodder for the United States military. So I went down and joined up on---in the Marines. Why? Because I had seen a couple of movies with John Wayne and Randolph Scott wearing Marine Corps uniforms and I loved the Marines and I---so what did the Marines do? They put me in a---they took a picture of me, of each fellow, each enlistee, they took a picture in uniform, the uniform consisting of a blouse, you know, the high neck blouse---you remember, the blues.

Shannon Berndt: Right.

Arthur Eichorn: Cut down the back so one size fits all, and they did the same with the hat, and while I was there they had their picture taken and also the uniform they took away from me, of course. They were not going to leave me with the uniform. And I went home and I showed my father. Oh---I went with a big envelope. And my father says, where you been? This was after I got thrown out of high school, you understand. I forget the time lapse. So I told him, I says, I just joined the service. He says, what did you join? And I said, the Marine Corps. He says, like hell you did. You did not join any Marine Corps, he says, you are not old enough. Oh, I have to get your signature on it, Daddy. I had to get his signature because I was 16 or 17. I was underage by a year so I had to get a parent's signature. I am not signing that. Well, I could not decide what I wanted, the Navy, the Army or---the Marines had lost their romance to me. But I began seeing newsreels. The camera reminded me of the ski troops, which were not the Tenth Mountain Division, they were the United States Mountain Troops. And I \_\_\_\_\_ (20:29) in Mt. Ranier in Washington and skiing and all of the---and staying at the beautiful places and skiing up at \_\_\_\_\_ (20:37), Utah, and up at—what was that place in, it was owned by Averil Harriman? Anyhow. I said, that is what I should join. I should join the ski troops. I had never seen a pair of skis. I did not know what skis looked like.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

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Arthur Eichorn: So I went up to the United States---the recruiting office for the United States Army run by a gentleman by the name of Manny [SP] 21:14 Dole, D-O-L-E. First name was Manny [SP] 21:20. He was a Yale man. And he headed up the United States Ski Patrol, the US Ski Patrol, which was a group of men throughout the country, skiers, whose job it was if you were injured on the slopes or something like that, they would go down and get you, get you off the slopes, take you to a hospital \_\_\_\_\_ (21:42) major \_\_\_\_\_ (21:43) injuries. In any event, Manny [SP] 21:45 Dole volunteered his resources. He said, I get a number of fellows, obviously, coming in here looking for the ski troops. So the United States used Manny [SP] 22:00 Dole for its recruiting thing---recruiting services. When the war got on---then we declared war, Pearl Harbor or something like that or---and I went down to enlist, I went down to the ski patrol. I---that was it. I went down to the Chrysler Building in New York City or the---I think it was in the Chrysler Building. I went upstairs and I saw him. He says---at this point things got a little hairy. What is your skiing experience? I had to lie. I lied. I had never seen a pair of skis. I had not been any more than sleigh riding up in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. Oh, Van Cortlandt Park, I told him. Well, we need you to get two---to join the Army, two letters of recommendation from a professional man, a teacher, a doctor or an engineer, and a layman. I had to get two letters of recommendation. When you get those, bring them in to us and we will make our decision. And I says, two letters of recommendation to join the Army? I says, I never heard of such a thing. But this was what they were after, the ski patrol, the ski troops. Which I did. I got two letters of recommendation, I remember. The first guy, I went around to a dentist, the guy who worked on my teeth. I told him and he says, what are you, nuts or something? I says, yeah, but it is part of the requirements. I got those. Then I was told---I brought them back to Manny [SP] 23:46 Dole, back to his office, and I gave him all the---all those recommendations and he said to me, okay. He said, are you signed up for the draft. I think---oh, I was not ready. I was 17. Yeah, okay. He says, when you get your draft notice, come down---go down to the draft board and tell them that you are assigned to the---not the Tenth Mountain Division, which did not exist at that time, to the Ski Troops, and they will send you out to Colorado, and that was the beginning of it all. So I waited for my draft notice. Finally it came through. You are---green, you know, Franklin Roosevelt, President, signed the stuff like that, a nice letter. You are hereby drafted in the United States Army and I am all set. I had been through this. So what I had to do was go back, take my draft notice to the draft board, show them that I in fact had gotten my draft notice. Now the draft board sent me a notice. Well, any how, I was admitted to the service and then from the draft board I had to go down to the Grand Central Palace, I think it was called, whatever, for my physical, and there were a million guys all going in the service. Not ski troops. And physicals. And do you love your mother and what do you think of your father. I said, well, my mother is dead and I did not love her, obvious reasons. So in any event I ended up at Camp Upton out in---Irving Berlin wrote one of his shows about it---in---on Long Island. I ended up at Camp Upton in a reception center and I was in the Army. I got my uniform and everything like that and I had to wait until they got a trainload---a carload---of perhaps 30, maybe 50 fellows that were going out to Camp Hill. But who the hell ever heard of Camp Hill? Who ever heard of the ski troops? Who wanted to join the ski troops? So finally, after pulling KP from days on

