

Gray County Veterans Memorial & Archive

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Robert Crotts

October 18, 2013



INTERVIEW
YEAR

Robert Crotts
2013

GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: **Robert Crotts**

DATE: **October 18, 2013**

PLACE: **317 N. Third Street, Cimarron KS 67835
(Crotts residence)**

INTERVIEWER: **Joyce Sullentrop**

PROJECT SERIES: **Korean Era Oral History Project for Gray County**

FUNDING: **This project is funded in part by a Kansas Heritage grant from the Kansas Humanities Council (KHC) for the “Gray County Korean War Veterans Oral History Project.” The Kansas Humanities Council is a nonprofit organization that supports community-based cultural programs, serves as a financial resource through an active grant-making program, and encourages Kansans to engage in the civic and cultural life of their communities.**

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: **Mr. Crotts was born January 9, 1933, in Partridge, Kansas. He was drafted into the U.S. Army Infantry in 1953 and served until 1955. The truce was signed in Korea about two weeks before Mr. Crotts finished basic training, so he completed most of his service at the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia. He held the rank of Corporal E-4.**

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: **Recruiting; life at Fort Benning; higher education with GI Bill; delivering mail**

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **Digital**

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: **45:00**

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: **None**

TRANSCRIPT: **17 pages**

ORAL HISTORY
Donald R. Dunham
Interview Date: October 18, 2013

Interviewer: Joyce Suellentrop (JS)
Interviewee: Robert Crofts (RC)

JS – Place of birth?

RC – Partridge, Kansas.

JS – Date of birth, you told me that?

RC – January 9, 1933.

JS – Branch of service?

RC – Army. US Army.

JS – And then they want battalion, regiment, division, corps, or?

RC – Well, it's infantry. I spent the majority of my time at the Infantry Center in Fort Benning, Georgia.

JS – Okay, that should be sufficient. Did you enlist or were you drafted?

RC – Drafted.

JS – Okay, from 1953 to '55.

RC – Yep.

JS – Did not go abroad?

RC – Did not. No, no. They signed a truce in Korea about two weeks before I finished basic training, so therefore I didn't go. Otherwise, I probably would have.

JS – And you said you spent most of the time at Fort Benning?

RC – Fort Benning, Georgia. I worked in a re-enlistment office.

JS – Okay, so that was your specialty?

RC – Yes, that is what I did. I worked in a re-enlistment office and re-enlisted people from 3, 4, 5, or 6 years, and typed up a form for them and they signed them, and that was it. And, in some cases, we had to fingerprint, depending on what it was.

JS – Okay, so then let me just back up a little bit. Why did you join the Army?

RC – Because I was drafted.

JS – Okay. And, you were specifically drafted for the Army or you could have joined another?

RC – Well, I could have joined, yeah, but I didn't. I went ahead and was drafted. That's where they sent me to Fort Riley, Kansas, for basics.

JS – And you were living at Partridge at that time?

RC – Yeah.

JS - Just out of high school?

RC – Yeah, well, two or three years out of high school.

JS – Okay. And, you took a physical?

RC – Yeah, I'm sure I did. Because some people they would turn down if they didn't pass a physical. They wouldn't take them.

JS – But you don't remember specifically?

RC – I don't remember how that all turned out, but I think I passed.

JS – Well, evidently.

RC – Because I was drafted.

JS – And then, basic training was at?

RC – Fort Riley, Kansas.

JS – Okay.

RC – Sixteen weeks. That's basically four months, and probably twice as long as most of them. Some of them have eight weeks training and then they go into school. This was 16 weeks of training.

JS – So it was the basics, how to shoot and things like that?

RC – Well, it was a heavy weapons company. In that case, the training was a lot longer because you not only deal with side arm, you deal with larger equipment. So, it's a double period of time.

JS – Okay, then did you go into a special school?

RC – No, I didn't go into any special school. When I got to Fort Benning, if I could play an instrument well enough, I might have played in the band. Since I knew how to type, then I got that office job in the re-enlistment office.

