

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
DURWARD B. SWANSON

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEW BY
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REVIEWED BY
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CYNTHIA TINKER: This begins an interview with Durward B. Swanson on March 6, 2013. His address is, what was it, 233 ...

DURWARD SWANSON: 239 Pine Crest, but I will be leaving there.

TINKER: In Maryville?

SWANSON: Yeah, in Maryville.

TINKER: But right now we're at the Blount County Library to conduct the interview, a good meeting place. My name is Cynthia Tinker, and I'm at the UT Center for the Study of War and Society. And joining me today on the interview is one of our interns.

KENDAL YOUNGBLOOD: Kendal Youngblood

TINKER: And also one of our graduate students ...

WILL RALL: Will Rall.

TINKER: Thank you, Mr. Swanson, for meeting with us and agreeing to do the interview. So we'll just sort of go chronologically, and we'll start with, if you want to say anything about your parents, and how you grew up, or what kind of people they were.

SWANSON: Well, I grew up in Troup County, Georgia. My dad was a farmer and a construction superintendent. He never went but to third grade in school, but the first job he ever had was at Tallulah Falls, Georgia building a dam. He was hired as an apprentice carpenter, and Mama said he used to pick up the blueprints—they threw them away at night—and he learned to read them. He went on to build dams as a superintendent all over the Southeast. Virginia, West Virginia, Florida, Alabama, Georgia. I grew up and went to school there, but I finished high school in Dublin, Virginia. Daddy was building a dam up there, Claytor Lake Dam, between Dublin and Radford. And then I went in the service in 1939.

TINKER: Back to your father—so he only had a third grade education?

SWANSON: Uh huh.

TINKER: But then he became a superintendent, like a foreman.

SWANSON: No, he was in charge of the whole dam, building the dam in the ...

TINKER: Wow, I've been to the Tallulah Gorge area several times, it's really something. Do you know what year that he was there for?

SWANSON: Well he was—first job he had was the year I was born, 1921.

TINKER: Oh, okay.

SWANSON: I was born in Tallulah Falls, Georgia when he was workin' on the dam up there.

TINKER: Was his family originally from Georgia?

SWANSON: All of them was. My mother and dad's both from Troup County.

TINKER: And do you know how far back your family line goes? Did they talk to you a lot about family history?

SWANSON: Yeah, well Cass [Mr. Swanson's cousin] has got—there's some of it in the book there, the O'Neils. My grandmother—my daddy's mother was O'Neil, and William O'Neil, our great-great-great-grandfather come from Ireland over. He settled in Morgan County, North Carolina. Then they moved to Morgan County, Georgia, and then on to Troup County.

TINKER: Do you know how your parents met?

SWANSON: Well, they grew up right close together. My mother come from a pretty wealthy family, and my daddy's parents was farmers. They was well thought of, but they wasn't no—probably, maybe middle-class people. And when Momma and Daddy got married, all her, even her grandmother, and all her sisters and brothers said, “You marryin' the wrong man.” Said, “He'll never amount to nothing.” Momma told them—I never will forget this, and she done it, too. She says, “I hope to live to see I'll be worth every one of you put together, and she done it.”

TINKER: That's good. When you said your mother was from a wealthy family, in what way?

SWANSON: Grandpa Carter, he had a little over 2,000 acres of farmland. He had sixteen black sharecroppers workin' with him. And he was also a Justice of the Peace, and he also owned half interest in the Troup County Mill.

TINKER: And what was his full name?

SWANSON: George Henry Carter.

TINKER: George Henry Carter.

SWANSON: I don't tell everybody but [Laughs] my granddaddy and Jimmy Carter's daddy was first cousins.

TINKER: You don't admit to that all the time? [Laughter]

SWANSON: No, no, no.

TINKER: So I'm assuming your whole family was Democrats back then?

SWANSON: They was, but I convinced Daddy to vote a Republican ticket when I was in Ireland. I been a Republican all my life. No, I take that back; I did vote for Harry Truman. That's the last Democrat I voted for. [Laughter]

TINKER: What was your childhood like? I mean, did you have to—I saw on your questionnaire you had one brother. Were you and your brother fairly close?

SWANSON: No, we wasn't.

TINKER: You weren't?

SWANSON: No, uh uh, not at all.

TINKER: What was the age difference?

SWANSON: Four years.

TINKER: You just weren't very good friends?

SWANSON: Well, no, we got along and all like that, but he was always jealous of me. See, he was named after Daddy, William Guy Swanson.

TINKER: Even when you were little?

SWANSON: Oh yes, oh yes. And especially when I went in the service and all like that, then got the awards I got. He went in the service, but he never did go overseas and all like that. I worked on the farm. I used to have to get up when I was eight years old, milk three cows, and then come back, clean up, and put my school clothes on, and walk a mile and a quarter to catch the school bus. I took two jelly biscuits, and a sausage biscuit, and a piece of pound cake, and a half a gallon syrup bucket ... That was my dinner. We didn't have no cafeteria or nothin'.

TINKER: That sounds pretty good though. (Laughter)

SWANSON: And then when I come home in the afternoon, I'd take my school clothes off if there was choppin' cotton, pickin' cotton, whatever they was doin', I went to the fields and went to work.

TINKER: Okay.

SWANSON: Then when I come out of—well, that's a little far on down the line. I was gonna tell you when I come out of the service, so ...

TINKER: Yeah, let's wait on that. And were your parents, um—was your family regular church-goers?

SWANSON: Oh, yes ma'am. They was Primitive Baptists.

TINKER: So you went to church and sang a lot?

SWANSON: Well, the first church that the Primitive Baptists went to, they didn't have music in the church. That's the old line. But then they moved to the Progressive Primitive Baptists, and they had music and all in it. And then when me and my wife married, she was Methodist, brought up in the Methodist Church right across the road from where the church was. So, she asked me, she says, "Do you want me to move to Baptist Church?" I said, "No, you grew up there." I said, "I'll move my membership to the Methodist Church." [Laughs] The funny part about it, [for] a long time, when they say the Apostle's Creed, I wouldn't say I believed in the Catholic Church. She says, "Why don't you say it?" I said, "I don't believe it." She said, "Well, let me tell you what it means." She says, "It means church universal." I said, "Okay, I'll say it then." (Laughter)

TINKER: Were your parents very strict? What are your memories of them?

SWANSON: No they wasn't—Daddy was, but I don't ever remember Momma ever whippin' me or my brother either one. But she done somethin' worse. She would set down and talk to you, and when she got through talkin' you felt just about like that. I'd rather her took a stick and beat the dickens out of me. (Laughter)

TINKER: Sometimes a whipping is easier, yeah.

SWANSON: Yeah, but Daddy believed in the razor strap.

TINKER: [Laughs] So you got it the easy way from him.

SWANSON: But you didn't tell—I think the hardest my daddy ever whipped me—he didn't whip me too hard, but it was—he was on the farm. He'd come in, and he would come and start a crop, then they'd call him back on the job or somewhere like that, and me and Momma would have to finish it up.

TINKER: Oh, call him away to the dam?

SWANSON: Yeah, to a job where—like he'd started a crop, he'd just bought 300 more acres of land, he was gonna plant a lot of cotton. They called him to come to West Virginia, Gauley Bridge, West Virginia on a dam.

TINKER: So he would go?

SWANSON: Huh?

TINKER: He'd go, right?

SWANSON: Yeah, he went, so Momma would have to—we had three sharecroppers that worked, and they was pretty good. But anyhow, that's the way it was like then.

TINKER: So you all would be responsible for finishing out the crop season?

SWANSON: Momma would, I was a teenager. I'd help all I could and everything like that, but Momma had a pretty good head on her.

TINKER: Were you a good student in school?

SWANSON: All but English. (Laughter) And the only way I graduated in Dublin, Virginia was my football coach was my English teacher. (Laughter) And by the way, I went back last year and spoke at his alma mater. Any of you ever hear of Hampden Sydney College [Virginia]?

TINKER: I have, yes.

SWANSON: That's where he graduated from. He was our football coach.

TINKER: And they had you back to speak?

SWANSON: I went back to his alma mater. I went to Virginia Tech, and then the University of Virginia, and then to Hampden Sydney.

TINKER: When you were in school—like grade school and then high school—did you play sports?

SWANSON: I played basketball. In Georgia that's all we had down there ... was basketball. I was the forward on the basketball team.

TINKER: Pretty good?

SWANSON: Well, we won the championship one year and finished second the next year.

TINKER: That's pretty good.

SWANSON: And then I went—when I went to Dublin I was a half of a junior year there. In my senior year I played football and baseball. Then I played baseball in the service.

TINKER: Now, you said you're from Troup County. What was the name of the town?

SWANSON: LaGrange was the county seat, yes ma'am. We got a Methodist college there, LaGrange College.

TINKER: How big was the town?

SWANSON: Well, when I grew up it was—I would say it was probably about eight or ten thousand, somethin' like that. But right now, it's right at forty-five, fifty thousand. Calloway Mills was a big sha-ding of Troup County and all.

TINKER: What did you do for fun in town?

SWANSON: (Laughs) Alright, on Saturday, Daddy would take us to town and give us a quarter. I went by Charlie Joseph, got me a nickel hot dog and a double cola drink. Then I had fifteen cents left. We went to the morning show, and stayed over for the evening show for ten cents and got a bag of popcorn for a quarter, and it was all gone.

TINKER: That sounds good!

SWANSON: For twenty-five cents. That was every Saturday.

TINKER: Money used to go a long way.

SWANSON: Oh, yes. You get the hot dog—we used to pay a nickel for it. Charlie Joseph's grandsons got both his places now. Now just a hot dog with mustard, ketchup, onions, is a dollar and ninety-five cents. (Laughter)

TINKER: So what kind of movies did you like going to see?

SWANSON: We would go see the—when we first started goin' it was the silent movies. William S. Hart cowboy. And then they got the—they had a Western serial on every mornin', and then you got the—at one o' clock the evenin' show come on. And it was generally somethin' with Clark Gable or somebody like that. John Wayne or somebody in it, somethin'.

TINKER: That sounds good. I like those old movies. So how old were you when your family moved to Virginia?

SWANSON: I was sixteen. I was goin' through my junior year.

TINKER: Were you happy about the move, or were you resistant? (Laughs)

SWANSON: Well, I wasn't too happy because Audrey—the girl I married later on—I was gonna finish high school in '39 at Rosemont [High School in LaGrange], and she finished in '40, and we was gonna get married after she finished school. But I got up there—then I worked during the summer months up there on the job with Daddy. Back then they paid I think it was thirty-five cents an hour I got for carpenter help and stuff like that. We called the kids that worked during school “roustabouts,” so that's what we'd do.

TINKER: What was it like in your home, did you have ...

SWANSON: We'd stay in a cabin. They built a—a man that was from a carpenter foreman on up to the steele-rigger, superintendent, stuff like that, they built cabins. We had a two-bedroom cabin they built.

TINKER: Did you have electricity?

SWANSON: I had electricity, running [water] ...

TINKER: And in your first home in Georgia did you have electricity?

