

The background of the cover is a photograph of the Gray County Veterans Memorial. It features a central flagpole with an American flag, flanked by two semi-circular structures with columns. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a clear blue sky.

# Gray County Veterans Memorial & Archive

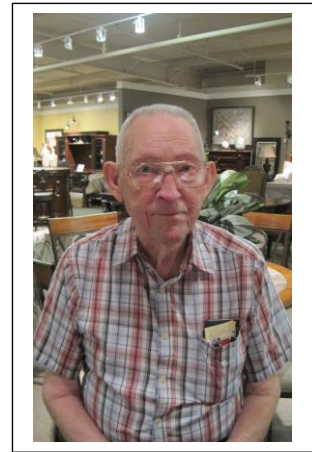
## ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

**Donald M. Weece**

September 12, 2014

INTERVIEW  
YEAR

**Donald M. Weece**  
**2014**



GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: **Donald M. Weece**

DATE: **September 12, 2014**

PLACE: **Ashley Furniture Store, Dodge City KS**

INTERVIEWER: **Kathleen Holt**                      TECHNOLOGY: **George Martinez**

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:**

**Born Cimarron, KS, 12/2/1929, Donald was one of nine children. He was the oldest boy with one sister older than he. There were four boys and five girls and nearly all were either preachers themselves or married to preachers. Donald met his wife in Colorado where he was stationed. They were married for more than 60 years. He returned to Cimarron to work at Cimarron Insurance after his service. In 1957, he started a furniture business in Dodge City. The business is operated today by Don and his children. He was a G3 Operations Staff Sgt. In the U.S. Army.**

**SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Military experience, meeting his wife, fortunate circumstance of becoming a clerk, honors**

**COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW: Mr. Weece’s wife of nearly 60 years died earlier this year. The love shared between them was evident throughout as he told these stories. Several of the stories evoked strong feelings and memories. The interviewers thank Mr. Weece for sharing these personal stories.**

**SOUND RECORDINGS: Digital**

**LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 44:22**

**RESTRICTIONS ON USE: None**

**TRANSCRIPT: 23 pages**

**ORAL HISTORY**  
**Donald M. Weece**  
**Interview Date: September 12, 2014**

**Interviewer: Kathleen Holt (KMH)**  
**Interviewee: Donald M. Weece (DMW)**

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**(KMH)** – OK. I'm Kathleen Holt and I'm in Dodge City with Don Weece, formerly of Cimarron and currently of Dodge City, at Don's place of business. This is September 12, 2014. Don, we'll just start off with you stating your full name and date of birth and then you can take off.

**(DMW)** - Donald Mervin Weece. I was born December 2, 1929. I was working in Cimarron at Fishers IGA at the time that a friend Charles Hewes and I decided to enlist in the Army, and on December 26, the day after Christmas, we left for Kansas City at 4:00 in the morning. We arrived there to enlist in the Army and on December 30th we were sworn in.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** - I went to Fort Riley Kansas for basic training and leadership training there, and then went on to -- well, I don't know what they call it. . .

**(KMH)** - Let's see, Fort, Fort, oh . . .

**(DMW)** – East . . .

**(KMH)** - Was it basic?

**(DMW)** - Far, the Far East Command.

**(KMH)** - Oh, oh, I see.

**(DMW)** - The Far East. We were given orders to go to the Far East command.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – We were given duties to go to Korea. After going to Japan, I was given orders to go to Eta Jima Specialist School which was the former Japanese Naval academy in Southern Japan. So after 12 or 15 days on ship, we arrived at Eta Jima Japan. The first sergeant told us that we wouldn't be able to get our PX cards -- Post Exchange cards -- to get necessary supplies because the company clerk was sick. And I went against the rules. I was told not to ever volunteer in the Army!

**(KMH)** – Oh (Laughter).

**(DMW)** - But I spoke up and volunteered and said that I h knew how to type, and if it'll get these guys their cards quicker, I'd be glad to type them. So I did, and the company Sargent and company commander took a liking to me, and while I was there attending the school at Eta Jima Specialist School, the field artillery mechanics school, with orders after that to go on to Korea. I never served in KP or that because they liked me there. No guard duty either. Whenever I was needed I went to the office they would have me work out there.

While we were talking about it, they, the company clerk was going to be going back to the States in a few days, and they wanted me to do it, but they looked and I was under federal orders to go on to Korea, so they couldn't just transfer me that way. So they finally figured out a way to work it out. They said if I got good enough class, grades in my class of field artillery mechanics, which I am not mechanically inclined at all, they would hold me out and then at that time start the school instructing. The plan was that they'd say that I couldn't make it at that and then they would be able to override the federal orders and transfer me on base.

