

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH BOBBY D. WEAVER  
FOR THE  
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY  
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KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE  
MARCH, 14 2013

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CYNTHIA TINKER: This begins an interview with Bobby D. Weaver on March 14, 2013, and we are at the Center for the Study of War and Society, and my name is Cynthia Tinker, and I'm the program coordinator here. Also joining us today on the interview is one of our undergraduate interns.

ROBERT PRATER: Robert Prater.

TINKER: And, um, Mr. Weaver's cousin, right? Go ahead and say ...

RON EASTER: Ron Easter.

TINKER: Okay so they're sitting in with us and thank you, Mr. Weaver, for coming in this morning. Like I said we will just kind of start with your background, and if you want to tell us a little bit about your—I don't know—did you know your grandparents growing up and where they were from?

BOBBY D. WEAVER: I knew my grandparents growing up. Yes I did. And thank you very much for having me here.

TINKER: Oh, no problem.

WEAVER: But it was back during the Depression and we was extremely poor.

TINKER: A what year were you born?

WEAVER: I was born in 1930. We was extremely poor when I was a kid, when I was a little kid. And I remember one time my father walking across a field where we lived and my mother ...

TINKER: Is this in Tennessee?

WEAVER: In Tennessee, yes. In Paint Rock, Tennessee.

TINKER: Paint Rock, Tennessee, okay.

WEAVER: My mother is standing in the doorway crying. I was only three years old. I remember it though. I wondered what she was crying about. Well later on I found out my father was walking to Sweetwater, Tennessee, to hobo a train to go to Oklahoma to work in the wheat fields for a little money. So we was left there alone, you know, me and my mother and my older brother. There was only two of us then. Then later on I had a sister who was born in '33—this is also '33. Then I had a brother born in '37 and then a sister born in '42. Another sister born in '44 and a brother born in '46. That's all my siblings.

TINKER: Okay, so you remember your mother crying when your ...

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: So father just hopped a train to Oklahoma?

WEAVER: Yeah, Oklahoma.

TINKER: Did he have something particular waiting for him or was he just ...

WEAVER: No. He met some people that was going to Oklahoma in Sweetwater. They hoboed a train; they hopped on a freight train. When they got out there and had no money—they didn't have no money—they would knock on doors and ask to do work for food and stuff, you know? Then they worked there in the wheat fields for a while, but when they came back several weeks later, I think he had maybe two or three dollars. That was it. But back then a dollar was like fifty dollars now, almost. You could buy anything with it. But anyhow, later on we started school. I started school, Paint Rock School. First grade in 1936. And I continued at Paint Rock until—through the fifth grade. After I graduate—I didn't graduate—after I got through the fifth grade, World War II was going on, and we moved to Knoxville.

TINKER: Okay well before that—before we get to that—you said you knew your grand—was your entire family from Paint Rock? Your grandparents on both sides?

WEAVER: Yes, originally they wasn't from Paint Rock, but they had been in Paint Rock for many years.

TINKER: Where had they moved from?

WEAVER: Well, on my mother's side, they moved from Ireland.

TINKER: Oh okay, did they ever talk about that to you?

WEAVER: They did, but years ago. My mother and father have both been dead for—I say, my father for over twenty years and my mother—both of them about twenty years. But that was on my mother's mother's side. Now, on her father's side was Sam Easter, same name as Ronnie because Ronnie's father and my mother were brother and sister, see. My mother was the oldest one in that family, and Ronnie's father was the youngest.

TINKER: Okay. That's how you all are cousins?

WEAVER: That's how we are cousins, yeah. And on my father's side, my grandfather was Pa Weaver—that's what we called him Pa Weaver. Asberry was his real name, Asberry Weaver, but we never called him that, just Pa Weaver.

TINKER: So his real name was Asberry, but how come people called him Pa?

WEAVER: He was my father's Pa, you know ...

TINKER: Oh, okay.

WEAVER: We called him Pa Weaver. His wife's name was—she was Ma Weaver. But her name was Nan. And they had a little farm, and they had cows and stuff like that. In fact, they supplied us with milk from the cows. 'Cause we didn't have no cows back then. Later on we did.

TINKER: So everybody in your family had been farmers?

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: Okay.

WEAVER: And so was Sam Easter was famer too, but he did other things. He was a furrier. He trapped fur and went bought fur, you know, like fox, hens, and minks and stuff like that. Which, I don't think they have many of those any more.

TINKER: No.

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: What kind of house did you grow up in?

WEAVER: Well, I'll tell you about the house. We lived in an old house that was on Pa Weaver's place for a while. That's where he had left to go to Oklahoma. We were living there then. But, a little later on in life like two or three years later, there was an old sharecropper's house on my Grandpa Easter's place, and my father tore it down and ... used the lumber in it to build a house up where I grew up at. And he built that house and we lived in it for many years, except for the three years we lived in Knoxville when we moved up here during World War II. That house cost him to build—that house, in money, cost him sixty some cents. That's for nails he had to buy.

TINKER: Because he took all the materials from the ...

WEAVER: ... from that old sharecropper's house. But he couldn't straighten enough nails out so he had to buy a few others.

TINKER: Right. (Laughs)

WEAVER: So it cost him sixty-some cents and we lived in that house for twenty some years. It cost sixty-some cents.

TINKER: Your father is very efficient.

WEAVER: We had to be.

TINKER: Yeah! (Laughs)

WEAVER: We had to be.

TINKER: And I am assuming, absolutely no electricity or running water or nothing.

WEAVER: Oh, they didn't have that until in the 50s and this was in the 30s. It was twenty years without that. But, uh, had the outhouse and had the ...

TINKER: What was your main source of, uh ... what was the main crop? Or what did you all eat the most of?

WEAVER: Well we grew a big garden to eat out of like vegetables and stuff—vegetable garden. Then we would have corn and stuff like that. They had ... would grow what they called cane for molasses. There was a machine that would come around—somebody owned it. It'd make the molasses for you. But They didn't charge you. They just took a percentage of the molasses. We had that and he had beans and stuff he used to grow and sell. Stuff like that.

TINKER: Did your father ever find any work on the side or did he just ...

WEAVER: Well, he used to cut wood. He sold back then a rick of wood for fifty cents that he cut by himself. Fifty cents for a rick of wood. In fact it was back about twenty-five years ago, his picture was in the Roane County paper. He was selling wood then.

TINKER: He's still—and he's just cutting the trees down off his own property.

WEAVER: We had chainsaws then, but back in 30s, we didn't have chainsaws.

TINKER: He's doing it the hard way ...

WEAVER: ... doing it the hard way. And there was a big write up in the Roane County paper about this woodsman that was my father. It had a picture of him in there. But later on he went to work other places. He worked at Y-12 in Oak Ridge, one place he worked at.

TINKER: Oh, really?

WEAVER: Later on, you know? Times got better. Never did get ...

TINKER: What was he doing at Y-12?

WEAVER: I don't know. He wasn't allowed to tell anybody.

TINKER: Oh, really?

WEAVER: That was before the war was over.

TINKER: Did your parents go to school?

WEAVER: He had to go in front of a lie detector about every month ...

TINKER: Oh, really?

WEAVER: ... and wasn't allowed to tell what he did.

TINKER: Did your parents have an education when they were younger?

WEAVER: My father went through the freshman year, I think. My mother went through the sophomore year or junior year—I don't know which. She didn't graduate, but she taught school. She didn't have a high school education, but she taught high school.

TINKER: Well she must have been pretty smart.

WEAVER: She was a substitute teacher for the principal there was Tommy—what was his name?

EASTER: Was it Huffine?

WEAVER: No, it was before Huffine. I don't remember their name now, but she would substitute for the principal. And he had—the principal was a teaching principal, you know? She taught—in fact she taught Latin.

TINKER: Really? Wow!

WEAVER: She took Latin in high school, yeah. That's one of the things she taught was Latin. Crowder. Tommy Crowder was the principal's name. He's been dead a long time. He'd be about 120 years old.

TINKER: What kind of things did you get into as a boy? I mean, did you like sports? Did you get in trouble? Mischief?

WEAVER: You're a good guesser. (Laughter) All of the above. Yeah, I went to school—after I got into high school—I went to school for two different reasons: to play sports and to flirt with the girls, not to learn.

TINKER: (Laughs) Well, school has its benefits, right?

EASTER: Tell them the gift you got for perfect attendance.

WEAVER: Oh, that was back when I was in first grade—first year I went to school. At the end of school, they give everybody that had perfect attendance—that was the only year I had perfect attendance when I was in first grade—a knife.

TINKER: Oh, that's a good gift!

WEAVER: For a school to give a knife, can you imagine a school giving a knife?

TINKER: Oh now they take their little plastic toys away. The plastic guns and stuff.

WEAVER: Anyhow, they was building a new bridge down on our Paint Rock Creek there. And my uncle, his father, my brother and I went down there at the bridge. We had a swimming hole down there where we used to swim. And I wanted to show them my new knife that I had. I pulled—it was a wooden bridge, so I pulled it out of my pocket and it fell out of my hand through the wooden bridge and fell into the creek. Never did find it. Had it less than a day.

TINKER: You must have been heartbroken. Lost your knife.

WEAVER: Yeah, I was a six-year old heartbroken kid.

TINKER: What kind of things did you all do in the summer? You and your siblings?

WEAVER: Work mostly.

TINKER: Did you? You had to help out on the farm?

WEAVER: Yeah, yeah. Help out on the farm and help out on the farm.

TINKER: Did you all raise any animals?

WEAVER: Later on ... we had a cow that we milked, a milk cow. In fact, after I got older, like when I was in the upper generi, I'd milk the cow at night and in the morning. Used to always feed it. We put the milk out in the spring. We had a spring.

TINKER: To keep it cool?

WEAVER: To it cold yeah, to keep it cool. My mother would churn and make butter. When we was living here in Knoxville, talking about getting in trouble, I got into a little bit of trouble. I started caddying at the golf courses. It was before they had golf carts. The Cherokee Country Club, I was a caddy there for about three years. And I would play hooky and caddy to make money. Not go to school. Well we didn't have no telephones then. Hardly anyone had a telephone. In fact, when we lived out in Paint Rock there wasn't no telephones up in Paint Rock. Nobody had one. They didn't have lines through there. If you had to call someone on the telephone you had to drive about eight miles to the closest telephone. But anyhow, I played hooky a lot. And after a while, these three truant officers chased me up the railroad track and I got away from them. The next day they caught me, though.

TINKER: You were literally running? (Laughs)

WEAVER: Yeah I was running. I got away from them. Along the railroad track there was a big ditch between that and the golf course. I got down and lay down in that ditch and they walked by and didn't see me. And it was cold, it was like December and there was a little skim of ice in that water I was laying in. Nobody would think you would be down there ...

TINKER: No, no.

WEAVER: ... when it was that cold, but I got away from them. But then they finally caught me the next day. Me and my two buddies that would play hooky with me too, they ...

TINKER: Now, what would happen to ...

WEAVER: I went to John Tartan Reform School.

TINKER: They sent you straight to reform school?

WEAVER: They went by my—they took me to Bearden school—I went to Bearden. I was in seventh grade at Bearden. They took me down to the school and told the principal and everybody that they had me. Took me by my house and let my mother and father come out to the car where they had me handcuffed. Now, I was a thirteen-year-old kid, and they had me handcuffed—my hands behind my back.

TINKER: That seems harsh.

WEAVER: Well it used to be. They got to come out and see me and everything, but they couldn't go visit me. The truant officer told them wasn't allowed to come up there ... until I got out. I got out a week later. I went to reform school, John Tartan right here in Knoxville, and my trial came up. I went before a judge within a week. And I got sent ...

TINKER: They put you on trial for missing school?

WEAVER: Yeah, I got sentenced to a reform tour in Knoxville until I was sixteen or through the eighth grade, whichever came first. Suspended. I didn't have to go, I was suspended. But if they caught me again ...

TINKER: ... you were going to go.

WEAVER: ... I was going to go. So I got a little smarter; I didn't let them catch me no more. I still did it, but I didn't let them catch me. But anyhow ...

TINKER: I guess I didn't realize that they were that strict about people going to school back then.

WEAVER: Now down in Paint Rock they wasn't. People would quit after the third grade down there.



TINKER: I was going to say 'cause I talk to veterans all the time that, you know, either they or their family members just quit school.

WEAVER: They would quit to start moonshining—making moonshine down there.

TINKER: Now what kind of community was Paint Rock? Was it—I mean, did it have, like, one store or—how big of a community was it?

WEAVER: They had a store out next to the school, which was a little more than a mile from where we lived. It was Siler's Grocery then. It's where the firehouse is now. Me and my older brother—I have a brother, well he's deceased—two years older than me. We'd walk to that store and my mother would make a list, and we would buy it and carry it all home. One of the things that we always had to get was a hundred pound of feed for the cows. Now here we're just kids and we are carrying a hundred pound of feed on our shoulders home. But they had the Paint Rock Church, which we went to church there.

TINKER: Oh that's right. What kind of church was it?

WEAVER: A Baptist.

TINKER: Was your family very religious people?

WEAVER: Well yes and no. They took spells like when times was real hard they were. But when my father got jobs and times got better off, we hardly ever went to church.

TINKER: Oh, mm hmm.