SWANSON: No, ma'am, no, ma'am. (Laughs) Had a light. Do you know how I used to get my lessons at night?

TINKER: How?

SWANSON: Get down in front of the fireplace, and while I was gettin' my lessons, I'd rake some coals back and put some sweet potatoes in there and bake them while I'd get my lessons. (Laughter) No, the first time the EMC [Electric Membership Corporation, a New Deal body in Georgia that brought electricity to the state] come through there, they was wantin' to come right across Daddy's land. He says no. He says, "Now, I'll give you the right of way to come by the road, whichever you need that way," but he says, "you ain't comin' across my land." He says—the man that was in charge down there said, "Well, you won't have no lights." Daddy said, "Well, I been used to lamplight so long, I can do without it from now on." And they run them where he wanted them to, too. He was stubborn that way, I tell you. (Laughter)

TINKER: If he would've let them run the lines through there, you all could've had electricity.

SWANSON: Right through the middle where he had his land—see where his farming land ...

TINKER: But he wouldn't ...

SWANSON: No, he wasn't gonna do it. No, no, uh uh. (Laughter) Just like it was, just before I went in the service, Daddy—I told you about buyin' 300 more acres of land?

TINKER: Mm hmm.

SWANSON: He planted cotton in it. And that was when Roosevelt was elected, and they come around, wantin' you to plow up all your cotton for certain percent of it, just keep certain acres of it. Daddy had over 200 acres of cotton planted, and he said, "No, I ain't gonna plant it up." And the man says, "Well, you'll never get it ginned." Daddy said, "Well, we'll see." So, anyhow, when he picked the cotton, Herman's daddy Gene Talmadge was governor of Georgia [Herman Talmadge, son of Gene Talmadge was also governor of Georgia in 1948-1955]. So, Mr. Dunn that had the cotton gin down in Chipley, Georgia, close to where we lived, him and Daddy went to see Gene Talmadge. And he says, "How many bales you expecting?" He says, "I should get somewhere around 200 bales of cotton." He said, "Well, here, I'll get your tickets for you." So he got it ginned. Well, when he—after he got it ginned, cotton had dropped. It dropped to three cents a pound. So, he built a big thing out next to the house there, put tarp over it, put all the cotton under there. And when I went in the service it was still there. And in '40, Momma wrote me, says, "Well, your daddy finally sold his cotton." Says, "He got twenty-one cents a pound for it." (Laughter)

TINKER: He was stubborn, wasn't he? (Laughs)

SWANSON: He was! He wouldn't have done it!

TINKER: He was holding on to that. (Laughs)

SWANSON: He had—after he retired, he built a store down there, him and Momma run a little country store. They done good at it. And they had—I think it was twenty acres back. He would go to stock sales on Tuesday, and buy some pork ... had a good pass at all kind of grass ... and ... stuff like that. And the guy from the county farm there says, “Mr. Swanson, if you will plow up that pass of yours and plant like we want you to, we'll give you a subsidiary.” Daddy said, “I don't need your subsidiary. My pass will stay just like it is.” And that's the way it stayed.

TINKER: I like your dad. (Laughs)

SWANSON: My grandson asked me the other day, he says, “Papaw, what would Granddaddy do if when all these gas prices go up, what would he do if he had been livin'?” I said, “I can tell you exactly what he'd have done.” He says, “What?” I said, “He'd have got him a horse and buggy, that's what he'd have done.” He would've, too. (Laughter)

TINKER: He would not pay that much for gas, would he?

SWANSON: No. (Laughs)

TINKER: Did your father serve in the military?

SWANSON: No.

TINKER: No World War I for him?

SWANSON: No.

TINKER: Was there a reason he didn't get drafted?

SWANSON: Well, he was in construction, in a lot of construction and stuff like that, but he was a farmer. I don't know, they didn't call too many farmers around there then. I think the only farmer I know of that went was Mr. Cliff Smith. He was the only one in Troup County I know of that went during World War I. 'Course, I don't remember that, but I've heard others talk about it and all.

TINKER: Now, what was your wife's name again?

SWANSON: Audrey Leonette Caswell Swanson.

TINKER: Okay. So you said when you all moved to Virginia at sixteen you already knew you wanted to marry her.

SWANSON: Let me go back to the fifth or sixth grade. (Laughter) Rosemont was a—we only had eleven grades then. But they had a lot of grades together. The fifth and sixth grade was together, and she moved from Heard County down to Troup County. Her step-dad—her daddy had died when she was about, I think about three or four years old, and she had a step-daddy. He was a mechanic down at the Troup County stockade down there. And they let us set together—they had double seats like that. (Laughs) I never will forget one day at dinner time, when the dinner-bell rang, I went to get up, and my hand hit her leg. Boy, she slapped me, whoo! She says, “You done it.” I said, “I didn’t.” I said, “My hand slipped. I didn’t do it on purpose.” (Laughter) But, I don’t know, we just—somethin’ happened between us there. And then I got mad at her and joined the service, and then we was twenty years later was when we got married. She was married, and I was too. I didn’t have any children, but she had two from a previous marriage.

TINKER: I was going to tell Kendal, just jump in if you have a question. Okay, don’t be shy.

SWANSON: If you’ve got one go ahead. (Laughter)

YOUNGBLOOD: It sounds like your family was pretty okay during the Depression, but did you kind of see any of the effects of the Depression personally, or did you see it around town?

SWANSON: No, because my daddy during the Depression when I was growing up, Daddy had a good job. He was a superintendent. He made, you know, back then he made around 200 dollars a week, and that was real good money back then. So, no, I didn’t feel it, but I seen some of them around there that did feel it. I had some kinfolks that felt it.

TINKER: Well, I guess she was wanting to know, how did you see it affecting your family members. What was the hardest thing they had?

SWANSON: Momma’s oldest brother, Uncle Arthur, it affected him. He had a big dairy farm, and then he was about to lose everything. I hate to say it like this, but Daddy let him have a bunch of money, and he never did try to pay him back. But Daddy let him have it to keep him on his feet and all.

TINKER: That was nice of your father.

SWANSON: His heart was as big as it could be, but he was—he believed in right. Here’s two things he taught me comin’ up. He said, “Son, be honest with people.” He said, “If you make a debt, if you can’t pay it right then, go to them and talk to them. They’ll work out somethin’ with you.” And he said, “Don’t lie, because if you tell one lie, you gotta tell fifty more to cover up that one.” And another thing he taught me, he says, “If you believe you can do somethin’, and believe in yourself that you can do it, you can do it.” So I guess he got that from where he knew that he believed he wanted to read blueprints and be a superintendent, and he done it.

TINKER: He taught himself.

SWANSON: Yeah.

TINKER: That's excellent. So, you're sixteen, and you all have moved to Virginia. Now, was life very different for you there?

SWANSON: No, it wasn't.

TINKER: Trying to make new friends was probably the hardest?

SWANSON: Oh, yeah. Well, I had Cass's husband's cousin and I graduated high school together. We didn't know it 'til—lemme tell you this. The way I met Cass, I was goin' to church one morning. I stopped by—I always stop by the cemetery and go in. My wife's buried there, and I talk to her a few minutes. I pulled up and I see this man and woman in there. The woman was standin' up between Uncle Ed O'Neil's grave and great-grandpa Augustus O'Neil's grave. I walked in, and I says, "Can I help y'all?" She says, "Yes, I'm doin' research on the O'Neil family." I says, "Well, they's here." She says, "Who are you?" I said, "My name's Durward Swanson. My grandmother's buried right there. She was O'Neil, Augusta O'Neil." I said, "That was Augustus's daughter." She said, "You ever remember Edwin, James, Hilliard, and Olivia O'Neil?" I said, "I've heard Daddy talk about them." She said, "Well, Olivia's my great-grandmother." I said, "Well, Edwin, her brother, was my great-grandfather."

TINKER: That's how y'all found out you were related?

SWANSON: Yes, in the cemetery, yeah. And then we got to goin' places, stuff like that. And then when I got to where I couldn't drive too much, Cass said, "I'll take you wherever you want to go." And I said, "Wait, now I don't wanna interfere with none of y'all's marriage or nothin'." She said, "Jim is completely—" Now she's been to Hawaii twice with me. She's goin' back again this December with me.

TINKER: Well isn't that so fortunate y'all met?

SWANSON: Yeah, it was. I says, "I never expected to meet a beautiful woman in a cemetery before." (Laughter)

TINKER: And it turn out it's your cousin.

SWANSON: Yeah.

TINKER: Okay, so, you're in high school in Virginia. Did you all listen to the radio a lot. I mean, were you aware of what was going on?

SWANSON: Yeah, Daddy did, and Momma would always go to town. There was a Ferris Brothers Grocery. Now, they'd come out to the camp during ... Then Momma and Daddy—on Saturday night, I'd go to a movie or somethin' anyhow, and if I had a date or somethin', she'd meet me. We'd go to the movie together. Daddy would go bowlin' with the little bitty ball, not the big one. They had the little bitty balls then. And Momma would go to the grocery store. By

the time that Daddy got through bowlin', movie's over, Momma done finished shoppin', we go back home then. That was every routine, every Saturday night.

TINKER: So you were going out with other girls even though you knew you were ...

SWANSON: Yeah, I dated a little girl up in there named Lillian Dezmuke for a while.

TINKER: What was her name?

SWANSON: Lillian Dezmuke.

TINKER: Lillian, okay. That's hard to spell. (Laughs) I guess I was going to ask—you said you got mad at Audrey?

SWANSON: Uh huh, but she—when I was in the service, I wrote her a letter, I wrote her a letter, I told her—we was at a prom party one night at my first cousin's house, and she come with Wayne, her brother, and Harvey Peacock, a friend of ours. And I said, "I'm gonna take you home." She said, "You know how strict my mother is. You can't do it Durward!" I said, "Well, if you don't let me take you home, you won't see me anymore for a while." So, the next letter she got from me, I was in Hawaii at Hickam Field. (Laughter) Then we corresponded back and forth, but a lot of times she wouldn't get my letters. Her mother would get them [and] tear them up. \

TINKER: Did they not like you?

SWANSON: No, she didn't. She didn't like nobody that come from Oak Grove community down in there.

TINKER: (Laughs) Now, why? What was there about ...

SWANSON: She said there was a bunch of roughnecks in there. We were just like same communities, like Pleasant Grove was. There was some roughnecks up there, but all—it wasn't, it was—I don't know. Lucy was just that way, but after me and her married, oh, she was the sweetest thing you ever see in your life. (Laughter) She said, "I don't know why you and Audrey [didn't] get married a long time ago." I said, "You know why. You know exactly why." But anyhow, she married Cleveland Evans. She sent me a letter and sent me a little keepsake thing. She says, "I want you to bring this to me when you get back out of the service, and get back from Hawaii over there." And she told me after we married, she says—but Cleveland got killed over in Europe, during World War II—and she says, "I was gonna divorce him soon as you come back, and marry you anyhow." (Laughs)

TINKER: Well, you all should've gotten married in the first place. (Laughs)

SWANSON: Well, I married a woman from Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and we lived in Nashville.

RALL: Hey, my mother's from Hopkinsville.

