

Gray County Veterans Memorial & Archive

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

**William Wiley
McFarland**
October 18, 2014



INTERVIEW
YEAR

William Wiley McFarland
2013



GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: **William Wiley McFarland**

DATE: **October 18, 2013**

PLACE: **Trinity Manor, Dodge City KS**

INTERVIEWER: **Joyce Sullentrop**

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

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: William Wiley McFarland was born on May 12, 1928, and was raised on a ranch south of Cimarron, Kansas. He goes by the name Wiley, but in the service was referred to as William. He has resided in Cimarron all of his life except for three years of active duty from March, 1952 to June, 1955, service for which he enlisted. His highest rank was Lieutenant and he was in the Navy Reserve for 22 years. Holding a degree in civil engineering, Mr. McFarland spent his military career in the Great Lakes 9th Naval District and working in the field as part of an engineering unit. A third-generation rancher, Mr. McFarland still resides on his family’s ranch and recently received centennial notification from the Farm Bureau.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Civil engineering, ordinance facilities, motivation for forming the Gray County Veterans Memorial project

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW: At the time of this interview, Mr. McFarland was recovering from surgery. The interview was conducted at Trinity Manor where he was convalescing. We deeply appreciate his willingness to share his stories at this time.

SOUND RECORDINGS: **Digital**

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: **49:29**

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: **None**

TRANSCRIPT: **27 pages**

ORAL HISTORY
W. Wiley McFarland
Interview Date: October 18, 2013

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)
Interviewer for Introduction: Kathleen Holt (KMH)
Interviewee: W. Wiley McFarland (WMcF)

December 9, 2014

(KMH) - So, my name is Kathleen Holt and I am here with Wiley McFarland. The date is December 9, 2014. We are at the Cimarron Hotel. Wiley, about a year ago on October 18 of 2013, you conducted an oral history interview with Joyce Sullentrop. Joyce is from Wichita, but she was originally from Ingalls – Joyce Batman Sullentrop – and in that interview, we neglected to record your name and the date which we like to have on the beginning of the interview. So you and I are going to do a little mini-interview here and we'll kind of get some information about you and we'll attach this to the beginning of that other interview.

(WMcF) - That sounds like a good idea to me.

(KMH) - Okay. Well, why don't you just start out by introducing yourself, and, again, if you'll just say the date, that will be good.

(WMcF) - Yeah. Today is December 9, 2014, and Kathi caught up with me in order to get the proper introduction here. My name is William Wiley McFarland. I go by Wiley, but I was – My proper name is William, so when I was in the service, I was William McFarland, so that's kind of a complicated thing. But anyway, I grew up here in Cimarron, Kansas. I was born in 1928, so I've been here all my life except for my time in the Navy which was about – a little over three years of active duty, and I was in during the World War – er, the Korean War time. And, I enjoyed the Navy quite a bit, really. I seriously considered applying for a civilian job with them, but they didn't want to pay enough when I was available, so I came home with my folks. We live on a ranch south of Cimarron and that's where I grew up. We still have it. In fact, we got a centennial notification this year from Farm Bureau. We've been on that place for over a hundred years. And, so, it's been quite a long time. I have been around Cimarron practically all my life.

(KMH) - What was your birthdate, Wiley?

(WMcF) - My birthday?

(KMH) - Uh-huh. When were you born?

(WMcF) - May 12, 1928. So, that's getting a few miles on me, too.

(KMH) - You may get a letter from Farm Bureau any day now.

(WMcF) - Yeah. (Laughter)

(KMH) - Tell me just a little bit briefly – Did your parents settle there? Were you born on the ranch?

(WMcF) - Basically so, yes. In fact, my dad was in partnership with his dad when they moved to Cimarron. And then as he got older, he married my mother in 1923. They met at the Ensign School. They were both teaching at the Ensign School, and so it was just – We were on the ranch and his folks moved to Cimarron, in town, and they stayed out on the ranch and that's where I was and where I grew up. I was there until – Well, I went through high school. I was in college there. I was still – when I was in the Navy, that was still my address. And, then I married a girl from Fort Collins, Colorado, and we moved back and then we were on the ranch. My folks moved to town, so it was just kind of a pattern that that followed. And, there've been some ups and downs, some floods and some real dry years. I went through the Depression and through the Dust Bowl, and so I've experienced that in my lifetime.

(KMH) - Um-hmm. Well, thank you Wiley. I think we'll attach this to your other interview.

