ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

NARRATOR: Wiley McFarland

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: William Wiley McFarland was born in Dodge City, Kansas in 1928 as an only child to William R. and Barbara McFarland. He spent his childhood on a ranch south of Cimarron, Kansas. After college he entered the military and spent three years in the Civil Engineer Corp. Afterwards, he returned to work his family's ranch where he continues to live today.

DATE OF INTERVIEW: July 11, 2003

INTERVIEWER: Rachel Pederson

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Cimarron, Kansas

NUMBER OF CASSETTES: 1 audio cassette

LENGTH OF CASSETTES: 60 min.

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 57 min.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Dust Storms and the Dirty Thirties; Farming during the thirties and forties; Experiences of home life and school; Home front of World War II; the Korea War; Observations about Vietnam; Description of Cimarron in the thirties and forties.

Wiley McFarland
Narrator

Rachel Pederson
Interviewer

July 11, 2003
Cimarron, Kansas

Wiley McFarland – **WM**
Rachel Pederson – **RP**

(Beginning of side A)

RP: Ok, today is July 11, 2003 and I am interviewing Wiley McFarland.

WM: So here I am, ready to be interviewed.

RP: When and where were you born?

WM: I was born in Dodge City actually but uh that's right in this area.

RP: Uhm, and when was that?

WM: When was that? 1928, May the 12th.

RP: What did your parents' do for a living?

WM: They were on this cattle ranch so we're right where we were then.

RP: Haven't moved.

WM: Haven't moved.

RP: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

WM: No I don't have any brothers or sisters. I'm an only child.

RP: So tell me about what it was like growing up on a ranch. What kind of chores did you do?

WM: Well it seemed like we were pretty well tied to the place. I mean there was no going down town, no going here or there or anywhere else. You, and uh, I always liked to tag along so . . . as far as definite chores, uh sometimes we did garden work and we fed pigs and fed cows and that sort of thing. But uh, I always disliked chores so I still try to keep them to a minimum.

RP: What did, what did you do for fun then?

WM: I don't know if I did a lot of things for fun. I guess I did. Uh, when about 19 . . . oh '34 or '35 radio became a, prevalent and uh, so you'd listen to the radio quite a bit. I know we have a TV guide now but back in those days, why my mother and father, they got a big piece of cardboard. They would put on the days and the different programs that would be on each week in the day and uh, so I remember Jack Benny was Sunday evening at six o'clock and Fred Allan was Wednesday evening at eight o'clock and you just kind of pointed toward those things. They were kind of a highlight for the week.

RP: Uh-huh. Did you go down to the river at all or . . .?

WM: Not much to play no, um-hum. We had an irrigation ditch we developed in '36. No, we didn't do a lot there playing with things either. It was just a matter more work than play.

RP: So you raised cattle and then you.... sold them. Did you have to drive them down to the town or . . .?

WM: Yeah, we did in those days, quite a bit. We had one of the first feedlots I guess you'd say in the area. I remember we fed cattle in '35 and '36, '37, '38, '39. And uh, each railroad, each town had a, stockyards and that was where the cattle would come in and be loaded off the train if they were coming into the country or if you were raising your own, why then you would take them and you'd take them down and put them on the railroad car. I don't remember trucks really hauling cattle until the mid-40s. Most everything was railroad and I do remember a few incidents. Of course we always had to cross the river one way or the other. The river did run some then and uh, in the wintertime is when you'd sell your fat cattle usually. That's when they came out and if you had ice on the river that was a little hard to get them to go through it and if you had quite a bit of water, you took them to the bridge and drove them over the bridge and then of course, when you did that you were in town with them and uh, sometimes they would be a little hard to drive down through the streets of town, although you picked your way around. You got along all right but then you'd get them to the railroad yard and uh, you'd order so many cars and they'd put them on the siding and you'd have to load them up and you'd do that. So that's the way we . . . Then after, I suppose oh maybe '40, '41, '42 somewhere in there the truck became the method and the railroads . . . Well, I think it was basically the railroads couldn't care less. I've often said that if the depot agent down here and the person running the freight, if he had gotten even five percent of the money they charged they charged people to use the railroad, we'd probably be still doing a lot of things that way. But I'll always remember 1936 I think it was. We went, we had relatives in California and uh so we went down, my mother would go out some summers and take me along so we went down to get some tickets to go on the train. And you would think we were doing that depot agent a big favor by even being there. He didn't want to open the door, window to sell us a ticket. And you know, uh and you feel that too, you can say what you want to. Yeah he did it, yeah it'd be all right, yeah, yeah,

yeah, but he wasn't glad you were there. He'd rather you were somewhere else and he was reading his book. So it's kind of . . . and we face that today too to an extent.