SWANSON: Hop-town!

RALL: Yes, sir.

SWANSON: That's who I married, a Dunn woman from down there, Mary Dunn. We lived together about twelve years, I guess it was, something like that.

RALL: That's nice. I'm from Kentucky originally.

SWANSON: You are?

RALL: Yes, sir.

SWANSON: From Hopkinsville?

RALL: No, well, my mother's from Hopkinsville, and I'm from Paducah. I was born in Paducah, which is ...

SWANSON: Paducah?

RALL: Mm hmm.

SWANSON: Oh, Lord, a lot of musicians come out of Paducah, gospel singers.

RALL: There are a few, there are a few.

SWANSON: Do you remember the—what was it? She just died, here a while back. They started out as The Kentuckians. Oh, what was that woman's name? She had one of the most beautiful voices. It was her and her husband, and her husband's brother and his wife. Oh, gosh, what was—it'll come to me in a minute.

TINKER: You can tell us when it comes to you. So, when did you know you were going to go in the service?

SWANSON: The night that she wouldn't let me take her home. I went to the post office the next morning. They had a big sign out front, says, "Join up for Hawaii. One more base in the Army Air Corps."

TINKER: Is that what the sign said?

SWANSON: Yeah, that was the biggest lie there ever was.

TINKER: They were using Hawaii to get you to ... (Laughter)

SWANSON: Yeah, yeah. But see I went in—when I went in in '39, August the 3rd of '39, it was Army Air Corps. Alright, in June of 1941, they changed it to the Army Air Forces. Then, in

'47, they made a separate branch out of it called the U.S. Air Force. And that's why that picture was the sixty-fifth birthday of the U.S. Air Force.

TINKER: So, you just kind of did it almost on a whim then?

SWANSON: Well, yeah.

TINKER: Like you weren't thinking, I'm going to go serve my country.

SWANSON: I said, no, what I was thinking about—I said, "I'm gonna get as far away from you as I can, and yes, I'm going to see some of the world and serve my country." That's what I thought.

TINKER: Okay, well, that's a good package then. (Laughter) What did your parents think about your decision?

SWANSON: Well, I tried to get Daddy—see I wasn't ...

TINKER: You weren't eighteen yet.

SWANSON: And, he said, "No, I ain't gonna sign it, no, no." So I went to Momma, Momma says, "Durward, you don't wanna do that." Says, "Why don't you go on to college?" I said, "I've got enough of school." She says, "Well I don't know if I—" I said, "Well, if you don't sign it, I'm gonna forge your name. I'm gonna sign it for you." And she looked at me, she said, "Give it to me." She signed it, and when she got through—wait a minute (phone rings).

TINKER: Yeah, I'll pause it.

(Tape Paused)

TINKER: Okay, so your mom went ahead and signed ...

SWANSON: Oh, yeah, and she looked at me, and she says, "I'm doin' this, but y'all make me do things I don't wanna." That's haunted me as long as I lived, it did, as long as she lived. It did. I said ...

TINKER: Well, because think how she would've felt if something had happened to you.

SWANSON: Well, I was her baby boy. That's one reason that W.G. [Swanson's brother] was so jealous of me. But I'll say one thing, I'll give him credit for one thing, he was a good a builder as there was. He was superintendent, and I was superintendent. He was as good a builder as there ever was. He knew how to build and all.

TINKER: Okay, so you enlisted in ...

SWANSON: August the 3rd, 1939.

TINKER: August 1939. Now, there wasn't a whole lot of money in the military at that time.

SWANSON: Twenty-one dollars a month.

TINKER: Well, and plus, you know, you hear the stories about how the army was training with broomsticks and stuff like that. When you went in, did it seem that sparse to you?

SWANSON: No, I took—we was at Fort Benning [Georgia] for three weeks, and we took some training down there under George S. Patton. He was a bird colonel then.

TINKER: Oh, okay.

SWANSON: Then we was shipped to Fort Moultrie [South Carolina] and called to Leonard Wood. Went from Fort Moultrie through the canal zone. We stopped on ... on the Atlantic side, and then we went to Balboa on the Pacific side. Then we went to Fort McDowell, and that's where we finished up gettin' out shots and everything.

TINKER: Fort McDowell? I've never heard of that.

SWANSON: It's right behind Alcatraz. It's a big island. It's part of the island over there, behind Alcatraz. And then we went—we landed October the 16th at Honolulu next to the lower tower. From there we went to Wheeler Field. They hadn't finished Hickam then, and we got most of our recruit training finished up at Wheeler Field.

TINKER: Now, when you enlisted, did you have any idea what you were going to be doing?

SWANSON: Uh uh, not a bit. I just wanted to go in the Army Air Force and go to Hawaii, that's where I wanted to go. (Laughter)

RALL: What did you know about Hawaii before you went? What were your sort of thoughts about Hawaii before ...

SWANSON: Nothin', I didn't know nothin' about it. (Laughter)

RALL: You didn't think it was some great tropical paradise, you just knew it was far away?

SWANSON: Oh, that's what I thought, yeah, yeah. (Laughter) I didn't know a thing in the world about Hawaii. I'd heard about it and all, like that there, but that was all.

TINKER: Were you following politics? Were you aware of that strain that was going on between the U.S. and Japan?

SWANSON: No, but this will go in the interview too. The war with Japan actually started back in the 30s. That's when we cut their ...

TINKER: Their oil.

SWANSON: Billy Mitchell told them—we were sellin' them scrap iron. Billy told them, says, "They gonna turn it around and fight you with that scrap iron you're sellin' them." So, they kicked him out of the service. But they named the B-25 after him. Then, in '43 I think it was, '42 or '43, they wanted to give his wife the Congressional Medal of Honor. You know what she told them to do with it? "Stick it." (Laughter) That's exactly what she said, "Stick it."

TINKER: Well, after what they did to him ...

SWANSON: Yeah, sure. And he was a smart man, he was. But, it's—I think in the last part of the book [Swanson is referring to his autobiography he had brought as a gift to the interviewers.] you'll see where this historian for the Pearl Harbor Survivors' Association—I got his copy. He wrote in there where the actual war started, when we cut their oil and stuff like that off of them.

TINKER: Yeah, one of our projects when I was still an undergrad, and I was learning how to do this, our professor had us go back and look at weekly newspapers in Knoxville. And when I started look—I started looking at the weeks leading up to Pearl Harbor, and it was amazing to me. I thought, well you can just read the newspapers, you can kind of see something was going to give. There was a lot of tension. Because now, you know, all you hear about is it was a surprise attack, which it was, but if you go back and look at the old newspapers—we cut their oil, and we're basically just cutting them off, and things are not looking good.

SWANSON: Let me show you somethin' I got last week. A friend of mine, he's dead, but his son sent me a copy of the paper, of the *Honolulu Advertiser*. He sent it. It was in a Florida paper, but there was a copy of it in front. Guess what the copy of the *Honolulu Advertiser* read? Now, I'll tell you what it said in there. It said the headlines "Japanese May Hit Hawaiian Islands Early This Weekend." That was on April, I mean November the 30th. Well, the next weekend—next Sunday was December the seventh.

TINKER: The tensions were really building. That's why I ...

SWANSON: Then, he went down, this guy was at the hospital at Schofield Barracks. He went down to get his morning paper, and he heard—tearin' his paper up like that. They was tearin' the front pages off, but he managed to get one of the copies before they tore it off. He says, "Why are y'all doing this?" They said, "The big brass told us to do it."

TINKER: Okay.

SWANSON: See, they knew—I always said this, that they knew that they was gonna hit us.

TINKER: Or that something was coming.

SWANSON: There's a book out now, it's been out for a long time. It's called *Deceit at Pearl Harbor*. You ever hear about it?

TINKER: It sounds familiar.

SWANSON: Alright, in 1964 they turned the Freedom Act loose. Congress passed it. They had to release all the tapes from the ... They got Roosevelt's tape. One morning at 3:40, Churchill called him. And he says, "Franklin, I hate to wake you up at this time," but says, "Scotland Yard just broke a coded message from Tojo [Japanese Prime Minister in 1941] to Hitler. It said that they was gonna hit the Hawaiian islands early in December." Roosevelt says—it's in the tape there. It says, "Don't worry about it." He says, "I won't declare war, I'll make war." So he said, "I won't be here when it happens." Alright, you know the only man that was at Washington, D.C. when the war broke out, December the 7th? Hap Arnold, head of the Air Force—Army Air Corps. Knox was in Tennessee [William Knox was Secretary of the Navy 1940-1944], Roosevelt was in Warm Springs, and Marshall was in Kansas [George Marshall was the Army Chief of Staff 1939-1945]. Nobody was in Washington. Hap Arnold was the only one there. And this guy that wrote the book—Lieutenant Commander Landis, he's the author of the book. Roosevelt already planned to send what they called the feathered goats out. Three destroyers from the Philippines to attack the whole Japanese army, navy I mean. And they knew they'd be sunk, then we'd declare war, see? If they hadn't hit us December the 7th.

TINKER: This has always been a persistent rumor, and some people dispute it, but even apart from that, I was always just amazed at reading local newspapers, how much you could see happening.

SWANSON: What I can't understand, I've got a first cousin and a buddy still entombed in the *Arizona*. There's 1,077 men still entombed there.

TINKER: I guess I brought up that, when you're there at Wheeler and then Hickam, was there any talk of that?

SWANSON: No, we didn't know. We had just been on maneuvers. The whole island had been on maneuvers. And see, we had our ammunition at Hickam. The navy had theirs on the ship. But Fort DeRussy, Fort Shafter, Fort Kam [Fort Kamehameha], Schofield Barracks, and all them had to haul the live ammunition down during the first raid from Ala Moana and Red Hill Craters.

TINKER: Well, when you first got to Wheeler Field, did you continue training, or what was the first thing they had you doing when you first arrived to Wheeler?

SWANSON: We had calisthenics every mornin', trainin', and general orders read to us, and had to memorize them.

TINKER: And what was your job?

SWANSON: We'd catch KP [kitchen patrol or kitchen police], somethin' like that. A fatigue, goin' out and cleanin' it up, stuff like that.

TINKER: So, you still had not been assigned to a unit?

SWANSON: No. Then when they sent us to Hickam, the first thing they done, stuck me on guard duty one night. Then the next mornin' I read the bulletin board, and it says, "Anybody that wants to go to air mechanic school, sign." Boy, I put my name right under there. (Laughter) And I finished second—come out with a second AM [air mechanic] ratin' at air mechanic school. Me and a buddy of mine, Albert J. Lloyd—he's mentioned in the book. We were just like brothers. We went over on the same ship, but we didn't know each other until they stuck us in the same tent together; that's when we first got to Hickam. Called it Tent City. I was ridin' a motorcycle on post, comin' up Hanger Avenue, and I kept hearin' this horn blowin', blowin'. The guy kept motionin' like that (Gestures), and I pulled over. And he come up, he says, "I'm Master Sergeant Dallas M. Kramer. I'm commander of the guards here at Hickam. I'm fixin' to start a air police. Would you like to—I see you ride a motorcycle," and he says, "It's gonna be motorcycle men. Would you like to head it up?" I said, "I don't know." I said, "I just got out of air mechanic school." He says, "I'll give you a buck sergeant ratin' if you'll take the job." I said, "Why should I take a fifty-four dollar job when I'm makin' seventy-two now?" And the staff sergeant paid seventy-two. He said, "Well, if you'll take the job, well then, within four or five months I'll have you a staff sergeant ratin'." I said, "Well, let me think about it." So I got to thinkin', and I said, might be good. So I took it. And I was on head of the air police. There was six of us. We rode in two in shifts, twelve hour shifts, two at a time. And there's a picture of—there's right before my picture in that book there, there's a picture of us. Right, you'll see the air police.