(WMcF) - That sounds like a good deal. At least I've been introduced now.

(KMH) - That's right.

October 18, 2013.

(WMcF) - The armed services have ways of procuring things.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And the Navy did not have a facility to build ordinance. That was coming out, and what was developed, and what was manufactured at Mishawaka -- after I left of course, was the talos missile which was fired off of submarines. The Navy went to the Bendix Corporation and said, "You're a manufacturer, you know how to make things fit together and put together. Now, we want to build this piece of ordinance and we want to see if you will contract with us to do it." Bendix said, "Oh sure. We'll be glad to do that, but, we don't have a place to build it." So they built 'em a new plant, at Mishawaka.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And me being in the civil engineer corps part of the Navy, the construction of the factory was involved in this deal, so that's what I was assigned to, was . . .

(JS) – Okay.

(WMcF) - helping with, looking after the building, supposedly to see that the Navy got what was coming their way,

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - and money's worth out of it, which was interesting.

(JS) - And how long were you there?

(WMcF) - Nine months.

(JS) - Nine months, and then?

(WMcF) - Then I went to another industrial reserve ordinance plant over in Decatur, Illinois.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And what, what hap -- what that one was, was that the atom, no, nuclear, developments in World War II. They built a fancy plant over there.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - That they put in moth balls, so to speak --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - when World War II was over, and they wanted to build a bomb, for airplanes, they were to build a 500 pound, a 1,000 and a 2,000 pound bomb, and they wanted to revamp that plant. They had the big shell of the plant, and they were going to just rebuild it and build these bombs in it, so, there were some kind of interesting things there happen too, but they -- that was, you know, in thinking about it, before they got done with it, I imagine, they'd been ahead to build them a new plant --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - because, it had lots of things in it that were just super, exotic, but on the other hand, they didn't work at that time, and so, but they did have the shell and I don't know what ever happened to that, and what they ever built them or not.

(JS) - So what were you're specific things that you did?

(WMcF) - Well, the main thing we did, we had civilian employees that would, you know, be, if we needed to inspect something or needed to see that, that was it. I would say the main thing was push paper.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - That's basically what it was, despite anything that you can say.

(JS) - Uh hum. And was there a base there that you lived on?

(WMcF) – No.

(JS) - No, where did you --

(WMcF) – We, my wife and I, we rented a place.

(JS) – Okay.

(WMcF) - And we, it was just housing in town, whatever.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) – ‘Cuz then there was no military there except what few were in the -- at Mishawaka. We had a Commander that was supposedly from Bu Ord [*U.S. Navy Bureau of Ordinance*] that was in charge of the, of the overall project.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And then I had a, Lieutenant at that time, and I was an Ensign that looked after the cil- or the, construction part of it.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And what we did, we -- well on the whole project, what they did they, had plans and specifications drawn up by an architect/engineer, and then this, they got down the road, well then they, authorized this project for bid, and we had a general contractor that bid it, and he was building it, and that’s where it was when I left. They were . . .

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) – Well, we had the building up pretty good and had a few hairy details that were interesting, but that’s --

(JS) - In building the building?

(WMcF) – Yeah.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And then the other thing was that I assumed that they went ahead and -- Well they had to gone and dedicated it, ‘cuz they built those missiles off there, I’m pretty sure.

(JS) - Uh hum. So how long were you there?

(WMcF) - I was there nine months.

(JS) - Nine months.

(WMcF) - See I was in for three years, and I was, nine months there, nine months up at the, Decatur and 18 at Great Lakes.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - So that's what I did.

(JS) - Okay, so after that, you went back to Great, Great Lakes?

(WMcF) - No.

(JS) - No.

(WMcF) - No, I, that was, that was the end of it. That was --

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - In other words, eighteen in Great Lakes got me through a year and a half, and then, three quarters of a year at Mishawaka, three quarters at Decatur and I was, home

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - Back at school.

(JS) - Okay, and you mentioned schooling. What -- you said you were getting a master's degree?

(WMcF) - Yeah, uh huh.

(JS) - And what were, what were you getting your masters in?

(WMcF) - Irrigation Engineering.

(JS) - Okay. For your life out here?

(WMcF) - Whatever, yeah.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - I kind of threw it away in a way, but I don't think so.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I played with it down on the river, anyway.

(JS) - Uh hum. But you enlisted. Why did you choose to enlist?

(WMcF) - Well, I can't say what went on. I don't know what needs to be all here, but -- but you know, I was subject of the draft --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - and I thought, if I can get an education, I could do better. I could do better for the government by what I might know, and so that was

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - why I thought it was a good idea.