JS – Okay, and they just assign you to that when they found out?

RC – Yeah, I was a member of the headquarters-and-headquarters company, 30th Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning on TDY to the re-enlistment office. That would be “temporary duty with”. So then, I lived in the large, large barracks right close to where I

worked. I was assigned to this company but it was several miles from there, but I worked at the other place.

JS – But you worked there the entire time?

RC – Yeah, for about a year and a half, until I got out.

JS – Is that unusual?

RC – That's probably unusual to stay that long in one place. Our office was very successful in recruiting people. I think one year, probably the first year I was there, we signed up over 2700 people in that one office. That was big! Now, that's Third Army area. Our area here would be Fifth Army area at the time. I don't know how they have it divided up today.

JS – So how did you recruit the re-enlistments?

RC – People would just come in. They could come in and if they would re-enlist from 3 or 5 years, they would get a bonus, a certain amount of money and a 30 day furlough. And then, they would come back and start serving their time.

JS – And were some of these people who had fought in World War II re-enlisting?

RC – Probably weren't, but some of the older people that were serving at that time probably had been in World War II. No, it was mostly the newer ones that were re-enlisting. And, sometimes, they would be assigned to Europe then, Germany.

JS – Right.

RC - That looked good to them, I guess, so they decided that they'd take that course and sign up.

JS – And, what did you do, receive a form, or they just came in and then you begin the process?

RC – Yeah, they just came in. We had a set of forms, we had to go through there and they had to sign those in certain places. Like I say, there's a certain group of them, I'm not just sure right now who that was, but we did have to fingerprint them. Then, the Captain that ran the office, he would sign it. That's it. Then they were ready to go on their furlough for 30 days and then come back and start serving their time.

JS – So how, shoot, now I lost the question. I was going to ask, well, it'll come back in my mind.

RC – Well, my partner and I, he was from a fellow from Texas. We both worked in that office. Like I said, we lived just upstairs a little ways from where we worked. We always had our food at the, there was a separation point, that's where the people were being separated. We could go in and just go to the front of the line and get our food. Because everybody there assumed that we were working on their separation, but they

didn't know that we were working at the re-enlistment office. So, it worked out pretty well.

JS – So separation meant that they were getting out of there?

RC – They were getting out and getting the same thing that I would a little later on.

JS – Okay, and were you and your partner the only people in that office working?

RC – Outside of the Captain, the one that run it. Just two of us and the officer. In those days, in order to get promoted from a private to a private first class or a corporal or sergeant, you have to have a certain time and grade. Once we had our time and grade, our Captain would call the headquarters and put us in for a promotion, because he knew a lot of the people that worked up there, like Colonels and what have you.

JS – So what rank did you have?

RC – When I was separated, I was a Corporal, that's an E4. If I had decided to stay myself, I probably had in enough time that I could have been promoted to an E5, that would be a sergeant, 3 stripes.

JS – And why did you decide not to stay?

RC - I wasn't interested in anything there. I grew up on a farm and that's what I wanted to do. I wasn't interested in the Army.

JS – So during that time, did you ever ask to do something else?

RC - No, I was satisfied with the job that I had. It was a good job. We just went to work like 8 to 5, just like people working out in civilian life actually.

JS – And did you get time off?

RC – Oh yeah. I could take a vacation. Well, I think you get maybe, I don't know if it was two weeks a year or one. But we had a pass, if we wanted to go into town. Most people would have to go to the company office and get a pass to leave; we had one in our pocket. We could go anytime we weren't working. But, we did have to be there on time to go to work every morning.

JS – What kind of a town was?

RC – It was Columbus, Georgia and Columbus, Georgia was about 70,000, so it was a little bigger than Hutchinson and there were 50,000 troops on the base. Just across the river was Phenix City, Alabama. Off limits!

JS – Oh really? Why?