RP: Uh-huh. Yeah. Nobody really wants to be working.

WM: What?

RP: Nobody really wants to be working.

WM: I don't know about that, but on the other side of it, uh you'd better realize that you'd better be working and you'd better be doing, if you're in the service business you better be about a good service as somebody else or you're not going to survive. And uh, if your companies big enough, why ok, who cares but if you're a little service, why I think a classic example is the drug store down here. I mean, they go out of their way to try and serve you and be good to you and see that you're satisfied and all that. That's what free enterprise is all about.

RP: So I know the Great Depression really hit the uh farmers really bad. How did it affect the cattle? Do, you were pretty young, do you remember?

WM: Well . . . Yeah of course, money was real hard to come by but it wasn't just a depression that we had. I remember uh 1931 was a good wheat crop - I don't remember the wheat crop but I remember hearing about it – was a good wheat crop but after that . . . '32 maybe there was something but by '34 out here across this pasture there was nothing there but pure sand. I mean, that was a two mile desert right straight up across that and a, a cow couldn't eat anything off of that. So that kind of shut us down and uh, I remember they took a lot of cattle from us even down to the, what we call the Flint Hills and uh, at least they had some rain and had some pasture and we didn't have any. So that shut you down too. I mean, uh if you can't get anything for your crop, that's a depression. If you can't even grow a crop that's a disaster, I think.

RP: Yeah. Do you remember the dust storms?

WM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I remember them pretty well. And uh, I don't remember a specific one, although I do remember that uh Mom would take and wet rags and put around the windows some to try and keep the dust out. And out could kind of tell which way the wind came from. If it was black dirt it came from the north, if it was red dirt it came from Oklahoma and uh, it would pile up in great big piles, I mean big uh waves of dirt. Waves, that isn't the term I need, I need uh just uh . . . Like our fences. If we, droughty times was a good time for what we call Russian thistles or tumble weeds. You're probably familiar with them. They would of course break lose. They will grow with a minimum of moisture where other stuff won't grow but they'd catch in those fences and then the dirt would catch in the tumbleweeds. And I remember we had a place up on the south side of our fence where we had at least fifteen wires in it because the, the uh thistles would catch in the fence and then you would put in more posts and put more wire on top to get above the dirt and then maybe the next time you turn around then why

the uh thistles – I'm talking about a period over about four or five years – the thistles might have rotted out then the wind had start blowing out and then it'd leave you with your, down in the ditch, blow a hole out underneath you. So uh, the thistles were quite a chore with fences or anything that would catch in them. Now we have a lot of sunflowers in our fences and if you happen to have an erosion problem, you don't have the land covered or it sifts a little bit, why you get a, get a windrow or dirt in your fence.

RP: Fifteen wires.

WM: Uh-huh. About that.

RP: Wow.

WM: I mean the thing was probably ten to twelve feet from the top to the bottom. I mean, it wasn't just standing there but that's what it ended up being.

RP: Wow. Do you remember jackrabbit drives?

WM: I remember they had them. I remember jackrabbits being real prevalent but I never was in on any of them and uh, we got some jackrabbits now. They say jackrabbits are a sign of dry weather and I think it was right.

RP: I wonder why that is.

WM: I don't know. Nature has a way of promoting certain things with certain conditions. Just like grasshoppers, they come some years and some years they don't.

RP: Do you remember some of the prices back in the 1930s, like?

WM: Oh, not, well I remember a nickel ice cream cone was pretty big and a nickel Hershey bar was pretty good, Hershey bar, and I think, I don't know, I suppose if you shopped you could get a package of gum for less than a nickel. Pack of gum had five sticks to the package, I think. Maybe they still does, probably does. Tell me about it. But anyway, but that was prices, I remember we used to sell eggs. Mom had some chickens and you'd get maybe twelve cents a dozen or ten cents a dozen for your eggs.

RP: That's a pretty bird. Sorry.