**(KMH)** – Oh, oh.

**(DMW)** - So, I made the second in the class and was held out as an instructor. Then they held me and transferred me to the company to be company clerk at that school.

**(KMH)** – Let me just, jump in here. This was on your way, when you were first on your way to Korea, right?

**(DMW)** – Right.

**(KMH)** – And then, some way on the middle there, you went to, Et-, and spell Eta Jima.

**(DMW)** - E-T-A, I've got a deal up here, Eta, E-T-A and then J-I-M-A, two words.

**(KMH)** – OK.

**(DMW)** - Specialist school.

**(KMH)** – OK, I, I thought that's what it sounded like, and then, so, it was just kind of fate, that you got sent that way.

**(DMW)** - Well, I feel that God had plan in it.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** - Which I'll explain a little later on.

**(KMH)** – OK.

**(DMW)** - But I ended up being there, and after a short time -- I'm not sure, a few months or a year, probably. I'm probably off on that, but anyway. . .

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** - A time later I was the company clerk. That other one didn't do his job too well and I, as a clerk, was doing most of his work and the officers on the camp knew about it, and so they . . . They couldn't give me a promotion because the rank was frozen at that time, but I was selected as Soldier of the Month out of the camp there out of several thousand.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – Students voted and then a little later, because of this, the Colonel that was in charge of the chemical biological and rheological school there, selected me as a Corporal to do a Master Sergeant's job.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** - Because the rank was frozen at that time, I went there and served there and serviced three majors. The Colonel was over three majors and then each department. I stayed there a while and I was thinking about maybe staying in the Army and one of the Sergeants there said, you know you, most of your service has been overseas. At this time I'd been there three years -- almost, well, two and a half years. So he said you really ought to go back to the States before you make that decision. And so I did. This Colonel I, served as chief clerk of the chemical biological and rheological school was going back to the states just a few days before me, so he put in my file a good letter of recommendation. When I got back to the states, I was selected as Operation Sergeant G3 in Fort Carson, Colorado.

**(KMH)** – Oh, oh.

**(DMW)** – While there -- I didn't want to go to church right next to an Army base, so I drove down 50 or 45 miles south to Pueblo. I went to church there and a couple kind of adopted me. Their son was away and they had a home, and said, "Any time you're in town, come and stay at our house." So I went to this church, this church there that -- Let's see, anyway, showing how God was working in my life, that, I didn't realize it at that time until just a few months later, I realized that God was at work there at this church. There was the wife or the sister of my wife to be who lived in Oklahoma at the time she was going to church there. So she said you ought to come to the church, come out here to Colorado and meet this guy. He's a soldier going to our church. So we met; we fell in love and we -- until her death in this year, February of this year -- we were married. We married October 17th of that year and we would've been married around nearly sixty years at the time of her death. I'm getting mixed up.

**(KMH)** – That's all right.

**(DMW)** – Getting back to the sister, Goldie Carneal was her name.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – Wrote my sis – oops! My daughter (Laughter).

**(KMH)** – (Laughter)

**(DMW)** – My wife to be, I'm getting . . .

**(KMH)** – OK, what's your wife, what was your wife's name?

**(DMW)** – Her name was Carneal, C-A-R-N-E-A-L, and . . .

**(KMH)** – Carneal, oh, that's a pretty name.

**(DMW)** – She was married, and my wife to be was Jean Taylor.

**(KMH)** – OK.

**(DMW)** – She lived in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

**(KMH)** – Oh, OK.

**(DMW)** – She came out to the camp, up to Colorado and we met and at first sight we knew we were for each other.

**(KMH)** – Oh!

**(DMW)** – We married in just a, few months later.

**(KMH)** – Did you have a military ceremony?

**(DMW)** – No, we had a ceremony there at this church.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – And it was performed by my brother who was a preacher.

**(KMH)** – Oh?

**(DMW)** – And he came from Missouri out there to perform the wedding.

**(KMH)** – Oh, how neat.

**(DMW)** – We had it quite ready. We had many of my friends from the Army that came to that service.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – But we just had the service and had the wedding right after that.

