

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

NARRATOR: Brice Ramsey

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Brice Ramsey was born in Southeast Kansas in 1923 into a family of six. He served in the Air Force during World War II. Afterwards, he took a sixteen month course on horology and moved to Cimarron, Kansas in 1948. He still lives in Cimarron, running his clock repair shop "Classic Creations."

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 24, 2003

INTERVIEWER: Rachel Pederson

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Cimarron, Kansas

NUMBER OF CASSETTES: 1 audio cassette

LENGTH OF CASSETTES: 60 min.

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 39 min.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Depression; Entertainment during the thirties and forties; Cimarron history and past layout; Horology; Pearl Harbor and the Air Force during World War II.

Brice Ramsey
Narrator

Rachel Pederson
Interviewer

June 24, 2003
Cimarron, Kansas

Brice Ramsey – **BR**
Rachel Pederson – **RP**

(Side A)

RP: Ok, this is . . . what is today?

BR: Today is my birthday.

RP: Really?

BR: Eighty years old today.

RP: Wow.

BR: That's getting up there.

RP: So it's June twenty . . .

BR: June the twenty-fourth.

RP: This is June the twenty-fourth

BR: I was born in 1923.

RP: I am Rachel Pederson interviewing Brice Ramsey. When and where were you born, sir?

BR: I was born in Fredonia, Kansas, the southeast part of Kansas there. I was born at home, in bed. All of kids were because they didn't have a hospital in Fredonia at that time.

RP: Ok.

BR: And uh, it was all of us born there in bed at home there. Doc. Flak and I was born there.

RP: How big was your family?

BR: Well there was five boys and one girl.

RP: And were you the oldest?

BR: No, no, no I was right in the middle of the boys. I had two brothers older and two brothers younger than me. So I was right in the middle there. And of course we grew up during the old depression days, you know. And uh, my dad, he was a good old guy but I'm telling you what, he had to work . . . WPA. Don't know if you ever heard of it or not, but the Workers Project Administration.

RP: Ok.

BR: That was a Roosevelt deal there in the thirties and uh, the depression there, you'd get thirty-five dollars a month. Pretty hard work. They built buildings and stuff like that. My dad was on it probably a year or so and then he got back and got on the, down to work of Linseed Oil Mill. He was working there when I graduated high school. And, and of course just as quick as I graduated high school I wanted to be a pilot, on the, flying planes. World War II you know, of course I was uh . . . actually I had job as a janitor at this Linseed Oil Mill and office there and I was down there on Sunday morning on December 7, 1941 and in came this old boy, was a chemist there, rushing in and he told me, he says, "You know the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?" I said, "Where the heck is Pearl Harbor?" [Laughing].

RP: Where is Pearl Harbor? [Laughing]

BR: Well, anyway, so then I found out we was at war. So of course, then I graduated in the spring of forty-two and, and got into the service there. I was going to get into the cadet program but didn't make it and finally, I, I was a mechanic on the ground and then I went on to, decided to go be a gunner so I was what they called a gunner engineer. And I usually flew the top turret up there. Sometimes Lopez wanted it so I flew the waist gun. It didn't make any difference to me and uh, so we flew above China. We flew . . . CBI it was called it . . . China, Burma, India Theater. And uh, I flew about thirty-five, thirty-five missions and I never officially got credited with a Japanese plane shot down but I shot at a few of them [laughing]. But anyway, so that graduated out of the service there and in November of '45 – that was when we got out - and I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do. And the uh, the uh, uh, and my dad says, "Well, why don't you be a dentist?" And I says, looked at that, and I says, "Oh no, no, no, no, looking at people's mouth, I don't think so." And finally I looked down and sure enough the school my brothers were going down to had a horology department – that's watch repair – you know, horology department. So I went down there and got in there and uh, I only stayed there for about sixteen months then I came and my brother worked at Fredonia for a while [unclear] then I moved out here west of Kansas. I've been in Cimarron since March of 1948.

RP: Wow.

BR: And uh, that's a while.

RP: That is a while.