WM: What.

RP: There's uh . . . It's gone. There was a yellow and black bird I've never seen right outside the window.

WM: That's an oriel. Are you familiar with Baltimore Oriels?

RP: No, I'm not. I'm not.

WM: Your not. Well, hey, we'll look for him after we get through with this.

RP: Ok. Uhm, so tell me about going to school.

WM: Well, I started at school in the fall of 1934. That was the first year for what we call then the "new school building" which they just tore down about four years, three or four years ago now and uh, when you talked about the dust bowl, I remember the janitor and his wife were the people were custodians at that time. It only took two to take care of the school building then. Now it takes a crew but uh, I remember them using a scoop shovel to take the dirt out of the place. At that time the, uh, well, let's see, what have we got up there? The school was pretty much the north part of town. North of the school there was about three houses and that was it.

RP: Wow.

WM: And that's the old school that they just tore down so there was a pretty good shot at the school from the wind and the north wind.

RP: Oh, yeah I bet.

WM: Then uh, I was, I think there was, they had two first grades. I think there was only about thirty in our whole class and as we went through we gained a few and lost a few but I think our class graduated twenty-five. And uh, one of the big highlights as far as I was concerned in 1936, the fall of '36, well, '37? I don't know. Anyway when I was a third grade, the band director Don Moore came to town and Bert Lane was the coach and Hinkhouse was our superintendent and as I think back on it that Hinkhouse had to be quite administrator because both of those guys were pretty firebrands and uh, you've noticed, maybe you've noticed, maybe you haven't that uh when you are in music and in athletics, usually one or the other goes, but it didn't in our school. You uh, the football boys played in the band and the uh, they were in the music and time was made so that you could practice in the band and you could practice for athletics too which uh, they put in a lot more time in practice now I guess. Maybe we have more professional athletes so to speak but I don't know if you're suppose to be an amateur and you're in it for fun, why you have to be so professional and spend so awful much time at it, I don't know. But uh, actually when, during those first years of the band, so say from '37, '38, '39, '40, in there, the football boys, the band man did make arrangements without the football boys and I guess when you talk about it, when I was a Senior and a Junior uh the uh band director had enough clout with the Superintendent, that we put our pads on, then we put our band suits on and we went and marched the program before the ball game. But at that time uh it was kind of uh, well it was just the matter of the times, but the first chair trumpet player was the quarterback and the best drummer – well, it was Jimmy Phelps. Maybe you know Jimmy.

RP: His name is familiar but . . .

WM: Yeah, but anyway Jimmy was our main drummer and I was the main trombone and uh you pull out your main trumpet player and your main trombone player and your main drummer and you got a little problem with the band. So I mean it worked, it worked, but then as soon as we got through marching the program then we ran down over the hill and put on our football suits and then we played the football game so, it worked and I think it worked for the best for the band. But anyway, that's was school and we had lots of activities. I don't think we have the activities they do today. It seems like activities is the main thing you go to school anymore but maybe that's being prejudice a little bit.

RP: I wouldn't say so. But what kind of activities did you do? You had band, and you had football and . . .

WM: Well, we had plays. Every year, well the juniors would have a play and the seniors would have a play and then the Drama group would have kind of a one-act play system. I mean, that would be the plays. We did have some uh, uh, we didn't do a lot in uh, oh, uh, what I'm trying to say, Forensics, I guess you'd say. Speech and speech contests and that. We did some. We didn't have debate when I was in school. There was a journalism class that did a yearbook although we didn't have a yearbook when I was a senior but they did have a newspaper they put out, the Blue and White they called it. So that was about it, I guess. At that time, uh of course they have rules now about how many games you have and all that good stuff but we had uh probably Tuesday and Friday nights and uh that would be about it for games. Football season, Friday was it. In fact we played some Friday afternoon games. We didn't have lights up here when I was in school and now it seems like every night something is going on somewhere but we didn't . . . It seemed like they had a little more time for kids to be working or be with their job or be somewhere else or killing time. They did that too so I guess it gets them off the street if they're busy.

RP: So when did you graduate from high school? That would have been . . .

WM: 1946.

RP: What do you remember hearing about the war, World War II?