**(KMH)** – Oh wow.

**(DMW)** – And then we left, went on our honeymoon to -- what was that place out there,? Canyon City, yes, there.

**(KMH)** – Oh yeah. Oh, pretty.

**(DMW)** – Wonderful city in the mountains there, and then I came back and was discharged then December 15, 1954.

**(KMH)** – Wow, so you were in about four years.

**(DMW)** – Four years, almost. Yeah, almost. A couple weeks less.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – Less than two weeks.

**(KMH)** – Let's see, you went – Let's back up. Tell me about what enlisting was like. How did you decide and how did your parents feel about that? You were just out of high school or you'd been --?

**(DMW)** – No, I'd been out of high school.

**(KMH)** – So you were working.

**(DMW)** – See I was, I was -- let's see. I was born in '29. Let's see, I know, I worked at Fishers IGA for three or four years.

**(KMH)** – Oh OK, OK.

**(DMW)** – Yeah, it's about three or four years so.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – I was in my early '20s.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – And –

**(KMH)** – So you just decided, OK, I'm gonna' . . .

**(DMW)** – I decided I didn't want to go in the Navy 'cuz I didn't like water ! (Laughter).

**(KMH)** – Uh huh. That was smart.

**(DMW)** – So I chose the Army.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – And uh, I'm happy I did.

**(KMH)** – Yeah.

**(DMW)** – I had experiences that I'll never, that, anyone else will ever be able to have.

**(KMH)** – Yeah, what was it like?

**(DMW)** – I don't regret my service to my country.

**(KMH)** – Oh. What was it like, taking off then, and being a young man that had grown up in and lived in a small western Kansas town and then you find yourself -- what was the first foreign port you, you went to?

**(DMW)** – Well it was certainly different. I was challenged because my friends all said, when you go in the Army, you'll drink and you'll smoke, and I kept that thought. My dad a -- When I was leaving at 4:00 a.m. in the morning to go overseas the last thing my dad said to me then was keep up your faith.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – And I had that in my mind all the time, that I was going to be faithful. I carried mass at the Eta Jima Specialist School. I taught a -- this is where I first started teaching my Sunday School class, and I've been teaching ever since, even to this day.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – That I started -- I have a letter from the Chaplin about me, thanking me. And I didn't know anything about this letter from the Chaplin until after my parents died. Then it was given a copy. It had come to the Sunday school superintendent, and then they gave it to my parents, but they never told me about it.

**(KMH)** – Oh.



**(DMW)** –And I treasure that letter more than I did being chosen soldier of the month.

**(KMH)** – Wow, that’s wonderful. That’s wonderful. So, did you learn to speak Japanese then? Did you. . .

**(DMW)** –Very little, I could say *ohayou gozaimasu*, which meant “good morning.”

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** –*Doko Iki, Doko Iku No*, or something, what are you -- where are you going?

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** –A few more phrases, I could understand more than I could speak.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** –But there in the cafes, they would have the, if you went into town to café, they would have the menu in English and Japanese.

**(KMH)** – Oh yeah, yeah.

**(DMW)** –And I know, I remember, one kind of funny thing. I ordered -- I saw boiled eggs, so I ordered boiled eggs, thinking they’d be like hard boiled.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** –They looked like they had just dropped them in hot water and took them right back out again.

**(KMH)** – Oh, oh, (Laughter) Not quite the same! What other kinds of things did you eat while you were in Japan?

**(DMW)** –Well, I liked to eat fish, sea fish. I like scallops. Shrimp was my favorite when we’d go out . . .

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** –And of course, I’d eat American food. We had a good mess hall there. I mean they served good food. Then they had uh, at the PX, they had a, luncheonette type of thing and . . .

**(KMH)** – Oh yeah?

**(DMW)** –So, I’d go over there occasionally.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** –And get something too. While I was there I took pictures of the classes and had my pictures that I had taken sent back home to the United States.

**(KMH)** – Oh neat.

**(DMW)** –And like I said, I taught the Sunday school class. I also played on the basketball team and was captain of our bowling team. They had their people of the bowling team were all officers. I was the only enlisted man and they made me captain. I think that was just for an honor, but we won in basketball. Our company league was champion of that and so we went on to the Far East tournament and we took second place in that.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** –We were only allowed to take seven players to this. It was on another island off off Japan somewhere, and because it was away, we couldn't take all of the instructors out of the class.

**(KMH)** – Sure.

**(DMW)** –And so I remember, I was captain of the team there too. We won the first game or we lost the first game. We'd had three fouled out and we were playing with four players, for the last, last half of the quarter.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** –And I remember that I played all except about three or four minutes of that game. I played . . .