(JS) - And, you enlisted here in Kansas? Or in Colorado

(WMcF) - No, Colorado.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - That was where I was.

(JS) - And where did you go to basic training?

(WMcF) - We went to, New Port, Rhode Island.

(JS) - And what was that like?

(WMcF) – Cold!

(Laughter)

(WMcF) - No, it was it was, it was a short course. The regular Navy ship going people, they spent, oh like four months I think, in that training. We had two months of it.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Ours was more for specialized groups and I don't remember how many we had. We had 32 civil engineers in the group, and I think we had, probably close to 150. So there were people that were specialties in mathematics or in accounting and that kind of stuff.

(JS) - Uh hum. So had your college experience helped you when you went into the basic training?

(WMcF) - Oh yeah. Well yeah, quite a bit.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - In other words, it did. There were quite a number of them in the class that had been in the Navy before and had gotten a degree or something and then they qualified to go for a mission.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And they did. I just, I was one that didn't have the military presence and all that, which, you'd learn, but uh --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - It's like any education.

(JS) - And why did you choose to go to Colorado to college?

(WMcF) - That's interesting, and you'd probably know about this. Did you ever hear of the Mitchells that lived south of Ingalls?

(JS) - No, I don't think so, but I might, as you're telling the story.

(WMcF) - Walter and Cleo.

(JS) - Oh. I think I do now, with those names.

(WMcF) - They had a son Bob about my age. They left Ingalls in the 40s, moved to Scott City for about five years and on to Fort Collins, Colorado.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - The, the tie in with the Mitchells and us was that my mother came to Ensign, Kansas, to teach school in 1923.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And she got a job in Ensign in the middle of the term, and so Cleo was a teacher down there, and they became good friends. And Mom nailed my dad in '23 and Cleo, Cleo Henderson was her name, and you maybe remember the Hendersons.

(JS) - I do. Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Well grandpa Henderson, he was quite a guy. And so they, so Walt Mitchell was in the area. Cleo was in the area, so they got married. So, Mom and Cleo became - well they kept up their friend ship.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Because, she was Aunt Cleo to me and Bob and all the kids had Aunt Barbara McFarland. So that was that was how I knew It just happened, you know, Bob was a year younger to me and so I became his roommate at their house.

Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And that's about it. Well actually, I didn't spend my whole college up there. I came to Juco here. And I got out in '48 here and then I went to Colorado Aggies, and uh

...

(JS) - So the Dodge City Junior College is that old?

(WMcF) - What?

(JS) - The college that, the Junior College is that old?

(WMcF) - Well, I don't know, it was running in the '30s, late '30s.

(JS) - Okay. Okay.

(WMcF) - Did you know Lyle Davis?

(JS) - Oh yes. Uh hum.

(WMcF) - He went to Juco over here

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - So --

(JS) - All right, but why Colorado? Because the Mitchell boy went to Colorado, or --

(WMcF) - Basically, I, I mean it was. It wasn't any -- Well, it just seemed okay.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - So that's why I went

And that was after World War II?

(WMcF) - Yeah

(JS) - Okay, so what, were you -- you were undoubtedly aware of World War II as it was going on in and knew people were --

(WMcF) - Oh, tell me about it. Yeah

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Yeah.

(JS) - Did you know people that went, me that went?

(WMcF) - Oh yeah, a lot of 'em.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I, that's why I pushed to get the memorial built.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I had a heck of a respect for 'em.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Every time I think of it, I think of --I guess what first comes to mind, and I didn't know him very well at all, was Robert Darnell, who was killed.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And my first push was to try to get the names of the people lost in, in World War II -- well not just World War II -- World War I.

(JS) -- Right.

(WMcF) -- Two, I think. And I don't know if we have anymore, to get them recognized somewhere and --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - We ended up after I was commissioner, have -- we have a plaque out in the fair building. I don't know if you ever saw it or not.

(JS) - I think I have.

(WMcF) - And it has the names of most of the ones that were lost.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And so then -- but I thought of all them and the thing of course, um -- You got time, I guess?

(JS) -- Sure.

(WMcF) - Okay, but in our school, Cimarron at that time, our band started in 1936.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I was in the third grade, and, the only reason the third graders got in the band, was because the . . .

(JS) -- I might close this, this door if that's okay. Okay, so third graders got in the band. What did you play?

(WMcF) - I played a trombone.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - Teresa remembers me playing the trombone in the third grade.