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end, because they did not know what to do with me, and I was with prisoners of war from World War I, from the American Army prisoners who were at Camp Upton and they were in prison there, and I was washing---they were washing dishes and I was taking orders from them and I was drying and doing grease pits and everything like that. And finally one morning they came over to my bunk and I said, when am I getting out of this joint and joining the ski troops? I see nothing but---this was in February of '43---I see nothing but sunshine here. There is no snow at all. We got your notice. Proceed to Grand Central Station. Make one phone call, which was my father and my brother and I called them up. Meet me at Grand Central, I says, I am going to board a train and go on out to Camp Hail, Colorado. And that was it. My introduction to the service. And when I got out there, I found out that not only did I lie, but just about everybody in my position. They had seen the same movies or the same newsreels or read the same Life magazines that I did. Could be the skiing. Oh, I \_\_\_\_\_ (27:55). And so I joined the outfit. Then we got on the train and there was a five day trip, perhaps, out to Colorado. And I remember my first of Camp Hail, Colorado, which are in the---probably in your pictures. Each barracks at Camp Hail---first of all it was at an elevation of let us say 10,000 feet, Camp Hail, so right away we had a cough. Secondly, there was nothing but a pall of smoke because each barracks burnt---which were below the train level. The train came around one ridge, one level elevation, and the camp was at another, maybe a couple hundred feet lower, enough to see from an altitude. And I could see nothing but smoke. And then the locomotives from the train, because of the grade---we were on Tennessee Pass at 10,000 feet---the train, the Denver Rio Grand Wester, I will never forget it---had a puller and a pusher, was belching nothing, but nothing but smoke. And I says, aw, boy, am I, what have I got myself into here? And unload. All you guys that are going to the ski troops, unload this as your stuff. And that was my introduction to the United States Army Ski Troops. And then it was one thing from there on. And then things happened fast.

Shannon Berndt: Did you get time for skiing?

Arthur Eichorn: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. But I---you gotta understand I was a baseball player and I was an athlete, and as such I was a good athlete, so I caught on to skiing, but I needed lessons, as did everybody else when I found out everybody had lied the same as me. And I will never forget when our ski instructor showed up. We had to go out to a place called Cooper Hill, I think it is. And [gave a short laugh] we were told how to ski. And I will never forget the instructor. He would say, bend ze knees. He was German. He was Austrian. Bend ze knees. By birth, and he was in uniform, you know, the same as---he was a sergeant, perhaps, I was---and so I bent ze knees. And then he says, okay, to me and maybe a dozen other guys who were in the class together. He said, follow me. This is with skis on. I did not put a pair of skis on. As a matter of fact, I remember putting them---I had to anchor my one foot---I got the ski on one foot, but I had to anchor that to put the ski on the other foot against a tree because I would slide. My foot would give way. In any event, I had to go downhill. He said, this is your introduction to skiing. He says, down that hill there. And it was a tow, a T-bar tow and a rope tow. The difference between the two was night and day. A rope you hang on to and you go up. A T-bar was a hydraulic bar that came down in the shape of a T. You would pull the thing down and you would---you would not sit on it, you would get in the nape of your---in

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your back, because we were carrying packs and rifles and helmets and everything like that.

Shannon Berndt: Mm hm.