WEAVER: Too busy, you know spending money or whatever you do. But when things were real bad—Now I'll tell you a true story about when was real small and went to Sunday school. I went church on Sunday but we had to walk. Well, I was maybe, like, six years old and a bunch of us walking home, and I just walked behind. I had a—what they called a toboggan that I wore down over my eyes like this, you know, because it was in December or November, kind of cold. I was just watching my father's footsteps to follow him home. Well at the forks of the road we went one way and some of the people we were with went the other way, and I was following the wrong person. I followed the wrong person home.

TINKER: 'Cause you were just looking down at the steps you weren't looking ...

WEAVER: I got all the way home before I knew it. That was about a mile longer, farther.

TINKER: That's pretty funny. (Laughs)

WEAVER: Yeah, I followed him home. And there wasn't no phone ...

TINKER: He wasn't looking back to see where you were either. That's funny.

WEAVER: There was no phone to call to tell them so they was having dinner and I ate dinner with them, then he took me home. We had to walk naturally; there were no cars, about two miles. Those guys are ... Willard, where Willard Cunningham lived, then on up.

EASTER: Right.

TINKER: Well that was nice of them to feed you and then take you back.

WEAVER: Everybody accused me of knowing it and went on purpose. They had fried chicken for dinner.

TINKER: Oh!

WEAVER: It was good too. It was real good.

TINKER: Well see, it worked out of the best then didn't it?

WEAVER: There is all kinds of things like that happened. At my age, I don't remember them all at the same time. I'm lucky to remember one of them.

TINKER: How did you get along—did you and all your siblings get along pretty well?

WEAVER: Well, me and my older brother used to fight all the time, but we got along real good. That was nature to fight.

TINKER: You fought for fun.

WEAVER: We got spanked for it a lot, too.

TINKER: Did you?

WEAVER: We sure did.

TINKER: Who was the main disciplinarian?

WEAVER: My father.

TINKER: Was he?

WEAVER: Now I have gotten spankings from my mother, but I think only remember two spankings that I got from my mother. And I couldn't count how many I got from my father. I needed more. I didn't ever get all I needed.

TINKER: That's how I feel. My mom will feel bad sometimes, and I'll say ...

WEAVER: Did your mom spank you?

TINKER: Oh yes. I'll say, "Mom, trust me, you probably should have done it more."  
(Laughter)

WEAVER: Where are you from originally?

TINKER: Gatlinburg. Yeah, I'm from the mountains. Huh. So do you remember what the two times your mother spanked you was for?

WEAVER: Yes I do. Yes I do. The time I was telling about back when we started, about my father going to Oklahoma, it was on my birthday, September 7th. And we didn't have no birthday cake; we was poor. But she had picked blackberries and made me a blackberry pie for my birthday. And I'm in there with my plate hammering on the plate with my spoon saying, "Bring on the pie. Bring on the pie." I broke the plate. We only had four plates, that's all we had.

TINKER: Uh oh.

WEAVER: There was four of us, we had four plates. That was all that was in the house. I broke the plate. My father was gone so she spanked me. It was the same day he left.

TINKER: Did that ruin your pie?

WEAVER: No it didn't. (Laughter) The other time was one time when I—me and my brother had walked out to the grocery store to buy stuff. She had made a list and gave us money to pay for it. I don't know why I had the money this time 'cause my brother was older than me but I did. And it came to ten cents less than she gave us, but she knew how much it cost. I had a dime left. When I got back she asked me for the dime. I had lost it. I really had lost it. I got a spanking for losing a dime 'cause a dime was a lot of money.

TINKER: That could have bought something.

WEAVER: Yeah, it could have bought something. And I think she probably thought I spent it on something.

TINKER: Mm. She is just covering her bases.

WEAVER: But I didn't, I had actually lost it. That the only two spankings I remember getting from my mother. Both times my father wasn't there or he probably would have did the spanking.

TINKER: She felt that she had to stand in for him. So in high school, you said you played sports. What was your favorite sport?

WEAVER: Basketball.

TINKER: Were you pretty good?

WEAVER: I was good compared to the rest of them. But we wasn't a real good team. We only had—see Paint Rock School only had two years of high school. That's all. And Fairview School, which is six miles over towards Kingston, had two years of high school. After you got through that you went to Kingston High School; they'd bus you over to Kingston. So we didn't have that good a basketball team ...

TINKER: Right, 'cause it's just two years.

WEAVER: But I was good compared to rest of them on my team.

TINKER: How old were you when you all moved to Knoxville?

WEAVER: We moved in 1942, and I was twelve, but I wasn't twelve yet. We moved in the spring of '42 and I wasn't twelve until September. We moved to Ten Mile Creek, down there on Kingston Pike.

TINKER: You said you went to Bearden, right?

WEAVER: I went to Farragut first ... then I went to Bearden, then I went to Asbury. I went to three different schools.

TINKER: Was that a big change for you? I mean, were you kind of missing your friends or ...

WEAVER: No, not really 'cause I just found new friends. Kids do that; they find new friends real easy. Where you get older ...

TINKER: So the move wasn't that big a shock to your system?

WEAVER: No. We moved up there in '42, and later on my father—at the time my father had a job at the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] warehouse.

TINKER: Is that why you all moved?

WEAVER: The TVA warehouse sits exactly where West High School is now. So we moved to Tobler Lane right across the street from the warehouse where he had to go to work. That's the second place we moved ... Oh, and I'll tell you how much rent was. The house was three-bedroom house, big two-car garage but we didn't have no car. Real nice yard and everything and rent was eight dollars a month.

TINKER: You all never had a car the whole time you were growing up?

WEAVER: Not until I was almost grown, then my father got a couple of A-Model Fords.

TINKER: In the Knoxville house, did you have electricity there?

WEAVER: We had electricity there, first place I ever lived that we had electricity. The electricity bill, they didn't have meters, was a flat seventy-five cents a month. No matter how much you used, seventy-five cents a month

TINKER: That sounds good.

WEAVER: We didn't have phone there though.

TINKER: Okay.

WEAVER: Didn't have a phone. And I had to walk to Bearden School which is two miles. We had to walk. Now, my sister Pat was younger than me. She was in a lower grade. She went to Perkins School. I think Perkins only went first through the sixth or something like that. Mick went there too. My brother went to Perkins his first year. But then, after living there for about a year and half or two years, my father got laid off at TVA. He got another job at Rohm and Haas here in Knoxville. And somebody bought the place up ...

TINKER: At what?

WEAVER: Rohm and Haas.

TINKER: Rohm and Haas. What was that?

WEAVER: That was a company that makes Plexiglas. You know what Plexiglas is?

TINKER: Mm hmm.

EASTER: It's a chemical place that's still in business. It's just right down here off of 17th Street.

WEAVER: He liked to work there.

TINKER: Oh, really? I never even heard of it.

WEAVER: And we had to move. They gave my father and mother the house. They could have it to move, but they had no way to move it and no money to hire nobody to move it. No land to put it except in Paint Rock. So he sold it to somebody for I think for twenty dollars or something like that. They did move it—or twenty-five dollars. Which you speak of that twenty or twenty-five dollars, you don't think much of that now, but back then you think of that in a bracket of two hundred dollars or something.

TINKER: Yes, yes.

WEAVER: We moved out to Asbury, Forks of the River, where the industrial park is now. We lived right at the forks of the French Broad and Holston River.

TINKER: You did?

WEAVER: They had that island in the middle.

TINKER: I worked out there for a couple years at Forks of the River, yeah.

WEAVER: Yeah, we lived here. Me and my older brother used to swim over to that island and swim back. 'Course our mother and father didn't know about it. I went to—I graduated from eighth grade there, at Asbury School.

TINKER: Nice.

WEAVER: Then we moved back to Paint Rock. We moved back to Paint Rock right before World War II was over. We moved back in August [1945] and it was over the next week in August, same month after we moved back. And I started back to Paint Rock and I was in high school. I was a freshman.

TINKER: And then you came back to Knoxville again, right?

WEAVER: We never did move back to Knoxville, no.

TINKER: Oh, okay.

WEAVER: I went to Paint Rock High School for two years. Then they built Midway School so that Paint Rock and Fairview would not have to go to Kingston. It was a four-year high school. And I went to Midway. Now, my father back then, the war was over, work got scarce, and he didn't have a job so he went to West Virginia and worked in the coal mines. My older brother had graduated from high school and he was going to UT [University of Tennessee]. He got into a Navy V-5 program where they send you to college and you get out and you go to flight school. You get out of that and you go to college two more years. They paid for all that, see? Plus you got paid. But you have to be smart to do that, and ... I wasn't that smart.

TINKER: Or you just didn't want to apply your smarts yet.

WEAVER: No, no. I was interested in sports and flirting. That was my priorities. I went to Midway school. When basketball season started—well my mother and father moved first. My father was living in West Virginia and he wrote—he had a house up there. My mother moved us up there, but they left me down there with my grandparents because I was playing ball and they knew I liked it down there. I didn't ask them too, but they did. Maybe they just didn't want me, I don't know. No, they knew that—they thought it would upset me. So I kept playing basketball there. And basketball season was almost over, and we didn't have too good a team that year either. I got disgusted, and I joined the Marine Corps. And I talked two of my buddies into going into the Marine Corps with me. But I was only seventeen. They was nineteen and they was old enough they could go in on their own. They gave me papers, and I had to go all the way back to West Virginia to get my mother and father to sign the papers.

TINKER: So that was all that got you thinking about going into the Marine Corps? You just got disgusted?

WEAVER: See, I was disgusted with the way everything was going.

TINKER: Oh, just in general.

WEAVER: I wasn't doing good in school then. And every day when we'd have what they used to call study hall, I didn't study. I'd read these brochures that the recruiters would put in there.

TINKER: Okay.

WEAVER: I read the one on the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, Marine Corps, then I read the one on the Marine Corps ...

TINKER: Your brother was already doing the V-5 program?

WEAVER: He was at UT. He had a room—a basement room here in Knoxville.

TINKER: Was there anyone else in your family that had served in the military?

WEAVER: All of my siblings did except one.

TINKER: Okay.

WEAVER: Bill, my older brother, he served in the Navy. Then he got out of that—he got out of the Navy, and when the Korean War broke out he got drafted into the Army. My sister Pat served in the Air Force, at McGuire Air Force Base [New Jersey], she was a stewardess, or flight attendant they called it. Used to fly to Germany twice a month for about three years or four years. She went to Germany twice a month. All them VIPs and stuff like that. Then my brother Mick, who is still alive, there is only three of us still alive, and he still lives out in Paint Rock, Mick does. He, uh, was in the Army twice. He went in out of high school. In fact after I was in the Marine Corps they moved back to Knoxville. They had moved back from West Virginia back down to Paint Rock earlier, but they moved back to Knoxville. And he went to West High School. He graduated from West High School. And he went into the Army and was in two years, got out. And when he got out, he had a hard time finding a good job. Only job he could find was farm work, and farm work didn't pay very much.

TINKER: Mm hmm.

WEAVER: So he went back in for another three years. This time when he got out my older brother, who was in the V-5 program, later become a—he got his Doctors degree and later become a professor at the University of Washington in Washington state. About a year before my brother Mick went out there, he signed him up as a citizen out there so he would have a residential—his college, you know, he had to pay a lot less.

TINKER: Oh yeah, so he got a ...

WEAVER: He went out and stayed with him and went to college at the University of Washington where my brother was a professor. Where his brother was a professor. And he did well. He got through there. He worked several jobs. But he'd lived there four years, when he left my brother told him, "Well Mick, sure glad to have you and you should come back, but when you come the next time don't stay four years."

TINKER: (Laughs) So you were, like, the first to actually enlist, right? Of your family?

WEAVER: Well Bill my brother was and he was going to UT.

TINKER: Well, besides the V—But then you were the next one?

WEAVER: Yeah, I was the next one.

TINKER: Okay. So in study hall, you were looking at all these brochures and what was it about the Marine Corps that ... caught you?

WEAVER: Well they was tougher. I wanted to be a tough guy. They were tougher. They were more gung-ho. I was really impressed about it.

TINKER: And do you think World War II had any impact on your thinking or, you know, wanting to serve?

WEAVER: No, no. Two years before the—no the war was just about over—I tried to join. I was fifteen and tried to join the Navy then. I hadn't read the brochures yet. But I got caught.

TINKER: But you still wanted to join?

WEAVER: So ...

TINKER: So you went to West Virginia to get your mother—your parents to sign. Did they willingly do that?

WEAVER: They did, and I come back and I was supposed to have met my two buddies down at Paint Rock. Then they were going to Knoxville to ride a bus out to Nashville where we took our physical and were sworn in and everything. But I got down there and they'd already left. And so they got there a day before I did. I got a bus the next day. Got up to Nashville and we all went in together. There was a bunch of us on a train that went to Parris Island [South Carolina]. When we got down to Parris Island, it was a lovely surprise. (Laughter) It was. It was a lovely surprise. It was pouring down rain.

TINKER: Now what year was this?

WEAVER: 1948 in the winter, in February of '48.



TINKER: ... February '48.

WEAVER: We was on this train and when it pulled up to stop, all of a sudden there was about six or eight Marines jumped on it, making us jump off. We couldn't use the steps—jump with your suitcase. They was nice to us.