(JS) - Oh my gosh. Yeah?

(WMcF) - But anyway, the only reason we got in was because the superintendent's daughter was in third grade.

(JS) - Uh huh.

(WMcF) - So, you know, that was a little bit of a crowbar over their music director, and the music director and superintendent were both new in '36. So as a result, I was in that band from 1936 to 1946. And, so when you're involved with the older kids, you actually associate with them a lot more than you do your kid, your, your group.

(JS) - Right.

(WMcF) - And so that was why I was tied, you might say, more to the older ones.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I know Harry Walsh Grant. I remember the day he was killed and how that affected the school.

(JS) - So how did they let you know that? Did they announce it?

(WMcF) - I don't remember.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I suppose somebody got -- They didn't announce it in the school because we didn't have a loud speaker in school.

(JS) - Right, but when you got home or something?

(WMcF) - Well, yeah. Well, it was in school when we found out about it.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But I know Harry Redger and well, there's quite a number -- Dwight and of course, Pearl Harbor. That got Dwight Roberts.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - He was in my cousin's class, and he just -- tied close to you.

(JS) - Uh hum. Well, yes. And like you said, you knew them better.

(WMcF) - Yeah, I knew, I associated with the older kids more than I ever did with my own class.

(JS) - Right, and in a small community --

(WMcF) - Yeah, you knew everybody.

(JS) - And when there's so many.

(WMcF) – Yeah.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Well, you know – Oh, I take the Jacksonian still and you'll recall, (Unknown) is a news story from 1943 – you know, about seventy years ago . . .

(JS) - Right.

(WMcF) - But we could see what the War was for.

(JS) - What was it like though, being here -- Did you listen to the radio to find out about the events of the war or --

(WMcF) - Oh yeah. You listened to what, what you could find, and then they had -- of course the -- on the, in the movies, they had Movie Tone News. It was all --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And it was all, I wouldn't say it was propaganda, but it was slanted properly for . . .

(JS) - Right.

(WMcF) - Uh, firing up everybody and for goodness sake, it was so wonderful to think how it went together.

(JS) - Uh hum, and how it really worked.

(WMcF) - And how it worked, that's the big thing, because it, it's amazing to me that they could, well when you just look at it, our little old communities -- There's Garden City and Dodge City and Liberal and Pratt, and Hays and all have airfields. Well, how – and they all came together at the same time more or less.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - To get all that material in there, get it built and get it done. Granted, it wasn't, all the best of construction, and the sense of having all the amenities of life, but it worked.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And yeah, and the barracks had a coal stove in the end of the building, that was about it, but that, that was the way you worked it.

(JS) - Were there many more air bases out here in this part of the country, than on the east or west coast?

(WMcF) - I have no idea. It seems like every time you go anywhere, you find an air base or something.

(JS) - Uh hum. Well to mobilize as fast as the United States did.

(WMcF) - Yeah, how they got it done is just miraculous to me.

(JS) - Uh hum. And then, when the veterans started coming home from the war

(WMcF) - Uh huh

(JS) - Were you aware that they, you know, were coming home and trying to pick up their life and --

(WMcF) - Oh yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. They -- and some were -- Well, case in point, Galen Truax, he was over in North Africa and he never did get over it.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I mean, they shot up his arm and I don't know what all else. So it had effects on some. I don't know that, I never remember anybody -- well who knows? There really was in -- I mean was -- had mental problems as a result of it. I'm sure it affected them.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And --

(JS) - Well see, when I was interviewing them, they just said, that they didn't talk about it, they just put their war experience behind them

(WMcF) - Yeah, a lot of 'em did.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I mean that was, that was done, it was gone, and

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And some of them, poured out pretty much.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I know, the Viet Nam veteran I know, I'm sure his experiences were quite excessive, but that's all right.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - That's good

(JS) - Yeah.

(WMcF) - Cuz when he got into the jungle, and he cut a head of a foot diameter snake, I had to think about that a moment.

(JS) - Uh huh.

(WMcF) - He -- maybe he did. That's fine.

(JS) - Well I heard that those giant snakes just sort of stood up and --

(WMcF) - Yeah.

(JS) - Yeah.

(WMcF) - And uh --

(JS) - Well war, I mean the experience of war is not, it can't be pretty --

(WMcF) - No.

(JS) - for anyone

(WMcF) - No, no it's not.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I don't know what's right as far as, what the media's concerned and what the, the, entertainment field is concerned, because the entertainment field was making spectacular, and that's. But, they'd like to sweep under the rug, the, horrible details.