Arthur Eichorn: That was what Cooper Hill consisted of where this fellow told me to go down. So I had to go down that slope and this is my first time ever down the hill. And I says, I am not going to—I am getting off of these things. And I did. I took the skis off and I walked down the hill. Where are you going, soldier? somebody asked me. I said, I am getting down to that parking lot there. He says, ski down. I said, I cannot. I do not know what to do. He said, you will learn. I learned.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughing]

Arthur Eichorn: I learned. And I became a pretty good skier. So then we went through a year and a half of training. Let me see. Yeah, perhaps a year and half of training up at Camp Hail, Colorado, and we are getting better and better. In the meantime I made sergeant and I was the best \_\_\_\_\_ (32:54). All these pictures I have shown you were taken during that time. But I was out in the field. With mules. We got--ask me about a mule and I will tell you all you want to know about a mule to this day. We got involved with mules because they were the only source of power that we had. Horses would not go where mules would go. Horses did not have the strength. But if a mule could make it across ice and snow, we would know, we would realize that a man could make it. And part of our training was in the mountains of the Colorado Rockies. And I think, but I did not put it down there, Camp Swiss, Texas. We departed Camp Hail, Colorado, in July—June or July of '44 down to Texas. And it was a hell of a trip because we were stationed 10,000 feet above sea level and there Texas is. We did not have a division down there. I do not know \_\_\_\_\_ (34:17) list of Camp Swift, Texas. And there was another division stationed at Camp Swift, Texas, when we were stationed there, so there were two divisions, which meant that there 30,000 men, whoa, there were 15,000 men per division. By that time we had become activated. Our division was activated into the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Division or whatever it was, and there was a swimming pool. I will never forget the swimming pool. But in any event, our reason for going down to Texas was---many reasons, but uppermost in my mind was that the United States Army did not want---had no use for the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. They had no place to put us. No general wanted us in his outfit because we were ski troops and nobody was fighting in the mountains except in Italy. So we got down to Camp Swift and they sent us on a march. I think it was perhaps 110 or 120 degrees above, you know, in the sunlight. And of course the march, the Army march in all kinds of weather. I think they had an investigation about that. And the guys were---so we were marching along in double squad---you know, one squad across the street and one squad across the road and I am marching behind my fellows in single file. And as the fellows were passing out from heat exhaustion, it was my job as squad leader, to run up, grab the fellow, unloosen his shirt and his pants if he still had them on—you gotta bear in mind that the guys were suffering—and we were---and then we had to drag them off into the shade and wait for the pie [SP] 36:27 wagon, the ambulance, to come around and pick them up. And they

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were picking up these guys like dirt. And then I think, because I was out of it by this point, I would have to run and catch up to my company, to my squad, that is, which I did, which asserted a certain amount of effort on my part, you know, to run and catch up, and fall in behind them and the line was getting shorter because the guys were falling out. And they found me talking to myself.

Shannon Berndt:       Wow.

Arthur Eichorn:       Walking off in the distance somewhere talking to myself. I had lost all bodily functions and the next thing I know—I do not remember any of that. I remember catching up to the squad and then I remember the next thing I was in the hospital. And I woke up. In the meantime they had sent a telegram home to my folks, my father—my mother was dead by this point, Wanda—that I was in the Camp Swift Regional Hospital and I was at a critical—that I was not expected to live.

Shannon Berndt:       Oh!

Arthur Eichorn:       Yeah. I had it bad. Fortunately or not, I pulled through. The thing I remember was my bed was all boarded up when I woke up and there was an Army chaplain standing there and my company commander standing there, and, you made it, Art. And I said, yeah, I made it. What did I make? Where are we? Where am I? And they told me. And then I was put in the hospital, in the Camp Swift Hospital. And I know what had happened. You do not remember the Hartford, Connecticut---maybe you remember, well, you have heard of it—the big fire that took place in the circus tent in Hartford, Connecticut, at the time the circus was up in Hartford and they had a big fire? And I remember that coincided---that---I use that as a---July 22<sup>nd</sup> I think it happened. Also it was the time when Hitler and his life was attempted by the---certain people over in Germany---they blew him up---they did not blow him up, they blew up his headquarters where he was stationed. And---but that is the time frame of where I was. I was in the hospital drinking eggnog, recruiting from a sunstroke. I had a sunstroke. See, these guys, other guys had heat exhaustion, but I had a sunstroke. So I was removed from my outfit and I was sent to rehabilitation at Camp Swift and it was nothing but play ball and eat the food you wanted and just to come around. In the meantime the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was activated to go over to Italy to fight. You know who is an RF? Bob Dole. You know, the senator?