BR: And you uh, you want to know something about . . . I'll tell you what, I, I, I got to talk to quite a few of the old guys, passed on since you know . . . Hog Firestone (sp?). We used to, Heck and I had uh, a recorder you know to record his stories. He, he, he was, he was the old sheriff for quite a while here. He was about on his last legs when I was there but he loved to talk about it you know and he had some [unclear] outlaws here and on the trail, you know. And uh, he uh, there was a team train robbery back in here at Cimarron way back in the twenties I think sometime in there and he was, he was sheriff then and then of course I uh, remember Ralph Clark. I was working at his drug store down there. Clark's Pharmacy, it's still called Clark's Pharmacy even though the Clarks are all dead now, but anyway why. I don't know, what else do you want to know about me anything in particular?

RP: Uhm, well just anything, uhm, so you grew up during the depression and stuff?

BR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RP: Were you in town or . . .

BR: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, we lived in the, small town as big as Cimarron, Fredonia in Southeast Kansas there. And we were as poor as church mice, I think, there but we didn't know the difference. We had fun. And uh, so I, I remember the . . . of course it was the dust bowl days here and the dust was in the air back then. You could see it sometimes but it was never, it never was like it was out here. I, I, I didn't get out here until the dust bowl days were all over and uh, that was in the dirty thirties when they, when they had those big clouds of dust come in there, you know. I had the guys telling me all about it, you know. Couldn't see nothing, you know, the streets were so dirty but uh, Cimarron got over that and uh, now we're hoping the farmers get a little wheat.

RP: Yeah, hopefully. Hopefully.

BR: Oh, yeah, I uh, I got to talking to the uh, uh, Luther brothers, you know. And uh, their dad was one of them that established uh Cimarron. Luther, Luther brothers' dad. Of course there was three or four of those boys and I knew them all. In fact, I bought my land for my home from Forrest Luther and in 1936 he bought that square that's three, three to four blocks North of here on the west side for twelve dollars.

RP: Wow.

BR: Tax sale.

RP: Wow.

BR: He got the whole block for twelve dollars.

RP: Wow, that is just, that's mind blowing.

BR: Yeah, well, nobody had any money during those days, you know there and then of course World War II came along and then farmers got to getting a little bit more money and so . . . but I, I, I knew a lot of them us [unclear] . . . One guy that's been in business longer in Cimarron than I have. That's old Bruce Ferguson at the Barber Shop. He's a year older than me and he started working in his dad's shop in 1947 and went uh, my shop in Clark's Pharmacy down there in 1948.

RP: So what did you do at Clark's Pharmacy?

BR: Oh, same thing I did here. I had a little watch repair shop there. Mostly I worked on watches then. Now I'm working on an awful lot of clocks now, mostly clocks now, but then I worked on watches mostly. The good old wind up watches, they'd, they'd give you trouble every about a year and a half or so, so I haven't done bad at all. I've got a nice wife and four kids of my own. I got fourteen grandkids and nine great-grandkids.

RP: Wow.

BR: And they're all doing good as far as I know.

RP: That sounds –

BR: We went to a wedding up in . . . my son's daughter up in Minnesota . . . one of his daughters graduated from high school and the other one graduated last year and she got married so we went to, one day we went to a wedding and the next day we went to a graduation up at Alexandria, Minnesota. And now we got to go out there to Colorado, out there because I got another grandson that is going to get married the fifth of July out there so we have fun. We run around and see them all.

RP: Sounds like a lot of fun.

BR: It was. Yes, as I say, you know, uh, uh, if you want kind of a history of Cimarron there, there's a movie. The Library's got it.

RP: Oh yeah?

BR: A video, of Small Town, USA.

RP: Huh.

BR: It was made out here in Cimarron . . . well, four towns uh, Cimarron and then there was two, three or four other towns on that movie there. It told about uh Small town, USA. It talking about, telling about everything, you know, the dustbowl days and everything like that. It was pretty nice. You ought to get a hold on that at the Library. They got it at the Library.

RP: I'll have to look.

BR: NBC made and then they, they didn't have a use for it any more so they sent the film to uh, the library.

RP: So they came out to Cimarron and just made this film.

BR: Oh, yeah, yeah they were in Cimarron probably about four to six weeks making this thing.

RP: Were you here when they made that thing? Do you remember anything about the filming?

BR: Oh, yeah sure, sure. Oh, yeah lots of . . . I never did get into it but uh, they uh, they had uh quite a story about Cimarron.