TINKER: That's the ships, oh, there you are!

SWANSON: That's it right there. That's the barracks, right in front of the barracks. That's me, the second one from the left. Yeah, right here, that's me. That's the big barracks that just—we had that barracks. Hadn't been finished, but about a \$350 million barracks hadn't been finished, I guess about five or six months when the Japanese hit us.

TINKER: So, well, here you are in Hawaii. You must've thought you had it pretty good.

SWANSON: Oh, yeah.

TINKER: Riding a motorcycle around, having a good time. (Laughter) You didn't spend much time as a mechanic.

SWANSON: Well, the—yeah, I was about two months, I was on the flight line workin' on—all we had back then was B-18s, two-engine planes.

TINKER: Is that what you learned on?

SWANSON: That's what I learned on, yes, ma'am.

TINKER: Okay, and were you a crew chief, or were you just an engine ...

SWANSON: No, I was later on, but I had to go back. This was after the war started, when I was—I had come back to the States to Chanute Fields, Illinois. That's one of the toughest crew chief schools you'll ever go to. It's closed now, but ...

TINKER: I was in the Air Force, and I was a mechanic. And that's where I went to my training.

SWANSON: At Chanute?

TINKER: At Chanute, yeah.

SWANSON: God!

TINKER: (Laughs) It was a cold place.

SWANSON: They give us some lessons, and all. See, a flight—they changed our M.O. [Modus Operandi (method of operation)] later on during the war from a crew chief to a flight engineer. And my panel was right behind the co-pilot, settin' up there. Everything was on my panel. I seen it out of the seat there. They give me—I was there, studyin' and studyin', and then the last day, next to the last day I was there, he come in with a bunch of questions. He says, "Now, you got thirty minutes to answer every one of these questions." Then he says, "You got to get three-fourths of them right to pass." I finished the questions in twenty-eight minutes, and got every one of them correct.

TINKER: That's pretty good. (Laughs)

SWANSON: He said, "You the only man that's ever come through here that's done that quick, and got them all right." Well, I was good in math and stuff like that. I was always—history and math was my two main subjects.

TINKER: Just the English you weren't too good at, right?

SWANSON: Well, I had to be when I went to Tennessee Tech, to get into that college down there. But if I hadn't have had geometry and trigonometry and all like that, solid and plane, I don't think I'd have ever made it. (Laughs)

TINKER: So, how long were you in the security, ya know, on the motorcycle?

SWANSON: Up 'til—well the war started on December the 7th, and I think it was maybe about the 20th or somethin' like that, I seen Captain Toole ...

TINKER: Of November?

SWANSON: He was—huh?

TINKER: Was it November 20th, when you—when did you start working the security?

SWANSON: Security?

TINKER: Yeah.

SWANSON: No, it was back in June of ...

TINKER: '40?

SWANSON: Yeah, June, around May or June, somethin' like that. I worked on the flatline a couple months before, and I stayed on it 'til—I had just come off duty the night the bomber hit the next morning. [I had] just laid down and closed my—I missed death by ten minutes. I just come out of the mess hall, and the bomb hit that and killed forty-three men eatin' breakfast.

TINKER: And you had just left?

SWANSON: I had just left. Laid down across—I was gettin' short. See, back when I went in the service, you signed up for three years, but that was considered foreign service. You only done two. So, I was ...

TINKER: Right, so you were close to getting out.

SWANSON: Yeah, so I was comin' back in February. So, we was plannin' on goin'—Sunday mornin', goin' down to Honolulu, me and Lloyd and Albright, and a couple more of us, and doin' a little celebratin', so ...

TINKER: Huh. So, you were already in your bunk when the Japanese flew ...

SWANSON: Well, I hadn't taken my pants off. I had just laid down across—I took my shirt off, and my shoes, and I still had my socks on.

TINKER: What was the first thing you heard?

SWANSON: Harry Albright comin' runnin' through the—I'm gonna tell it just like the way it is now.

TINKER: Okay.

SWANSON: He come runnin' through the barracks—"Sergeant, Sergeant, get up. The Japs are bombin' the hell out of us." And my bed was right in the corner, had the window here, and a window here, and I rolled over, and I seen this plane backin'—I seen the risin' sun on the wing. I knew it wasn't no joke. I knew it. So I got my shirt on, went down, strapped my .45 on, jumped on the motorcycle. Sergeant Kramer had always said if anything happened, all the guards go straight to the main gate. Then we could circle like guards around the whole perimeter of Hickam Field there, and that's where I went. When I got down there, I said, "Has anybody seen Lloyd?" We called him Stud, Stud Lloyd. They said, "The last time—" Burr said, "The last time I seen him he was standin' out in the middle of the ball diamond with a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle] firin' at everything he seen, cussin' the Japs. I said, "He's gonna get himself killed." So I jumped on one of those, started back up there to get him, and as I started back, I went on Hangar Avenue. Instead of goin' Entrance Boulevard, I went Hangar Avenue. But that

was the wrong thing to do, 'cause I should have went—'cause they was hittin' the Hangar Avenue, the Zeroes strafin' and all. And I seen one comin' straight at me. So there was a parking lot down there; I just slid right up under the parking lot I went, under the car. I thought it was good at the time, but I got to thinkin' bout it after that day, I swear if he'd have kept strafin' and hit a gas tank, I wouldn't have been here today, would I?

TINKER: That's right.

SWANSON: But anyhow, he went on by, and I got up and went to Lloyd. I said, "Stud, get your butt on this motorcycle. You're gonna get killed, let's get out of here." And we started out, we heard some noise comin' from the guard house. And I said, "God, there's prisoners still in there." So we went in the guard house, and I picked the phone up. The OD [Officer of the Day], if he would've stayed at home, he had to leave his telephone number there for you to call if anything happened. We had a room there we stayed, but Lieutenant Ritchie was at home, so I called him. I said, "Lieutenant, we got four prisoners in here, what do you wanna do with them?" He said, "Let them out, we're at war. Just let them out." So I opened the door and let them out. And then we went on back down to the gate down there, and we circled—then we started puttin' guards all around the perimeter of Hickam Field and everything there.

TINKER: Because you didn't know what in the world was coming.

SWANSON: I was scared, I ain't kiddin' you. Somebody asked me one time, says "Was you scared?" I said, "Yeah, I was at first." I said, "If somebody tells you, if they was in combat the first time that wasn't scared, they either crazy or a big liar, one of the two. I don't know which it is." Yes, I was scared. We were—I say 90% of the people—airmen at Hickam Field was anywhere from eighteen to twenty-two years old. Well, we had some old-timers, like Sergeant Kramer. He was in World War I. We had some old-timers there.

TINKER: But not many though?

SWANSON: No, there wasn't many of us there, no. Then, after that, I was comin' up Hangar Avenue on the motorcycle, and I seen—I met Lieutenant Toole when he—this is a—I don't know whether y'all wanna hear it and all, but I'm gonna tell it.

TINKER: (Laughs) Go ahead.

SWANSON: He was—he later married Colonel Greene's daughter over at Fort Kam, which is right behind Hickam. And he was a soup pilot All they had up there at Wheeler then was P-26s. He landed over on Leaver Beach to pick some flowers. And he was late comin'. He broke formation, late comin' in. When he landed there, Colonel Lynn says—looked over and walked up, he says, "Lieutenant, where'd you get them flowers at?" He says, "I knew my goose was cooked." He said, "I told him I just flew bottom side up over there and picked them to take them to my sweetheart." He said, "Park your plane over there." He parked it, but you know what he done? Flew it through the hangar and then parked it. (Laughter) And he told me, he said, "They Shanghaied me in the heavy bomb squadron." (Laughs) They did. That's where I first met him. He used to pull OD. Every time, when he was on OD he said, "Where's Swanson?" And he'd

want me to go with him to catch the guards and around and all like that. One—there used to be big sugarcane field right across in front of the gate there, and he said, “Well, let’s walk over there.” He took his saber out and cut us two stalks. I said, “Lieutenant!” He said, “Damn thing ain’t worth nothin’ nohow.” (Laughter) He was a mess, but he was a good man, he was.

TINKER: When I first met you, you were telling me that you were pretty sure that you were supposed to have a lesson with Cornelia Fort that day. [Cornelia Fort was a civilian pilot instructor who gave lessons at Pearl Harbor, though she would later the WAFS and become the first American female pilot to die on active duty. She was flying in the air when the first wave of Japanese attacked the harbor.]

SWANSON: My flyin’ time was at ten o’ clock.

TINKER: For that morning, the seventh?

SWANSON: Right. Stingle had been given—I don’t know what he was goin’, but he says, “The lady here will give you your solo lesson at ten o’ clock on Sunday mornin’.” And she was already in the air with somebody, I don’t know who it was. But she was supposed to be through with him at ten o’ clock.

TINKER: Isn’t that something?

SWANSON: And they got her pic—have you ever been to the Aviation Museum over in Sevierville?

TINKER: Yes.

SWANSON: They got her picture over there.

TINKER: They have a nice tribute to her over there.

SWANSON: Yes, they have. They sure have, yeah.

TINKER: What happened the rest of the day? You’re doing your patrols on your motorcycle?

SWANSON: We kept on after the bombing—some of them said there was two raids but there was three. The last one was a high altitude bomb come over there. But anyhow, we made sure the perimeter was secure around, especially the bombed up where all the bombs was out there. We had five guards over there around that perimeter there. And they tore up the ball field. They hit that ball field, they tore it—see they had planned to put all of the oil and everything underground at where the ball field is, but later they changed it and put it out on the bomb number. Well, the Japanese had the map of the ball ...

TINKER: They thought it was still at the ball field?

SWANSON: Yeah, that's why they bombed it so much, tore it up so much like that. But they got fooled on that one.

TINKER: From where you were, could you see or hear—I mean, I've never been there so I don't know the proximity of the harbor. You could see and hear all that?

SWANSON: Oh, yeah, I was standin' at the main gate and I seen the bomb when it went in the magazine section. I didn't know what it was at the time, but I seen a big mushroom cloud come up. And it was when the *Arizona* went up. It went down through the stack and hit the magazine section down in there. I didn't know what it was at the time, but later on I found out what it was. They wouldn't let us drink no water, so I was a thirsty gator. So I went down to the Officers' Club, and me and Lloyd, we got in the command car and went down there. We got three cases of beer, two cases of Johnny Walker scotch whiskey. (Laughter) And I never drank so much in my life. I want to get drunk, I wanted to—I couldn't do it, I'm tellin' you.