Shannon Berndt:       Mm hm.

Arthur Eichorn:       He was wounded over there. And it was two weeks before the war ended. They took me away from all that and put me in this rehabilitation camp and I had another sunstroke.

Shannon Berndt:       Huh.

Arthur Eichorn:       Playing ball. And I ended up in the hospital again. And we went through the same thing. By that time my outfit was long gone overseas, get the hell out

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of here. So I remained in the States and I, what I did was I guarded German officer prisoners. And then they took 50 GIs, dogfaces we called each other—I was sergeant at that point, see, so I had a little rank. Did not have to do KP or anything like that, and I would get my---but they sent us out to the West Coast to Seaside---to Oceanside where Camp Pendleton is and the Marines come from. And I will never forget. I got in line for breakfast one morning. Now this was in 1944 or 45. I forget. Yeah, the war ended in April of '45, May of '45. And I got in line for chow at a navy base and the person who was ahead of me, how do you want your eggs, soldier? Because there were 50 GIs. You gotta understand, I did not know what I was doing out there, to train men, but in what, I do not know. I was a mortarman and we had no use for mortar-men. But what they--- what---to make a long story short, to what they were using us for, was evidently to go up and invade Japan. Because the war had not been over in Japan. In any event there we are at Oceanside, California, and I said, oh, boy, this is great, I saw the Pacific Ocean, I said, this is wonderful. But I---to this day I wear a baseball hat. I could not wear a hat—I could not go out in the sun without a hat. And I am trying to think what I am \_\_\_\_\_ (42:50) with. Oh, I went back to my barracks one morning and I did not have enough points to get out of the army. The point system was in effect then. The point system was being overseas duty, combat this and that. So I did not have enough points to get out; they kept me in. And I am lying in my bunk with the radio on. I was permitted a radio then. And the news came over in August of '45 I guess it was when Harry Truman, the President of the United States, dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima. And I just hollered out to all the guys that were out—my squad who were out in the barracks area—I said, fellows, I said, it is just about over because Truman had given, I think, the Japanese one week to decide to surrender---what---and he was going to drop another bomb. That was it. The Japanese did not surrender. Truman dropped a bomb on Nagasaki. Boom. The Japanese surrendered and then we were excess, excess baggage. All they could do was to get rid of us. Get rid of us one way or the other. So I had to make a trip back from the West Coast to the East Coast to Camp Kilmer---Fort Dix, that was it, New Jersey. And get this, \_\_\_\_\_ (44:23) and one guy had a job, a lieutenant, to get all of us together, the discharges. And coincidentally, I was inducted into the service, I joined the Army on February 13, 1943, and I went out, I was discharged February 13, 1946, three years to the day. And now, his job was to give us a pep talk extolling the virtues of reenlisting. Well, you can imagine, all we wanted to do was get out. Get out of here! And we threw things at the guy. He says, haha. I says, you got the worst job in the Army. But that was it. Smartest thing the Army ever did was to give us the GI bill. I went to college after that. I finished high school when I came out of the service, finished my high school. By that time I found out that my father was not as dumb as I thought he was, and I finished high school and went to college, and I met my wife. I met this girl whose picture I got you. She was a model.

Shannon Berndt: Oh.

Arthur Eichorn: Not my wife. This girl that I met. I picked her up at the beach.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter] Good.