RP: I'm sure.

BR: And it's up there at the library. They didn't tell you about that, huh?

RP: Well, I heard someone mention that NBC did something but uhm . . .

BR: Yeah, yeah, they made that uh special, an hour long special uh way back in those days. And I don't know how come Cimarron got chosen but they did. So anyway, there's uh . . . old Frank Luther that was talking to Dick Leatherwood, that's when Dick Leatherwood was a little, little boy, telling about the old country and everything. Of course, Luther boys, they knew all about because their dad was part of the county seat fight. See there was quite a county seat here, and I'm not sure just exactly when it was . . . 1886 . . . oh, about 1880, some where in there. And uh, we uh, we uh, got [unclear] to the county seat. And Ingalls decided they wanted the county seat over there so they sent some guys over here to get all the books and everything, the county seat and haul it over to Ingalls. And that quite, that was a pretty good fight there.

RP: I would imagine.

BR: Yeah, the county seat gun fight there and it's uh, it's quite a bit of history there about it and then of course the uh, oh, I heard him talking about the, the blizzard of . . . what was that, eighty-eight or something like that . . . that they lost hundreds of head of cattle out here. One day in January it was nice and balmy and the next day, here come all this wind and snow and everything. I don't know how many cattle they lost but they lost

quite a few. Put some of the cattle guys out of business. But uh, I've been out here since 1948 and I've never planted a bushel of wheat and I've never harvested a bushel of wheat. I probably never will.

Well, I don't know, what, what, I, I, uh, I had fun during the service, well I say had fun . . . It was exciting and I might tell you one story that happened, and of course I uh, I was flying left waist gun, [unclear] put your gun out there, you know, sit there behind it and uh, I'm flying waist gunner this time and uh, we uh, it was Nan King (sp?) at that time [unclear] and they had these warehouses along the river front there . . .

RP: Who, ok, one time, where were you?

BR: China.

RP: Ok, ok.

BR: China, yeah, I flew with the Fourteenth Air force. And . . . of course we were liberated . . . we called ourselves the Fourteenth Air force, I meant the uh Flying Tigers, but we weren't really the Flying Tigers we were bomber bunches and we flew Liberators, the old four engine Liberator and uh, so we took off from our base Li Yang (sp?) and headed out towards uh Nan King on the Yang Xi River up there and uh, there was probably about twenty-four, twenty-five of us bombers and we uh circled this fighter field and here come up the P-40s, mostly the Chinese pilots, you know, about twenty of them come up and join the escort and uh, we said, "Well, that's good enough. We can do it all right." So we bombed the warehouses at Nan King on the river, Japanese warehouses and then we turned out over a lake. And I was standing in the waist gunner and I saw flashes right, straight above me. And I said, looked out there and I said, "Here's our P-40's out here. Who is that up there?" And uh, I can see planes going around and around and around up there. And uh, pretty soon they start coming down and I found out what happened was that uh, they had brought in fifteen brand new P-51 Mustangs. That's considered the best fighter plain, uh, engine, during World War II – and there're still a bunch of them around. They are nice planes. I tell you they could sure fight. And anyway that was, what I saw was there was twenty-two Japanese Zeros circling around up there that were going to drop down on us. They were probably twenty-four thousand . . . We were flying about seventeen thousand I suppose and uh, uh, we circled out over the lake and these Zeros were going to drop down on top of us but these P-51 Mustangs come into Chick Yang (sp?) Fighter Base the day before we were bombing – nobody told the Japanese – and they took off before we got to, you know, circle the base and they were flying almost thirty thousand feet. We had, we had high cover and didn't even know it. So they dropped down on the Zeros before the Zeros could drop down on us and that's what I saw up there going around and around was P-51 and Zeros and they said they shot down twenty Zeros that day at the loss of P-40s.

RP: Wow.

BR: And uh, I had, I had uh experience there because I was sitting in the waist gunner, you know, I saw these Japanese come up on my side and I was getting ready to shoot

[unclear] and he was on fire, he was on fire, he was burning and I saw the P-40 sitting behind him just pumping lead into him and I seen the little Japanese pilot trying to get out of that burning plane, you know. I said, "Come on get out of there." You know, because you didn't want to, you know, really didn't want to kill him, but anyway, so he bailed out . . . Of course if they have a parachute it's one that their family had got for them, made for them because uh they, the government didn't issue any parachutes. The plane was just more important than the pilot to the Japanese so they didn't give you a parachute.