**(KMH)** – My goodness.

**(DMW)** –In bowling, I had some trophies there from bowling too, so . . .

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** –I was involved with a lot of different things and that made the time pass.

**(KMH)** – Yes.

**(DMW)** –There were times when I would get home sick that I would think about my -- maybe I should volunteer to go on to Korea now so I'd get to come home quicker.

**(KMH)** – Oh?

**(DMW)** –But I, I didn't. I said, "I think God wants me here." We had a prayer meeting, every night, there at the chapel, which I was really involved in, and then we'd go over to the chapel and that's where we played ping pong and other games. But I was all involved there anyway. It was very fulfilling to be able to talk to these guys and give them encouragement as they were going on to Korea from there.

**(KMH)** – So you had people pass through as you were the clerk? What was that?

**(DMW)** –We had people from several different nations that went through that school.

**(KMH)** – Oh. Oh.

**(DMW)** –Especially Canada, Australia, and other nations around. I can remember them. I had some of them in my Sunday school class too, so. . .

**(KMH)** – Oh Goodness, what was that like?

**(DMW)** –It was very interesting. We -- with the rules there -- they didn't want you to teach anything from a denominational standard or anything like that.

**(KMH)** – Right.

**(DMW)** –We couldn't use like I have now, an instruction -- a teacher's quarterly. We had to use the Bible only.

**(KMH)** – Oh, OK.

**(DMW)** –Now I could use the quarterly to study and bring up points, but I had to use the Bible in class.

**(KMH)** –Yeah.

**(DMW)** – I remember a wonderful sunrise service that we had there and up on a mountain top, just back of the mountain. Now this was an island that was surrounded. Eta Jima island was a little island. It was only about a 40 minute bus or ferry boat ride from Hiroshima.

**(KMH)** – Oh, oh.

**(DMW)** – So I got to visit Hiroshima several times.

**(KMH)** – Oh?

**(DMW)** – And visited some missions when I was overseas. We went over to -- I'll tell this, you can put it in or not but, I was going to Kure, which was also about a 40 minute ferry boat ride. One day we were going over there for a Youth for Christ meeting, and I

and quite a few of the service men went over there but some of them weren't going over there for that reason/ Anyway, as we were coming back, I remember that one of the guys, one of the soldiers that was on board not with our group, started telling dirty stories, and I and some of the other guys started singing a song, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. It came upon me then -- I realized, I really knew the power of God.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – And so, it was amazing. Pretty soon he left, but other people that were not with our group started singing that same song, and that song has had a real meaning for me ever since.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum. I can see why. Yeah, I can see why.

**(DMW)** – Right.

**(KMH)** – So what was it like to prepare people for what they were going to go to into Korea?

**(DMW)** – Well, you just had to remind them that God was with them.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – Where ever they were, He would still be with them.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum

**(DMW)** – And we couldn't guarantee that they were going to be able to come back safely but, He would still be with them and watch over them

**(KMH)** – Uh hum. So what did the school do, the school where you were?

**(DMW)** – OK. They had a lot of different things. They had the one field artillery mechanics; they had a typing class; they had other mechanical classes; they had a school for cooking. They had a great number of schools. They were just all them coming there and then going . . .

**(KMH)** – Oh, yeah.

**(DMW)** – On to Korea to fit into the particular job they had.

**(KMH)** – Oh.

**(DMW)** – I can't think of all the different ones but there was a number of them.

**(KMH)** – And, and was it pretty random? I mean you mentioned that you got assigned to mechanical but you weren't mechanical. Did they just kind of . . .

**(DMW)** – They take your aptitude test.

**(KMH)** – Oh.

**(DMW)** – And they assign you by that to the different school, the ones that come to school there.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – And . . .

**(KMH)** – You may be more mechanical than you know then (Laughter)!

**(DMW)** – (Laughter) Well, yeah I suppose!

**(KMH)** – Um, so the CBR, is that the school you said you were specifically in?

**(DMW)** – The chief clerk of, CBR School, chemical biological and rheological school, I was the chief clerk of that.

**(KMH)** – And but what, what was CBR, I mean what?

**(DMW)** – Chem, chemical school.

**(KMH)** – I mean they, so they studied different chemicals and . . .

**(DMW)** – They studied that, how, chemical warfare, radiological warfare, biological warfare.

**(KMH)** – Oh, oh, oh.

**(DMW)** – And how to protect yourself in a case of that.

**(KMH)** – Oh I see, so the soldiers that would be going to Korea would go through that, before they went.

**(DMW)** – No, only certain ones would go through that -- those that were going to be a specialty group.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh. Okay. That's interesting. And about how many people were in that? I have no idea of the size.