TINKER: When you enlisted in the Marines, did you have in mind anything you wanted to do or you just knew you wanted to join?

WEAVER: No, I didn't have in mind anything.

TINKER: You didn't care what job you ended up with.

WEAVER: I did after I got in there, after I had been there. But anyhow, they made us all get off that train, jump off. Then they doubled timed, which is run us out in the rain for about an hour until we all give out and soaking wet. Then we went to what they called a mess hall and had chow. And I—it was good, I never dread anything in the Marine Corps, not even in boot camp. I liked it.

TINKER: You liked boot camp at the time or you liked it in hindsight?

WEAVER: I liked it at the time, mostly. There were times in there I didn't like it. I got called a few names.

TINKER: I'm sure.

WEAVER: A few bad names I'm not allowed to say that I got called. But overall I liked it, even boot camp.

TINKER: Did your buddies feel the same way you did?

WEAVER: Well I made a career out of it, and they didn't.

TINKER: So they must not have.

WEAVER: Yeah, they didn't. Well, one of them reenlisted once. One of them stayed in for nine years. The others stayed in four years. We joined for three years but then the Korean War broke out. They was what they called convenience of the government. They held everybody at the convenience of the government for one year. So although we was only signed up for three years, we had to stay at least four years. And that's when I reenlisted. I said, "I might as well go reenlist anyhow." So I reenlisted. Now one of my buddies he reenlisted, too, later on for three years I think. He had about seven years in or maybe eight. I think he had eight years in. But the other one he got out after the four.

TINKER: What was the most difficult part about boot camp for you, do you think?

WEAVER: I don't know of anything that was difficult. There was some of it I didn't like to do.

TINKER: Well that's what I mean. What did you dislike? What did you dislike and what did you like?

WEAVER: The thing—I didn't mind doing the PRT, the Physical Readiness Test, and all that stuff. In fact, I enjoyed that 'cause I was in real good shape. I worked hard on the farm, cutting timber and stuff. The thing I hated the most was going to class. They didn't have air conditioners. You'd fall asleep.

TINKER: So you still didn't like school. (Laughs) Even in the Marine Corps.

WEAVER: You fall asleep and the first thing you know you would be getting hit in the head with a swagger stick to wake you up. But that's the thing that I dreaded most.

TINKER: ... was the classroom part.

WEAVER: Not the drilling, not the cleaning the barracks, not the physical tests and stuff. The classroom part 'cause it was real hot and there was no air conditioners.

TINKER: When did you find out what you were going to be doing once you left boot camp?

WEAVER: Well, while I was in boot camp, they took us all to a demonstration of airplanes they had down there flying. I had never been on an airplane before in my life. Never even seen one until I saw them, other than way in the sky. They came over and they buzzed and they did loops with those airplanes. I said, "Boy I'd like that." So when we put in for preference of duty, I put aviation.

TINKER: Mm hmm.

WEAVER: And I got it. All three of us did. We had both of our buddies.

TINKER: Yeah.

WEAVER: We got aviation that is how I got it. I had no idea about it until I saw that air show. But another thing I want to tell you about, too, when I graduated boot camp. Back then, they ... promoted the people to PFC [Private First Class], the top ten percent of the platoon. That was all they were allowed to promote. And, now, we had a lot of people; we had about eighty people in the platoon. A lot of them had four years of college, two years of college, high school graduation. And out of the eight people that made PFC, they made me and my two buddies who was high school dropouts were three of them that made PFC.

TINKER: (Laughs) That's pretty good.

WEAVER: Three high school dropouts made PFC, and college graduates didn't make it. Several of them. I think the reason for that was—a lot of it was our attitude. I liked it, I liked the boot camp. When we qualified with the weapon, I made expert, with the M-1 rifle and all that stuff. We was in real good shape. There is one more thing I want to tell you about though when I first got there. The first Saturday night before Sunday—you could go to church if you wanted to, but they wouldn't make you go to church. So our drill instructor came out and said—now this is Saturday evening. He came out and said, “Anybody that wants to go to church fall out. Anybody that don't fall out is going to be scrubbing the barracks with a toothbrush.” I thought, “Well, it would be better to go to church.” So we fell out. We didn't know, see—we was all Baptists. It was confession, a Catholic confession.

TINKER: Oh, you went to a Catholic confession? (Laughter)

WEAVER: We didn't know ...

TINKER: You didn't know what you were going to.

WEAVER: We just wanted to get out of the barracks so we wouldn't have to scrub the barracks with a toothbrush. We sit there in the pew, you know, and everybody kept going in, going in and coming out of the confession. Finally, the priest came out and said, “You guys coming to confession?” We said, “What's that?” We didn't know what it was.

TINKER: That was a new experience for you, brand new. Well, when did you—where did you go when you left basic?

WEAVER: I went to Cherry Point, North Carolina.

TINKER: That is where you started your training.

WEAVER: Career. I got in a squadron. There are a lot of stories about that too. See, I went to school later on, to different schools, but back then you didn't go to school out of boot camp. They do now, I think, but back then you do OJT, on-the-job training first, then go to school.

TINKER: Oh, so that's what you—you went to on the job training first?

WEAVER: First, yeah. Then when you went to school, you knew a lot about it already. You could learn more. I think it was a good idea, really.

TINKER: Oh, I meant to ask you, before we get too far, when you were at Parris Island, did you ever have any leave days where you were allowed to go off base and do anything?

WEAVER: No. We didn't have a day where aloud to go to the PX [post exchange] even.

TINKER: You never had one day?

WEAVER: Not one single day.

TINKER: You didn't even go to the PX?

WEAVER: No, we never did go to the PX. We did see an outdoor movie, the whole platoon at once with the drill instructors. We didn't go in the ... we was marched to the movie. Then we fell out and marched back to the barracks afterwards.

TINKER: Do you remember what the movie was?

WEAVER: I did for a long time, but I don't remember right now what it was.

TINKER: Had you seen a lot of moves before?

WEAVER: Very few. I had seen movies before, but very few. First movie I ever saw, I was six years old. It was in Loudon. They had a theater and it was Shirley Temple. What was that movie with Shirley Temple? It was, um—I was six years old when it was on. But anyhow, getting back to Cherry Point—no, where was we at?

TINKER: Yeah, we were at Cherry Point, and you were doing on the job training first.

WEAVER: I was on the job training. Well, I got out there and they put me in a section. Section One, they had six aircraft. One through six. I didn't know how to do anything, you know, about aircraft. I had never even seen one up close until then. They had a big tanker truck that come out to gas them. So my section leader, who was a tech sergeant, said, "Go out and gas the plane."

TINKER: What kind of aircraft was it?

WEAVER: It was this kind right here. (Points at picture)

TINKER: The Corsair?

WEAVER: Uh huh. So I go out there and right up on top there is a gas tank. You could stand on the wing there and gas it. You need a hose. Well I'm gassing the tank and I'm looking at the meter on the truck. And I never dreamt that anything held that much gas. Remember, I'm only seventeen years old.

TINKER: And they hadn't even shown you how to do this yet?

WEAVER: No. I gassed it okay, but when it got about two hundred gallons I thought it must be leaking out. 'Cause nothing will hold two hundred gallons. So I get off the wing. I let the gas go and get off the wing and look and see and it ain't dripping out. I asked the truck driver, I said, "Is that pump right? I already got two hundred gallons in that tank." He said, "Well it holds three hundred and thirty." I was used to cars that held maybe twenty gallons.

TINKER: Well, yeah, when you get to two hundred gallons you think, "There is a problem here."

WEAVER: The oil tank was thirty-some gallons for the oil tank even. I was thinking two hundred gallons; it can't be holding that much. And I have one more thing. Later on, still on the job training, but I hadn't gotten with nobody to check with me on how to do different things. So my section leader he told me to go wash their planes. He was going be gone. He was also a NAP [Naval Aviator Pilot]. He flew aircraft, he was a pilot too, but he was only a tech sergeant. So he was gone and I go out and wash the planes real good. I mean washed them all day. Worked real hard. Next morning when we had muster my section leader chews me out for not washing the planes. He said, "I want you out there today, and I want you to wash those planes." I thought I had them clean already. So I went back and washed them again. They was clean as could be. Next morning muster, he gets all on me again. I said, "Well Sarge," Sergeant Scales is his name, "Sergeant Scales I washed those planes real clean, will you come show me where the dirt is?" I got filthy dirty washing those planes. He goes out and shows them to me. You know what happened? I was washing the wrong planes.

TINKER: You were washing the planes in another section?

WEAVER: Another squadron. Right next to ours and they were in line just like ours. I am washing the wrong planes. Boy—I took him over and showed those. He said, "Boy they're really clean." I got them real clean, but it was the wrong planes.

TINKER: That's pretty good. Were you washing them by yourself?

WEAVER: Yeah, I was the only one.

TINKER: Can I ask what you all washed them with?

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: Was it special aircraft wash?

WEAVER: No.

TINKER: Just regular soap?

WEAVER: No.

TINKER: What was it?

WEAVER: Gasoline.

TINKER: Really?

WEAVER: Gasoline, which is strictly illegal. We could wash them with kerosene, certain parts of it.

TINKER: How would you do that?

WEAVER: A big old bucket of gasoline.

TINKER: Just straight gasoline?

WEAVER: Uh huh.

TINKER: With your hands you're up there like you would wash a car.

WEAVER: You would dry it with another cloth.

TINKER: So you didn't have a water hose?

WEAVER: No.

TINKER: When I was in service, washing a—well washing anything, the 130 [AC-130] or the 53 [MH-53], was not fun. We had that special aircraft wash and it would just eat you up.

WEAVER: But this back in 1948.

TINKER: Gas, wow. Huh, I bet it took the exhaust stains off, though.

WEAVER: Well not only the exhaust, but also the grease and oil. It always had oil leaks, you know, little oil leaks. You'd get little streaks of oil. (Coughs) But it would take it off.

TINKER: Let's pause for a second. Let me ...

[Tape paused]

TINKER: Okay, we're ready.

WEAVER: But a little bit after all this scrubbing airplanes and stuff like that, I started working with the check crew leaders, where they would pull what they called a thirty-hour check or inspections on the aircraft and changed spark plugs and stuff like that.

TINKER: Right.

WEAVER: They sent me to cutaway school, so I went to school on all those—engine school, and to hydraulic school, electrician school.

TINKER: You called it cutaway school?

WEAVER: Yeah and I come back and I made crew—plane captain they called it then.

TINKER: You were like a crew chief?

WEAVER: Yeah, crew chief now or some places call it ...

TINKER: So you went to separate [schools], like you would go to engine school ...

WEAVER: Yeah, I would go there and it might be four weeks or five weeks of engine school. They was real good.

TINKER: Was that at Cherry Point?

WEAVER: Some of there were and some of them I went to Jacksonville, Florida, Naval Air Station at Cecil Field.

TINKER: So you learned engines separately and then you learned hydraulics separately?

WEAVER: Electrician.

TINKER: Electrical. Which one of those did you enjoy the most?

WEAVER: I don't know. I think they were all about the same. But I think it was better because I knew a little bit, you know, I worked with the aircraft. Cleaned them, gas, and oiled them.

TINKER: So you had a familiarity.

WEAVER: When they would show me a part, I would know what it was. They would show you a part on like the carburetor or something that went on the plane. You saw it before and you knew how it worked almost so it was easier.

TINKER: So each school was just a few weeks? Did you go to them back to back or did you go to engine school and then go back ...

WEAVER: There might be a period of ten days or maybe even thirty days for the convenience of whenever the new school convened, but I went to several of them. I went to them and as I got more experience in those things. I went to quality control school and stuff like that. When I was in Vietnam, I was maintenance chief of twenty-four planes—twenty-four CH-46s that cost about—back then, I think about twelve million. They cost a lot more than that now, each. I was very happy and very proud to say that we never lost one on account of maintenance error.

TINKER: That's excellent.

WEAVER: Never lost a plane like that. We had several shot down. But we never lost one like that.

TINKER: So were the Corsairs the only thing that you worked on at Cherry Point?

WEAVER: Yeah. Now, when I came back from Korea, I got stationed down at Miami, Florida, at a Marine air base down there. They had F6Fs. They was even older than the Corsair. Worked on those for a while and then we got Corsairs again. Worked on them and then we got AD-5, a Navy plane.

TINKER: AD-5s?

WEAVER: Yeah. AD-5s was a two seat up front. There was a pilot and a RO, radar operator. But you didn't have radars so people just used that seat to get their flight time in 'cause you got flight pay, you know. In the back you had jump seats you installed. You could install six of them so actually there could be eight people in an AD-5. There hardly ever was, but there could be. There was almost always two.

TINKER: So how long in total were you at Cherry Point?

WEAVER: Until I went to Korea. Now I had—I went ...

TINKER: So you were there from '48 until ...

WEAVER: '48 until, I went to Korea in June of '51.

TINKER: Okay. Did you enjoy—you lived in the barracks at Cherry Point right? But you could come and go freely and go off base?

WEAVER: You had duty. Once every fourth day, you'd have duty and once every fourth weekend. You had to be in the barracks, other than going to the mess hall to eat, in case of ... an emergency or something. Of course, you could get a stand by, somebody to stand by for you.

TINKER: Were your two buddies still with you at that time?