RC – For one thing, they had a fellow in Phenix City that was campaigning and running for attorney general and he was shot right there in the parking lot. So it was kind of a bad place. There was a lot of things going on there. Most of the places were off limits,

because there was gambling and probably a little prostitution going on. They called it "Sin City USA". We were not supposed to go there, we could pass through there if we were traveling, but not stop there.

JS – And did the police go over there to look for people who might have gone over there?

RC – Well, I don't think that there would be anybody foolish enough to go over there. If they got caught, they would probably be arrested by the police and then they would turn them over to the military police and then they would go back out to the base and then they would really be in trouble.

JS – Okay. And you would go into?

RC – We would go to Columbus.

JS – Just to like, eat dinner? Or go to a movie?

RC – Yeah, we would go to movies. They had a lot of these things on the base. Fort Benning is a BIG place. They had movies, they had football games, they had all kinds of entertainment. They had boxing matches and stuff. A lot of things going on there.

JS – And you said there were about 50,000?

RC – About 50,000 on that base. The building that I stayed in is what they call a quartel and it's about two blocks long. And it's about, I think, three floors and each one of those will hold about 2,500 troops. Very large!

JS – That was a holding station for some troops that would then go overseas?

RC – That was their barracks. That's where they lived, especially in World War II. Even when I was there, they had paratroopers come down from Fort Bragg and different places. They practiced jumping. They have a 250 foot tower, they pull them up to the top, and then they turn the chute, turn it loose. They just kind of floated down and they practiced landing. They got to know how to land or they're going to have problems.

JS – Well, did you ever get bored with your routine?

RC – Oh, no, not really. Like I said, we could go into Columbus, two or three times a week if we wanted to. One thing about it, it was in the early '50's, and there was quite a little segregation. They were trying to integrate blacks in with everybody but, we could get on the bus there at Fort Benning and go into town. As soon as the bus left of the military reservation, the driver would stop and say "Okay, blacks, you must move to the back of the bus". And he said "It doesn't make any difference to me where you sit, but I just want to keep my job". And then when you get into the city, you would see drinking fountains for colored, drinking fountains for white. The same way with the restrooms. Colored and white. A few years after that, that changed a lot.

JS – Was the Army completely integrated at that point?

RC – That was just when they started. If you go back a few years earlier, no, it would be segregated. Like in World War II, they didn't even try that.

JS – Okay, so you were there for the duration and then you didn't want to re-enlist?

RC – No, I didn't want to re-enlist. I didn't want to re-enlist for all of the advantages because I didn't see that many, so I just went ahead and separated like they doing pretty darn close to where I worked.

JS – And, do you remember how much money you got per month?

RC – Yeah, as a Corporal, I got paid \$122.00 a month. If I were a Sergeant, I would get \$143.00 a month. Of course, in those days a dollar was worth something, and I had a certain amount of money taken out of my check every month and sent home, say like \$50.00 or something.

JS – Oh, Okay.

RC - So after two years, there would be a nice little sum there in the bank. People did that.

JS – And you were definite when you got out, that you wanted to go back to Partridge and farm?

RC – Yeah, but the thing, when I was separated at that time, you put in two years active service, then you were assigned to the reserves for 6 more years. So if they needed you, they could call you back. But they didn't.

JS – But you didn't have any duties?

RC – No, I didn't have to go to any meetings or anything. I had all that training for 4 months.

JS – Well, would you call your experiences typical experience because you stayed in the same place for so long?

RC – I doubt it. I really think, so I was there basically a year and a half, I would think that most people would probably move around a little more than that.

JS – Were there other people from Partridge, from Kansas down there?

RC – No, they came from everywhere. Like in basic training, they were from Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, this area, central US, but they came from everywhere. And, at Fort Benning, they were from all over of the United States, all the way from California to New York.

JS – So, most of those people were drafted?

RC – Yeah, most of them. Now, the young man that I worked with was from Texas. He went to a military school in Texas, and he did enlist for 3 years. So he was a regular, they called him.