RP: Really?

BR: His family apparently made him one but didn't make it very good. I saw him bail and "Oh, gosh he was going to live." But you know, I seen him go down and pretty soon his parachute come out like a sock was how it was . . . he went 'swissssh' right down into the lake. I watched him, I said, "Oh, my gosh, poor guy." [Laughing] He didn't have a good parachute so that was the end of him, you know. So, but anyway, we knocked the [unclear] out the Zeros that day . . . We didn't, I didn't but anyway we, they, that was one of the best things that happened to the Zeros in a long time.

But uh, of course, you, you've uh, history and everything, read about Pearl Harbor and all that.

RP: Yeah.

BR: That's uh, we all knew about it, you know. And of course, when the United States got in the war, we were fighting Germany, Italy, and Japan uh, all, all at one time. And that, that was pretty rough and in those days, well your folks can tell you about the rationing and everything during World War II and uh, but anyway that's what happened. As far as I know. Have anything else that you want to know about?

RP: Uhm, let's talk a little bit about growing up. Uhm, just, just, kind of how life was. What did you do for fun when you were growing up?

BR: Well, well when I was growing up we couldn't afford any boughten (sic) toys. We made all of our own toys and uh, we made sling shots, sling shots and we'd get an inner tube and cut it out and get you a forked stick, you know. You could 'stooouah' (sic) . . . I still pretty good at that. I could hit a bird for quite a ways off there and the poor birds around there were in bad shape. [Laughing] Then of course we made our own fishing equipment. And I got a hold of a little old five dollar rod reel. Me just a boy. I must have been about twelve years old or something like that and uh, me and my buddy Dude Pound, we uh, we went down to it's called they uh, uh, Sand – oh gosh, I can't think of it – well, the river down there . . .

RP: Sand Trap?

BR: No, at the it wasn't it was the River and uh, the river dam, full river dam and we went down below there and we had us some sandwiches and it was must have been Saturday or some time and I uh, I couldn't throw this bait out very far but uh, I let Dude

Pound throw it out a ways and he gave it a throw. Load that, load that old hook with all the worms we could get on the hook and landed, and it landed almost the middle of the river, you know, and of course we put it down and put a rock on top of the pole, pulled out our sandwiches and started eating, you know, and pretty soon this guy up there by the dam fishing says, "What in the world is that line doing down there?" It was going back and forth up the river, back and forth. And boy, I say, "What the heck, that's ours." And so we started reeling it in, I couldn't get it in, Dude he kept pulling on the string, making me, and I'd pull it up. We finally got in a big old six pound cat fish and uh, that was all the fishing. We headed home with that big cat fish and [unclear] and he said, "Hey you got to see what these boys got here." Man, they all come down to see this big cat fish we had. That probably as big a fish I ever caught there. So, anyway, I love to camp out and stuff like that, you know, but uh, I don't know, I'm trying to think. . .

RP: Uhm, you said that you were born at home.

BR: Yeah, yeah, yeah, the doctor and he just came with the, came with, the house, you know, and the woman in bed there and it was us boys, I remember my little brother, coming home . . . Me and Clayton, my other brother younger than I was, we went to school – I was probably about second or third grade and he was probably in the first or second, I can't remember for sure – but anyway, we come home at noon time to eat, we had to come home for lunch, and uh, my mother was laying in there and there was a little old baby laying beside her. And uh, where in the heck did that thing come from? [Laughing] So we, my aunt Flora was out in the back doing the wash, you know, and we went out there and told, said, "Now, I don't know where you got that baby from. Take it back." [Laughing] That was my younger brother and then of course had a younger sister after that. But my folks had a tough time but they, they, they, they uh had good high morals and they wanted to raise us right there so. . . All of us boys are still going but we're all getting up there now pretty good. So it's, it's the way it goes in life. I was uh, when I came here in forty-eight, all the guys that were here in business, they're all gone now, you know, how it turns over, you know, gee whiz.

RP: What kind of businesses were here?