WEAVER: They was at Cherry Point, but they was in different outfits. All three of us went to Cherry Point.

TINKER: Did you all socialize together off base?

WEAVER: Yeah, we did. We did.

TINKER: What kind of things would you do?

WEAVER: Well, we'd get drunk for one thing.

TINKER: You did?

WEAVER: Sometimes. (Laughter)



TINKER: Now, I'm just guessing, but I am assuming drinking wasn't a big part of your life growing up in Tennessee. Was the drinking something really new to you or ...

WEAVER: Well I drank one time, and I drank too much. (Coughs) I got sick that time and I hadn't drank since. I had only drank one time when I was in the Marine Corps. I didn't drink right away when I went in, but, you know there was peer pressure. You start going out with the guys and have a beer or whatever. But we'd go out and go to a movie, stuff like that, and maybe to a restaurant to eat. Although I liked the food the Marine Corps had. They had good food. Had a lot better than the Navy. I would eat with the Navy a lot when I was aboard ship. I was aboard a lot of aircraft carriers. Their food sometimes was awful, in my opinion.

TINKER: Did you ever purchase a car while you were there or any kind of big purchase? I mean, you were getting a regular paycheck now, so what was it like having that kind of money for you?

WEAVER: Well, a regular paycheck but when you was a PFC with under two years, and that paycheck was eighty dollars a month back then.

TINKER: Did you ever send any back home to your family?

WEAVER: Yes I did. I did buy a car when I got back from Korea. I had bought one before I went to Korea, and I left it with my father. I bought a used Chevrolet. But when I got back from Korea I traded it in and got a big—I came back in '52 and got big a brand new '52 Roadmaster Buick.

TINKER: That's a big purchase.

WEAVER: Yeah. It was pretty expensive. Back then it was like three thousand dollars or a little over three thousand. I brought back a lot of money from Korea too. We used to play poker a lot.

TINKER: Where did you learn to play poker? Just on base?

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: Just kind of picked it up?

WEAVER: Now when I was a kid we used to play cards at home, my mother, father, my brother and me, but we never played poker. We played cards like rummy and stuff like that. I got in the Marine Corps and I learned pinochle, and I learned poker and all that stuff pretty good.

TINKER: When did you find out ... first start hearing about Korea and thinking we're going to get sent?

WEAVER: When they broke out—when Korea broke out that was the first I really was aware of it. I had heard stuff, but it went in one ear and out the other. I remember we had to stay on the aircraft twenty-four hours a day there at Cherry Point, when it first broke out, for about a week.

Of course it didn't have to be the same person. Somebody else could relieve you. Somebody had to ...

TINKER: The base was just on alert.

WEAVER: Had the planes on alert, ready to go. See, I made four Med [Mediterranean] cruises on aircraft carriers while I was at Cherry Point. I made the first one—I was already a plane captain when I made the first one. I think it was August. I think I had been out of boot camp about three or four months. I had been to some of the cutaway schools but not all of them.

TINKER: So you had already been on cruises before Korea?

WEAVER: Oh yeah, yeah. I was in a sea going squadron. We had to spend nine months a year aboard a ship. We got sea pay year round, and sea pay was twenty percent of your base pay back then. Flight pay was fifty percent of your base pay and I got both of them. So I made more than that eighty-two dollars. (Coughs)

TINKER: When you would—did you go out on a different carrier each time?

WEAVER: Our first carrier was USS *Palau*, CVE-122. It was a carrier escort; it only took one squadron. We went to Cuba all the time, Gitmo Bay [Guantanamo Bay]. We would get off there sometimes and operate from Gitmo Bay and then maybe a week or two later get back on the carrier. We would go every year. In August of 1948, when we was going to Gitmo—before we went we went up the Maine. Portland, Maine, we stood a parade—we had a parade, fiftieth anniversary of Portland, Maine. The Marine Corps pulled in there. We had a parade, and we was all in dress blues. That night, the whole town—the whole city of Portland, everything was free for Marines in uniform. Restaurants, bars—everything was free for Marines. We impressed them so much.

TINKER: That's very nice. That's a nice perk.

WEAVER: Yeah, we impressed them that much. Then we went on down to Gitmo Bay, Guantanamo Bay, and operated down there. Batista was a dictator down there then, and we got to go off of base when he was dictator there. I didn't go off much, I went off once or twice, but it came to September, and I had a birthday. I turned eighteen [in] September. I was sitting in the enlisted club down there drinking a rum and coke, eighteen and PFC in the Marine Corps, and I had the world, I'll tell you. I was sitting on top of the world. Drinking my booze, a Marine. I was so proud.

TINKER: I'm sure you had to think your life has changed so dramatically in such a short time.

WEAVER: I was so proud to be a Marine and drinking a rum and coke.

TINKER: Only the military can change your life so drastically in such a short time. I mean you go from Paint Rock, Tennessee, to look where you are then with your rum and coke in Cuba. Right? On top of the world.

WEAVER: We no sooner got back to Cherry Point from this Cuba cruise 'til we went on our first Med cruise aboard the USS *Midway*. It was a big carrier. It was a bad cruise 'cause we kept getting people killed.

TINKER: How were they getting killed?

WEAVER: They would be careless. The flight deck officer lowered the big elevator down on people working in the elevator pit. Killed about three of them at one time.

TINKER: That's really terrible.

WEAVER: I know. They embalmed them and put them in ...

TINKER: Burial at sea?

WEAVER: No. We did that in Korea, we buried a captain that got killed at sea.

TINKER: They embalmed them on the ship, you mean, to take back.

WEAVER: Embalmed them and left them in the freezer where the food was that you ate, you know, until we got back.

TINKER: What was another incident? Do remember any of the other incidents?

WEAVER: Well somebody—see we had a lot of squadrons aboard there. It wasn't just mine squad. It was the biggest aircraft carrier—well they had the *Coral Sea*, the *Midway* and the *FDR*. They was all the three biggest carriers in the world at the time. It was a thousand feet flight deck. That's a long ways, a thousand feet.

TINKER: Is that were you spent most of your time when you were working?

WEAVER: On the flight deck, yeah. The *FDR*, not the *FDR*, the *Midway* was real—I didn't like it aboard there at all. We were gone maybe four or five months. Our homeport was Naples, Italy. We would always pull into Naples, Italy, and have liberty. We was there at Christmas and we gave a party for the orphans in Naples. We brought them aboard the ship. Everybody was assigned a kid to take to eat and take care of, you know, an orphan. That part was good. We got back and we made a few more cruises on the *Palau*, or another carrier escort, just to qualify pilots or stuff like that, you know? Then the next year we made another Med cruise, and it was on the *Leyte*, USS *Leyte*, which is next to the biggest carrier. And it was a good cruise. I used to go to—they had tours on it, which cost. Like I said, I played poker a lot and usually had money. I went Paris, France, about three times. Rome, Italy, about three times. For a week each time, tour. Just like leave, but it didn't count for leave. You was on your own, but they called it a tour. I think it cost, like, sixty dollars for the whole tour, you know, the train ride there and back. The hotel room. Then, of course, you had to buy your meals and stuff like that. It was a lot of fun going to Rome.

TINKER: That's sounds really good.

WEAVER: In fact, I think it was that cruise, one of my buddies was Catholic, which, I later became Catholic. We went to see Pope Pius [XII]. We had an audience with Pope Pius.

TINKER: Oh, you did?

WEAVER: But I was Baptist; I didn't know what was going on. I was there, but I didn't know what was going on. Then the next cruise we made was on the *Coral Sea* and the last one was on the *FDR*. When we got back from the *FDR*, we got back to Cherry Point, and I had my orders for Korea.

TINKER: Waiting on you.

WEAVER: Waiting on me, yeah.

TINKER: This whole time when you are going on these cruises, were you staying in touch with your family? Were you writing letters and postcards?

WEAVER: Yeah, we wrote all the time. I had an allotment going home to them too. I mean an allotment to my mother. I forget how much it was.

TINKER: I'm sure that really helped them a lot.

WEAVER: It did. Yeah, it did. Some of the things that happened aboard those aircraft carriers, being a plane captain—see my plane was flying and it came and was going right back up 'cause the pilot gave me an okay, or it was in commission, it was good. The next pilot got in and he was going on a high altitude mission. At the same time, we was having General Quarters. Do you know what General Quarters is?

TINKER: Where everybody ...

WEAVER: It simulates combat. You're in combat. You're taking fire, and the enemy is attacking. The next pilot got in my plane and he was going on a high altitude. He called me up there and said, "I don't have no oxygen." For high altitude, you got to have the oxygen. I said, "Well I'll run back and get you a bottle to put in there." I ran back to the fantail of the ship where I knew where the oxygen shop was to get a bottle, and I got stopped by MAs, Master of Arms. I was in an area that had been hit by torpedo, you know, simulated. There was poison gas. He said, "You can't go. You got to be decontaminated." I said, "I'm in a hurry." He said, "You got to be decontaminated." I said, "Okay, decontaminate me. What do I got to do?" He said, "You have to walk through that shower down there." I take off my clothes and walked through that shower to get decontaminated. Put my clothes on, went and got the bottle, and started and got contaminated again. I had to do the same thing on the way back. I get back to the flight deck, they about going crazy waiting for the plane to get off. I just kept getting contaminated.

TINKER: Right. Now were these Corsairs?

WEAVER: These were Corsairs.

TINKER: Was that what was on all your cruises?

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: Corsairs strictly.

WEAVER: Corsairs on all.

TINKER: What did you think of them? Did you enjoy working on them? I mean, were they hearty planes? Did they break a lot?

WEAVER: No, they was good planes. I liked them. There a lot of things, we had to do. We had to service a dashpot. A dashpot is a hydraulic reservoir there that keeps that tail hook down when they come in to land on a carrier. We had to make sure it had hydraulic fluid. You had to crawl up inside the plane to see. There was a little thing you took off the bottom of the plane and crawled up there where all the controls are. You mixed where the dashpot is, you got plenty of hydraulic fluid or that tail hook, when it comes in, will bounce and bounce and miss all the cables.

TINKER: So that was like the one chronic thing you had to constantly check.

WEAVER: Yeah, that was a safety thing you had to do every day. Every day that was on our preflight to check the dashpot.

TINKER: Did the Corsairs ... have any particular little—from my own experience, there is always some system that seems to—like if something is going to go wrong it's usually in this one area or this one system?

WEAVER: The Corsairs are a pretty good old plane. I guess they are all in dry dock now.

TINKER: Yeah.

WEAVER: I drove around different places and I saw a Corsair in somebody's yard one time, as a souvenir.

TINKER: I wonder if they have one at that museum in Sevierville [Tennessee].

WEAVER: I don't know.

TINKER: There is an air museum up there. So you left for Korea in, I think you said, June of '51? Is that right?

WEAVER: June of '51, I got to Korea in June of '51. I left there in June and got there. We went on a merchant ship. It took us about ten days or twelve days to get there. I went up to K-1. The K stands for Korea and they had different base numbers. I got into VMF-215, I think. They were the night fighter squadron. I had it easy. They made me crew chief on one of the night fighter planes. I was only there about three weeks before I asked for a transfer, though. I'll tell you why I asked for a transfer in a minute. But I'd go down and get that plane ready, and they never did fly while I was there. I didn't have nothing to do. But I saw on the bulletin board in the line shack there where they wanted volunteers to go to 212, down in Japan—that was down there getting ready to go aboard a carrier. Well my two buddies was in Korea, and they was in 212. They had Corsairs. Now this wasn't Corsairs up there. It was almost like a Corsair, but it was a little different. So I volunteered to go to 212. About two days later they called me in and gave me the orders to leave right the same day. So I got packed and left and went to Japan. They was qualified to go aboard an aircraft carrier, and about three days after I got to Japan, three or four days, we went aboard the *Rendova*, USS *Rendova*, Aircraft Carrier.

TINKER: Do you know why they weren't flying the VMFs? You said you were assigned to them. Is that what you said they were, the VMFs?

WEAVER: Yeah, the squadron was named VMF. That V is...

TINKER: But it was Corsairs in the VMF squadron?

WEAVER: No, it wasn't Corsairs.

TINKER: What was in that squadron?

WEAVER: It was—I can't think of the name of it. It is a Corsair, too, but it's not the regular F4U-4 like I worked on.

TINKER: Do you know why they weren't flying out of that squadron?

WEAVER: Well they only flew out—the one I was on, it only went out on emergencies or something. Like somebody was attacked at a base or something. They had others that other people worked on that was going out. But all the time I was there it never went out. I just kept it ready to go all the time.

TINKER: So you got busier when you got to 212.

WEAVER: I got real busy. I got real busy when I got to 212. In fact, this picture here is in 212. (Points at picture) I was a twenty-year old ...

TINKER: We'll have to scan this. Scan that and make a copy. Now where was that photo taken? Over there?

WEAVER: On the *Rendova* on the flight deck. It's on the flight deck of the *Rendova*.

TINKER: So ... the Corsairs in 212 were seeing a lot of combat?

WEAVER: Yeah, we saw a lot combat. This is a squadron, or a ship I was aboard, remember I told you we buried somebody at sea? One of our pilots, he was a really good guy too, he got shot down and they picked him up. The North Koreans had strafed him and killed him, you know? They shot him. He was dead and they brought him back to us. In his financial—not his financial, his confidential statement, it said if anything happened he wanted to be buried at sea, so we buried him at sea. I don't remember much about it, but it was a real sad thing.