**(DMW)** – Yeah, I've got a picture of it here. I can show you, but they had -- say the former Japanese Naval Academy --I know we had, probably 3,000 there.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – Different ones coming in each week. Some of the classes were four weeks, some for seven, some for eight.

**(KMH)** – Oh yes, they just. . .

**(DMW)** – And just, varying, depending on how technical they needed.

**(KMH)** – They just, shifted through. Let me ask you this, because this was not that long after World War II, what was Hiroshima like when you visited that?

**(DMW)** – What was the what?

**(KMH)** – What was Hiroshima like after World War II. Didn't you say you went to Hiroshima?

**(DMW)** – Yes.

**(KMH)** – Yeah.

**(DMW)** – By then, of course the War was over -- What year? I'm not sure.

**(KMH)** – Ten, well about ten years, but, '45?

**(DMW)** – Yeah, at first I was kind of worried about that, but they were mostly westernized by then, and back then, they had, a lot of it. It looked, pretty much like it was then. Some of the cities, the smaller ones had these outdoor markets all the way around.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – And I remember one visit -- I had to take a leave while I was over there or I would've lost it, so I took a bus ride clear up in the mountains there. I got to see --and it was surprising, the kids, the high school kids that would come up and speak to me, trying their English. I learned one thing. A smile is a universal language. I would have little kids come up to me and they'd smile and I'd smile back. I've always remembered that, that a smile in any language is the same.

**(KMH)** – Yeah. Was the city pretty much rebuilt by the time you visited?

**(DMW)** – Most of it, ye. They still had a place around Hiroshima where it was showed these spots there. They had one guy there that had gone through it who had scars all over his body.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – And it was terrible to see that, but most of it had been rebuilt.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh. That was pretty fast to rebuilt that big of city.

**(DMW)** – Yes it was. It was.

**(KMH)** – While you were over there, how did you keep in touch with your family back home?

**(DMW)** – Well at that time we didn't have the telephone or anything like they do now so we -- just about letters was all.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh. Did you get care packages from home?

**(DMW)** – Yes, I did.

**(KMH)** – Yes, like what?

**(DMW)** – Cookies mainly. Candy.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – It had to be something that wouldn't spoil right away.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh. Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – But uh. . .

**(KMH)** – So your, was your mom a good cook? (Laughter)

**(DMW)** – Yes, mother of nine children, she knew how to cook!

**(KMH)** – Yes, so there were nine in your family, where were you in the . . .

**(DMW)** – I was the oldest boy, had one sister above me.

**(KMH)** – Oh OK. So how many boys and how many girls?

**(DMW)** – Four boys and five girls.

**(KMH)** – Wow. I'm only asking 'cuz I know some of them! (Laughter)

**(DMW)** – (Laughter) Right.

**(KMH)** – But people listen, right?

**(DMW)** – I did ask a friend of mine, Irv Koppish from Ingalls -- who was a good friend of mine -- I asked him one time to send me some candy. I was thinking about some candy that I really liked and that was the caramels.

**(KMH)** – Oh?

**(DMW)** – And I asked him to send me some, and he did, and I tried to keep 'em hid from the rest of the guys, but it was kind of hard!

**(KMH)** – Oh (Laughter) Did you send home anything, from that time?

**(DMW)** – Oh, yes, a lot of things. I sent each of my sisters a set of dishes, Noritake mainly, and I've got a set for me. I knew some time I'd get married, and I sent little knickknack shelves that had little figurines and stuff that they made. The thing that I have five of right now that I had sent back, that I had kept, was cloisonné. It's a really long time process making. It was very valuable then and it's even more valuable now.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – I have five vases.

**(KMH)** – Oh wow.

**(DMW)** – And I'm hoping, I'm planning at this time probably to give one to each of my kids.

**(KMH)** – Oh.

**(DMW)** – They're not all the same size and that's going to be the problem.

**(KMH)** – Oh yeah?

**(DMW)** – I haven't told them yet, but this Thanksgiving, after my illness this year . . .

**(KMH)** – Yes.

**(DMW)** – I was near death. I felt that I needed to take care of some of these things this Thanksgiving time.

**(KMH)** – Yes. That sounds like a good idea, a very good idea. Who was it that told you never to volunteer in the Army?