(JS) - Uh hum, well --

(WMcF) - Because what it is, it's glory for people.

(JS) - I mean there's, you know, basically when you go into action

(WMcF) - Yeah.

(JS) - You are trained to kill.

(WMcF) - Yeah.

(JS) - And then, but, in a sense, you were, I don't want to say lucky, but you were supporting all --

(WMcF) – Yeah.

(JS) – Yeah.

(WMcF) - Yeah, I was lucky, I'm first to admit that.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But when you stop and think about it, probably, 60%, 70% was support. When you think about the signal corps and you think about all the supplies stuff, and all that --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And, at that time, why the, and I guess, you could still, the bulk of the ships are running off, fuel, oil, that kind of stuff, but, when you think about just the logistics of getting stuff there.

(JS) - Wow.

(WMcF) - It's, it's fantastic, it was, when you think about how much fuel those planes took, and they put thousands of them on the air.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And they had to get gas, it had to come from somewhere

(JS) – Yeah. So, when you were at Great Lakes, you said that you were there that, eighteen months.

(WMcF) – Yeah.

(JS) - What specific things did you do there?

(WMcF) - Oh, my main things I was playing with, was -- by that time, of course, the Reserve was a pretty big item in a lot of places, and after World War II, um, of course the Quonset hut was developed and became a pretty big item, and so at -- an awful lot of, cities, in the Ninth Naval District, a Navy Reserve unit would be organized.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And then, they, most of them, at that time, they were changing when I was there, to make some permanent good ones, but most of them had been built on, donated land, which was probably a, swamp or a, a park where the soil wasn't all that secure at all, and then they'd get that piece of land and then we'd have a Quonset hut system, maybe two or three Quonset huts, and they would tie those together with a, passage away of some kind, and, I mean, just, you know, covered.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Covered the hallways, and they get them built and that was there, that was the facility they had. Well, by the middle -- they built all them. They started in, I think about in the, later '40s and by the time they got into the '50s, and by '53 and '54, why as soon those slabs they built those Quonset huts on had settled a bit.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Some of them weren't holding too good, and in the course, they were, a little bit higher maintenance requirement deal, when they had to be painted, so -- Contracts to paint those buildings and keep up the, the whole plant and the, the purpose of public works, was could just be the city engineer. I mean, just look at any of the big bases, they have all the, facilities of city engineer, and so you just, had to keep it up like, keeping the city up, if you could.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - That is all it was, and then it all became a matter of, you know, everybody had their needs and desires, and everybody threw their needs and desires in the hopper and then when, it came time to budget to come out, they need, to solve whether you got allocated or not.

(JS) - Uh hum. Let me ask you about those Quonset huts. It seemed when I was growing up, that farmers would buy these Quonset huts and put them up, is that right?

(WMcF) - Oh yeah. They're, it's, well it was, we call them Quonset huts. I think they, now I don't remember seeing any before World War II.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But I think it was something that was developed in the war that was a, a good, they're, they're better than a tent when they're built.

(JS) - Yeah.

(WMcF) - And uh --

(JS) - A good design I guess.

(WMcF) - Yeah, a good design, because they had a circular top, and that would hold up quite a bit of weight.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - The still had distributed it out. You didn't have to have a bunch of rafters and stuff up above, you just --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Hadn't -- I know I have -- we call 'em round tops too, or whatever.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And they are built by quite a few companies now, and they're, they're an economical way to get a building built. And when you get it metal, that's, pretty permanent, and you can keep that pretty good.

(JS) - So, during that 18 months you had different projects that you were working on all the time.

(WMcF) - Yeah. And we had a whole design group in that district public works office, that would actually, oh, I'd say it, Glenview Naval Air Station, maybe they had a bunch of quarters that had been built in the '40 and maybe some of the porches were given out.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - So, they would, draw up a set a plans to redo the porches, and so they'd draw the plans, and then we basically had a contract, would set up the contract, and then they'd go out and try to get it done. And they had another branch in there too, called Resident Officers in Charge of Construction and it was a pretty big place. Or even in Great Lakes, I was attached to one of them that went up to Milwaukee. We were supposed to -- we were building a Naval Air, Naval Reserve facility up there, and it was a pretty plush thing for that time. It was all brick and all this good stuff, and it was run out of Great Lakes. But I know the civilian guy that was, I mean he knew what he was doing. I didn't know what he was doing!