TINKER: This was after it was all over?

SWANSON: Yeah, yeah.

TINKER: Why wouldn't they let you drink water?

SWANSON: They said they thought it was contaminated. Japanese—they even thought the Japanese was comin' to shore, and some of them was already ashore. And they said they thought they'd contaminated our water supply and everything.

TINKER: So y'all just went and raided the booze? (Laughter)

SWANSON: I slept in a little pup tent in ... bushes that night. Boy, they was firin'—they'd fire at anything. In fact, we had three planes comin' back off the *Enterprise* to land over at Luke Field, where it was Ford Island. Now, it used to be over at Luke Field. And they shot one of them down, the navy did. But the pilot got out of it alright. They was jump-happy. I was comin' by up toward the guard house, and we had five guards around the guard house there. And Kramer said, "Nobody goes in the guard house." I said, "What about our—?" [Kramer said] "Leave them like they are. Nobody goes in the guard [house]." I don't know what ever happened to my clothes and my bag.

TINKER: So, all your stuff is just gone?

SWANSON: Yeah, personal stuff and all. And I had over \$300 in my footlocker.

TINKER: And you never got any of that back?

SWANSON: Nope, no. Never, not a bit of it.

TINKER: Well, that's ...

SWANSON: My class ring was in it.

TINKER: That must've been rough at first.

SWANSON: I don't know what ever—after we did get back up there, all of it was gone, so I don't know what they done with it. Nobody will ever know I don't guess.

TINKER: That's interesting. I've never heard that one before. Did you fire your weapon that day or anything?

SWANSON: Uh uh.

TINKER: Never needed to?

SWANSON: Never drew it out of the holster.

TINKER: You were just busy getting out of the way right?

SWANSON: Yeah. I had it on my side. It was ready. All I had to do was take the safety off.

TINKER: Did you lose any of your friends that day?

SWANSON: Two of them. I saw one of them get cut half in two. I didn't tell you this. When me and—I went back to get Lloyd. James Strickland, he come runnin' out of the barracks runnin' for the bleachers. He was tryin' to get in the bleachers to hide. And the machine gun—Lloyd was shootin' at this plane, and he cut James right half in two. He was from Erwin, Tennessee. I'm goin' back up there, supposed to October this year. They're havin' the James Strickland Day up there. And I don't think none of them know how he died exactly. He's buried over in the punchbowl. [The punchbowl is a crater in Honolulu where the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific is located.] Every time I go, I go by his grave down there.

TINKER: So your other friend was trying to get the plane before it ...

SWANSON: He didn't die. He was beggin' me and Lloyd, he said, "Shoot me and get me out of my misery." And I seen a medic up there, so I went to get him. By the time I got back, James was dead.

TINKER: Oh, that's tough.

SWANSON: And then they found another buddy of mine, George Smith—we didn't know what happened to him. We thought maybe he went over the hill or ... or where, we couldn't find him. Twenty-one days later, next to the tennis court over there, there was some lumber, and they took the lumber off of him like that, and there he was under there. And they counted where he had twenty-one bullet holes in him. And he's buried down in the punchbowl. Things like that—I mean, for a long time, when I was writin' this book and all, I was getting' some of it—Cass was helpin' me with it and like that. And she was askin' me about James, and we was talkin' about it.

I could see him just as plain as day. He used to—there's a poem Joe ... it's in the Seventh Air Force book. I got one of them. And it says, starts out and it says, "Once around the barracks, where once we laughed and sang, the steel guitar now is broken where once we used to sing." James used to play that steel guitar. You know where it's at now?

TINKER: Where?

SWANSON: It's in the Music Museum in Nashville, Tennessee.

TINKER: His steel guitar is?

SWANSON: His steel guitar is, yeah. They sent it there to—that was his idol, to play the steel guitar on the Opry. So, they sent the steel guitar. It's in there in the Music Hall of Fame there in Nashville.

TINKER: That's nice to know. That's nice.

SWANSON: I'm gonna surprise y'all in a minute, and tell you somethin' I bet you didn't know.

TINKER: Uh oh. (Laughter)

SWANSON: Should I gone on and finish or not?

TINKER: (Laughing) Well, go ahead I guess.

SWANSON: I was front man for Hank Williams, Sr. [regarded as one of the most significant and influential American singers and songwriters of the 20th century], for about nine months.

TINKER: Oh, you were? Now, when was this?

SWANSON: This was in '49 and part of '50. A lot of part of '49 and '50. I had planned on goin' back to college. I had a—well, I married Dawn from Hopkinsville. She lived in Nashville, and she worked as a cashier down at Union Station there in Nashville. That's where I met her, and we dated and she got me—she heard me sing a couple times. She says, "Why don't you start you a band?" So, I got to foolin'. We got to goin' to nightclubs and all, and I would get up once in a while and sing a song, somethin' like that. So I decided I would. So I did. I got me a band up. I got me a steel player, a bass player, a guitar player, and I had a trumpet player in the band. And Jerry Rivers was a fiddle player for Hank Williams. He come out to Lynn View Inn one night, he says—I was known as then Dusty Swanson. And he says, "Dusty," he says, "Hank needs a front man." Well, let me tell you what a front man will do. A front man is a guy that comes out with the band. He sings a couple of songs; he tells maybe a joke or two like that. Then he introduces the star of the show, like Hank. And I said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, let me—I'm gonna bring Hank out here." So, the next Saturday after they got through with Opry here, he come—we played on Saturday nights, start about 8:30 and we played to about 1:30, two o'clock in the mornin'. So, after they got through up there, he come out there, and I says, I talked to Hank and like that. I said, "Would you do a song here?" He said, "Sure I will!" And

everybody wanted to hear “The Lovesick Blues,” and he done it. (Laughter) And I says, “Okay, I’ll try it for a while.” But I tell you one reason why I didn’t sta—I wanted to go to college, and I meant I was goin’ to college. But I could’ve stayed a little longer, but I seen so much of this pill and dope, and I knew if I stayed in there, I could probably get hooked on it, too. That wasn’t no part of my life, nuh uh, no. Because I’ve seen them pop them pills and shoot syringe in their arms.

TINKER: Even back then?

SWANSON: Yes, ma’am, they sure did. In fact, we was at the Opry one night, and Moon Mullican [western singer, songwriter, and pianist] come in—you ever hear of him?

TINKER: Moon Mullican? I’ve never heard of Moon ...

SWANSON: He was the one that come out, “I’ll sail my ship along, with all my dreams are gone, and when it starts to sink, I’ll blame you.” He was from Texas. He played the piano. Anyhow, I seen him when he come in to do the show that night, and I could tell by his eyes. So, he went in the bathroom; he stayed a pretty good while. And I told Jerry Rivers standin’ next to me, I says, “There’s somethin’—I’m goin’ in the bathroom. I’ll be back in a minute.” Well, I looked and I couldn’t find nothin’. But all of a sudden I go out, I reached up over the door, there his syringe was where he’d been shootin’. You know what I done with it? I stomped it and threwed it in the commode.

TINKER: That’s exactly what I would have done. (Laughter)

SWANSON: I done. That’s one reason I didn’t stay with Hank no longer. Now, Hank was on pills, too, but Hank had leukemia. And Jerry called me ...

TINKER: Well, he always looked kind of puny.

SWANSON: Huh?

TINKER: He always looked kind of puny.

SWANSON: Yeah, but Jerry called me the night he was goin’ to Dayton, Ohio to play a show date, and he said, “Durward, would you love to go up there with him?” Said, “He would love to have you as his front man, do the—“ I said, “I’m tied up in college, Jerry. Ain’t no way I can do it.” Next mornin’ I heard where he died, in Oak—here’s somethin’ about Hank. He live in Oak Hill, Tennessee. That’s a suburb of Nashville. He died in Oak Hill, West Virginia. He buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Montgomery, Alabama. He lived, died, and buried in Oak Hill, three different states.

TINKER: Well, you know there’s controversy about whether he died in Knoxville.

SWANSON: They said he died in Knoxville, but he stopped in Knoxville.

TINKER: Because there's suspicion that they think he died in the back of the car during the trip, right? Isn't that the story?

SWANSON: Yeah, but Charlie Carr, his chauffeur, talked to him after they left Knoxville, and he said he stopped at Oak Hill to get some gas, and he said, "Mr. Williams, you need anything?" He didn't answer him, and he called the medics and he was dead. Yeah he said he—Charlie said he talked to him after he left Knoxville.

TINKER: Okay, well I wonder why that rumor persists then.

SWANSON: I don't know. I've heard it many, many times.

TINKER: Well, probably because Knoxville wishes that they had some kind of claim to Hank Williams, right? (Laughter)

SWANSON: But that man had—we left Knoxville one night, and we played on ... Record Shop. And twelve o'clock we left. Back then, Hank would fly sometimes with Cannon Airlines. Otherwise, he had a five-seat Cadillac. We didn't have no tour bus or nothin' like that then. He set between me and Hillous Butrum who was the bass player back then, and he wrote three songs. And he says, "I'll have every one of them on the Popular Hit Parade within ninety days." "Hey Good Lookin'," "I Can't Help it," and "Cold, Cold Heart."

TINKER: He wrote those three in the back of the car? (Laughs)

SWANSON: Three songs, yes ma'am. You could give him an idea for—that man, one of the last songs he wrote, he was down in—let me think of the name, that's where my daughter-in-law is from. It's in Alabama.

TINKER: Montgomery?

SWANSON: It's out—it's a little cabin like, Lake Martin. Alright Lake Martin. Her daddy had a—he was a dentist colonel in the army, and this guy from Montgomery wanted to do his life history. Hank says, "I'll meet you down there," but [he] says, "I don't know whether I'm gonna live long enough for you to do it or not." But anyhow, they did. Next morning, he got up early, walked outside, and there's a number two washtub there. And he got to [Swanson begins beating on table]. You know what song he come up with? [Swanson begins humming the tune to "Kaw-Liga."] As you went in Lake Martin there was a totem pole on each side of the ...

TINKER: So that's how he came up with that? Just on the spot? Wow.

SWANSON: When he came up there with a song—him and Audrey [Sheppard, Williams' first wife] come to Nashville the first time, and Fred Rose [another country music songwriter in the Country Music Hall of Fame] says, "How do I know you wrote these songs?" He said, "Well, you give me an idea for one," he said, "I'll write you one." (Laughter) So [Williams] said, "Alright," he says, "Here's this poor boy in love with this girl, and this rich boy's in love with

this girl.” He says, “That’s all I need.” He went off and come back, you know what he come back with?”

TINKER: What?

SWANSON: “Mansion on the Hill.” [Singing] “Tonight, down here in the valley, I’m lonesome in the white field. I know you’re livin’ in sorrow with your mansion on the hill.” He’s got over 400 hundred songs never been published. And he’s got a son—I heard this on the radio the other day. Hank III ...

TINKER: Yeah, now I’ve seen him.

SWANSON: God! He was singin’ “Cold, Cold Heart,” and I thought it was a record.

TINKER: Doesn’t it sound just like him?

SWANSON: He sounds just like him!