BR: Oh, about everything. Drug stores and over here at uh, at Clark's, that goods, that goods side where they got the gifts in there, you know . . . that was a grocery store.

RP: Oh, yeah?

BR: Yeah, yeah that was a grocery store when I come here and uh, uh it, quite a little while there and then of course there was Doug's Drugstore on the corner where it is now, that was Tuggle Drug at that time.

RP: That was what?

BR: Tuggle Drug.

RP: Tuggle?

BR: Tuggle. T-U-G-G-L-E, Tuggle Drug, and then down where the uh, was it Insurance Company down here, that was Clark's Pharmacy down there. Ralph had that there and of course then in '68, I think it was, they bought out Tuggle and made Clark's Pharmacy up here so that's what happened there. Now this, of course, that building that's uh, see is it south of Gechter's, I think it is, that used to be a bank. That was a bank in there and then of course when I come here it was a city clerk's office and uh, then you go on down the street there and then uh . . . Who's in there now? I can't think . . . uh . . . [unclear] store and then the [unclear] store when I first came to town here. That's on down on the next part of the block and then there was a variety store in there and then there was another grocery store on the end down there. And so, on this side of the street, this was here (indicating his shop), was uh, International Harvester uh, Tractors and stuff all sold in here in this building.

RP: Oh, yeah?

BR: But uh, it was all, Harvester's, International Harvester's building. And then of course over across the street there, right there (indicating Burkhart Funeral Parlor) was Western Café. It was a café for a long time and then on north of it, uh, was the Jacksonian was over here, and of course they've moved over there and then Walker sales was up north of him and uh Irskin Insurance was up there and uh, and then the Ford Garage was up there where Joe Butcher had got his offices in there now. That was a Ford Garage, selling Fords. We had two dealerships here in town when I came here in '48 we had a Chevrolet dealership down there where the old, where the uh, Senior Center is that was a Chevrolet Garage that uh, [unclear] is, that was Ford Motor Company.

RP: Ok.

BR: We had, actually we had at one time three, three uh, dealers. [unclear] uh, he over here where they have these apartments over there, they had a building in there, he sold Plymouths in there, sold Plymouth's cars, so we've had dealerships at a time. Oh the town changed a lot and . . . of course we were real proud of our insurance company but that folded up. That's too bad but that's life. That's the way it goes.

RP: Did Cimarron ever have a movie theater?

BR: Oh, sure.

RP: Where did it used to be?

BR: Oh, yeah up here at, uh, where uh, Mrs. Addison has got her beauty shop up here.

RP: Oh, ok.

BR: Yeah, can you, there's the windows and everything in there and you look and you see where the window had a ticket deal on it on the north side. Look at that you can see that word "ticket." Oh yeah there was a movie theater here, oh gosh, way back in the thirties, long time, you know, and it lasted quite a while after I came here. Uh, Blakeman, Blakeman ran it for quite a while, so uh . . . Yeah there was a movie theater there. I used to go up there to the movies there and uh, I don't know, it lasted quite a few years there. Then of course television come in and now the movies are kind of coming back. That was uh, uh, movie theater in there, yeah.

RP: How much did it cost to see a movie?

BR: I don't know, I can't remember, a quarter or something like that. I don't know.

RP: A quarter?

BR: Yeah, I know back in my home town, we used to like to go to Saturday Matinees back in those days and uh, they had a matinee there and they said they'd let two, two children in for a dime. And uh, so my little brother – he wasn't hardly six years old – so we brought him along too. We brought him because he was too small so all three of us got into the movie theater for a dime. Yeah, I tell you what, see my mother – I'll tell you how it is – uh, my mother would take a five dollar bill and go to the grocery store and get enough groceries to feed us family for a week. How you do that? I'll tell you what you know how to cook, you know how to . . . mush, corn meal mush, and if you make a meat you make a casserole, make it go a long ways. I still like casserole, but anyway that's the way you had to do it in those days. Uh, you just didn't go buy so much of steaks and, and uh . . . because it was pretty expensive. Turkey was too. Uh, I must have been twelve years old before I ever had a piece of turkey. Turkey was one of the most expensive things you could buy in those days, because it wasn't a big deal like it is now. They just had turkey at days, holidays you know, and uh, something like that, because I was about twelve years old before I ever got to eat a piece of turkey. Sardines. Sardines and lunchmeat call it, baloney, call it baloney, a slice of baloney. And I know that when I was growing up, I thought boy it was terrible: These boys, these kids around here in the block was eating this boughten (sic) bread, loaves of boughten (sic) bread, and we had to eat homemade bread. My mother, my dad would buy about a fifty pound sack of flour and we'd make it and I had to get up there on the table so I could turn that mixer around and around and around, making the bread. Then those loaves about that long (indicating about 15 inches) and about that high (indicating about 9 inches). One, one, one slice of it made a meal almost there but it made a way . . . I thought, "Boy, that was terrible." All the other guys got to eat that boughten (sic) bread and we had to eat that homemade bread. Shame I didn't know how lucky I was there. Sure love to have a piece of that homemade bread now, but we used to eat it all the time. So that, I got so, I'll tell you I grew up on it.