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I was just kind of a long for the ride, but --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I was there, in order to be official, so to speak, I mean, I knew what was going on.

(JS) - Right

(WMcF) - But he'd been in it for, probably, 25 years.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - So he knew what he went out to deal with the contractor to see if he was doing it right, that was right, or that wasn't right, and he, and so, that was something I learned about it.

(JS) - It was probably a learning experience.

(WMcF) - It was. It was a very learning experience.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - That's why it was very, very rewarding for me.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And so that was why --

(JS) - And did -- what other skills do you think you learned that then helped you once you got out?

(WMcF) - This one did help me when I got out, but I'll tell you about it. I learned about politics.

(JS) - Okay. What did you learn?

(WMcF) - Uh, what did I learn? Okay. I learned in Mishawaka when they had decided they were going to build the, build the plant down there, and they had the land for it, and Strauss, yeah -- F.M. Strauss I think it was, was the architect/engineer.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But he was a politician and he knew people in Washington, and he knew people all over, and he was up high in the architectural and engineering hierarchy in Indiana. He was on the engineering board and all that stuff.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And so he when they, they just happen, through the, turn the first shovel of dirt for that plant, on the Navy/Notre Dame Football team day.

(Laughter)

(WMcF) - And you, you see where I'm coming from?

(JS) - Uh huh.

(WMcF) - It just happened on -- they had the Navy vs. Notre Dame Football team in South Bend, Indiana.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I, I, it was the day after the -- They opened it; they turned the ground or whatever, but old Strauss had rented a, one of the big hotels in South Bend as a hospitality house.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And, of course, they had Admirals were out from Washington, and and all that type of thing going on. And so, that was the way it was done, and I know my Lieutenant/boss, he -- it rankled him the wrong way, but, all he could do was sit and stew and --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - He wasn't diplomatic enough to get along with too well. He would raise up, a big fuss about something that was being constructed wrong and all that. Well okay but, but anyway, the way it all turned out Sollitt Construction which got the job -- I'll back up just a sec. I'm just taking all of your time.

(JS) - No, no. That's good. I hear. That's fine.

(WMcF) - You're getting an education.

(JS) - I am.

(WMcF) - Yeah, but anyway, Sollitt -- who got the job. I'm not so sure it wasn't made up that Sollitt had had the job before the bids were even open.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But this job was -- one of the big things that was out at that time was tilt up air construction. I don't know if you know what tilt up construction or not.

(JS) - Nuh um.

(WMcF) - Okay, well, we had a, a lot today, quite a bit, but you take it, pour a slab, maybe it's the wall, but you pour it flat, then you tilt it up

(JS) - Oh.

(WMcF) - and you put it together.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And you can have a reinforced concrete wall or whatever, beam or anything, and by using, pre, pre-tensioning -- in other words, you stretch those steel wires, so to speak., I mean, you know what, what reinforcing bar is?

(JS) - Right. Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Okay, but in other words you get into this and you get in the wires that are -- but you pre-stress 'em. You put stress on there before it ever stresses the wire.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And then pour the concrete, okay?

(JS) - Oh, okay.

(WMcF) - So when the concrete sets, then you cut the wires loose at the end and you've got that much pressure on your concrete to hold it together tighter, and it's, it's a good tool.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - You gotta' know how to use it, but it's a good tool. In fact -- the shop we got up at the, at the county is that and I don't know if you ever noticed out west of town, but Warner's, when they built that shop they had out there, which is a real nice shop --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - That's pre-stressed concrete.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - And it, it can be used and it can be done very, very well.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But we were at the beginning of it with this project time and, very few contractors did it. Well the reason that these, that we did it, I think, the Navy, the Navy up above did it was, it's a new concept. It's good. It's sharp and that's all it is. Well, when you're getting out of the nut and bolts people, I don't know how to do that. Well, we got the contract written, I mean we, we, we got the plans then, and they were, they had the pre-stress stuff.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Okay, so that was all well and good. They bid it, and I don't think they even hardly opened the bids. And Sollitt came in and said, "Well, we can do that, but we can do it this way, and we'll save you some money."

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Okay, politics, yeah.

(JS) - Yeah.