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Arthur Eichorn: You know. She was, I guess, she was very, very pretty. In any event I got a job up in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and I flipped a coin. And this is another story, that is all. The guy who referred me, because we were out looking for a new job—looking for a job—later turned out to be the chairman and the chairman of the board of—and CEO of Gulf and Western Communications. They own the Rangers, the Nicks, the--Madison Square Garden, all these guys. But Marty Davis, his name is Martin Davis and I read about him in the Wall Street Journal. This is after the war now, bear in mind. I was up in Connecticut. But at the time Marty called me up late one afternoon and he said—when I lived in New York—this was after I got out of the Army and I was looking for a job and he was looking for a job. He says, Art, he said, there is an outfit, WT Grant and Company who is looking for a floor walker. They are trying to get a hold of vets, that is what they were doing. They were trying to get a hold of veterans, and they wanted to get a corps together and put the best foot forward for WT Grant. So I went down and I got interviewed and I got the job. Okay, where do you want to go, Summit, New Jersey, or Bridgeport, Connecticut? I flipped a coin. I flipped a coin and the coin landed wherever I called it, heads or tails and I said, Bridgeport. Heads, Bridgeport. And I ended up I Bridgeport. And my life turned around that, on the flip of a coin...

Shannon Berndt: Wow.

Arthur Eichorn: ...you might say. And I met my wife---and I was engaged to this other girl—aw, it is a long story.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter].

Arthur Eichorn: Ask questions.

Shannon Berndt: What was it like when you guarded the German prisoners of war?

Arthur Eichorn: What was it like?

Shannon Berndt: Yeah, what was it like? How did they act? What did you have to do?

Arthur Eichorn: They were---bear in mind that they were German officers mostly---mainly---altogether they were German officers from about as high as major general down to the second lieutenant and most of them had come from the Afrika Korps.

Shannon Berndt: Oh.

Arthur Eichorn: And they would wear their uniforms. We were---they were permitted to wear to wear uniforms in their own encampment. Our relationship with them were---was I would not say friendly. As a matter of fact, one of them was shot and killed by a---one of our men trying to climb a fence, the compound fence that he was in the compound. I mean one of the guys in my outfit shot, killed him. Anyhow, which leads me to another story if you want to listen to it.

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Shannon Berndt: Certainly.

Arthur Eichorn: I know about Mr. Philbin over there. We were---I was stationed I think at Camp Swift and we were permitted to walk around the perimeter of the camp. And you gotta bear in mind that the camp was back filled and the camp was built upon it—like they did everything in Texas. This is why I hate Texas. Now I cannot stand Texas. And one afternoon my buddy and I, we were supposed to go on guard duty and he said to me, he said, let us take a walk, let us take a hike, Art. And I said, fine. I have a few cigarettes. Bear in mind that Luckies and Pell Mell, we had them coming out of our ears. Cigarettes—we did not worry about cigarettes. Anyhow, we were walking down this dirt path on the perimeter of the camp. And I hear, help, help. And I said to my friend, is that you? And he said, no it is coming from down there. And there was a Negro, a black guy, splashing through the swamp. And bear in mind that we had an embankment coming up, a 20 foot embankment, at least 20 feet, dirt, to where we were walking. And I said, what do you want? And he says, I am looking for a cigarette. So I think I had two or three left in a pack in my what is this, shirt. So I says, here, take these. And he says, I only have time for one. I said, what do you mean? And he said, they are after me. And I said, who is after you? I ain't never heard of this. I had never heard of prejudice, racial prejudice in my life, coming from the Bronx. Being through all that I had never heard of racial prejudice. I had heard of it by guys in my outfit, rebels we called them. But in this black guy's case he had done something, he had looked at a white woman in the wrong way or something like that and they zeroed in on him. Anyhow, we went out on guard duty. We had driven around our post and we had to go up on a guard tower and we were to be relieved in 40 minutes or a half hour, whatever it was, and our relief was late in coming. In the meantime---and it was dark, getting dark at this time. Our relief was late in coming and I could hear silence and finally a Jeep shows up with our relief. And says, where the devil have you guys been? I mean 15 minutes was the daytime. We wanted every minute to ourselves. This was for sack time. And we got an emergency over at the hospital. We got in the Jeep and drove off and they went over to the hospital. And they opened up the doors of the ambulance and they wheeled out this stretcher, this gurney, whatever you want to call on wheels, and it was this colored guy, his throat cut, dead. They had lynched him. His boss had caught up with him and whoever was involved had caught up with him and that was it. And they thought no more of it than shaking your hand, you know, why I am talking to you. And that left a deep impression on me. And anyhow, that was at Camp Swift. Well, you asked the questions. What was my---how did the German prisoners? The German prisoners were fine. We had to kill one of them because he tried to escape. They were put in their own compound, I remember distinctly, and we were put with the machine guns. See, we were not allowed in their compound with weapons. The Geneva Convention said you were not allowed to use weapons to go into the compound. You used baseball bats or anything you want, but do not use gunfire. So we got word that there was a riot going on in the German POW camp. Naturally I got picked. They sent me down with a squad of boys, and break up what is going on. \_\_\_\_\_ (54:16) but we are not allowed in that place. I says, you got machine guns on either end. I said, we will shoot each other. On either end---I mean it was the machine guns. They never thought