**(DMW)** – People that had been in the Army.

**(KMH)** – (Laughter) Yeah, I was guessing that.



**(DMW)** – Some of that, and these were people from Cimarron, too.

**(KMH)** – Yes.

**(DMW)** – I can't remember, I think I know of one, probably it was, but anyway, I won't mention names.

**(KMH)** – (Laughter) Um, while you were over there, did anything unusual or extraordinary, or things you remember in particular happen?

**(DMW)** – Well, I remember that one of the generals was taking off -- the one that was general over there. He was relieved of duties, but I can't remember his name. I don't remember which name. I don't want to say the wrong one.

**(KMH)** – Oh OK, right, right.

**(DMW)** – It was -- I had some, sometimes there was a lot of prejudice in the Army about race.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – And I was in after that, when they put the, all races together.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – And I had friends, dear friends that were of other races and I can remember one that as I was going overseas, and I became seasick, and I didn't feel like getting up at all. One of the men -- he was a colored man -- went and got me something from the PX to eat, some fruit.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – It was about the only thing, peaches I think it. . .

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – Was or something like that?

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – But, I had friends, many friends of all different races there. The Japanese that were there -- there were two -- that had been born in the United States. They ran the photo shop there at the PX, and I became real good friends with them because they developed my pictures. That was when I was taking the pictures, class pictures and that.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – And there were two of them there, but one I remember especially because we became real good friends. In fact, he wrote me down some things in English, in case I found myself in that one faraway place. He thought I might not have the café where they had both English and Japanese.

**(KMH)** – Oh yeah?

**(DMW)** – And he wrote me some things that I wanted in English – no, in Japanese, so I could just . . .

**(KMH)** – Oh.

**(DMW)** – Say that to them.

**(KMH)** – Oh, oh how great.

**(DMW)** – So like I say, good friends like that, good memories of the Army and the friendships that were forged in that back from Fort Carson to dear friends that I still correspond with from the Eta Jima.

**(KMH)** – Really? Oh that's neat.

**(DMW)** – That were Christian friends of mine.

**(KMH)** – Uh huh.

**(DMW)** – There was one boy, the chaplain's assistant, down in Missouri. I haven't heard from him in quite a while. Then there's a guy in Indiana, that each year we correspond together.

**(KMH)** – Oh that's neat.

**(DMW)** – And, so.

**(KMH)** – Yeah. Do you attend reunions and things like that, ever?

**(DMW)** – Army reunions?

**(KMH)** – Yeah.

**(DMW)** – I tried to that one time, and I was -- this was the 50s reunion and the only time they'd had one up until then. I, don't think they've had one since then of our group that were there. But, it was the 50<sup>th</sup> in 1999. I was on my way to North Carolina -- Asheville, North Carolina, to attend this reunion. I got as far as Memphis Tennessee, and I had a

heart attack. My wife did not drive, so I pulled in a motel and stayed there and then the next morning, they called. Somebody came down and looked at me, and said, "Oh, you're OK. You ought to check in the hospital maybe before you go." Instead of them taking me there, I went on a little bit and started to find my way to the hospital, and then I just got lost there. I got lost, so I stopped in the hospital and the guy told me I was having a heart attack right then.

**(KMH)** – Oh my!

**(DMW)** – He said, "I don't know who read those, that sheet on that," but he said, "you should've been taken to the hospital right then!"

**(KMH)** – Oh my!

**(DMW)** – But it was a good place there. The heart doctor there, Dr. Cook it was. People flew in from all around the area to go to this Baptist East Memorial Hospital.

**(KMH)** – Oh wow.

**(DMW)** – Nash or, um . . . Memphis . . . Tennessee, there.

**(KMH)** – Wow, sounds like there was a hand in that one too.

**(DMW)** – Yeah, yeah, God has had a hand in my life.

**(KMH)** – Yes.

**(DMW)** – And I, want to give Him the credit for many things.

**(KMH)** – So how would you summarize your service experience?

**(DMW)** – It's something that I'm glad I went through. I would not want to do it again, because -- But, I, I wouldn't trade it for anything in my life, that experience that I had.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum. What was it like when you came back?

**(DMW)** – Well, I knew I didn't want to go back into the grocery business, so I went to work at the insurance company there in Cimarron. Everything was you know, good. I mean it was about like I expected.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – I think we were some of the people in that area were not noticed as being veterans, but I didn't have that problem at all. People . . .

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – Respected me as a veteran.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – But I worked at the insurance company and then started the business in 1957 where I am located now.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum, and was that just an opportunity or you just thought, “OK I want to go into business now or . . .?”