TINKER: I bet.

WEAVER: One interesting thing that had happened to me in Korea aboard ship was my plane was down in a hanger deck ... First flight was supposed to go out that morning and right as the pilots were manning the planes they moved it up to the flight deck. Well, all the pilots come out, but there was none assigned to my plane. So I thought I would go ahead and get it all checked out because they would probably send somebody. So when the other planes started engines, I started the engines and preflight it. Well, when the others all got shot off the catapult, the directions came out and directed me. Well I was a qualified taxi pilot. They taught us that when I was down at Gitmo Bay. All the crew chiefs would taxi the planes.

TINKER: Really? So you could taxi it wherever it needed to be?

WEAVER: Oh yeah. So I thought they was going to taxi me up to put me there as a spare. So I just followed directions. I follow directions good. They put me on a catapult, and I thought well maybe they were going to have the catapult ready with a spare. Never told me to cut engines once I got there. So I got on the catapult and the flight deck officer started giving me the two finger turn up. That means to give it full power; they are going to shoot you off. I had never been a pilot in plane, and I was about to get shot off an aircraft carrier. I cut that engine and got out of there. (Laughter)

TINKER: I was going to say, you were getting a little nervous.

WEAVER: I cut that engine and come out of there. That flight deck officer come up there and says, "Sarge," or son or something like that, don't you know you're not supposed to fly these planes?" I said, "That's the reason I cut the engine." They were going to shoot me off there.

TINKER: How long total were you in Korea?

WEAVER: Fourteen months. I was aboard ship half of that.

TINKER: Half of that. Well, during that time, or in Japan ... what was it like getting the parts you needed? Did you ever have difficulty, you know, getting what you needed?

WEAVER: No, we got it pretty good. They had places there. We went to—our homeport was Sasebo, Japan. We would go out off the coast of ... North Korea for seven or eight days and then we would come back to replenish at Sasebo. We had liberty at Sasebo, Japan. Which was real

good liberty. We would stay there about three or four days, five days and replenish and then go back out.

TINKER: You said liberty was real good there. Why was that?

WEAVER: Well, we had a lot of picnics and what they called beer parties. But they was picnics off the ship.

TINKER: Japan was probably ...

WEAVER: It's good to get away from that combat too, for a little while, you know.

TINKER: Just to be able to relax, right?

WEAVER: We got attacked once. The carrier did. Some Migs. One of our pilots shot down a Mig. A Corsair shot down a Mig. I knew his name, but I don't remember right now.

TINKER: I was going to say, that's a good pilot.

WEAVER: Yeah, we lost two or three. After we got off, out of the planes, off the carrier, we went to K-18. And we was there and it was real cold in the winter then. Like the frozen Chosin [lake]. Snow all over, we had to keep the planes running, turned up all night.

TINKER: 'Cause it got so cold?

WEAVER: The oil would get so thick it wouldn't start. That's why. It wouldn't even turn over. I got promoted. I got a battlefield promotion, only one I ever got—well me and several others, from sergeant to staff sergeant. One morning down at muster, this wasn't one of the real cold mornings, the CO [Commanding Officer] called off a bunch of names and started giving us a hard time. He said, "You guys have all been reported urinating in the fox holes." That ain't never happened. It was odd that everybody that had been called off by name was a sergeant, so all of sudden he started laughing and said, "No, you all have been promoted." I said, "Well that's more like it." (Laughter)

TINKER: Was your promotion for any particular reason, or you had done just such a good job in general?

WEAVER: I wasn't the only one that was like that. I don't remember, I think it was about eight or ten of us that got promoted. Battlefield promotion, which they are authorized, sometimes they get authority to authorize to give those. But then I stayed staff sergeant for a long time because after I came back from Korea and got down to Miami, the rates were frozen. They didn't promote nobody for five or six years.

TINKER: Mm hmm. Trying to save money. When you were in Korea, on the ship, and in Japan, how aware were you of the combat on the land that was going on? Or were you just so busy in your own work that ...



WEAVER: No, we was aware of it.

TINKER: So you tried to follow that pretty good? Talk about it while you are working?

WEAVER: Well not much. We got reports. In fact, we had a TV on there. We'd see the news. You know the armed forces news.

TINKER: What kind of news would you get from home?

WEAVER: Well you got letters and stuff from home. Packages.

TINKER: So after your fourteen months was complete and you come back from Korea, where did you go first?

WEAVER: Well we came back by a troop ship again, to Treasure Island that is off the coast of San Francisco [California]. We stayed there and got processed, you know, all kinds of physicals and stuff. You got your orders. My orders were MCAF, Marine Corps Air Station, Miami, Florida.

TINKER: Were you happy about that?

WEAVER: I was puzzled, I didn't know. I didn't even know there was a base there. There had been a base there in World War II, and they opened up again. It closed in '58. In fact, I left there in '58 and went to Japan. I was pleased about it, yes, but I didn't know how good it would be. It was real good. I came home on leave, and my mother and father had moved to Knoxville [Tennessee]. I accused them of moving to Knoxville and not telling me where they lived just so I couldn't find them, but I found you anyhow. The reason they hadn't notified me that they moved there, that was while we was on a troop ship coming back to the States and they had no address. They knew I had left Korea and they had no address to write and tell me. So my aunt, who lived there where I turned up to go up to where they live, when I came in she ran out and told me they don't live there. In fact, somebody rented our house. John M. Robinson had been living there. So I had to go over to my other aunt and uncle, and when he got off from work, he took me to where they lived in Knoxville.

TINKER: That is kind of funny that you come home and your family has moved.

WEAVER: They moved away. They knew I was coming home.

TINKER: So how long did you stay home on leave?

WEAVER: Thirty days.

TINKER: So you took your full thirty?

WEAVER: Thirty days or maybe longer because I had travel time in there too. I came back from San Francisco to Knoxville by train. Then I caught a bus out to Loudon, Tennessee. Then I hitchhiked out to Paint Rock which was about another ten or twelve miles.

TINKER: How was that train ride across the country?

WEAVER: It was good. It was good. I rode across the country the other way, going back, one time too. By train. That's when I went overseas, went to Japan in '58. That's when they closed Miami. I got down to Miami and got checked in. I liked it a lot. In fact, that's where I met my first wife and the mother of my children.

TINKER: What was her name?

WEAVER: Norma Adomly.

TINKER: Was she originally from Miami?

WEAVER: No, she was from Massachusetts. She was down there—there is one of my air medals.

EASTER: Did they serve rum and coke on the train?

WEAVER: Yeah they did, 'course they served it at a price. I don't know where that other picture is ... when me and Norma got married.

TINKER: Well, maybe we—are you sure it's not in there or ... 'Cause I'd like to scan some of these.

WEAVER: There's one of retires in there. There's after she died, before I retired.

TINKER: So where did you meet your wife at?

WEAVER: In Miami.

TINKER: I mean. what were the circumstances? Was she working somewhere and ...

WEAVER: Yeah, she worked down there, and I met her—I met this other girl first, and I asked this other girl for a date. She said, "I'm going to study, I can't go out. But my girl," she lived with my wife; "But my roommate would probably like to meet you." I said, "Well good." So she introduced me and we went together for about eight or ten months and got married. We was married up until she died. We got married in '53, and she died in '70.

TINKER: When you got married, did you set up a house off base or did you live on base? You lived off base.

WEAVER: Yes. I lived off base, right there in Miami.

TINKER: I bet it was really nice in Miami in the '50's.

WEAVER: Yeah it was. They liked the Marines down there. A lot of places where they had service people—I remember when we used to go aboard ship and go to Norfolk, Virginia, they didn't like the sailors back then. They do now, I hear. Back then, boy, they had signs in their yards, "Dogs and sailors keep off the lawns."

TINKER: (Laughs) Dogs and sailors. What did you all do in Miami? I mean what kind of things did you and your wife like to do in Miami? Did she work?

WEAVER: She worked, yeah. She worked for Dun and Bradstreet. Remember Dun and Bradstreet? Then she worked for Sears in the office, she was a clerk in the office.

TINKER: How many children did you all have?

WEAVER: We had two, a boy and a girl. A boy in '55 and a girl in '59.

TINKER: Did your parents ever come down and visit you while you were there?

WEAVER: My sister did when she was in the Air Force. No, my parents never did. My parents come down to visit me when I was in California.

TINKER: Okay. That was a big trip for them.

WEAVER: They rode a bus. They didn't drive out there.

TINKER: They rode the bus. Oh my goodness, that's a long trip.

WEAVER: On a bus.

TINKER: When you're in Miami, you're still just crew chief ...

WEAVER: No, I was line chief in Miami.

TINKER: You were line chief? So you had a little more responsibility, too? How many aircraft were you responsible for?

WEAVER: We always had twenty-four. Twenty-four is a Marine Corps squadron. What they have.

TINKER: Were they just training, flight training then?

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: How many hours a week did they want the planes flying? I guess I'm trying to get a sense of how busy the flight line was.

WEAVER: Well it was pretty busy. We'd have maybe eight planes take off in the morning, and maybe two hours later have eight more. The others come back and refuel them and get them ready to go again. They'd go in the afternoon and sometimes we would have night flying. One night we had night flying, and I was on a bowling team. It was my bowling night so I got one of my assistants to stand by for night flight. So when I got through bowling, I called to see if the planes were back and everything. "Yeah, everything is okay. Planes are back and everything is going good. Oh, by the way, one plane did crash and the pilot got killed." I said, "Everything is okay you said."

TINKER: I don't even know what to say. Were you mad?

WEAVER: Yeah.

TINKER: So you call and they say, "Oh yeah, everything's okay ..."

WEAVER: He was thinking about, was the planes all secure and stuff like that. This one, a plane crashed in the sea, in fact. In the ocean.

TINKER: Oh, in the sea? Did they ever get the pilot?

WEAVER: I think they got the pilot, but he was dead. I used to fly with them a lot down there too, for my flight time. I'll tell you, you go out over that ocean, and it's a nice day, and they do a couple of slow rolls and you don't know whether you're flying upside down or not. You could look up and see the sky, you look down and you see the sky, you don't know which is which.

TINKER: They say that's what happened to John F. Kennedy Jr. He had a very short flight, but he made the mistake of going out over the water and got disoriented.

WEAVER: I knew exactly where he was flying to and where he flew from.

TINKER: Is that where your wife's family is from, that area?

WEAVER: Yeah, I wasn't up there when it happened, but I had been up there—I lived there twenty years.

TINKER: You know that area.

WEAVER: That area good, yeah. My granddaughter lives in—not Boston but it's close to Boston there. My daughter lives in Massachusetts and my son in Vermont.

TINKER: How long did you stay in Miami?

WEAVER: I got there in '52; about August or September of '52 and I stayed until about May of '58. Then they closed the base. They closed the base. We went to Japan for a year. I went home on leave, thirty-day leave. Moved the family back to Massachusetts.

TINKER: Did you think that was unusual that they were sending—you had already been overseas to Korea. You're married and have a family. It seems a little unusual they'd send you to Japan for a year.

WEAVER: Well, they sent the whole outfit. They didn't just send me, they sent the whole outfit. We went as an outfit to Japan. We had a guy that was stationed with us in Miami, he was Cuban, Frank Jewit. He didn't speak real well English. He spoke English but not real well. When we was going on one of our maneuvers, we went to Panama for three months. On maneuvers we went to Puerto Rico, Panama; we went all over. He is telling everybody to get ready, and like I say he spoke not real good English. He was plain in what he said, but his vocabulary in English was kind of—at muster time he came out. He was our leaded chief. He came out and he said, "Okay, all you married men, I want you to get rid of your wives right now." What he meant, not wait to the last minute and have to move them home. Take time off. Everybody says, "He wants us to go home and shoot our wives?"

TINKER: Well he said get rid of.

WEAVER: Some of them would probably like to have shot their wives.

TINKER: Did they tell you why you were going to Japan for a year?

WEAVER: Well we were relieving another squadron over there. Another Squadron had been over there and was coming back. They came back to Cherry Point although they left from Miami. But Miami was closing down.

TINKER: I guess this was all still related to Korea.

WEAVER: Yeah. We was—my squadron was 331, in Japanese that's san-san-ichi. San is three and ichi is one. San-san-ichi was our outfit over there. We was there for another fourteen months in Japan. It was good. I went to where the atomic bomb dropped there. That was pretty close to where we were at. It was about a thirty-minute ride.

TINKER: So your family didn't go. Did they stay in Miami?

WEAVER: No, I took them home, Massachusetts. In fact, my daughter was born while I was overseas then. When I left she was pregnant, just barely. I was in charge of the night crew in Japan in February of '59, and my buddy John Kavanaugh would get my mail for me because I wasn't down there when the mail room was open. He got the telegram where my wife had had a baby. When we had muster—you know what muster is—he got up and said, "I got something to say. Bob Weaver's wife just had a baby and sent me the telegram."

TINKER: Was he trying to be funny?

WEAVER: I think he was trying to be funny. “Bob Weaver’s wife had a baby and sent me the telegram.”

TINKER: When you came back, where were you stationed?