JS – Did you come in contact with the people who had fought during World War II?

RC - Not very much, not very much. Most of them were a little younger than that. See, World War II ended in what, '45 or '6 or something. I wasn't very old at that time.

JS – Do you remember people in the community in Partridge going off to World War II?

RC – Yeah, my older brothers were both in World War II. One of them went to Japan. The other one, he never did go there, he took his training down at Fort Benning. He was a paratrooper and my oldest brother was a MP, police, and he did go to Japan. When he was on his way over there on his ship, that's when they dropped those two bombs on Japan, and that was the end of that war.

JS – So then he came home and got out?

RC – Well, but he stayed there for a while. He probably got out early. They were letting them out.

JS – So, did they enlist or were they drafted?

RC – No, they were drafted.

JS – So, did your father, had he served in?

RC – No, he never did. He graduated from high school in 1916. So I assume that war was going on, World War I. I think it was from '14 to '17. So, pretty soon after he graduated from high school, that was the end of World War I as far as I know. No, he didn't serve.

JS – And then when your brothers come back, did they farm?

RC – No, one of them, the older one, he started working as a carpenter. And he was a very good carpenter, he could do cabinet work, but the work wasn't steady enough so he went to work for Cessna hydraulic or whatever in Hutchinson, and he worked there 30 years. It isn't exactly what he wanted to do, but it was steady. And he retired there after 30 years. And my other brother, he and a couple of other guys, started a taxi service in Hutchinson.

JS – Oh really?

RC – Had the veterans camp, had radio center camp. And they ran that for a little while. They took in quite a bit of money, but I don't think they knew how to manage it, so that didn't last that long. And then he went to working for Chalmers Borden, which later became Borden. They built elevators, grain elevators. He worked there for a long time.

JS – But then you went back to the farm?

RC - I went back to farming. And, as soon as I got out of the service, I found out they would pay me \$110.00 a month to go to school, so I started going to junior college. Went there a couple years and then I went to Hays for a couple more and graduated up there.

JS – And what kind of a degree did you get?

RC – It's in agriculture.

JS – Oh, Okay. And then, you went back farming?

RC – Yeah, here. And then I got married. My wife's family owned land here see, so that's where I started farming.

JS – Oh, Okay. And, what year would that have been?

RC - We moved in here in 1961. We actually moved out here a little before that. So, we started farming in about 1960 out here.

JS – Okay.

RC – And my wife was teaching, school librarian for years.

JS – Here at Cimarron?

RC – Well, some. She spent 16 or 17 years at Montezuma and then she transferred up here. She retired from up here, Cimarron.

JS – Evidently you were successful at farming?

RC – We did Okay. We've had good years and bad years. We've had some of those recently.

JS – Right. Because of the drought?

RC – The drought. We're kind of in the third year of our droughts here. It's better than it has been, in some places at least.

JS – And, how did you meet your wife?

RC – At school, at Hays. She was in the English department. One of the fellows that I roomed with up there, he met her and so he introduced her to me. And that worked out, but he never did get married.

JS – It did work out for you.

RC – It worked for me, but not him. But that's the way that he wanted it. He taught English for years, I think at Holcomb. He was just a friend.

JS – So when you went into the Army, were there skills that you had learned at home growing up, that helped you there?

RC – Not really, no. They got all their own rules in the Army.

JS – Was it hard to adjust to?

RC – It's a little hard to adjust because they got their ways of doing things and that's it. To look at it from the other angle, you're probably not going to learn very much in the Army that would help you in the farming business either.

JS – Well, that's what I was going to ask.

RC – Having a career in the military, that's completely different. I had a brother-in-law, he went 20 years and he retired from that. That's what he wanted to do.

JS – But, your experience seems unique to me. So it wasn't difficult adjusting to Army life?