**(DMW)** – No, again going back to the Oklahoma, my father in law to be lived in Oklahoma, and he’d been born and raised there. He was part Indian and we decided to bring him up here. He had run a store with used furniture down there, so we brought him up to Cimarron, and opened a second hand store for him to run. And I got interested in that and helped him, and then came the business. Then we decided to open in, Dodge City instead of there.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – Because of the limited cliental there, we opened here, and then I eventually decided I wanted to go into business most of all.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – I would say this off the record, but turn it off for a bit. . .

[PAUSE]

**(KMH)** – OK, let’s get that on there. So when you came back, what job did you have right away?

**(DMW)** – I started at the Cimarron Insurance Company, at \$1 per hour.

**(KMH)** – \$1 per hour?

**(DMW)** – And I was selected in the IBM section which made all the reports to the IBM computer . Now you can hold a computer in your hand.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – It was about six foot long and about three foot wide and about four foot tall, and you had to, wire these computers. They had a board on the side of the computer, and you took little wires, and had little holes all the way through it, and you put a wire in here and a wire in here, and it told what the machine was to do, and I was the only one at the time that could do that. Well, my sister Helen could do that too, but I was the one doing it. It was quite different.

**(KMH)** – Did it have all those cards?

**(DMW)** – Yeah, punch cards?

**(KMH)** – Did it have a bunch of cards, punch cards?

**(DMW)** – You had to punch cards. They had a collator that collated the cards. Then I would collate them and set 'em in alphabetical order, and then you'd print out the thing on the big machine that had the. . .

**(KMH)** – Wow, print out the report from that?

**(DMW)** – You don't even know what we're talking about, do you, Jorge?

**(JM)** – No!

**(DMW)** – I've got a picture of it up there on the office if you . . .

**(KMH)** – Yeah,. We're gonna have to go see your pictures I think, yeah.

**(DMW)** – Yeah, I've got a picture of Eta Jima. I've got a picture of me receiving the award, some of when I got medals and different things. Oh, I have sports medals and -- Oh I can't remember. I have a picture behind my desk there.

**(KMH)** – Oh neat. When you were in the military, did you have to learn weapons and things like that?

**(DMW)** – Yeah, when I went to Fort Riley, they instructed us in rifles, machine guns, different things like that, and small pistols too. Then, when I went overseas and went through the field artillery mechanic school, they did.

**(KMH)** – Oh.

**(DMW)** – We were involved in firing them and testing them and cleaning them and repairing them.

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

**(DMW)** – So we had to have knowledge of a lot of different weapons.

**(KMH)** – Goodness, then, but you're not a hunter or anything like that now, since. . .

**(DMW)** – No, I used to be a hunter when I came back. I liked, loved to hunt, and I'd go pheasant hunting when I was on the farm. Rifle hunting. I'd go out in the snow especially. Caught your cotton tails or young, younger jack rabbits, cotton tail to eat, and I liked to go duck hunting.

**(KMH)** – Oh?

**(DMW)** – And when I was first back that first spring after I got back from Japan, I used to go out every morning at least down to Montezuma. I'd go down there -- at that time you could hunt, start hunting a quarter, half hour before sunlight, so I'd hunt and then when the rush was through there, I'd come back and go to work at eight.

**(KMH)** – Oh goodness.

**(DMW)** – I think 9:00 then or something.

**(KMH)** – Wow, have you ever been back to Japan?

**(DMW)** – No.

**(KMH)** – Have you ever thought about it?

**(DMW)** – No.

**(KMH)** – Yeah?

**(DMW)** – I couldn't go through the, flight for one thing. I don't think I could anymore.

**(KMH)** – Yeah.

**(DMW)** – And of course it'd be better than the ship.

**(KMH)** – Yes (Laughter).

**(DMW)** – The one we went back on, but I just don't think I could do that.

**(KMH)** – Yeah, yeah.

**(DMW)** – It would be nice in a way, to see what Eta Jima Specialist School is like now, if they're still training people through there or if it's gone, been given back to the Japanese. I have no idea.

**(KMH)** – Hum, yup. So interesting. Is there anything you want to tell, anything I didn't ask you about? I know there have to be some good stories you haven't told.

**(DMW)** – About the Army?

**(KMH)** – Well probably, or somehow related to the Army.

**(DMW)** – Well I could tell the story how I met my wife.

**(KMH)** – OK.

**(DMW)** – I think I told part of it in there.

**(KMH)** – OK.

**(DMW)** – I found out after I got back here -- just after my wife died, it came to me -- I realized that God was at work in my life to bring us together because here I was. . . This is several years before I actually met my wife, but yet how God took control. They're sending me over there as an infantry man, and then, choosing me to be selected as a field artillery mechanic and with me with no mechanical abilities, and then the fact that - I guess I told about the fact that I was sent there and held out as company clerk and then went to church in Pueblo and then met my wife through her sister after she'd invited her there.