TINKER: And he kind of looks like him.

SWANSON: It made cold chills run up and down my back. He looks like him. He even looks like him.

TINKER: Hank III looks like him, but Hank, jr. doesn’t. (Laughter)

SWANSON: No, Hank, jr.—Audrey ruined Hank, jr. She ruined him.

TINKER: Did she?

SWANSON: She taught him he was better than anybody else, he was better than anybody else. And you know it, he like to get killed. That’s why he wears that beard. He was skiin’ and hit the rock pile.

RALL: Are you ready for some football?

SWANSON: But I can see Hank right now. When he was pickin’ that guitar, he’d always raise up on that left foot. You’d see him raise up with it.

TINKER: Wow, you’re just full of good stories. (Laughter) We’re getting military history and music history.

SWANSON: Anyhow, Captain Toole seen me one day, he said, he asked me, he says, “You gonna ride that motorcycle the rest of your life? I want you back on the flat-line with me.” He said, “I need a crew chief.”

TINKER: How long after the attack was this?

SWANSON: This was, I think it was in the first part of January, somethin' like that. And he says, "Now, you gonna have to go to school for six weeks." I said, "Well, okay." He says, "You're goin' back to Chanute Field." And says, "They may give you a furlough home if you want it." But buddy, they didn't. As soon as I finished school, they shot me right back to Hawaii.

TINKER: Well, in the immediate aftermath of the attack, was everybody just trying to—I guess everybody just focused on the task at hand, right? Just trying to get back to normal.

SWANSON: Yeah, it took a while to get back because, I don't know, there was still some—you could see a Oriental or somethin' like that come in, you could see the kind of fear or somethin' in their eyes.

TINKER: Yeah, a little fear.

SWANSON: You know what I'm talkin' about. The kind that—in fact, that Wahoo Railroad come in out at Hickam there, and you had to had a gate you had to open. Stud down there one mornin', when this breakman on the Wahoo that come in, and he was a Chinaman. Stud knew he was a Chinaman. He says, "Swanson, come here, come here." I swear, he says, "I got me a Jap I'm fixin' to kill over here." [The Chinese man said,] "Me no Jap! Me Chinese!" (Laughter) I said, "Stud, I oughta kick you."

TINKER: Just teasing the poor man.

SWANSON: Yeah, he was. But there was—now the lady that helped write the Seventh Air Force, she was Japanese. And, Inouye, you know he died, Senator Inouye died. He was in the war and lost an arm over in Europe. They've got some good—one college I went to, it was down in Georgia down there. It's Columbus College. And this guy, he asked me a question. He says, "Why did we have to drop the bomb on the Japanese?" And I seen his professor—it was a history class. I seen his professor kind of look at him. I said, "No, no, no, I wanna answer that." I said, "I'm glad he asked that." I says, "President Truman said that's one of the hardest decisions he had to make in his life. But I'm gonna tell you why. We had just won the Battle of Okinawa. We was just fixin' to invade Japan. Alright, Japan had over 5,000 kamikaze planes waitin' for us. They had trained women and children to throw grenades at us. They had human beings with bombs strapped on them to swim under ships and blow them up. The army had over 6,000 speedboats with torpedoes on them. The navy had over 8,000. We would've lost somewhere between a million and a million and a half men. We would've lost somewhere between 500 and 600 airplanes and ships. That's the reason we dropped the bomb, and we had to drop two of them before—" And by the way, my brother-in-law—he's dead now, that's my wife's brother. He was a radio operator on the *Enola Gay* for Colonel Tibbets when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

TINKER: Oh, he was?

SWANSON: Yeah, Charles ...

TINKER: Now, I believe there's only one left.

SWANSON: I think there is one left of them. You know what Colonel Tibbets told them? They all were mad at him dropping the bomb. He says, "When I'm gone," he said, "I want my ashes scattered over the Atlantic Ocean." That's where they're scattered. He says, "Then nobody can't come up to my grave and say 'He's the one that done it, he's the one that done it, he's the one that done it.'"

TINKER: He went through a lot. We had him at an event in Pigeon Forge to speak over ten years ago, and he went through a lot.

SWANSON: But I tell you, the thing that amazed me more than anything. You remember when Doolittle bombed Japan?

TINKER: I was just going to mention the Raiders because another one of them passed away recently, and there's only like ...

SWANSON: There's three of them I think left now.

TINKER: I think it's more than that, but it's gettin' low, yeah.

SWANSON: Well, I met one of them when I was in the hospital in Modesto, California at Hammond General, and I asked him, I says, "How in the cat hair did y'all get off of that aircraft carrier?" They went to Barksdale Field, Louisiana. They drewed the field off the same length as a aircraft carrier was. And they practiced. In the mornin' they took off, the captain turned the aircraft carrier into the wind, and he said they set back there and revved them motors up 'til that fuselage is just shakin' like that. Then he let them go, and as they went off they went down and then up.

TINKER: Mm hmm. That's some brave men.

SWANSON: (Laughs) Every one of them.

TINKER: They all knew there was a good chance they may not come back at all. So, you went back to Chanute for your aircraft mechanic training.

SWANSON: For my crew chief school and all, yeah. I never will forget Captain Toole told us that mornin'. It stuck with me. He told us that mornin', he says, "Boys," he says, "We goin' to Midway." He says, "We got a job to do." He says, "Some of us may come back, none of us may come back, or all of us may come back, but," he says, "We gonna do what we sent to do."

TINKER: And this is when you went straight back to Hawaii?

SWANSON: Yeah.

TINKER: And how long were you at Chanute?

SWANSON: Almost eight weeks.

TINKER: About two months?

SWANSON: Mm hmm. Not quite eight weeks.

TINKER: And you came back to Hawaii in April?

SWANSON: (Laughs) They sent me right—sent me to Hamilton Field, right back on the B-17, right back to Hawaii.

TINKER: Was that when you got back to Hawaii, was it April?

SWANSON: It was the last part of March. ‘Cause we was on patrol flight before we went to Midway. That’s where Tinker, General Tinker give me the Flyin’—Distinguished Flyin’ Cross.

TINKER: So, when did they first tell you about Midway, that you all were going?

SWANSON: That morning, the 5th.

TINKER: The morning you were leaving? Okay.

SWANSON: Didn’t know about it. The 5th—see, they had—on the 3rd, Major Sweeney took nine [B-]17s. And you could—to Midway. Alright, on the 4th, Brooks Allen, took seven. Alright, on the 5th, we left. Captain Riding was the lead pilot on our crew, and we had seven planes in it.

TINKER: Now, what unit—I think you told me on the phone, but you were assigned to the 23rd?

SWANSON: Yeah, we was lyin’ out of the 23rd because that’s where Captain Toole was. I was still a member of the Seventeenth air base group.

TINKER: Technically, you were still ...

SWANSON: Yeah, right, but I was on DS with the 23rd. That’s what they called detached service, DS.

TINKER: Okay, okay. Did you like—now what kind of plane did were you ...

SWANSON: B-17E.

TINKER: B-17E. Did you like that plane?

SWANSON: Oh, yes. It was two things about the 17E. I told Captain Toole when we fly patrol and all like that. They had four 1830 right cyclone engines in them, but you could not keep them from leaking around the pushrod housing and the rocket box covers. They'd leak a little oil. I said, "We should have had Pratt & Whitney engines in these things." He says, "Yeah, but they went to the twenty-fours." I said, "I know that." (Laughter)

TINKER: So that was really their only little flaw?

SWANSON: Yeah, but it was always a fine ...

TINKER: It was a good plane?

SWANSON: But, this ...

TINKER: How many hours did you have before you went to Midway?

SWANSON: In the air?

TINKER: Mm hmm.

SWANSON: I would say I had about 140, 150, somethin' like that. See, we would fly out—we would take it one week, and then the Navy would take it one week. We'd fly out a thousand, cross a hundred, then back a thousand.

TINKER: Just patrolling, right?

SWANSON: Yeah, that's where I got my Distinguished Flyin' Cross. We was comin' back in, and I seen it on my panel. The red light—the landing gear would go down, but they wouldn't lock. And Captain Toole said, "Well, I'm gonna fly back out and drop the bomb." We always flew with a full bomb load. And he says, "Then, we'll have to bail the plane in." I said, "No, no, Captain, you don't have to do that." I said, "Down in the bomb bay section, there's a crank down, and you can crank it down, push it up, and it locked the landing gear up." It wouldn't come back up or nothin' like that. I said, "Let me." He says, "It's too dangerous, Sergeant." And I says, "I know it." I said, "You trust me to be your crew chief. Trust me to do this." [Toole said] "Alright." So, I went down, locked it. I knew if I'd have hit one little thing next to that bomb bay door had opened, I'd have been gone. I knew that, but I knew how to do it. And I cranked it down, pushed the lock up, and it just locked. We landed, everything else. (Laughs) About two weeks later, come over the [loudspeaker], "Sergeant Swanson, report to the flight line. Sergeant Swanson report to the flight line." I went out there, and there Captain Toole standin' over there, just a-grinnin'. And General Tinker there, and I walked up to him, saluted him, shook my hand. He says, "We need more in the Air Force like you, son." (Swanson takes off his cap to show his pin on his cap) And he pinned this one here one, right here. That one right there.

TINKER: Now, this whole time were you writing back home to your parents?

SWANSON: Well, that's another case there ...

TINKER: I mean, did you tell—did they know this, like you did that?

SWANSON: No, they didn't know I was hurt or nothin'. The December the 7th—this was the biggest scam. It didn't go on at Hickam, but it went on in the Navy up at Pearl Harbor. There was a couple come around, says, "Give us five dollars and your parents' address, and we'll let them know you're okay." It was a scam.

TINKER: So you thought that they knew ...

SWANSON: I thought Mama and them knew.

TINKER: And they never got it.

SWANSON: She went to a fortune-teller down in Alabama, a black woman. And let me tell you what this black woman told her. She says, "Your son's alright," but she says, "He's been hurt." Says, "I can't tell whether it's a leg, or arm, or someway." But she says, "You gonna hear not from him, but from somebody else." And she said about four or five days after that, she got a letter from the War Department that I had been wounded and all. Them people, I don't believe it. They went to Schofield Barracks, they went to Wheeler Field, they went to Kaneohe. They went everywhere.

TINKER: Scamming all those airmen. That's terrible.

SWANSON: Yeah. "Five dollars and we'll let your parents know." Just give them your address. Stuffed the money in their pocket. I wish I could've run into them after that.

TINKER: I bet your crew really loved you after that landing gear incident, huh? Did they buy you a couple?

SWANSON: (Laughs) No, I knew what could've been done. See, the Captain didn't—he knew it was down there, but he thought it was too dangerous to go down there.

TINKER: Right. Yeah, that's one thing. The crew chief and then the other maintenance people ...

SWANSON: You've got to know everything about ...

TINKER: An airplane.

SWANSON: See, it come on my panel how many RPMs that every motor was turnin' on there, right on my panel. And if any little thing went wrong, it come up on my panel there.

TINKER: Okay, so, you're going to Midway. What ship were you on?

SWANSON: B-17E.