RC – Oh no, not really. All you had to do was follow the rules and stay out of trouble, because if you didn't, they had a little place right down the street. They called that stockade and that has a fence around it. Well, we had a fellow come into our office once, a lieutenant that worked there at the stockade, and they got people in there that mess up. If I would be walking down the street at night wanting to go to the movie, they would be out there marching or something after supper. He said "we don't treat them too nice out here. We don't want them to coming back." They didn't do anything really out of line, but they just kind of made it tough on them. And, they probably wouldn't go back.

JS – Right. If they were smart, they wouldn't.

RC- If they were smart, they wouldn't. They'd toe the mark and not mess up.

JS – So looking back on the experience, were there things that you thought were particularly valuable or things that you remember and you think "oh, I'm glad I did that or"?

RC – Well, there's one thing about it, you have to respect authority. You know, I might meet some women officer walking down the street, but that doesn't mean that I wouldn't salute. Oh, yeah. Even now today, there are a lot more women officers I'm sure.

JS – Definitely.

RC – The guy I worked for in our office, he might send me up to the headquarters with some papers or something. I might give them to some lady; she'd be a major or something.

JS – So that was the result of World War II that the women started?

RC – I think that’s when they got started. They had their WAC’s and WAVE’s and what have you. Now days, they don’t separate them that much.

JS – No. It seems to me, that just many young women go in. They see it as a way to get an education.

RC – Well, it is. If they are one of these persons that attend eight weeks of training and then go to a school, there’s a big list of schools that they might attend. They may not get the school they thought they would, but there’s probably some kind of school out there that they can attend. And, they’re getting paid to do it.

JS – Right. It’s probably a lot more technical now?

RC – Oh, yeah.

JS – And when you went through basic training, I’m assuming growing up on a farm, you were accustomed to guns and?

RC – Well, a few guns. And I thought that I was in pretty good condition, handling bales and things, but I found out one thing, I wasn’t used to walking. And we did a lot of that.

JS – And, did you have a pack on your back?

RC – Well yeah, part of the time and that doesn’t make it any easier. And, it was over 100 degrees and it’s up at Fort Riley and the humidity, it’s pretty hot up there. See, it runs from April up into September and that’s right through the summer.

JS – Right.

RC - Of course, there’s other places like Missouri or back there in the Carolina’s, it probably would be a little warmer.

JS – Didn’t a lot from around here, maybe younger than you, go to Fort Leonard Wood?

RC – They did go to Fort Leonard Wood.

JS – I think that’s where my brother went.

RC - I had a neighbor, he’s a fellow I went to school with at Hutchinson Junior College. They sent him to Fort Leonard Wood. When they were first inducted, I can’t tell you the name of the place, they went there, and then they sent them to several different places.

JS – It’s hard to figure out the whole Army organization.

RC – Well, when I was in Fort Benning, that’s Third Army area. This area right here is Fifth Army area. I think it’s headquartered in Chicago maybe.

JS – Really. So does the Fifth come out of Fort Leavenworth? They call it “the big red” up there.

RC – The “big red” is the first division, isn’t it? And when I was at Fort Riley taking training, I think that was part of the tenth division at that time. In World War II, that was known as the Mountain Division. It was in northern Italy, the 10th division, it was up there. The same one Bob Dole was in.

JS – So when you go in, do you have to learn all of that stuff about divisions and battalions and?

RC - No, you don’t have to learn that, but there are certain things, like if you go on guard duty, there’s certain things that you have to know. There’s about eight or ten rules that you follow. Like, one of them is you don’t just talk to anybody, you don’t speak to anybody except in the line of duty. When I was at Fort Benning, I did help guard the bank, whatever they called it, where all the money came. See, they paid in cash in those days. So when the payroll came in, it would be large in a place like that. I pulled guard duty on the finance building, and they would have one fellow walking around this way, one walking around that way, and one standing over here across the street, and another one standing over here across the street. And those rifles, we had, they were loaded. They didn’t want anybody messing with that building.