(WMcF) - So, they, they did it and they were -- they wanted to go to brick and block like customary construction. Okay, that was -- Okay, well then we had to go back to Strauss and get it redesigned because we were using something different than what was designed. Well of course, that cost somebody something.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And you know who it was. But anyway, got that done and then it ended up – Well, when we got through with that, we had to have a little bigger footings than we were planning on.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) – ‘Cuz we could only hold a little bit more weight up there. Okay, that was all okay. So they got laying out the brick and block, and I never will forget when the Lieutenant came in -- he was just stopping out there because they were putting the -- they put a seal across the top of the window like across there.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But when they got to putting some bricks on top of the -- that original design hadn't called for that, for big enough, being the whole, where the windows were going out.

(JS) - Oh my.

(WMcF) - And so then they had to come inside and had to put some, anchors and props then to straighten the walls up. Okay, but you know -- all the change orders by the time we got there were something else. But Sollitt got the job and that was the way it was.

(JS) - And the lieutenant probably spent a lot of energy being upset. (Laughter)

(WMcF) - Yeah he did. It didn't bother me any.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Although I learned one other thing in that, which was not -- now this, --It bothered me for quite a little while. I mean it didn't really bother me, but, it bothered two of us quite a bit, and there was a young guy in there that in order to do the job. Strauss was supposed to furnish inspection.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - He's the one that was bird-dogging -- looking after it, looking after it. Okay, he's the one who's looking after it. Okay, so, he needed to furnish a full time, inspector, and this full time inspector was, of course out there, being sure that they did this and they did that. He was about my age, and so, we got to be pretty good friends and he said one day, "Well, would you and your wife wanna come over and see me and my wife?" Sure, we could do that, we went over there, and he said, "You know there's something I gotta tell you." I said what's that, well he was studying to be an architect.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Han Strauss who owned the Strauss Company, he was the -- he was the main guy on the architectural board that would down the road approve him getting his

architect license, and he said, "You know, last year, I worked for Sollitt and I am still working for Sollitt."

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But here, Strauss was paying him to inspect the project the Navy, and that bothered him, and I, I could see why it did.

(JS) – Right.

(WMcF) - Bless his heart, he was, he was trying to be as fair as he could. I know he was.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But, you know, politics.

(JS) - Yeah

(WMcF) - It goes on, but kind of teaches you to think about politics.

(JS) - I would say, maybe teaches you how to maneuver in the world anyway when you get out.

(WMcF) - Teaches, teaches you how the world's maneuvering.

(JS) - Well that's true probably. Yes.

(WMcF) – Yeah.

(JS) - Definitely.

(WMcF) - Because you just do. You just needed to protect yourself a little bit.

(JS) - Uh hum. So, your wife then. Wherever you were, she moved?

(WMcF) - Yeah, yeah, we moved. Actually, well -- yeah, she moved up to -- well when I first got out of OCS, you might say, we had a two month course in Port Hueneme, California.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And so she moved up, well we went out there for two months, and then --

(JS) - And what was that for?

(WMcF) - It was to get me acquainted with the, to get us acquainted with how the Civil Engineer Corps worked.

(JS) – Okay.

(WMcF) - Well, actually, I should put this in, because I happen to get chosen for Civil Engineer Corps contract type stuff but that's also the Seabee branch of the Navy.

(JS) – Oh?

(WMcF) - In other words, they were Navy battalions.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And so all of us went to that school.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) – ‘Cuz that taught them, when they were going out of Seabees where they were going and, I think that one of the big projects when I was -- at that time was Subic Bay in the Philippines.

(JS) – Oh. Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I know one or two of the guys in my group went out there, in -- I guess that was quite a development before they got done with --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - that thing. That was a big deal, which I think they've given to the Philippines.

(JS) - Well it sounds like you did a variety of things.

(WMcF) - I think I did quite a few things.

(JS) - Yeah, uh hum.

(WMcF) - Yeah, it wasn't just like sitting at a desk and, poking a type writer.

(JS) - So did you ask for certain things to do or you were just assigned?

(WMcF) - I just got assigned.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I think maybe I had a choice between construction battalion and contracts or something like that.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Not contracts – It was public works.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And uh

(JS) - And you think -- Well you know that what you had done in college helped you.

(WMcF) - Well it helped quite a large, yeah. Well, it had to.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Especially, when you stop and think about that. College was a lot different then than it is now.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Our, because, when I was -- well I only went to Colorado State for four quarters, and I was out.

(JS) - Oh my gosh.

(WMcF) - And so I had a few hours built up in other places.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But anyway, the bulk of the people in college at that time were veterans that were back.

(JS) - From the war.

(WMcF) - Yeah. There were probably from our class, probably oh, 50% to 75% were veterans.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And you get an education just talking to those guys about, to see how, how their life is.