WEAVER: El Toro, California. That’s when I went to helicopters, when I came back. What happened when I was checking in, they kind of wanted me to go to helicopters. They gave me a choice. ‘Cause they said, “There is not going to be any more fixed wings, other than jets, except transport ships—transport aircraft. Do you want to go into helicopters or do you want to go into transports.” I asked him, “Well, what do you recommend. I don’t really care.” He said, “How about helicopters?” So I said, “okay.” I went into helicopters. I was in the component shop, which is like the shop that takes care of the transmission, the rotors and stuff like that. All the components, but not the engine, they had an engine shop for that. (Coughs) But I was in the component shop there. I was next in charge. I was the second one. But I didn’t know nothing about helicopters. So I would go out with ...

TINKER: So they didn’t send you to school?

WEAVER: Not right away, although I did go to school just like before. I would go out with people that had been in there, you know, and although they might be way junior to me, and asked them questions about it because they worked in it.

TINKER: What model was it?

WEAVER: It was the old HUS [Sikorsky HUS-1 Sea Horse?] they called it. We was the first squadron. After I got in a different squadron, I was in headquarters maintenance squadron to start with, but after I got in a different squadron, we was the first people to get the Sea Knight. First of any branch, Navy or Marine Corps. We came back to Pennsylvania and flew them like four at a time till we got our squadron. That was a lot of fun. We had RON, remain overnight, in Texas or someplace.

TINKER: Did your wife and the children join you right away in California? Came, got ‘em, and moved back.

WEAVER: Yeah, we went out there together. See, I came home on leave and got them and drove to California. California was nice. I went to several schools. Went up to Oakland, California, to quality control school. My quality control officer went too. The rest of them were Navy. Most of them were officers: commanders, lieutenant commanders. I came in number one in the class.

TINKER: You did?

WEAVER: I did. I felt real good about that. The guy that came in number two was my boss. Captain, I can’t think of his name, Shorty or something like that. I forget it.

TINKER: So what did you think about the helicopters, I mean, compared to the Corsairs? Were—you can't really compare them, but how did you take to them?

WEAVER: I liked them, but you are in a lot more dangers in a helicopters. The enlisted men in a Corsair, in a fixed wing, when they go out to make a bombing run or—you don't go, there is no room. You stay back at the ship or whatever. When they go out in helicopters, you do go. But I liked it.

TINKER: Did you ever get air sick?

WEAVER: Never did, never did. Never got air sick, sea sick.

TINKER: Nothing? Not even once?

WEAVER: Not even once. Never.

TINKER: Well that's a blessing.

WEAVER: Did you ever get air sick?

TINKER: Yeah, I did once. From the exhaust pouring in the back. That exhaust is hard to take.

WEAVER: My wife that just died two years ago, she'd get air sick and sea sick, too. She wouldn't much if she took the pills she had.

TINKER: Like the Dramamine. Yeah.

WEAVER: Whatever it was, so she'd always have those. She'd get car sick even. If she sat in the back seat sometimes she would get car sick.

TINKER: You were at El Toro, California?

WEAVER: It's closed now.

TINKER: What's the closest big city to that?

WEAVER: Los Angeles. Forty miles. Well Santa Ana is a pretty big city, but the big city, Los Angeles, was forty miles.

TINKER: Did you live off base there as well?

WEAVER: I lived in a government housing there.

TINKER: Okay, but it wasn't on base?

WEAVER: It was just right off base. Government housing. Wary Housing they called it.

TINKER: Did your wife and children enjoy it a lot out there?

WEAVER: Yeah, we used to go up to LA [Los Angeles] just about every weekend because a friend of my wife lived up there that she went to school with and everything. She got married and moved to California.

TINKER: Well what a small world.

WEAVER: So we used to go up and visit them about every weekend. They had two kids and we had two kids. Their kids were a little bit older than mine, but not much. The boy was about two years older than my son and the girl was about two years older than my daughter. So sometimes when we would go up there, John, the husband, had to work on Saturdays sometimes, not every Saturday, and my wife and Connie, her girlfriend, would go shopping and leave me with the kids. I'd babysit the kids. One time I took them to the park there in LA. Real beautiful nice park, and it was time for them to get back from shopping, and I wanted to go home or take them home. Their little girl, not mine, didn't want to go. She refused to go. As I was dragging her along there she said, "I have to go to the lady's room." She run in there and wouldn't come out.

TINKER: Oh no,

WEAVER: She was smart, boy, she knew all the angles. I go to the door and holler for her, and she wouldn't come out. Some lady come out and I said, "Is anybody else in there except that little girl?" She said, "no." Well, I went in and got her. I pull her out of the lady's room, pulling her down the hallway, and she's hollering at the top of her voice, "This man is not my father." (Laughter)

TINKER: You were in a mess. Is that the last time you babysat?

WEAVER: That's the last time I babysat her. But she was a gifted child. She hadn't even went to school and she could read and write and spell. She could spell, even words like California and stuff when she hadn't even went to school. Before she started school.

TINKER: During this period is the time you said when you said they had frozen all the promotions. So how many years went by before you got another promotion?

WEAVER: Well I got promoted ...

TINKER: So you were promoted to staff [sergeant] when you were in Korea.

WEAVER: Korea. And I got promoted the next time in California. I think.

TINKER: So that was several years then, three, four?

WEAVER: No, no, no, I got promoted in Japan. In Japan.



TINKER: Oh okay, so it wasn't too long, then.

WEAVER: Well, it was about five or six years. I got promoted at a party. They had a party.

TINKER: So went to Japan in '58.

WEAVER: And I got promoted in '58.

TINKER: Promoted to tech sergeant?

WEAVER: Yeah, tech sergeant, they called it then. It wasn't long till they changed the rate system and went back to gunnery—acting gunnery sergeant. But I remember we had a party: a promotion party for me. And I'm sitting there with my executive officer, a major. He was a physical nut. He'd run all the time. We got into a big argument and I told him, "Major, anything you can do physically I can do better." That was mistake. (Laughter)

TINKER: Was it? What happened?

WEAVER: It was a mistake. He said, "Okay, tomorrow morning I'm going to run. I'll be over to get you to run." I said, "I'll be ready." The next morning when he came to get me, I had a hangover. I felt bad, and he run about six miles with me trying to keep up with him.

TINKER: Did you finish the six miles?

WEAVER: I finished, I run it all, but boy I felt bad. That was a mistake.

TINKER: You should have said, "If I wasn't hung over, I would beat you." That's funny. Okay, so how long were you at that base in California, at El Toro?

WEAVER: I was there until I got my orders to the base—well I didn't orders, till our squadron went overseas.

TINKER: Got the orders?

WEAVER: Got the orders. We went over ...

TINKER: To Vietnam?

WEAVER: ... to Vietnam in January of 1966. Went over on an aircraft carrier. Took the planes with us. We had the CH-46s then. I like those CH-46s.

TINKER: Yeah, those were bigger.

WEAVER: Yeah. We was flying in right before Christmas of '66 in Vietnam because we always had a truce on holidays. But the Vietnamese, they didn't recognize our truces. So the one

I was in got its tail rotor short shaft shot in two. That's the shaft to the cooler fan that cools the oil. We had to make an emergency landing in the jungle. Us and our wingman.

TINKER: You did? Had you been in Vietnam very long when that happened?

WEAVER: Well I had been there almost a year because it happened in December, and we got over the in January. We stayed there, and we radioed in and the next morning, they flew in a short shaft, and I changed and we flew out. We was taking sniper fire all night.

TINKER: What base were you—Did you operate just off the carrier or were you ever at a base?

WEAVER: We weren't on a carrier then, no. We operated out of Marble Mountain.

TINKER: Marble Mountain.

WEAVER: Yeah, right next to Da Nang, but we was all over. We'd stay sometimes at—maybe a week up at Khe Sanh and fly SAR [Search and Rescue] north. When we stayed there, all they had there that stayed there was two green berets, a captain and a tech sergeant, and about five thousand bodyguards for them who had been bodyguards for the other side. They'd fight for whoever paid them the most.

TINKER: So most of your all's missions were search and rescue, or were all of them search and rescue?

WEAVER: No, we moved troops and stuff like that and supplies, moved stuff. We'd haul in supplies and move troops. We did a lot of search and rescue and medevacs.

TINKER: How often were you flying?

WEAVER: Every day and every night.

TINKER: Every day and every night? Were you assigned to the same aircraft each day, or were you hoping helicopters?

WEAVER: No, I would usually just fly when somebody needed a gunner or something, or a crew chief, even. I flew both. I was crew chief too.

TINKER: So you didn't always fly every day?

WEAVER: No, I was a maintenance chief then. I would fly all the maintenance ops, I mean all the test ops. I would fly in the other seat on the test op.

TINKER: To check them out?

WEAVER: Yeah, check them out.

TINKER: What was our squadron that you were with then?

WEAVER: VMF-not VMF, HMM, marine helicopter, 164. Up until my wife died, we'd go to the reunion every year. We went to the last one in 2010 out in Reno [Nevada]. One before that, Washington, DC. One before that was Dallas, not Dallas ...

EASTER: Pensacola?

WEAVER: No, we went to Pensacola. That was the one before Dallas, but it wasn't Dallas. It was that other big city right next to Dallas.

EASTER: Fort Worth?

WEAVER: Fort Worth. Then Pensacola. One before that was San Diego. I didn't feel like going this last year, being as I didn't have my wife because they just loved her so much. They did, well I did too. You would think she was the one that had been in Vietnam. They'd fuss over her and not me. Well Ronnie knows.

TINKER: You were just the guy she brought along.

EASTER: She was worthy to be fussed over. That would be Jan's mom.

TINKER: Oh, okay that's right.

WEAVER: We were married twenty-two years.

TINKER: Aw, I'm sorry you lost her.

WEAVER: I lost three wives.

TINKER: That's tough.

WEAVER: I've had three wives and lost them, all three.

TINKER: Let me ask about your missions. Like, is there any particular one that stands out to you? Or types of missions that you would fly on? Is there anything that really stands out?

EASTER: When you all were flying back listening to the Army, you know the green berets were ...

WEAVER: She was in the Air Force. I would hate to tell that one.

TINKER: It's okay, I can take it. Go ahead.

WEAVER: The one that stands out that I remember quite a bit about was there was a bunch of force reconns that was trapped. The Air Force was going in to pick them up. We had the same

frequency on our planes. We was listening to everything. They aborted the mission; it was too dangerous. Our pilot went over to the radio and told them—he got court-martialed for it, too. He said, “Go on back to your club and drink your beer, you candy ass. We will go in and pick them up.” We did. There are about seven or eight men alive today that wouldn’t have been.

TINKER: The Air Force guys couldn’t get in there?

WEAVER: They was taking too much fire. That’s why he called them a candy ass.

TINKER: And he got court-martialed?

WEAVER: Yeah, for disrespect, but he didn’t get nothing out of it. He didn’t win, but just got a, “you shouldn’t do that.”

EASTER: What about when you asked for volunteers to go ...

WEAVER: Oh yeah, the first time we went to Khe Sanh. See, I’d go to all the briefings, this was when we first got to Vietnam, I assigned, on the ops, the flights, I would assign the personnel and their plane. I didn’t assign the pilots. But anyhow I had been to the briefing, and they said up there at Khe Sanh, we would be going up there and stay and probably three days, two days. I forget now. They said out of the last four or five that went up there nobody came back. ‘Cause they would shoot a plane down, and we would go out and pick up the survivors. That’s what was our mission. When you go out and pick up the survivors, they would shoot you, the North Vietnamese. So that morning muster, I told the crew chiefs and the gunners that story. I said, “I want just strictly volunteers. If you don’t want to go, you don’t have to go. Strictly volunteers. Raise your hand if you volunteer.” Every man I had raised their hand. Every one of them.

TINKER: That’s great. That’s really great.

WEAVER: But I went.

TINKER: Of course. I wouldn’t expect anything else.

WEAVER: I went with them but we didn’t get nothing, we didn’t get called out.

TINKER: Now the helicopters in Vietnam, were you ... what was it like doing the maintenance on them? Did the weather cause—I mean, it rained a lot it had to have some effect on their ...

WEAVER: When we first got over there we had a lot of problems with all the dust and stuff. We had the factory reps over there for, I’d say, three months. We finally got them all—all the bugs out and all this stuff.

TINKER: Trying to get new designs rigged.

WEAVER: The engine button different, screens, wire meshes to keep stuff out of the engines.

TINKER: Over the front, yeah.

WEAVER: I liked the CH-46. I liked those helicopters. They was easy to work on. It was easy to change the engine even. You could change the engine in an hour or less. On those old Corsairs, it would take you two days to change an engine.

TINKER: Really?

WEAVER: You had that big hoist, and had to hoist the engine up after you get everything loose. All kinds of stuff.

TINKER: You said you didn't have any trouble in Korea getting parts and supplies. What about Vietnam? Was it the same?

WEAVER: I think we got them pretty good there too.

TINKER: Did you have to—we would always have to cannibalize one plane to fix another ...

WEAVER: We did that too, yeah. We did a lot of cannibalizing in Vietnam, a lot more than we did in Korea.

TINKER: A lot more scrounging going on, uh? Did the bases you were at ever take direct fire?

WEAVER: We have, but not very often. I started running on a beach over there—it was right on the South China Beach. See here is a picture of it. (Points to picture) That is our hut that I lived in there. Right behind that is the South China Sea.