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about it. But anyhow we went down. We went---I think we went in the midst of the POW camp and we broke up the fight. Oh, I know what they did. They separated the guys up because they were all turning anti-Nazi, that was it. So a lot of guys, German prisoners of war, it was getting towards the end of the war at that point, they had turned anti-Nazi and they were squealing on their buddies, he is a Nazi but I am not, amigo over there, or whatever you want to call it, the friend. The Germans would get a hold of these guys and start fighting amongst themselves and that is when they sent us down, because they were fighting amongst themselves. And then I remember a lieutenant or a captain or something being shot by somebody---this---just a kid, we were all kids, 17, I mean 18 years old. I was the youngest noncom in the whole division at 19 years old, in my division—I was a mortar---when I made sergeant. But this was how old we were. And I was 23 when the war was over when Harry Truman dropped the bomb. I think 23. Maybe 20. I forget. I was 23 when I got married, when Jean and I got married, which is a long story in itself.

Shannon Berndt: [Chuckle]

Arthur Eichorn: But I have been married 57 years and I am 82 years old going on 82 and---57 and 82 and there is one other number. In any event that gives you an idea of my lineage, my background. But the smartest thing, the greatest thing that the United States ever did for the GI then back in those days was the GI bill. You could not fill up the colleges fast enough. They did not care if you could write your name. That is all they wanted to do was sign those registration papers in the college and join. So I went to the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut and I got my degree and that goes with it.

Shannon Berndt: Well, you are a long way from Connecticut now. How did you end up here?

Arthur Eichorn: Interesting story. I have got a son—well, we have got---I have got two sons and a daughter. The daughter is the middle. The younger son, he was a Navy man. He joined the Navy when he was---I got him a job in Connecticut and he told me one day, he says, I am going in the service; and I convinced him to join the Navy not---in fact, you know, stay away from the Army, stay away from---the food is lousy and it is dirty. I says, aboard ship it will be cleaner and the food is better. So he joined the Navy. The only problem was that it was a four-year hitch instead of three. The Army wanted a three-year hitch out of him, but he was willing to give up a year. He was going to Fordham University at the time, my son. My older son had already gone to Fordham. We were living in Connecticut at the time. So---but Jim got stationed aboard a ship out of San Diego, California, and---flying helicopters of all things. I was working for Sikorsky at the time making choppers, you know, blades. And Jim got aboard the ship, the Belleau Wood, and he cruised the world. Join the Navy and see the world. He saw all parts of the world, but stuff I had never seen before. And---as a matter of fact, there was one leave that Jim was supposed to have gotten and the ship was supposed to have docked in Australia, and then from that point it was to go to Australia and then to the Hawaiian Islands and then from the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. And all of this was done by airplane except the steaming part—the sailing part. I got a call. Now

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this is going back 25 years ago, perhaps. Jim called me. He says, Dad. Now I expected him home. He says, Dad, I am not coming home. I says, where the devil are you going? He says, I am going to Australia. He says, I met a girl. I said, in Australia? And he says, yeah, of all places. I said, when the hell did you run into her? He says, my ship docked at Perth, Australia. And he tied up at Perth, Australia, and sure enough, he docked. But anyhow he was aboard this Belleau Wood and he was in naval intelligence at the time. He was in Naval intelligence, and he was discharged from the Navy and---oh yeah, he met this girl, that was it in Tacoma, Washington, up near Seattle.

Shannon Berndt: Mm hm.