(JS) - Uh hum, well, what, I would think that you were fairly unusually to go to college at that time, were, or were there any others in the community that went to college also?

(WMcF) - Oh quite a few did.

(JS) - Really?

(WMcF) - Yeah, I think, I, I, I'd have to stop and think, I don't know, but if you wanted to go to college, you went to college, just like my roommate up at Fort Collins. He went on and got his degree, I think.

(JS) - Uh hum. So why did you want to go?

(WMcF) - To college?

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I was always interested in civil engineering

(JS) – Oh, okay.

(WMcF) - I thought maybe I would play civil engineer someday but --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I guess I was too homesick and too ingrained in the ranch to want to leave it.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And probably money wise, I would have done better and lived better. I don't know, but --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I don't know that I did.

(JS) - Well

(WMcF) - I lived like I wanted to.

(JS) - Right, that's the most important thing.

(WMcF) - Uh hum.

(JS) - Um, okay I was going to ask you another question. It was going out of my mind.

(WMcF) – Yeah?

(JS) - So you did a variety of things, learned a variety of things also.

(WMcF) - Yeah, oh yeah.

(JS) - And when you look back at, those two years, approximately two or three years --

(WMcF) - Three years.

(JS) - Three years -- Is there, are there incidents or specific people that you remember and you know, that . . .

(WMcF) - You know the whole, the whole thing go, goes together with a lot of wonderful memories.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And the one that just crossed my mind, which is not a memory at all, but when we were at Great Lakes, why, I had a quartet in the Civil Corps in the Ninth Naval Office --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And we sang at the Christmas parties and stuff.

(JS) - Oh my gosh.

(WMcF) - I mean that was --

(JS) - Well you must have musical talent, if you could play the trombone.

(WMcF) - Yeah, that, that, that's fun. I mean it was fun, and, and of course you have some interesting things. We had a -- are you familiar with quartets?

(JS) - Uh hum. Well sort of.

(WMcF) - Oh sort of, then your lead singer is usually your second tenor.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - He always sings the melody. Okay.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - We had a unique second tenor. Once he -- his wife worked with him an awful lot. Thank goodness.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - In fact, he was in this -- but, once he got a melody, he had it.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - But, if you didn't get him started on the right note . . .

(JS) - Oh.

(WMcF) - You were in big trouble because he could be down half a tone.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Or he could be down a third of a tone, and we would go to, be getting ready to sing. We, we had a pitch pipe, and we'd say oooooohhhhh, oooooohhhhh, oohhhhh, ohhhh.

(Laughter)

(WMcF) - I mean that's one of the phrases I remember very well by . . .

(JS) - Uh hum, so you, basically then would sing for --

(WMcF) - Oh, like the Christmas parties.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - And that kind of stuff, we weren't out doing any kind of singing for anybody else.

(JS) - Right.

(WMcF) - It was just, just our own fun.

(JS) - Okay, did you have a good time, when you were in the service?

(WMcF) - Basically I did. I, I had one problem, if, if you want to call it a problem. I, I never have drunk. I'm not a drinker at all.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I don't criticize people for it. But, it's not me.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And that makes me feel kind of anti-social.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - Which be that good or bad. I don't know, but that's me.

(JS) - Probably in the long run, it's for the better. Yeah.

(WMcF) - Huh? As I get older, why I'm glad I don't because, I see too many alcoholics that --

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I, you know, I saw that when I was there too, because oh, Asba's wife, at the Christmas party she was after Captain Shade.

(Laughter)

(WMcF) - She chased him around that, that place, quite a bit.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And I think probably somebody got him to take his wife home, get her out of there.

(JS) - You might --

(WMcF) - I mean, that's, that's sorry.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - And uh --

(JS) - But you must be a careful observer of what's going on around you and what you do. Don't you think?

(WMcF) - I try to be, let's put it that way.

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - So now you've learned about me a bit.

(JS) - Yeah, so, did you have brothers and sisters?

(JS) - No.

(JS) - No, you were an only child?

(WMcF) - I'm an only one.

(JS) - Okay, so when you came home?

(WMcF) - I was there.

(JS) - Okay.

(WMcF) - And it was, I mean, what dad would've done with the place, I don't know

(JS) - Uh hum.

(WMcF) - I'm kind of in that spot now, with, what the girls want to do with the place, I don't know. So, that brings us up to the present time.

(JS) - Thanks. We'll see what the future holds.

(WMcF) - Thank you.