WM: It was real, real close to everybody. It's amazing the way the patriotic uh feeling caught on the whole nation. Everybody was in it as a united effort. I mean, it's "What can I do to win," it's not, "What's in it for me?" it's "What can I do to win? What can I do to take care of this, to protect my nation, to protect my freedom?" And of course, it was over by the time I graduated basically. I did manage to get into the, at the Korean Involvement but World War II of course was really, really tough and I think, I don't think people today realize how critical it really was or how people really felt about it. I mean, hindsight, it's always real easy to say, "Well, yeah we got through it all right. Everything's fine," but when you are in the middle of it and you wonder what's happening next it's a whole other ball game. I remember you'd hear about – and I'm sure they weren't telling us everything that was going to because you see it on different

documentaries now – but you know, like the Battle of the Coral Sea and, I didn't realize how many ships they were losing in the Atlantic during that period of the Submarine thing. I mean it was thousands. You know, you stop and think a thousand ships, that's lots of ships and lots of guys and uh, so it was real serious and I think in our day and age we're probably discount how serious it really was.

RP: Do you remember first hearing about Pearl Harbor? Do you know where you were?

WM: Yeah. Yeah, I was right out here in the yard. It was Sunday afternoon. In fact, I don't know if it was, it was kind of a cloudy afternoon if I remember right or kind of hazy. I don't remember what it was but I remember where I was when it happened. Of course nobody knew what was going on or anything about it.

RP: So you had rationing right? Ration cards, did that . . .

WM: Yeah, uh my mom was always a real good manager and I, of course, probably at that time what was a sophomore in high school and junior, freshman . . . I don't know. But anyway, she took care of that and I never suffered. The one thing I think I remember about it was the tire thing. You often wondered about it. It's like everything else, I guess, the squeaky wheel gets the oil but some people that really got tires that we kind of wondered did they really need them but that's all right. There were tires there and they got them and so that was the way it went. But we didn't have near the equipment then that we got now or the pick-ups or the trucks or anything. We never got a pick-up until 1948, '49; I don't know when it was. I was in school anyway so everything we did was, you pull the trailer behind the car and if you only got one car, why it doesn't take a heck of a lot to keep tires on one car, or battery or anything else, except your pretty well tied up if it doesn't work.

RP: That's true. Uhm, you said the patriotic feeling of the country was really bit and everything really pitched in. So does that mean you did stuff like Victory Gardens or . . .?

WM: Well, being out here we had a pretty big garden anyway but they did have a victory garden in Cimarron I remember and you know, uh, well a lot of that was for a promotion in a sense. I remember I was in 4-H club and uh, so we had paper drives and we go around and gather up papers in our stock trailer which I guess saved something for somebody, I don't know. But if you could feel you were doing something for the war effort, why you did it. One phrase that came out then – and you probably know nothing about this . . . Are you familiar with Lucky Strike Cigarettes? Have you ever heard of them? It's a brand that was famous like Camels and Chesterfields, Lucky Strike. And at one time in the war effort, Lucky Strike Green has gone to war. The pack used to be a green cellophane or cellophane or some kind of material and uh then over the radio on the commercials, why "Lucky Strike Green has gone to war," which, I don't know what it did, if they saved anything with it but at any rate it was probably as much promotional for Lucky Strikes as anything else but of course cigarettes are a whole other ballgame now compared to then.

RP: So what other sort of stuff did you do? Like . . . I've heard that there were kids that went around collecting, you said you collected papers. Did you collect aluminum or anything like that?

WM: Yeah. Iron, old tires, uh . . . it would . . . I don't remember how it was done but I assume it was probably some place in town. You'd take your stuff and dump it. It was kind of like recycling in a sense but uh . . . And a lot of people made a lot of thing go a lot further. I remember one of the things that came out was the feed sacks that you could make clothes out of. I don't know if you're familiar with that one or not.

RP: I've heard a little bit about it.

WM: Supposedly you could utilize the material for something else besides just a feed sack.

RP: That would definitely be interesting.

WM: Well, you better have a seamstress in the family if you're going to do it. And I don't know, I don't' know what the material was. I suppose it was cotton of some kind and uh . . . certainly never saw anybody wearing burlaps stuff.

RP: Do you remember where you were when you heard the war was over?