JS – So, why did they pay in cash?

RC – I don’t know but they sure did. You would report for pay, and the pay officer sitting there would just count it out, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, 22 . . .

JS – And then you just had to make that last until the next month?

RC – Yeah, you sure did. And some people were foolish because they gambled. They’d shoot dice or play cards or something, maybe a day or two after they got paid, they’d be broke. They would be borrowing money from somebody else, and they were glad to loan it to them.

JS – Because they charged interest?

RC – Yeah, outrageously high interest.

JS – So, did a most of the people smoke?

RC – A lot of them, a lot of them did. Well, they furnished cigarettes.

JS – Oh they did, they were free for you?

RC – Yeah, I’m pretty sure they did. Well, I know they did during World War II. And I think they were still doing that. They still had some of those old C-rations that canned stuff, left over. I guess it keeps forever, and hardtack, whatever that is.

JS – So how was the food? Was it different?

RC – It was pretty good. I think that once I got to Fort Benning, it was quite a bit better. They were serving this food at this transfer point, and I think they were trying to make a pretty good impression on the troops, so maybe they’d stay, but it was pretty good. A

lot of them complained. Well, I don't think I ever sat down to a meal but what someone was complaining about the food. They were probably eating better than they were at home for some of them.

JS – You know when I did World War II oral histories, that's what many of the men said. That they had entered at the end of the thirties or early forties, and they said the food was better than they got at home.

RC – It wasn't that bad. All you needed was a little seasoning and maybe a lot of ketchup. That'd make it work better. Those cooks in there were pretty good; they'd take an egg in each hand and break it, just like that. They had to because when I worked in a battalion mess hall, that feeds five companies, and there's probably 200 people in a company, so it's big. They had like 15 KP's to clean up the mess. It took 15 of those and I don't know how many cooks they had.

JS – And what did you do there?

RC – Well, I had to, I think I worked on KP once, even after I was promoted a time or two, because everybody else was either a Corporal or a Sergeant. There weren't any Privates around to do the work.

JS – And KP means to “clean and wash”?

RC - “Keep Peeling”. But, the thing is, like peeling potatoes, we didn't peel them. We just threw them in a big machine and turned it on. And, it's a thing in the inside of it just rubs the peeling off. When you get done, you dump them out. If you left them in the forever, you wouldn't have much left. We didn't peel them with a knife. They did in World War II, I think. I don't think they had those.

JS – But, I supposed they automated as much as?

RC – They did some.

JS - Well, because of your experiences, did you make friends with anyone that you kept in touch with?

RC – Yeah, a few of them. I had one from Iowa. I kept in touch with him just a year or so ago. I didn't call him this last year; I may call him one of these days. He moved to South Carolina, he married some girl from down there and he moved to South Carolina. And then there was another fellow there from California. He married some girl from around Atlanta there someplace, but I don't think that lasted so I don't know what the deal is there.

JS – So did you join the VFW and the American Legion?

RC – Yeah, the American Legion.

JS – And what's the difference between those two?

RC – With the American Legion, that's for people that only served here in the States. The VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars, so you had to serve overseas if you're going to be in VFW. That's the difference.

JS – Oh, Okay.

RC – Oh, I get stuff all the time. I've belonged to the American Legion, have for years. I got one of their letters there somewhere.

JS –But, if you don't belong to the VFW, can you still use the VA Hospital?

RC – Well yeah. They have a VA office over here in Dodge, you know Fort Dodge. I went over there and signed up, just to get my name on the roll. Because if I wanted to, I could buy prescription medicine at a pretty good discount, but I don't use it because I have another plan that's probably just as good. I get that through the Rural Letter Carriers. Which I carried mail, you know, for about 23 years, over 20 years.

JS – Oh, you did? On the same route?

RC – Yeah, one. Out here south of town, between here and Ensign. And all around Ensign and back here.

JS – How many mail boxes did you have?

RC – I had about 150 boxes and 135 miles.