TINKER: You got your Marine face on right there. That's a tough guy. That's a tough man right there.

WEAVER: That's right out in from of the Quonset hut that we lived in. I lived right by the door on the other end.

TINKER: You were the maintenance chief for your whole squadron?

WEAVER: For the whole squadron. I didn't start out being maintenance chief. I was line chief, but the maintenance chief was flying as a gunner on one of the ops, and he got shot.

TINKER: Oh, so that's how you ended up with that.

WEAVER: Well, I was next senior in that MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]. He got shot, and he went to the hospital ship. He was in there, the hospital ship, about two or three months. Then he came back to the squadron and he went home. He was shot up pretty bad. He could walk with a cane and stuff.

EASTER: But jogging on the beach there?

WEAVER: Oh yeah. I started telling you about when I jogged on the beach. The first time I jogged on a beach—I always did try to keep in pretty good physical condition—I run a mile, and I was out of breath. I mean really out of breath. So I started doing that every day, and after about I'd say two or three, three or four weeks I could just run indefinitely. We'd run way down a beach, and we didn't have nothing with us except we would be in running shorts and barefooted. We run barefoot on that sandy beach. Real nice beach. We had ran about three miles down the beach, and the Vietcong started shooting at us. There was three of us, me and two other guys. I think we broke a record running back. We didn't have no guns, no nothing. Shells started all around us. They was shooting at us.

TINKER: That's a close call. You could have been killed. Did you ever have any leave time while you were over there?

WEAVER: I went on R and Rs, two R and Rs. I went on—it's supposed to stand for rest and relaxation, but you don't get much rest.

TINKER: Where did you go?

WEAVER: I went to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for five days. I was the only one—the only senior NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] in my outfit that went, but there was two junior men. They were the best kids. One of them was a crew chief and the other one was his cousin who was an electrician. He flew as a gunner with his cousin all the time. The day that we got back, the next day after we got back, they went on a night mission and both got killed. They both got killed, and I had such a good time with them. I was like—they was probably like eighteen, nineteen, and I was like thirty-six, but I enjoyed those kids. Real good kids. They wasn't like a lot of them that go out and get drunk like I was. They was real good kids. The first flight flew they flew after they got back from R and R, they got killed. They got killed together because his cousin flew as a gunner same time he was flying as a crew chief.

TINKER: How many times did you fly as a gunner?

WEAVER: I don't think I ever flew as gunner. I might of once or twice. I was loadmaster over there too. I spoke Vietnamese terminology; I learned some Vietnamese terminology down in Okinawa. I learned how to say *san-san-ichi*. That's Japanese. I'd say—I don't remember.

TINKER: But you learned enough to get by.

WEAVER: I was out one time. We was moving a village out. The North Vietnamese had a division coming down. They was taking over. We was moving them out. We would move with a—take all their livestock and everything in that place. Moved them out. I noticed some of the laborers there that was helping me, I had hauled as Vietcong—hauled as enemies, prisoners. When we got prisoners from the South Korea, the Japanese prisoners were, they tied them in barbed wire. They bound them in barbed wire. We'd go pick them up and they would be bound in barbed wire. Anyhow, I noticed a bunch of them was ones that I had hauled as prisoners. When they got back to get another load, this Green Beret in charge I called him over. He was a

captain. I said, “Sir, there some of these people I know that they are prisoners.” He laughed and said, “They all are. They’re trusties though. They’re all prisoners. The hard cores are locked in the dungeon there.”

TINKER: The hard-core ones they had locked up.

WEAVER: So these people I that was using to upload the aircraft was all prisoners. I didn’t know at first or I would have been scared. I thought they were just regular ...

TINKER: But then some of them started looking kind of familiar to you.

WEAVER: I had seen before.

TINKER: That’s a funny thing, things that happen over there.

WEAVER: Yeah, it’s a strange thing, stuff that should never happen. Stuff that should never happen. See, these Vietcong, they go into a village, and they’d round up the chief of the village and if he had any children, little children, they would take them out and hang them and disembowel them. Then bring everybody else from the village, “If you don’t fight for us this will happen to your children.” I never did it myself, but we had people that when they flew, they went out and took some of these kids down.

TINKER: They did? They would just come across them and then cut them down?

WEAVER: Yeah, they had their ...

TINKER: That’s terrible. That’s really terrible. So ... you did the one year in Vietnam and no more?

WEAVER: Fourteen months. Our tours were always fourteen months.

TINKER: And no more. Did they ask you to go back, did that ever come up? I mean, your squadron, not just you?

WEAVER: No they didn’t ask me to go back, but I’d have been—when I came back from Vietnam, you’re supposed to put in for preference for duty stations. I put no preference. ‘Cause I had twenty years in then, I stayed twenty three. I thought I would wait till I got home and talked over with the wife and kids, see if they wanted me to go ahead and retire. I wanted to stay in. But if they had wanted me retire I would have. They said no, I had orders for recruiting duty. I got orders for recruiting duty. So the last three years I spent on recruiting duty.

TINKER: That’s a nice way to end your career, I think.

WEAVER: I was stationed in Mobile, Alabama, until my wife got sick. Then I was stationed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, because that was her home. They gave me a humanitarian transfer back to Pittsfield. And when she died I would have stayed in except for the children were small. They

lost one parent, and I probably would have been going back to Vietnam, which I didn't mind going back. But I felt those kids should have one parent around. So I put my letter in, letter of intent to retire. She died in December—no she died on May the 4th, and I retired in December.

TINKER: Did she have a long illness, you obviously had enough time to move back home to Massachusetts?

WEAVER: She had cancer and she lived—after she first found out she had it, she probably lived about eight months, eight or ten months.

TINKER: And that was in Massachusetts?

WEAVER: Most of it was.

TINKER: In your three years in Mobile what was recruiting like? You always hear about all the Vietnam protests.

WEAVER: Mobile was the most patriotic city I ever seen in my life.

TINKER: So you didn't have a lot of problems in Mobile?

WEAVER: We didn't have any problems. We couldn't even pay for nothing in the city. You go into McDonald's in a uniform, your money is no good. I got promoted to master sergeant when I first got there. They give me a party, the whole district. They came from all over to my party when I made master sergeant. They'd all chipped in money to pay for it, and there was about thirty five people, thirty-five to forty people there. The bill was something like; I forget now, something like four or five thousand dollars. They went to pay it. The owner of the place said, "On the house."

TINKER: Wow. That's touching. That's nice. That's a good way to end your career there, in a place like that.

WEAVER: I got a letter here. I didn't bring it on purpose either it's just in here. See when I got transferred to Pittsfield, when I was down in Mobile I got several of these letters. They was all on a bulletin board but this one is one I got after I got stationed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. In fact, it's about a young man that I recruited. I went to his house and recruited him. He went in, and here is his parents. When he got through boot camp they come to see me down there. The other recruiter told them, they gave them my address. Read that letter there.

TINKER: "December 15th, 1969." Now this is the parents of the young man you recruited right?

WEAVER: Uh huh.

TINKER: Their name Henry and Wanda Bullion.



WEAVER: Uh huh.

TINKER: “Dear Sergeant Weaver, we tried to contact you in October after Bobby graduated from Parris Island, but were told you had gone to Massachusetts and would not be back to Mobile. We were very sorry to hear of your wife’s illness and want you to know that our prayers are with you and your children in this time of trial. We also want to thank you very much for your interest in our son. With more dedicated men like you the world would be a much nicer place to live. Bobby is a Christian and has always been a good son, but the Marine Corps helped him in so many ways that he is very proud to be a Marine and we are likewise proud to have him in the corps. He didn’t graduate with special honors, but we did get to go up to Parris Island and see the things he did. He had pneumonia the last couple of weeks in Lejeune and was sent back so he was only home for six days. He left Saturday for Memphis [Tennessee] and Sergeant Justice and his grades were good especially since he was set back. He has structural maintenance in aviation, whatever that means.”

WEAVER: Well, he got into aviation.

TINKER: “Anyway the rest is up to him, and he seems to be determined to study and continue to move forward. Again, thanks ever so much for your interest in taking your own time to explain things to us about the Marine Corps. Sincerely Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Bullion, Mobile, Alabama.” That is wonderful. Do you care if we make a copy of that?

WEAVER: No, go ahead.

TINKER: When we finish we will scan some of these.

WEAVER: You can keep it if you want to. I forgot about it till I just opened this up.

TINKER: Oh no, we will make a copy. Well that is special.

WEAVER: I had, I bet you, at least twenty or thirty of them on the bulletin board down in Mobile that is like that.

TINKER: I bet a lot of recruiters around the country wished they had a community like you were in.

WEAVER: I recruited one guy, signed him up, and his father was a big shot in Mobile. He went in the Marine Corps and he went to Vietnam right away and got killed. His father, after he got killed, wrote me a real nice letter. Said he died the way he wanted to.

TINKER: That’s bitter sweet isn’t it?

WEAVER: What made all these letters and everything, ones I got—see I used to have breakfast with the mayor every month in Mobile. I got letters from him sent to my Headquarters Marine Corps. See when I got out of the Marine Corps, I made the highest rate, master gunnery sergeant.

But I couldn't take it. You had to stay two years. I had I don't know how many letters from people in my service record.

TINKER: You would have gotten that last promotion but ...

WEAVER: I did, I made it.

TINKER: But you didn't stay the next two years.

WEAVER: I would have stayed the next two years.

TINKER: Because your wife had passed, and you wanted to get out for the kids.

WEAVER: I had letters from everybody that was important in my record. From the mayor, from all the city council, the sheriff.

TINKER: Those people must have thought very highly of you.

EASTER: Tell them about the girl you recruited that first tried to get in the Air Force.

WEAVER: This going back to the Air Force again. Going back to the Air Force. Okay. My office was in the federal building. So was the other recruiters: the Air Force and the Navy. We knew each other real well, and we helped each other. In fact, the Air Force one time he called me, this is not the one it's something else, he called me and said, "Let's go for a ride." I said, "Where you going?" He said, "I'm going to the airport to pick somebody up." I said, "Well, I'll ride with you." Little did I know who he was going to pick up. I went to the airport with him, and he picked up Barney Fife, the movie star.

TINKER: What? Don Knotts?

WEAVER: Don Knotts.

TINKER: Now I'm really floored.

WEAVER: We picked up Don Knotts, and we went right straight to the television station; he was on television. Don Knotts said to me, see I had my full dress blues on, he said, "You know Sarge, once I tried to join the Marine Corps, but they wouldn't take me. I was under weight." This was on television. I said, "Well try again; they might have changed the rule."

TINKER: That was on television?

WEAVER: It was on television. It was on local television.

TINKER: He was doing, like, a recruiting spot to help you all out?

WEAVER: He just got a call from somebody to pick him up at the airport, I don't know who. Another time I interviewed on television, on local television, a Medal of Honor winner.

TINKER: Oh, you did? Do remember who it was?

WEAVER: He was a lieutenant. I didn't much like him. I mean, I liked what he did and everything. He awful sarcastic and stuff. We got along okay. Old Dot Morda, MC there, gave him a set of golf clubs.

TINKER: Was he a Vietnam Medal of Honor winner?

WEAVER: Yeah, oh yeah. I said, "Where is my set?"

EASTER: Air Force recruit, the girl.

WEAVER: Okay he called me this one time and said, "Bob we got a girl that wants to go in the Air Force, but she was rejected. Can you take her in the Marine Corps?" I said, "I said probably not if she was rejected from the Air Force." He said, "Well she was rejected on appearance." She was ugly. They used to do that. The Air Force would do that. Until they got sued and lost. (Laughter)

TINKER: Was this, this particular recruiter doing that or was this ...

WEAVER: No, he recruited her and sent it all into ...

TINKER: I'm just wondering who's making this decision.

EASTER: He sent everything to San Antonio, and they rejected her.

WEAVER: They rejected her, came back "rejected appearance." He showed me the rejection. Instead of saying ugly, it says appearance. (Laughter)

TINKER: So you said send her over?

WEAVER: I said, "Well she can't be that ugly. Send over." She come over, and he was right, she was. I took her anyhow. She made a real good—had real good recommendations.

TINKER: Well sometimes looks change!

WEAVER: She had recommendations from her mayor, from her preacher, from everybody. I took her and she came home on leave and she had made honor woman in her boot camp.

TINKER: Top of the line.

EASTER: Molly Marine.

WEAVER: Molly Marine. Her father was a retired Air Force colonel.

TINKER: You would think he could have got her in.

WEAVER: She changed her mind; she didn't want nothing to do with the Air Force. All of her girlfriends wasn't ugly, and they started joining the Marine Corps and it started a chain reaction.

TINKER: Really? So you had all these women coming...

WEAVER: I'm not kidding. It's unbelievable. I got write ups about that someplace. It's unbelievable. Mobile, Alabama, had never enlisted a woman in the Marine Corps until I went there. We was enlisting about fifteen a month, not a year, a month.

TINKER: If you have an article on that I would like a copy of that too.

WEAVER: I'll see if I can find it. We was enlisting twelve to fifteen a month.

TINKER: 'Cause you took that one girl it started all the other girls thinking about it.

WEAVER: That the Air Force gave me.

TINKER: Did you send him a thank you note or buy him a beer?