**(KMH)** – How, did your wife? – Well, tell me about when you met your wife. What was that like? You said you fell in love right away. Did she recognize that right away?

**(DMW)** – Yes, she said she did. We both -- it's kind of funny because we were just talking, and finally she, one day, she says, "I can't marry you!" I says, "Why?" We'd talked about marrying. She said, "You haven't asked me yet!" (Laughter)

**(KMH)** – Oh (Laughter) Well that's a good way to go about it! (Laughter)

**(DMW)** – So, but, yeah we had a very happy marriage.

**(KMH)** – Yes.

**(DMW)** – I, I told my Sunday School class, if you read a couple years ago, about the fact -- well that I prayed that, first phone call we got, [PAUSE]

**(KMH)** – That's OK.

**(DMW)** – I told my Sunday School class a couple of years ago about how I always thanked God every day for bringing my wife and me together. And I thanked him for her every day, and as we were going home, she said, "You mean you've been praying for me, thanking God for me and praying for me every day?" And I said, "Yes." She says, "I've been praying for you every day and thanking God for you every day!"

**(KMH)** – Wow, oh wow, that's powerful.

**(DMW)** – Yeah.

**(KMH)** – Yup, you have kids here, right? How many kids?

**(DMW)** – I have two of my children working with me now. One, my daughter takes care of the books and takes care of all accessories. My son, youngest son, David, is the manager of the store and does all the buying and re-arranging, selling, and supervising. I still write the checks and do scheduling of deliveries, and my, oldest son is with a furniture company, Lane and Broyhill and Thomasville Furniture, living in Topeka now, and he travels over half the United States.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – He's the vice president of sales over that big company.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – And my other two sons are preachers. My younger, next to youngest son is a preacher in Fort Smith Arkansas, that's all he's ever done since. All of my kids worked for me, during the stores there growing up, but then my, next son is a preacher in Stanford, Florida.

**(KMH)** – Wow.

**(DMW)** – Mark Weece, Randy Weece is the one, David Weece is my youngest and Casey Cat is my daughter, and then Randy Weece and then Mark Weece then Michael Weece.

**(KMH)** – Wow, and how many of your siblings were, were or are preachers?

**(DMW)** – All of my sib, siblings that were married were preachers, or married to preachers.

**(KMH)** – Yeah.

**(DMW)** – I had two sisters that didn't marry.

**(KMH)** – Yeah.

**(DMW)** – And worked in, lived in, Cimarron, practically all their lives.

**(KMH)** – Yup, yup.

**(DMW)** – I'll bet you get some interesting stories, don't you?

**(KMH)** – We do, we do. I so appreciate your, your sharing your story with us.

**(DMW)** – Well yeah.

**(KMH)** – Thank you.



**(DMW)** – That’s one thing I, when I was near death and thought I was dying, given up for dead, one time, I knew God had a hand in it because I, miraculously was saved from five things, from liver enzymes going, well, first thing. They thought I was dead then. Then I had the next couple of days I had a heart attack. I had a gall bladder attack. I had a kidney stones, and did I say, pneumonia?

**(KMH)** – Oh my!

**(DMW)** – Anyways there’s five things there that I had that . . . It’s a humbling experience, but God saved me, and I thought, He’s got some purpose for me, and I search for it daily. Don’t know what he wants me to do, and I know one thing is that I need to be more vocal in witnessing, but then that’s something that we as Christians are supposed to do anyway, so it’s something besides that, ‘cuz I’m just doing what I’m supposed to do on that, not, maybe I . . . I, I was hesitant in some instances to speak up for Christ but, no more!

**(KMH)** – And this was just recently, wasn’t it?

**(DMW)** – February the 19<sup>th</sup>, when my wife went back in, well, when she died. I went in the hospital from her cancer coming back, and she wanted to die. And I went in the hospital at 11:00 that morning, and then she died at 4:00 and at 3:00 in the morning they called my kids to say if you want to live, you better come up and see, but that’s when God stepped in, and as the doctor told me, he says, “Don I didn’t think you’d make it,” but he says, “you had to have more power, power from on high!”

**(KMH)** – Uh hum.

[Interview ended.]