Arthur Eichorn: And they got married. She had three kids by---three---oh, no, no, no. Excuse me. She had a kid by a previous marriage. She was a pain in the neck. And they have been married 25 years and they live out here, but they moved down from Tacoma, Washington, down here. And we used to go out---to fly out---my wife and I would fly out to Tacoma and go to the---mainly to the, what is the---Bremerton, Washington, where the boats are, all the old battle ships, and I would drive out there, oh boy. I would see---bring back memories. In any event I called Jimmy one day. I was sick of hanging around Connecticut. I wanted to get out of Connecticut so badly and I says, Jim, I says I made up my mind. I am coming out. I am going out to---I am going up to Vermont or New Hampshire. I am going to buy a house up there. And Jim said—he is a \_\_\_\_\_ (1:01:21) broker. And he said, why do that, Dad? Now I am going back three years, as long as we have lived here. He says, come on out here. He says, you will not have to shovel snow. He says, you will not have to rake leaves. Everything will be taken care of for you. And he said, I will find you a house within your income. And he says, just shoot me the business, that is all. I says, you got it. And I---that is how I got out here. And I cannot get a decent meal fish-wise.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughing] Oh, no.

Arthur Eichorn: I love fish. I cannot find fish out here. I---we have got company. My niece and her mother are coming up over the weekend and she wants nothing but fish. Where am I going to find fish from? I got sick off fish the other day. I went over here to some joint.

Shannon Berndt: No fish in the desert.

Arthur Eichorn: Yeah.

Shannon Berndt: Are you a member of any of the veterans groups like...

Arthur Eichorn: Not the VFW. American Legion, yeah, I have got that down here. Post 40.

Shannon Berndt: Okay. Do you stay in touch with any of the...

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Arthur Eichorn: They are dead.

Shannon Berndt: Are they.

Arthur Eichorn: Except Bob Dole, who I get a letter from once a year. He is looking for a contribution for a---the World War II memorial down in Washington, or for the Republican Party, neither of which I am. I do not care. I am not a Republican and I do not give a damn about the World War II Memorial contributions. Life is tough enough. No sense in me giving 25 bucks. I can use 25 bucks to my own \_\_\_\_\_ (1:03:13).

Shannon Berndt: Well, thank you so much. It was very interesting speaking to you. That is all I have unless you have any more stories you would like...

Arthur Eichorn: I have got millions of stories but I do not want to bore you. I have taken up enough of your time and you have listened to me and I could see Mr. Feldman over there. He is getting tired of listening to me, too.

Shannon Berndt : [Laughing] Oh, no.

Arthur Eichorn: But I---that is my life, so to speak. Up until the time I was asked to leave high school, and I, you know all about that. I played hookey.

Shannon Berndt: Mm hm.

Arthur Eichorn: I could not see going to school. I just could not see it. A beautiful day like this. Let us go out and---and pretty soon one day went into the next and then---I joined the service. And the Army made a man of me. And---oh, bear in mind that a lot of---most of the fellows that were in my outfit in the Army in the ski troops were men from New England and Washington and none from down south, but they were all mountain men so to speak. And in so doing---in so being these men were all well educated, Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, University of Vermont, you name it, all the schools up there. These were fellows that skied. And here comes a guy from New York, the Bronx, New York, and I joined this outfit so I could see---it did not take me long to---I became quite friendly---I remember---I do not remember his name, but I became quite friendly with a Yale man, a fellow who was a student at Yale. There was another guy, Hemmingway. I will never forget he was a big, tall, lanky guy, and he was in my outfit in---at Camp Hail, Colorado. And he came back one day and he said, hey, fellows---and he had a broad New England accent. I mean you gotta understand this. Hey, fellows, you know what I did? What I am now? And I said to him, no, why? He said, I am a cook. I says, you, a cook? He says, yeah, I love it. He says, I finally found my---he found his place in the Army. And as far as I know Hemmingway became a beautiful cook in the service. But this is an---this gives you an idea. But most of them were either from New England, from the Midwest in the mountains, or from the Northwest in the mountains. And I lost a number of them, you know, were killed in action over there in Italy. I am trying to think. Walter Progger [SP] 1:06:19 was a Dartmouth man. He was

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the coach of the Dartmouth ski team when he joined the service, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, the ski troops at the time. We were---the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was not organized. And Walter Progger [SP] 1:06:36 came in our fit—and he was a tall, skinny guy, I remember him—they were all tall. All the guys were tall except me.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Arthur Eichorn: But that is it. I---you know---I do not want to bore you any more.