TINKER: But you didn't ...

SWANSON: It wasn't named, no.

TINKER: Oh, but you didn't have a name, like it wasn't ...

SWANSON: No, some of them named—we was gonna name ...

TINKER: You didn't have a name on your plane? (Laughs)

SWANSON: No, we was gonna have it, we was gonna put the name on it.

TINKER: I said ship, I meant plane.

SWANSON: We was gonna—we had numbers on the plane. They had numbers. I forget what the numbers were like that, but we had no—but the one thing while we was en route ...

TINKER: Because isn't it bad luck if your plane doesn't have a name? (Laughs)

SWANSON: We was en route to Easter Island. That's where you landed at Midway. That's where the big bombers landed. Now, Sand Island's where the short ... planes and things like that off the carriers land.

TINKER: Sand Island? Okay.

SWANSON: But on the way, the left gunner spotted a cruiser off to the left. And I went over to cross and looked out, and it looked like a Japanese. I says, "Captain," I says, "If you look out the left side there, look and see what that is." He says, "It's a Japanese cruiser." He said, "But we ain't got enough gas. We got to go on to Easter Island and refuel. We'll come back." So we went on and refuel, and Captain Sweeney—he told Captain—Major Sweeney where we was goin'. [Sweeny] said, "Go ahead, Joe." So we went back. We sunk it. Alright, and then comin' on back, we was flyin' about 18,000 feet, and Lieutenant Macy was lookin' through the bomb site. And he says, "There's a carrier down there." He says, "Oh, Brooks done got one hit on him." And Captain Toole says, "How do you know it's Brooks?" He said, "I see Mary Ann on the nose of it." That was the name of Captain Brooks's plane, Mary Ann. He named it for his wife. And he sunk that carrier. And then we was comin' on back in, and Zeroes were all over us, all over us. Spot Heard, my tail gunner—he was the baseball catcher on our team, too. He said, "Sarge, I'm hit." That's the last thing I heard out of him, and I told Captain Toole, I said, "Captain Toole, you goin' in too low." He says, "I know it." He says, "I see this heavy cruiser up front of us here." He said, "We gonna get him." And he told Macy, he says, "How many bombs you got left?" [Macy] says, "Two." He says, "Drop them when we—either we go over the cruiser here." And I—the left gunner was gone, left side gunner was gone, blood was drippin' all over me, and I felt a sharp sting in this left leg, and I felt blood comin' down. See that scar there? And my arm. And as we went in—we bailed it in, he done a good job bailin' it in. So we had our Mae West on. You always had—that's for float for in the water. And if it hadn't been for Captain Toole and

Lieutenant Macy pullin' me out, I don't guess I'd have made it. Because I couldn't—wasn't no way I could get out, because my leg was shattered. It was—and ... when we got back to Tripoli said, "Sergeant, the only reason you're here today is that saltwater coagulated that blood long enough for them—“ see, a PT [Patrol Torpedo] boat picked us up, and they put a tourniquet right around there. He said it was ... that tourniquet. And that coalman started sprayin' stuff all over my leg. I said, "Well, what are you doin'?" He said, "It's sulfanilamide to keep infection down in it."

TINKER: So you all were able to drop the two bombs and then get far enough away ...

SWANSON: Yeah, he dropped them, yeah, we did. And we was, I guess about a quarter of a mile when he bailed it in, over away from the ship. It didn't disturb us, no. But it was on fire, they said. The PT boat that picks us up said, "Y'all got it." [They] says, "It went down."

TINKER: So you, the pilot, and the co-pilot survived.

SWANSON: Me—no, the co-pilot was dead, and the navigator, we don't know whether he was hit or not. But see, the navigator set right in the nose of the plane, and when he bailed it in, if he wasn't dead, that killed him. We knew that.

TINKER: So you and the pilot?

SWANSON: And the bombardier.

TINKER: And the bombardier survived.

SWANSON: Lieutenant Macy, Captain Toole, and me.

TINKER: Did that upset you pretty bad later? That's tough, huh? I'm sorry. That upsets me, too. Maybe we could take a little break. I need to ...

[Tape Paused]

TINKER: Okay, we took a little coffee break there, but I think we left off where your plane had been shot up, and you're wounded, and you all landed, and you told us—who all picked you up?

SWANSON: PT boat, Navy PT boat.

TINKER: The PT boat. So, you go back. They took you straight to the hospital, I'm sure.

SWANSON: They took us back to Easter Island. They took us on a transport plane. The only enlisted pilot there was, Master Sergeant Cunningham, he flew the transport back. [He] took us back to Hickam Hospital. And there's two things I remember very distinctly: Monica Cauffman, she was a nurse there December the 7th. She passed away this year; she got a book out. *Nurses' Dreams Really Come True* is the name of the book. But anyhow, I remember her sayin'—Major Lane was head of the hospital there, and I remember [Caufmann] sayin', "Well, here's another

one gonna lose his leg.” I remember hearin’ her say that, yeah. They took me on to Tripoli General, and Major Vasco and Captain Shwartz was preppin’ me, and I heard Vasco say, “Well, I guess we’re gonna have to take it off a little below the knee.” And I ain’t gonna tell you what I said. (Laughing) I was hollerin’, screamin’, cussin’. I said, “You ain’t gonna cut my leg off.” I said, “Let me get out.” And Colonel Spittler, head of orthopedics come in. He said, “Sergeant, be quiet. We’re not gonna cut your leg off. We’re gonna save it. We’re gonna save your leg.” And they did. They kept me in traction. They had this leg ... with a pin in the heel, and a pin in the knee, and traction for nine months, with weights on it.

TINKER: That’s a long time.

SWANSON: I had to learn to walk. (Laughs) I never will forget when they took that—they took the cast off. They took the pins out when I got back to Hammond General in Modesto, and they put another cast on it.

TINKER: Now, was it shrapnel that went in your leg, or actual bullets?

SWANSON: I don’t know what it was. It shattered it. You could take my heel and turn it around sideways and touch my knee with it. That’s how bad it was shattered up.

TINKER: That’s bad.

SWANSON: I don’t know whether it was shrapnel. It could’ve been the anti-aircraft fire or somethin’ like that. I felt a sting when it happened, and that’s it.

TINKER: Kendal’s cringing. (Laughter)

RALL: You need a minute?

YOUNGBLOOD: Yeah, I don’t have a tolerance for that kind of gore. (Laughter)

TINKER: She’s getting queasy.

SWANSON: But, then they—at Memphis, Tennessee, when they finally took the cast off, there was a nurse ...

TINKER: Now, how’d you end up in Memphis?

SWANSON: Well, they had me—first they sent me to Letterman General. From there, they sent me to Modesto, California. I stayed there for about three or four months. Then they sent me to Springfield, Illinois’s general hospital. And from there—they was tryin’ to get me close to home, see. They sent me to Memphis, to Kennedy General in Memphis, Tennessee.

TINKER: During this process, were you discharged, or were they starting the ...

SWANSON: No, I wasn't discharged 'til I got to Memphis. They turned me back to duty before I got discharged. But when they took that cast off, there was a nurse standin' on one side of me, and the warden boy standin' on another one. I said, "What are y'all doin'?" He said, "We're gonna help you walk." I said, "I can walk!" I took one step, and if they hadn't caught me, boy, I would've fell flat on my face. I had to learn to walk all over again. But no, they turned me back to duty. They put a brace on this heel with a shoe, and put a brace up right to there. And they turned me back to duty, and I put in to go back to Hickam Field, to Hawaii. They turned me down. They sent me back to Millington out there, which is a Navy base, put me in charge of security out at Millington. So, the Captain he put—I said, "Put it in again." So he put [the request to go back to Hickam Field] in again, and they still turned me down because of that plate in my leg. And I said, "Well, I've played with them long enough." Now, I says—I had over 600 points. I said, "I've got enough points to get out." He says, "No, no, no, Sergeant, don't do that." I said, "Why?" He said, "Don't take points. Make them give you a CDD." That's a Certified Disability Discharge. I said, "Look, I fought, and I want honor." He said, "It's an honorable discharge, it's just you get a pension with it." So I took it. And I got home, and—well, I wasn't home. They give me a 50% ratin', pension ratin'. It was fifty dollars, all it was. So they wanted me to go back to Atlanta, up to that hospital. They wanted to take that plate out, take bone graft out of this leg, and put it in that one. And the last thing Colonel Spitler told me, he said, "Sergeant, as long as that leg don't bother you, don't let nobody bother it." So, I wouldn't do it. So they cut the pension out. I told them, "Take the pension. I don't need it, no-how." So, then I went to Nashville, and I don't know why—well, I do know, too, because I would go through Nashville on the way from Memphis to Atlanta, and I met Mary then. She was a cashier down there. So that's the reason I went back.

TINKER: Now, when you said you came back home, was that to Virginia. Were your parents still in Virginia at that time?

SWANSON: No, no, uh uh, they were back in Troupe County.

TINKER: They were back in Georgia, okay.

SWANSON: Daddy had done retired. His last job he done was in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. They built a chemical plant down there, and then he retired and built that little store down there.

TINKER: Okay.

YOUNGBLOOD: What was the first thing you did when you got home? Do you remember?

SWANSON: Yeah. (Laughs) I got off the train in La Grange and Uncle Benny, Daddy's brother, had the gas company, Atlanta Gas Company close to there. And I walked down there, and he called Momma and Daddy, and they come and got me. And I says, "Has anybody seen Audrey lately?" Momma said, "Yeah, I seen her at the grocery store the other day." But I didn't—I just wanted to know how she was doin' and all. Momma said, "She looked great. She looked great." And I stayed around, and then I went to Savannah, Georgia and went to work in Wainwright Shipyard down there as a welder. I didn't stay down there long, and I don't know—me and Pete Kirby, buddy of mine, he was over in Europe, but we grew up together. We decided

to go to Miami for a while. (Laughs) I had about \$3,000 in my pocket, and he had about two or three thousand. He had a '29 convertible Ford with a rumble seat in it, so we drove to Miami. I mean, we lived it up. (Laughter) One morning we woke up there, and there was a club right close to where our motel was, it was the Five O'Clock Club. You go in at five o' clock in the mornin', from five minutes to five to five o' clock, all the drinks you could drink was free, on the house. (Laughter) So, we got in there drinkin'. Pete says, "Durward, I ain't got but ten dollars." I said, "Let me see how much I got." I said, "God, I ain't got no money." I said, "Yeah, I have. I got a hundred dollars." I'd stuck a hundred dollars back, hid it in my pocket book. He said, "We better go home." I said, "I suspect you're right." (Laughter) So, we got back home, and that's when I went to Nashville then. Got up there and stayed at the YMCA, and I seen, I got the Nashville *Tennessean* [newspaper] that mornin' readin' the paper where help was wanted. I seen in there where Byron Wilson Chambers was wantin' carpenters and apprentice carpenters. So, I went down there and talked to Mr. Farnsworth, and I went to work for him. And he told me, he said, I says—I played music in the clubs like that. Later on I says, "Mr. Farnsworth, I wanna go to college." I said, "I wanted to get a degree in civil engineering." He said, "Well, they've got—where I went," he said, "I went to Tennessee Tech." He said, "They've got a night class." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." He says, "I'll let you come—let you off an hour early, let you come in an hour late, guarantee you forty hours. You have to be goin' four years to college," and he says, "If you'll promise to stay with me five years." I said, "Draw your contract." He said, "Your word's good enough for me." So, I finished college, and I stayed with him ten years. After he died, the devil couldn't have gotten along with old man Farnsworth. So, I left and went with J.A. Jones. I stayed with him fourteen years, and then went. I stayed with Marshall Kanutz about six years, and then I ended up with Hardaway Construction Company out of Columbus, Georgia.