WM: No, not really. You kind of figure things were winding down . . . I mean it wasn't that big a climax to us. Kind of like out here, a holiday really isn't a holiday. I mean, everything has got to be fed, everything has got to be taken care of so, yeah you do take off and you go and do something and you make plans to do that but the cows don't stop eating and the chores are still to do, so if you don't do, somebody is going to do it. And so, you don't just take off a weekend and, I mean just out of the blue take it off. You plan for it.

RP: Well, you mentioned you got in as part of the Korean War. Were you . . . Can you tell me about that a little bit?

WM: Well, I went to college and then I applied for the Officer Candidate School and I was, became an officer in the Civil Engineer Corp so then I was in active duty from, oh, I think it was, April of '52 to June of '55 or something like that and [unclear] got acquainted with the military that way and it was real interesting and I like the military myself, what I did. Uh, I mean, I think like is a matter attitude and if you decide you're going to like something you basically will get along with it. Maybe not like it but you'll get along with it. If you decide you're not going to like and it's going to be terrible, then you're going to be unhappy and you're still not going to get along with it but, you'll be miserable so you got to kind of think positive so that's kind of the way . . .

(End of side A, Beginning of side B)

RP: Ok. The thing you liked about it (the military).

WM: But every time you went to a base, it had a basic structure. There was always a main guard. There was always a place where they could send you to tell you what you needed to know. There was always a place to eat. There was always a place to sleep. I mean, it wasn't like going to, say Wichita and looking yourself up an apartment and doing all that. It wasn't that, it was compulsory but still it was there and to me that was a security that I liked about it because somebody else had been there and done that and was ready for the next go around. So that was one thing I like about the military.

RP: What was kind of the uhm the attitude toward the Korean War? I mean the country had just come off of this three-year war with Europe and Japan and how did they feel about . . .

WM: Oh, uh it wasn't a resentful war like Vietnam became. Uh, the people pretty well accepted it because it was so cold up there in Korea and of course the Communist Chinese were dumping an awful lot of support into the North Vietnamese, I mean the North Koreans. And so it wasn't a matter of . . . You didn't always win and that was a bad deal about it. I wasn't over there but anyway the one thing that did happen was that a lot of people that had been in the World War II had stayed in the reserve and during the Korean conflict, they called on the reserves an awful lot for action and a lot of people felt a little bit bitter about that one in that . . . but here again you'd signed up in the reserve. It was supposed to be something that you wanted to do to protect your country, and they did. I'm not saying that they resented that but uh it was that they just called up a whale of a lot of reservists that, and from their stand point, the bulk of them, I'll say this, probably went to college, an awful lot of them went to college on the G.I. Bill out of World War II. That was a real great program as far as getting a college education and a lot of them went and got their college education . . . of course they were trying to get along and supplement the best they could was why they stayed in the reserve. Then they got hauled back in and that was a little rough there because here you take out say five years of their life for World War II and then you go from '46 say to '52, that's another six years and then you haul them in that for another three years and they're getting a little age on them by the time, you know, they're out looking for a career. But I do know a lot of them, they learned a lot in the service. I mean, there was a lot of vocations and skill to be learned in the service and they put that to good practice so it wasn't all lost. A lot of them went to work for the government that I knew, civil service people. So there wasn't a resentment with the Korean, I don't think, that there was with Vietnam, although Vietnam . . . Well, I, there's a lot of reservists that got called up there too but I don't think it was near like the other deal was. I think they felt they learned their lesson in Korea and they were going to try and support their forces with more or less volunteers and that type of thing, and draft. They had a draft in Vietnam too, so . . .

RP: So what did you do as part of the Korean War? You said you went for –

WM: Well, I was in the Civil Engineer Corp and our part was to uh, oh, the Navy went out and the Navy didn't have, say they wanted a missile or they wanted a bomb made. The Navy didn't have a bomb plant or a missile plant but uh there were people out there that were good at that like Macon Arms was good at bombs and Bendix Corporation was good with . . . they ended up with the TALUS Missile which was where I was involved a little bit and so the Navy would go to Bendix and say, "Would you, what would you set up a plant for and operate it here and we'll pay you to set it up." In fact, the Navy bought the plant, paid for the plant, but the Navy didn't run it as an administrator. They let Bendix run it. And so I was in on looking after the plant maintenance more or less. They would build a new plant at Mishawalkie, Indiana when I was there and uh that was for the TALUS Missile and uh so, I don't know whatever happened to the plant. I suppose that Bendix bought it on five cents on the dollar but maybe they didn't. Maybe the Navy . . . the Navy or the government many times put a hold on that. I mean yeah they could, somebody could take it and run it for their own stuff but if an emergency came then they would want it back or they could take it back, which is reasonable. In fact, in World War II they went in and they went into a lot of plant and operated them with uh putting out say tanks instead of Studebakers or something like that.