RP: Uhm, let's see . . . Did you have a radio when you were younger?

BR: I didn't have a radio until I went into the service.

RP: Really?

BR: I went into the service there and went down to Shever (sp?) Field, Wichita Falls, Texas way out in '42 and uh, I had four dollars to my name when I went into the service. It was three months before I ever got paid.

RP: Wow.

BR: And uh, I remember that uh, that after three months I just had to find a used radio and that uh, [unclear] gave me ninety dollars, you know paying me, back pay. I never had that kind of money in my life. So I went into town – you couldn't buy these portable little radios, you know. Uh, batteries [unclear]. So I bought a little old table radio and I carried all the way around over to China and back in my duffel bag and when I got back home, all I had was the tubes and the speakers . . . it'd still play but the case was all busted up and gone.

RP: Uhm, so when did you get your first TV?

BR: My TV?

RP: Your TV, yeah.

BR: Oh, ok that would have been 1957. Uh, we had, we had, I didn't ever get a TV until we had a station out here. Uh, I think probably it would have been '56 or somewhere in there that we got a lot, we got the TV station out here. That was [unclear] and I was out there watching them put that antenna out there south of town. That's quite an antenna out there and they still could broadcast their own program if they wanted to right there at the station. And we'd do that a lot you know the first time, but we only had one station here. At that time, it was channel six, CBS, and uh, uh then of course ABC came in and NBC came in and there were all three of them now, you know. If you don't have a . . .

(End of Side A, Beginning of Side B)

BR: It was Warner's deal basically, because the guy came in here when we had Rotary (Club), talking about TVs, he says, "This, this area out here . . . I'm afraid you'll never have TV out here because this is too small of an area, people wise." Of course when Warner heard that next thing he was going to do was build a TV station so he did. Yeah, he did. It's still out there south of town. Of course it's all remote now, you know, isn't nobody out there at all. It's all turned on and off by remote, you know, and so that's the way it went. I had a little black and white. I don't know when I got my first color TV but it was quite a few years after that. Television was all black and white but we thought that was so great, we go us our TV home and we sat there watching the pattern on the screen, it was put on the screen so you could adjust your set for several hours before the station, for it to come on and the programming come on. Man, we sat there watching that, you know, waiting for the program first day or so, you know, and now you know,

gee-man-nee (sic) Christmas, how things have changed. But them days we felt real happy to get just one station. We sat there and watch it ever evening, same station, you know. [Unclear] pretty soon CBS and NBC came in and you'd get three stations, you know. That was it for a long time until they got the cable coming in you know. SO times changed. I just going right along. Ask me how long I'm going to stay in business, I don't know. I'm going to stay in business as long as I can there. (ringing phone) I've got to get that there.

RP: Ok, go ahead.

BR: Classic Creations, may I help you? (tape stops for personal phone call) . . .

RP: Really?

BR: Yeah, they had it (his cash register) you know, set it down here for uh, silent auction down here at the church. I walked around and nobody had ever bid on the thing [unclear]. I thought, "Shoot, I can in the shop [unclear]" and so I put down ten dollars and of course, when the bidding was all over I was the only one to bid on it. So I look like I'm up town with that thing now. I've been all these using a cigar box for my change box. Ok, well what else? Do you have anything in mind?

RP: Uhm, just a couple more questions.

BR: Yeah.