Shannon Berndt: All right, well, thank you very much.

Arthur Eichorn: You are quite welcome.

Shannon Berndt: And I will scan your pictures and get them back to you.

Arthur Eichorn: You have been so nice to me.

Shannon Berndt: Oh, it has been our pleasure. Have you seen the video that we have that is on the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division? It must have been misplaced or whatever. It is a very interesting video. It talks about [overlapping voices].

Arthur Eichorn: Oh, I would love it.

Shannon Berndt: We should see if we can get...

Arthur Eichorn: I had gotten it---one of the girls out there and I got it---the ladies that work behind the desk at this reference counter here, Kay and---could not be nicer. As a matter of fact, Kay knows more about baseball—I am an ex-baseball player, too, part of my career. But Kay knows more about baseball than I do.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Arthur Eichorn: She does not---she is a Kansas City fan and I am a Red Sox fan and I hate the Yankees being---having been born and raised in the Bronx I do not like the Yankees. I have never liked the Yankees. My first baseball game that my father took me to was in 1932 at Yankee Stadium. I was a little 8-year-old kid, squirt. And who the devil is playing? Shagging flies? Babe Ruth. This gives you---puts you in perspective of my age and the times that I am talking about. And I was brought up during the depression and thank the Lord my father had a job. He did all these many things that I told you and he was always able to get a buck to get money in his pocket to feed us kids. And live apparently, live in a halfway decent manner because some of the pictures that I have somewhere in that---probably in that---are indicative of the style we lived in. We lived pretty well. But then my mother died when I was 11 years old. My mother had cancer. Back in those days I mean that was it. They did surgery and there was nothing else to it and my mother---I went to summer camp in 1936 principally because they wanted to get me away from the house, so they sent me to a summer camp which my

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father could not afford. He could not afford paying the hospitalization, which was minimal. I mean the hospitalization then was nothing to what it is now. But he could not afford to send me to summer camp, so I have an uncle somewhere—I have never met him—in Chicago—he is long gone, Uncle Louie, and Louie paid for my summer camp. And they sent me away to summer camp. And I was able to see my mother before I left for camp. And let us say it was May, Memorial Day, and I went to summer camp. And I went over to the hospital to see her. They did not have a hospice. They had terminal care in the hospital. So if you had cancer that is where they sent you. That was it. They had nothing---no idea of what hospital---hospice was. And she was a very pretty woman, my mother. And I will never forget. She was freshly made up. They had made her up and they had doped her up with morphine, but she was propped up in bed and she wanted to see her son. She wanted to see her son, me. And I---she said, now you be—I will never forget—you be a good boy and do not fool around. [Laughter] I had a reputation even then.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Arthur Eichorn: And I went to camp and I played---I wrote every day. I wrote home, how is Mom? And then finally we were let out of camp after Labor Day, I suppose it was, and I got home in the Bronx right away, and I went up to my father and my big brother and I told them I am going over to the hospital to see Mom. And they said, don't. I says, I came home. I says, I gotta see my mother, and I ran out of the house over to the hospital. And I get up to the hospital to her room where she was. She did not know who I was. She did not know who I was. She died two days later. She stayed alive to see me, to see her little boy.

Shannon Berndt: Mm hm. Yeah.

Arthur Eichorn: I am convinced of it.

Shannon Berndt: Oh yes, I believe it, too.

Arthur Eichorn: Convinced of it. But that is my life. Man, you know more about my life than my wife does.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

Arthur Eichorn: You and Mr. Feldman there.

Shannon Berndt: [Laughter] A very interesting life.

Arthur Eichorn: Anything else?

Shannon Berndt: That is all for now.

Arthur Eichorn: Okay. I got a million stories to tell you.

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Shannon Berndt: [Laughter]

End of file