RP: Sara (McFarland, Wiley's daughter) told me about . . . there was an explosion one time at the plant you were working at.

WM: Uhm, I'll have to think about that one. Must not have . . . didn't impress me too much. An explosion.

RP: She said that something had gone wrong and there was just this big deal that you . . .

WM: One thing that went wrong in a sense was – but they just hadn't counted on it – at Decatur, Illinois where they contracted with Macon Arms to make bombs. Uh they would make a five hundred pound, a thousand, a two thousand pound bomb and they had this guy that was pretty, well he was in the arms business. He knew what he was doing and he came up with the idea of big electric furnaces and they start out with a piece of sheet steel about eight feet square and maybe an inch thick and they would heat a bunch of uh different forms and they'd take that and put it against the steel and get it red hot and then they would press it. And they'd press it through about oh probably about five processes and they have the shape of a bomb out of that piece of sheet steel, which was a good deal. But one thing they hadn't counted one was to uh . . . the ventilation in the place. And uh, in order so that the steel didn't stick to their form they gave it a shot of oil. Well, you give it a shot of oil on red hot iron and it's going to blow a bunch of smoke out and that was kind of like an explosion in that place I know. It was, it was a pain. Oh, I've had a few, we had a few occasions. One night we went out for an LST – I don't know if you know what a LST is or not – Landing Ship Tank they called them and uh I know they used to be, they were supposedly the dream thing in World War II in that they had great big doors that would open up on the front and they had a big ramp that would fall down, so you'd run that baby into the beach, drop the ramp down and the tank would just drive up on shore. That's the way it's supposed to go, and they worked pretty good. Well, they worked real good, I mean, when you stopped to think about it but one

of the problems they ended up doing, then they ended up putting pontoon . . . a lot of pontoons together and they you would have a cause way which is just a pontoon road that you could tie up there and you could drive off of it because jumping a tank into about eight feet of water isn't the best, smartest thing in the world either. But anyway, we were out doing an exercise with them one time and so these things were suppose to be self-sufficient and each one of these LSTs were suppose to take, I think around a hundred foot piece of pontoon and they had a angle on the side of the ship so that would hook into the pontoon and they'd go on the outside, outboard edge of the pontoon, pull it up on the side of the ship in order to uh transport it. In other words, you weren't dragging those pontoons across the ocean. You had them mounted on the side of your ship. So they had them mounted up and they were showing us how it worked but then they decided that uh the easiest way of course in port was to lift them with a big crane. They just come along with a crane and picked it up and they were done. But anyway, then in theory when you got out in the field and you wanted to put those things a shore, you get that ship out and turn her wide open and the precise moment then you would cut that pontoon lose and it would fall and the momentum from your ship would take the pontoon on it. But anyway they were demonstrating how that ship could load that pontoon by itself with cables and pulleys and uh so they always told us, "Hey, you want to be careful, the, the cable might break. Be careful." "Well has it ever happened?" No they'd never seen it happen, but it happened that day and the cable broke and, I'll tell you when a cable goes through a cast iron pulley at a high rate of speed the pulley just flew apart. I mean there were just pieces of pulley flying all over everywhere. So yeah, that was kind of interesting.

RP: Oh, gosh. Oh, that's crazy.

WM: Yeah it was kind of different. But that was just one experience. Everybody's had a lot of them. So I don't know. You probably interviewed a lot of people with a lot of good war stories.

RP: Uhm, there's been some. I haven't talked to anybody who could talk about Korea. I've talked to several people who knew about World War II, like Brice Ramsay. He talked about that sort of stuff.

WM: Yeah.

RP: But I have heard very little about Korea.

WM: Well, actually it was very tough on a few people, but it wasn't . . . it didn't have the country tied up like World War II did. I mean, it wasn't near that big a feel. It's kind of like Desert Storm and these we have now, you know. I mean, yeah, they're real important to a few people who are involved but from the standpoint of all the resources of the nation and all that, it's not a big deal. We don't think it is anyway, let's put it that way.