RP: Uhm, tell me about going to school.

BR: Going to school. Uh, of course uh, I went to high school and grade school in Fredonia back in the east part of the state and uh, I like I, I graduated in '42 uh, spring of '42 and of course then I went on in to the service but I, I didn't go to schooling anymore then until I got out of the army and then I went to what's called horology school, watch repair school down in Weatherford, Oklahoma, uh, started in '46 and I went for about sixteen months there so . . . that, that's the school that I've had.

RP: Is, is the school down in Weatherford still open?

BR: No. No, the horology department has closed down. As far as I know . . .

RP: How long ago was that?

BR: I don't know. I uh, there only on regular school in uh, down anywhere and it's in the pan handle of Texas, down there, and I don't know what they call it but mostly they teach their students how to fix up these quartz watch, quartz watches and stuff really that's no complicated deal at all I don't think. Uh, you just replace the quartz movement, if you, lots of times if you uh find one bad you just put a new one in there and put the old one in the drawer, in the box. (pulls out a shoe box full of old quartz movements)

RP: Oh, my.

BR: It's all quartz watches, movements, guts in there.

RP: Wow.

BR: I put a whole bunch like it, there are several more like it besides that in the house. But that's several years, you figure you put several of those quartz movements in a watch uh, a week or so, well you get a lot of them.

RP: I would imagine.

BR: But anyway that's what they teach down there because I know. They might teach little clock repair too, I don't know about that, but that's all uh . . . Of course, I, I was, oh, in the watch craft business before you ever got . . . Well, first they come out with Acheron, you know, heard the Acheron uh, it was out for quite awhile there – it was an expensive watch and it took a special, I read up special on it to learn how to fix it. And then of course, here come the quartz watches and uh, that's when I decided I was going to have to work on more clocks because those quartz watches, why, particularly the little, uh, the ones that just see the numbers and dials, they could be throw away stuff, you know. I guess a lot of people buying those. That's why I come over here because I decided to work on more clocks here. Moved over here, across the street here in '83. I was in the drug store, Clark's Pharmacy for better than thirty-five years. And a lot of people out of town never even knew I was there. But they find out about me now. They're bringing in clocks from all around.

RP: Looks like just an interesting line of work, just to . . .

BR: Oh, yeah, yeah, you see, no two clocks are alike. It always a little variation in there, you know, so you can, uh, every one is a little different. Every repair job is a little different. But I try to get them fixed up and going for them there, you know [unclear] and get them ready to go again.

RP: One really quick last question: Uhm, do you remember where you were at the end of the war, when you heard the war was over?

BR: Oh, I was right down here at Liberal Airbase, right here at Liberal. Uh, I was a fine, what the instructors [unclear], and I was teaching the others. We flew out with these pilots. Then flying on the B-24s but they were training on the B-24s, the pilots were because they were going to move over and fly the B-29s and uh, that's what they were doing down there, you know. And uh, I was, I was out there flying those, I was an engineer . . . Engineer uh, of the plane, you had to check the fluid, fuel system and everything, hydraulics and all that. You had to be sure everything was working, you know and make sure the bomb bay doors opened right before you dropped the bombs and

uh, that sort of stuff, you know. But uh, I enjoyed it there but like I said, I enjoyed but I didn't want to go back. That's the way it goes.

RP: Yeah.

BR: I wouldn't trade you a nickel to do it again but I'm sure glad of the experience. But anyway we, we got the thing going there, you know.

RP: Well, that's all I can think of for right now. Well thank you very, very much.

BR: Ok, well thank you. I'm glad I could help you. I hope there but you might up there at the library about that Small Town, USA.

RP: Ok. Ok, I'll do that.

BR: And I don't know. I think they got that in the video. It was still shot in sixteen millimeter movie film, you know, there, but they had, [unclear] about thirty-five and I'd rig a movie deal so, and then they put it on one program, a special program, you know. They work all that hard and an hour on the TV, on the network and it was all over. They didn't have use so sent the film to the Library up there.

RP: Well, I'll have to go look at that.

BR: You go look at that. Maybe, you can learn a lot about Cimarron on that one.

RP: I'll have to do that.

BR: Well, thank you then.

RP: Yeah.

BR: I hope I help you out a little bit there.

(End of Interview)