JS – Every day?

RC – Yeah every day, well 6 days a week. 135 miles a day, about 100 miles of that was country roads and the rest of it was pavement. So, when it's muddy, that's a problem and when it snows, that's a problem. But when the weather's nice, it's Okay.

JS – So, what years were?

RC – Well, let's see. When did I start working? I substituted for Russell Monical for 8 years, before I finally got a regular carrier's job. That's the way you usually get them.

JS – Oh, really.

RC – Most regular carriers, they only have one down here, the rest of them are contract routes. And Sherry Burns, she has the route that I had.

JS – Okay.

RC – When I retired, you know she worked for me to start with, she took that job. At first, she didn't know if she wanted it. And I thought, now wait a minute Sherry. The pay's not outstanding, but the benefits that go with it, see that's a civil service job. And, you got to think about that. I think she finally figured that out. She's still doing it, and she's very good.

JS – Did it change or is it basically the same job every year?

RC – What's that, with the Post Office? It hasn't changed much, but they come out with some new things, new ways of doing business. The main difference is, I think when I started, I think a stamp was either 13 or 15 cents. And, I think they're going to go up again.

JS – Now what are they, 45 cents?

RC – Forty-six cents, and I think they are going to raise them two or three cents. The thing is, the US Postal Service is regulated by the government. They tell them what to do but they don't furnish them any money to do it with.

JS – That's right.

RC - So it's like an unfunded mandate. They set the rules but they don't furnish them any money.

JS – Did you have to sort the mail?

RC – Oh yeah.

JS – So how early would your day start?

RC – I would start about 8:00 a.m. I was supposed to be there from 10 til 8 to 10 after. The mail come into the post office, the clerks in there would sort this mail. They'd put the Cimarron mail here and the route mail in three different slots for the different routes. When they got a bunch of it, they would take it over and set it on your table. Then you have all the boxes and everything's all in order. Then you sort it into there.

JS – And you would read the name?

RC – Yeah, the name or the number. They started giving them street numbers out there. Anyhow, you read the name and put it in there. Then, when you get ready to go and pack it up, everything's in in order. And, if you do a go job at the post office, you won't have any problem. You service one box and go to the next one; there it is, just right down the line. But if you mess it up there, then you got problems. Because you'll find a letter after you're 50 miles down the road that should have gone back here. Well, you can't go back, that means the next day.

JS – So, you didn't go into Ensign though?

RC – Yes I did. When I first started, I went into Ensign and sorted mail there also for that route. But before I retired, they combined them. And, it was all sorted here, so when you leave, you got it all for the whole route.

JS – And how did you get that job or how did you?

RC – Mainly, because I was a substitute for someone else for 8 years. And then, when this person retired.

JS – But, why did you start substituting there?

RC – Well, they just asked me if I wanted to.

JS – Did you live south of town?

RC – No, no. I've always lived here. I did that here. I've substituted for Monical and I've carried mail for by Ingalls and Pierceville, too, because his route went over there. And that's the one I worked on. But, when I got the job, I took this other route. They don't have very many regular rural routes anymore. What makes the difference, if you have more miles than you do boxes, they can make it a contract route. So like, Sherry, I think she's in good shape. She probably has 140 miles, but she may also have 160 boxes. So, they are not going to mess with her, she will remain a regular rural route and that's civil service and all this stuff. The other people, they're not civil service. They bid their route in at so much a mile, and that's what they get paid. Now, when they retire, they won't have any civil service, they'll probably have some social security, but that's it.

JS – So, in Gray County, Ingalls still has a post office but Ensign does not?

RC - Yeah, they have had one. They just run short hours, like maybe two or three hours in the morning and that's it.

JS – And Montezuma and Copeland still have?

RC – They have post offices and I think they have carriers out of there. I don't know if they have any regular rural carriers or not.

JS – So, what time of the day would you get back in off your route?

RC – Actually, I would usually get back here around 3 o'clock and leave here a little after 9, maybe.