RP: So how long were you in the military then?

WM: Well I was on active duty a little over three years but I stayed in the reserves and I retired, so I was in reserves for . . . well, active duty and reserves for, I think twenty-two years or something like that. And the thing that I enjoyed about it was, every year I had to go to training camp for a couple weeks, whatever, and it gets you away from what you're doing. It's, you kind of just are back with the other, other people in the world, some of them. So that's what I liked about it.

RP: So were you in the Reserves during Vietnam?

WM: Uh-huh.

RP: Were you ever in danger of going over?

WM: Not that I know of. I don't think so but you never know. I did rub shoulders with a few that were. Actually, the, I was in Alameda, California taking a course one time and they flew a couple of wings in there that were reservist that were on their way to Vietnam. I think one of them was out of Missouri. This one boy, his family grew turkeys and uh, I don't know if, maybe they still, I don't think they grow turkeys that way now but then, they would put turkeys out to farmers and farmers would take the turkeys and they would feed them and do all this and uh then there was suppose to be a market for the turkeys and what it boiled down to was cheap labor on the part of the guy who owned the turkeys is what it boiled down to. But anyway, this guy uh family been, had been in the turkey business for a long time and uh, they had a hatchery, two. In other words they hatched the little polts and they could send them out and they'd be out with the contractors, so I was visiting with him one time, said, "Well, how are you doing?" "Well," he says, " the turkey business out in the field is not good," but he said, "The hatchery is doing real good," so they were doing all right but here he was in the reserves. He was going to Vietnam and I suppose Dad or big brother or somebody was looking after the turkeys, which was what he basically had decided what he was going to do with his life so . . . that's the way, that's what happens to reserves. And, and you've heard of them here. I mean, they pulled them out all over Kansas. There are units all in Great Bend and Wichita and all that, and if they can pull then and get them back before to long, I mean, it's not all that bad. But like World War II, where some of the guys were gone for four or five years, unless you're a career person then that's a different deal.

RP: I'm going to change the subject a little bit. You've been in Cimarron basically your entire life except for the time when you . . . How, how, how has the town changed?

WM: Oh, I don't know. It's hard to say. It was . . . Well I don't really know how to start with that. We used to always have two grocery stores. Now we had one and thank goodness we have it. Uh never had, never knew what a convenience store was. Now I guess we got two of those. Which is fine, I mean that's great. Of course we used to have, one, two, three, four, probably five filling stations or six. That's what we called them filling stations, service stations.

RP: Service Stations.

WM: You used to get service at a service station. Now all you do is go in and fill your car up at a service station and pay them, which is ok. And uh, we did have two lumberyards for a long time and they kind of combined into one. Uh, we did see the big growth in the Insurance Company, which was one little office up until the latter forties, maybe fifties. Then they really took off. That was a big industry for Cimarron. I don't know if you heard but I think they had three hundred in the employee at one time.

RP: I didn't know it was that big.

WM: That's, that pretty good size operation. I think they, owned or were in about every store on Main Street that was empty and uh, so, how it changes? I don't know, I mean, you grow with the people and, a lot of them are, they're all wonderful people. We had that, years ago, we had, we had Lloyd Tuggle and Ralph Clark, we had two drug stores. And Mrs. Clark was a wonderful person as far as congeniality and meeting everybody. I mean for the good of the community, she'd do it. She just bubbled with that and uh and I'd say that Sandi Coast (present owner of Clark's Pharmacy) is close to that now. I mean, you know.

RP: Yeah.

WM: People just kind of fill in the shoes of what needs to be done and uh, of course Sandi [unclear] well, but that's beside the point. Actually, things have gotten bigger and faster. I do remember, the uh wheat trucks used to be right down Main Street. That's where they all lined up and they were all maybe a hundred fifty bushel, maybe two hundred bushel wheat truck. That was, that was the max. Now the semi's come in there, I don't know what they got on them, eight, nine hundred bushel probably, but there are semi's and . . . but they don't park on Main, the middle of Main Street anymore either. But that's where they used to be a lot of people even hauled their wheat in their pick-ups. And I don't go back far enough to when they hauled them with horse and wagon but I guess they did that too. But things have gotten on a bigger scale, so much bigger scale. Uh, when I was probably a sophomore, junior in high school I worked for my uncle at harvest and he had some land that had uh . . . At that time you what you called Summer Fallowed about everything. Are you familiar with summer fallow?