WEAVER: I used to play golf with him all the time. We used to play ...

TINKER: So when you got out, your first wife sadly passes away. Norma. And that precipitated your decision to get out and take care of the kids.

WEAVER: One hundred percent. One hundred percent.

TINKER: Did you stay in Massachusetts with the children or did you move?

WEAVER: I stayed there until they was grown and had their own kids. I moved down here when I met my last wife. I was going to move down anyhow.

TINKER: You said you remarried again, Mary, in '74. Was that in Massachusetts?

WEAVER: Yeah, that was in Massachusetts. Mary Sieska. See my first wife was Norma Adomly, she was Italian. Mary Sieska was a Polish. She was head of Selective Service. I knew her before my first wife died, but I only knew her business-wise.

TINKER: Just at work.

WEAVER: At work. Because once a week I would go by the Selective Service. She later became the head of Selective Service of the whole state of Massachusetts. We started dating, oh maybe, Norma died in 1970. I would probably sometime in '71, late '71. We started dating after

her mother died and I went to the funeral. She was impressed, I already retired then when her mother died. I went to the funeral and she invited me to have coffee and everything after. I went to the funeral home. I went to her house and had coffee. Then we just talked day to day. Every once and a while, we would talk. So I asked her out for lunch, and we started dating in '71. It might have been '72, but I think it was late '71. In 1974, November '74, November the 4th, '74, we got married. She was a nice lady. I brought her down here to my mother and father and everything. We was going to come back the next year. She went in for a physical checkup, an annual physical, and they found a tumor on her lung. We both smoked then, she smoked, and I smoked too, but I don't smoke no more. They did a biopsy and it was malignant. They operated and removed half of one lung and part of another one. Both lungs. She got better and she come home from the hospital. We went out to eat and went to movies and shows. In August of '74, she started getting sick again, went back to the hospital in August. She died November the 4th of '75. We was married exactly one year.

TINKER: That's terrible. She died on your anniversary day?

WEAVER: On our first anniversary, she died. '75, we got married '74.

TINKER: By this time your kids—your two children are grown and they're gone?

WEAVER: They're not gone.

TINKER: They're not living with you?

WEAVER: My daughter was still in high school at this time. My son was going to school in Guadalajara, Mexico, as an exchange student down there. He got his degree from UVM [University of Vermont] Boston, but he went down there three years. She died and after a while—well I started coming down to see my mother and father every year. During the winter, after I retired, I would come down and see them.

TINKER: What kind of work were you doing after you retired?

WEAVER: I started my own business. I had a fencing business: chain link fences, all kind of fences, tennis court fences, and wooden fences. I had a good run, made a good business out of it. But every winter I would close it down and come down and see my parents 'cause they was getting old. In 1988, all my brothers and sisters, they were scattered all over the United States. They wasn't none of them that lived there. My two sisters lived Alexandria, Virginia, and my brother Mitch lived in Arizona, my brother Bill lived in Washington state. He was a professor. (Coughs)

TINKER: Do you need some more water? Are you out?

WEAVER: No, I still got some. So I would come down there. I put my business up for sale 'cause I was going to move down to Tennessee to be with my parents 'cause they were getting old. Then I would go back to Massachusetts when they was feeling good and stay six months or

three months. I had a home up there and had one down here too. But I met my third wife, and we started dating.

TINKER: Down here?

WEAVER: Down here. Ida, Jan's mother. It kept getting more serious and more serious. I'd went fourteen years, I didn't care whether—I didn't even plan to ever get married again. I was perfectly content.

TINKER: Where did you meet her at?

WEAVER: At my house. She was such a good woman. My mother and father were getting old, and after she worked in the cafeteria in the school, high school, after work once a week she would come over and clean their house for them.

EASTER: Just 'cause she was that good of a woman.

TINKER: You mean they weren't paying anything?

WEAVER: No she wouldn't take anything.

TINKER: Well, how nice.

WEAVER: I was down there when she came over one night when I met her. I had heard of her before and knew of the family, but I never met her. Anyhow, she come every Thursday after school, after she got off. She would come down there and work about three or four hours, clean that house spick and span. We would talk and talk. After—I stayed here three months—after a while she asked me, "Did I want to go to a ball game, a basketball game, high school." That same high school that I went to you know, and I played basketball for so I said, "Sure." So I went to the game, we didn't go together; she drove and I drove. I met her out there. We watched the basketball game, and I started to go home, and she said, "You want to stop by and have a cup of coffee at my house?" I said, "Well, I'll have to follow you. I don't know where you live." So I did and we had a cup of coffee and talked for a long time. I lost my glasses when I got out of the car. That Sunday when they all ate dinner there, they found my glasses. Her son, Tim, was living there then. He was grown, but he was living there. He got married about two months after I left and went back. He came in and says, "Mommy there has been a man in this house." She said, "How do you know?" He said, "I smell a man in here." Her granddaughter found my glasses. We just started getting more serious and more serious. I had to go back. My business was up for sale, but I was still running it. So I went back and we called each other all the time. I talked to her on the phone. That June my mother and father were having their sixty-seventh wedding anniversary, so we came in. I came, and I stayed three weeks. We went all over. We went all up through the Smokey Mountains. Before I went back, we got engaged. I sold my business when I went back up there; I got a good price for it too. I started this business from scratch.

TINKER: I was going to ask, why fencing? What led you to get into that?

WEAVER: How I got into it—right after my wife had died and the kids was kind of small, I put in a swimming pool to try to—I did the fencing around it. The guy that sold me the pool, he delivered the fence, I bought it from him, but I put it up myself. He was short a couple sections; it was a wood fence. He was going to bring it. After I retired, I was still in the Marine Corps then; after I retired that spring I went in and said, “You owe me two sections of fence.” He said, “I know I have to get out there and deliver it. You’re retired. What are you doing?” I said, “Well, I’m working as a bouncer at a nightclub.” I was. I was working as a bouncer. He said, “How about coming to work for me doing the fence.” I said, “I don’t know nothing about fence.” He said, “You can put up your own and it looks good.” I said, “Well if I mess my own up, it’s my business, but if I mess up one that someone is paying good money for that’s a different story.” He said, “I’ll teach you to do it.” I said no. Next day he brought the two sections of fence out to me, and I invited him in to come in for coffee. He came in and was having coffee with me. He says, “You sure you don’t want to put that fence up. Put up fence for me.” I said, “No, I don’t know nothing about it.” He said, “Well, I’ll teach you. I’ll give you a raise.” He already told me how much I’d get per section, per foot. So he gave me a big raise. So I said okay and started working for him. After working for him for about four months, I went into business.

TINKER: Just like that. You never know how things are going to work out.

WEAVER: He never did teach me how, I learned by myself.

TINKER: You’re a good mechanic and used to working with your hands.

WEAVER: That business that I built up, I had zero money in it. I sold it for 250,000 dollars.

TINKER: That was all profit.

WEAVER: Yeah but Uncle Sam took most of it. They took over half. Federal government took thirty-five percent and the state government took fifteen. That’s fifty percent.

TINKER: My goodness. That’s a lot.

WEAVER: I know it is.

TINKER: Did you ever use any of your veteran benefits after you got out?

WEAVER: No.

TINKER: So you never had any use for any of the benefits?

WEAVER: I never used any. Now my brother, Mitch, he went to school on the GI bill. He went to college on it. Out in Washington State where my other brother, his brother, was a professor. He still had to pay—he had to pay instate tuition, but he didn’t have to pay it ‘cause the GI paid it. The GI bill paid it or paid most of it.

TINKER: So then you married your third wife, Ida, right?

WEAVER: Yeah, Ida.

TINKER: Your parents—sounds like your parents lived a very long life.

WEAVER: My father died when he was eighty-one, I'm almost eighty-three now. I'm older than my father. My mother died when she was eighty-six. She was almost eighty-seven. She died in August, and her birthday was in September.

TINKER: After you sold your business and you came back down here, did you look for work, or did you start another fencing business?

WEAVER: We did start another fencing business, but it wasn't my idea. It was her idea—not her, it was her son's idea. He wanted to go into business and said he always did want to go into business for himself. He talked me into it and we went into business down here for about seven years. We had a fencing business down here. We did pretty good down here too. We didn't sell the business for nothing; we let another guy take it over.

TINKER: When did your parents pass away?

WEAVER: My father died in '91, February 15th, '91. My brother Bill died November the 4th of '91. The one that was a professor, he retired two years before. He only lived two years after he retired. I found him dead.

TINKER: Did he have a heart attack or something?

WEAVER: I imagine. They didn't do an autopsy.

TINKER: You're the one that found him?

WEAVER: I'm the one that found him. My mother had Alzheimer's. And She got pretty bad with the Alzheimer's, she wasn't always, but the last year or so she was pretty bad. She had had Alzheimer's for about ten years. She died in August of '95. My sister Pat, who was younger than me, she died in May of '99.

TINKER: Oh my goodness. She's the one that went in the Air Force?

WEAVER: Uh huh. Cancer. May of '99.

TINKER: You said that you and Ida, you mentioned before, were going to reunions. I was wondering, when did you all start going, when did you first start going to reunions?

WEAVER: Shortly after we got married. I told her they had them, she liked to go. I did too at first. I liked to go with her. The first one we went to was in St. Louis '93. We had been married four years.



TINKER: What kind of reunion was it? Was it a particular squadron you belonged to or was it just a Marine reunion?

WEAVER: It was a helicopter group. Papa Smoke, they called it.

TINKER: Papa Smoke?

WEAVER: That's from you pop a smoke grenade when you get shot down.

TINKER: Who started the group, the association?

WEAVER: It was, like, probably six or seven different squadrons of helicopters that was in Vietnam.

TINKER: So it was just the helicopter people. So you never belonged to one of your Korean War groups or Corsair groups?

WEAVER: One of the others? No I never did, although I did go to one, went about two or times, Marine Corps Aviation. It could be helicopter, it could be—I went to that a couple times. I went to the one in St. Louis and the one in D.C. and one in Camp Lejeune [North Carolina]—that was a good one in Camp Lejeune. I went to Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point.

TINKER: As I recall, helicopter people are a lot of fun to be around. I'm sure you had some really good reunions.

WEAVER: Oh we did. We had some fun. We did a lot of things too. Our squadron, not the whole—our squadron I was in in Vietnam built a school over there. Paid for every bit of it.

TINKER: I have noticed that a lot with the Vietnam veterans. One of the Air Force groups that I belong to, they still support a school and they still help bring people over and help them get set up. Seems like the Vietnam generation stayed very involved with helping the people over there. Did you ever belong to the American Legion or the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] or anything like that?

WEAVER: I belong to the VFW. I'm a lifetime member.

TINKER: Did you go to local chapter meetings?

WEAVER: I never went to the meetings, I just belonged to it. When I was in Massachusetts. I'm lifetime membership of the VFW.

TINKER: You haven't been real involved in the veterans ...

WEAVER: I get the *Leatherneck* magazine all the time. Being retired, I don't pay for it, they just send it to me. Being as I retired I get it.

TINKER: Did either of your children ever join the military?

WEAVER: Well, my son tried to join and almost got in too, to be an astronaut. See, he was a pilot. Before he got through high school he had his pilot's license.

TINKER: As a civilian pilot?

WEAVER: Yeah, a civilian pilot. Had his pilot's license and belonged to a jump—what do you call it? Sky diving club. He used to go every Saturday and make about four or five jumps when he was sixteen years old. He'd applied for an Air Force program to be an astronaut. The Air Force kept sending him letters, "Congratulations you're in the top ten percent." "Congratulations you're in the top five percent." He thought for sure he was going to get it. He finally got a letter, "We are sorry you did not make it this year, but please try again. We only took less than two percent." So he wasn't in the top two percent.

TINKER: That's too bad.

WEAVER: He'd already took his physical, he had already been accepted at all the colleges, every one of them. He really wanted to be an astronaut. That's many years ago, and he's got over it now. He just had a birthday. He's fifty-eight years old.

TINKER: Well that's something to say you even came close. When you're in the top ten percent, that's pretty good.

WEAVER: Yeah, he was in the top ten percent. That was the same program that Bill Jennings's ex-wife got in. She became a doctor. Only she made it. That's our cousin.

TINKER: Yeah. Let's see ... is there anything you think I have missed?

WEAVER: No, but I will think of it when I get home. (Laughter)

TINKER: Then, you know what it's like for me every time I interview somebody. Later I go, "Oh, this and that." But we try to do our best. Robert, was there anything that you ... Mr. Easter?

PRATER: Not off the top of my head ...

TINKER: Mr. Easter ...

EASTER: Well, this is, uh—and Bob's telling the truth about what a wonderful woman Ida was. Well, Jan and all of her brothers and sisters feel the same way about this guy.

TINKER: Aw. Well it sounds to me like you were lucky three times. We'll just look at it that way, won't we? You were blessed three times.

WEAVER: That's true. Some people wasn't blessed any.

TINKER: That's true. Some people marry one time and then regret it the rest of their life. Well, since we can't think of anything else, I hope I haven't missed anything. I just want to thank you again for coming in today.

WEAVER: Well, I wanted to thank you.

TINKER: And thank you for bringing him, Mr. Easter.

EASTER: My pleasure.

WEAVER: He takes me on my doctor's appointments, too.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----