JS – And, were there any days when there was snow, that you simply couldn't?

RC – Oh, yeah. And the rule was, you didn't have to have a 4-wheel drive pickup. All you had to have is a like a Chevrolet sedan. If you started out of town here and saw that you're not going to be able to make it, you could turn around and come back, that's it. They didn't want you out there messing around. No, you're not required to have a 4-wheel drive, a lot of them do. I never did, I never had one all those years, and never got stuck, very much.

JS –Did you know the people that you were delivering mail to?

RC – Oh yeah. Like over at Ensign, I knew the one fellow and he said "if you have trouble here or slip off in the ditch or something, I got a little tractor sitting over there in the shed, just get it out and pull yourself out". In fact I got over there one day by his place and the u-joint broke on a pretty new pickup, I was buying them about one a year, and that's it. You're sitting. So he said "here, just take my car and finish the route", so I did. I took his car and finished the route, filled it up with gas over here at Haggard and took it back to him. I said "I need to pay you for it" and he said "nay, no charge".

JS – So how many miles a year would you put on a car?

RC – Oh, about close to 40,000.

JS – Did you ever get tired of driving?

RC – No, the only problem is, going on the same road every day, year after year, you might get a little careless and not pay attention. You need to pay attention because, sometimes there's cattle in the road and a few other things. That would be probably your biggest problem. If you did it for year after year, you might just get a little careless.

JS – Did you listen to the radio and stuff?

RC – Yeah, I just listened to music. And, my son, he couldn't believe that I didn't know the words to the songs. I said "I wasn't listening. I'm thinking about something else, I'm just listening to the music in the background, that's it". I used to listen to a Liberal station and everything.

JS – Well, that's interesting.

RC – Oh yeah. On that Liberal station, they had Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, I think they came back from the thirties or something. They had that on there.

JS – Okay, and then you retired from the Post Office and you retired from farming?

RC – Yeah, a little bit. But I farmed for a while. I basically retired from farming this year.

JS – Oh, Okay.

RC – Because I would go out and put out some wheat and stuff. From now on, I'm not putting out any because I sold the drill for one thing, that'll take care of that.

JS – Well, that'd do it right there.

RC – So, that's what I did. No, I'm not interested in it. Well, I like it. I had one fellow tell me the other day that I didn't know anything about farming. Well that's funny, I grew up on a farm, milking cows and grinding feed for hogs and all that good stuff. Then I went to school and studied ag. I think I probably know a little bit about farming.

JS – Did he think he knew more than you did?

RC – Yeah, he's older but he didn't have much schooling.

JS – Well, is there anything else that you want to say about your Army experience?

RC – Well, I think it's probably good for people. I think we probably got a little youth out there now that might do them a little bit of good if they went in there, and have a little bit of discipline. It would be good for them because, you either follow the rules or they got this place over here for you.

JS – That's right. Now, you said you have a son?

RC – Oh yeah.

JS – Did he go into the?

RC – Oh no. He just turned 41. They're not drafting anybody now and he's not going to do that. He went to school and studied to be a physical therapist.

JS – Oh, Okay. That's a good field.

RC - That's what he does. He got his training in Omaha at Creighton University. He has a Doctors degree in that and so does his wife.

JS – And where do they work?

RC – In Emporia.

JS – Oh, Okay.

RC – They run the office up there at Emporia. They made a move here just a few months back and moved into kind of like a shopping center area. That was smart because they're more visible. Before, they were right downtown.

JS – And all downtown areas are not,

RC - And in some places, a lot of stores are closed.

JS – Well, I think I've been here about 40-45 minutes, I think that all the questions that they suggest. No, there is one other question, when you were at Fort Benning, were you able to come home? Did you have time that you could come home?

RC – Yeah, I think I could take two weeks.

JS – So, is there anything else that you would like to say before I turn this off?

RC – No, I don't think so. I think we pretty well covered it.