RP: No.

WM: Ok, well I'll give you an education here.

RP: Ok.

WM: But anyway in summer fallow, you grow a wheat crop, you plant it, you grow it, you cut. Ok, then you don't do anything with that land, probably till that fall or the next spring and you don't grow anything for the next year on it.

RP: Oh, ok. You rest the land.

WM: You rest the land for a year. That's what summer fallow is and that was the way things went in this country most of the time. Some people, continuous crop but most of it was summer fallow. Well in that year that I'm talking about my uncle, I don't know what he had, around nine hundred acres that he had summer fallowed, was going to plant on this one place. And he didn't get any rain, didn't get any rain so he didn't get planted that fall so he double summer fallowed it. So the next year he planted it and it was a beautiful crop. I mean it was the best wheat we had ever seen and I think it made thirty-one bushels to the acre and that was the best we had ever seen. We cut a lot of wheat that was fifteen bushels to the acre or maybe twelve and then there was some poor wheat but now if you have a thirty-bushel wheat crop, you think you're on the doldrums of disaster, you know. I mean, it's got to be fifty or sixty or you're not even in the ball game so the production has increased tremendously and of course, the size of the elevators has increased. Like uh when I was little, I guess that one elevator over there west was built. It's got 1930 on it I think that was when it was built. And uh that was big elevator in Cimarron. Everything else was little stuff. And another thing they did a lot then was to get railroad cars and load them out about as fast as they could get wheat in and now you don't see them loading out cars all that much. Of course, they got tremendous capacity now too. So that's a whole other, other gambit of what we have here.

The roads through town have changed a little bit but that's, I remember when fifty was a through street and twenty-three had to stop. You always stopped there. There was no stoplight and I don't think Fifth Street even existed when I was little, so . . . But that's one thing that's changed, the Courthouse. It's changed. We've put additions on it and so forth but it was build in, I don't know '27, '28, somewhere in there, the main building. So some buildings last, and the old opera house, I think it was there in 1912.

RP: Where was that?

WM: Upstairs over uh Clarks.

RP: Oh, ok. Clarks.

WM: Uh-huh. They had uh, traveling shows that would come in and put on shows and all that kind of stuff. Of course, everybody would go because there was no movie, there was nothing back in the twelve's and fifteens. Then the movie was, that we had it town sat in the building where, is it Joanie Addison?

RP: Jane Addison.

WM: Has her beauty shop now. And that was where we had our picture show. I remember that from about the mid-30s up through quite a ways. I don't know when they quit trying to . . .

RP: Did you go the movies a lot?

WM: No, I never did. When you were out here, you didn't go a lot. I mean, you just weren't that mobile. I didn't get a car till I was a sophomore in college, or junior, for me. The folks made in available some but, you know, when you got one car in the family, that's kind of the way you run it too. Is that your car out there?

RP: No, that's my dad's van. Rebecca (Pederson) has the car that we share, my sister.

WM: Well, at least you have a car to share.

RP: Yeah. Well, that's about all I have. If there's anything else that you can think of . . .

WM: Oh, I can't think of too many things. I should have given it more thought which I didn't do.

RP: It's ok.

WM: Sara listens to it. She can tell me what I should have said. Then you can come back and get a sequel to it.

RP: Ok, we'll see what we can do.

WM: Uh, one thing that has changed . . . Back in the thirties, there weren't any trees hardly on the river. In the forties the trees came and they about choked the river off. And then in the seventies when the river went dry, and eighties, then the trees died so now you can see back across the river some. But I remember laying in, I was pretty sick, I guess about the first grade, I, they thought I had measles and something but they ended up thinking I had scarlet fever but I was pretty sick so I would lay in the bedroom and I could look out the window and look over across the river. You could see the trains go and see the cars go and then it got to where you couldn't see anything. Just trees. Now you're back where you see cars. So I guess what goes around comes around sometimes.

RP: Yeah.

WM: But that's about all I can think right now.

RP: All right. Well, thank you very much.

WM: Well, thank you for coming out.

RP: I really appreciate it.

(End of Interview)