TINKER: Did you work on big projects like your father?

SWANSON: Dams, dams. I built a dam in Morgantown, West Virginia on the Monongahela River. I built one in Hot Springs, South Dakota. I built one in—two in Montana, one called Hungry Horse dam at Kalispell. One is Canyon Ferry dam in Helena, right out of Helena. I built two in Georgia, one in Columbus and one in West Point, Georgia. And I built bridges all over on [Interstate] 75, 90, 26.

RALL: So, you got to travel a lot.

SWANSON: I did. Ted told me—my baby boy, said, "Daddy—" well, let me tell you about him. He'll be fifty-six the 28th of September, and he's never in my life—now he'll drink a beer occasionally. I've never known him to drink no whiskey. I've never known him to fool with no kind of dope. And he's been with Trinidad Hubbard. It's the second-biggest foil company in the world—I mean the first-biggest foil company. It's the second-biggest aluminum company behind Alcoa. He's been there twenty-two years, and I don't know how much foil he's got any anything, because he's got a bunch of it. He's think—they bought him a home up in Cleveland, Georgia in the mountains. They just bought him a home up there. They got their home down in LaGrange there, but ...

TINKER: Up in North Georgia they bought a home?

SWANSON: Cleveland, Cleveland, Georgia, yeah.

TINKER: I love North Georgia. That's pretty.

SWANSON: We go down to Blue Ridge every year. I go to Blue Ridge. We have our Shriners' Convention down there every year at the Helen.

TINKER: So, you used your G.I. Bill to go to school?

SWANSON: I used my G.I. Bill, yes, ma'am, they paid for every bit of it.

TINKER: So, did you have to work at all to supplement?

SWANSON: Oh, I worked, yeah, but that didn't come out—they paid for every bit of my G.I. Bill. But I didn't get no subsidy because I was workin'. If I hadn't been workin' they'd have given me a subsidy to live on. Where was you in the Air Force at?

TINKER: Oh, well after I went to Chanute I got sent to Woodbridge in England. I started on the C-130s.

SWANSON: (Laughs) That's a big one.

TINKER: And then the H-53 helicopters. They call them the Jolly Green Giants. They were in Vietnam, and they've done away with them now. But, yeah, I worked on those, too.

SWANSON: Oh, I left out part of my thing after I got out of the service. I worked at Beale Aircraft on the B-29s up there for about three months.

TINKER: You kind of kicked around a lot when you first got out, didn't you? (Laughter)

SWANSON: Yeah, I did, yeah, yeah. But I couldn't get settled until after I got in Nashville. Then I started playin' music, and then I knew where I could go to college at. That's what I wanted to do.

TINKER: I think a lot of people sort of—I didn't even go to war, but after I got out of the service I kicked around a little, too. (Laughs) It's like something you've got to go through.

SWANSON: There's a certain thing, I guess 'til I was about maybe twenty-nine, or somethin' like twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old, then I kind of gettin' settled down a little bit.

TINKER: Mm hmm. Well, my second base was in Albuquerque. Did you ever go out to New Mexico or travel out West?

SWANSON: Oh, yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am. I tell you, the hot weather—the hottest summers I ever had in my life was in Amarillo, Texas, though. We were buildin' a new plant for Pittsburgh

Glass Company. It was 112 [degrees Fahrenheit] in the shade out there. Dust comin' in, Lord. [Tucumcari], New Mexico, we built another one right there.

TINKER: You did? A plant?

SWANSON: [Tucumcari].

TINKER: (Laughs) It's nice out West, though. It's a different kind of heat. I know people go ...

SWANSON: You ever been to Vegas?

TINKER: Yes, yes, a couple times.

SWANSON: Alright, you ever been to Lake Tahoe?

TINKER: No.

SWANSON: There's a big, round Holiday Inn. It's forty-two stories high. I was the super—I built that.

TINKER: You did?

SWANSON: Lake Tahoe, yeah. I was with J.A. Jones when we built that. That was back in '71, '72 I think it was.

TINKER: Now, I'd like for you to sort of recount the story again. Now, what year did you and your first love get back together?

SWANSON: Me and Audrey?

TINKER: Audrey, yeah.

SWANSON: In 1944. We married in '45 then.

TINKER: Okay, but in between she had married, but he had gotten killed in Europe. And you had married, and that didn't last long.

SWANSON: Well, it lasted thirteen years, but, you ain't gonna wanna hear this. (Laughs)

TINKER: Now, how did that happen? But you ...

SWANSON: I called her—I was on the Mississippi River buildin' a lock; I'd come home on the weekend. And somebody told me, he said, "You better watch. Mary's been runnin' around." I said, "Why?" Said, "Well, we'll go down to Club Plantation, you'll find out." Guess who I found her with down there?

TINKER: Who?

SWANSON: Porter Wagoner. (Laughter)

RALL: I don't know who that is.

TINKER: You don't know who Porter Wagoner is?

SWANSON: He died last year. Him and Dolly Parton used to sing. They was singin' partners together.

TINKER: Dolly got her big break on the Porter Wagoner show.

RALL: Man.

TINKER: (Laughter) I'll show them later when we get back to the office. Well, your wife Mary must've been a looker.

SWANSON: She was, she was pretty. I've got a picture somewhere.

TINKER: If you've got Porter Wagoner trying to steal her from you. (Laughter) But did you always know in the back of your mind you wanted to marry Audrey?

SWANSON: Oh, that was never out of my mind, never out of my mind. I knew someday we was gonna get together.

TINKER: You just didn't know how it was going to end?

SWANSON: In '44, the way I met her, I was home that weekend, and Momma says, "I need to go to Kroger's." She'd go up there once or twice a month, and she'd get things on the sale, she'd bring them back and put them in the freezer. Like bacon and stuff like that. So I was up there that night, I took her up there, and she was getting' some stuff. I said, "I'm gonna get me and Daddy a t-bone steak. You want one?" She says, "No, I'll get me some chicken." So, I went back to the steak department. I went to cut the corner on my buggy, and Audrey cut it, and we bumped buggies. (Laughter)

RALL: It's like out of a movie.

TINKER: I was just going to say, it sounds like a movie.

SWANSON: We bumped buggies, and we started datin'. Then she went back up—she was workin' at Cole's Drug Store then. She went back up—and Verlene was a secretary there. And she says, Verlene told me there Audrey come in and says, "Oh, I seen him! I seen him, I seen him!" [Verlene] says, "Who you seen?" [Audrey] says, "Durward!" And we started datin'. We dated about a year. Go out, I'd take her and the kids out for supper and stuff like that. I told her, I says, "Now, I'm gonna tell you somethin'." I said, "This has gone far enough. We're gonna get

married, or we're gonna bust up." She said, "No, we're gonna get married." So, we got married, and both her children was in the weddin'. My first-cousin—when we married Cleveland, Cleveland was a buddy of mine. Alright, we went to school together. My brother, his wife and my first-cousin took her to get married, and J.C., my first-cousin, was the best man. My Daddy's first-cousin was the justice of the peace in Chipley, and he's the one that married her. I said, "With people like y'all, I don't need no enemies." Anyhow, then J.C. says—I said, "You gonna be my best man?" I said, "I'll forgive you for it, if you will." He said, "Yeah, I'll be." But he said, "I ain't gonna stand." He told Audrey, said, "Now, I ain't gonna stand up for you no more." (Laughter) But yeah we—I don't think there's one thing about it I can say—we may have had a little quiver, or somethin' like that. But never a hard fuss, and we never went to bed at night without where we would say "I love you, I love you." That was our last, say it every night. And when I lost—let me tell you, I was settin' there holdin' her hand when she died, and I was—her favorite song was "Mansion Over the Hill." I was singin' it to her. And I told the doctor—oh I'll tell you in a minute. Dr. Long, I said, "I don't know whether she heard." He says, "She heard it." I said, "What do you mean she heard it? How do you know?" He said, "That's the last thing that goes from a person is their hearing." So I seen a little smile come across her face, so I knew she heard. Oh, that—look at the back of that book. Look at the back of it. There on the page. It's that poem she wrote and give it to me about two years before she died. She knew the Lord was fixin' to call her home.

TINKER: Hm, I'll read that later. But I guess I was trying to figure out when you got divorced from Mary.

SWANSON: In '43, '43. She—what is funny, I got a divorce from her. I could remarry again, but she didn't get one. She couldn't remarry again. That's in Georgia.

TINKER: Oh, so both people had to file?

SWANSON: To get a divorce, yeah. And she didn't—when she died, she was by the name of Swanson. She never did marry no more. But I didn't know you could do that, but you can in the state of Georgia.

TINKER: I didn't know either. And you only had the one son with Audrey?

SWANSON: Uh huh, yeah, yeah.

TINKER: But she had two?

SWANSON: Had two.

TINKER: And did the kids ...

SWANSON: Oh, I treated them just like—you know she give me one of the best compliments I've ever had in my life. She says, you know what? She says, "I knew of three step-dads." I said, "What are you talkin' about?" She says, "Jesus had a step-daddy." She says, "I had a step-

daddy,” and she says, “you’re a step-daddy.” I said, “I couldn’t ask for a better compliment than that.” I didn’t treat—I treated her just like—I done with them just like I did my own, yeah, I did.

TINKER: Well, did they ever know their father?

SWANSON: No, they didn’t, no, they didn’t. One of them didn’t. No, neither one of them did. No, they’d didn’t. Because she was pregnant with Brenda, and then he come back—she had Brenda, and he come back home before he went overseas and she got pregnant again. No, I don’t think neither one of them ever knew of their father.

TINKER: So, when did you know that you wanted to sort of follow in your father’s footsteps?

SWANSON: Well, I had a choice of two things: music or construction, and construction was in my blood. I just loved it.

TINKER: You just liked it?

SWANSON: My son is the same way, but yet he’s—when he used to work for me when I was buildin’ the new recruit barracks at Fort Benning—that’s the last job I done. It was built right down from where Patton’s house used to be. It was a \$28 million new recruit barracks. It wasn’t like what I went in. They had carpet on the floors. They had a new mess hall there, but see ...

TINKER: What year did you do this project?

SWANSON: Well, let’s see, I retired the first time in ’80 I think it was. ’80 or ’81, ’80 I think it was, yeah, because [Audrey] retired, and she asked me to. But, Ted would work with me when he was a senior in high school and all, and after he got out of high school. But every money he got, it went with computer, somethin’ with a computer. Now, in his office he’s got three computers. He buys—they got—and every time they build a new plant, they just—their home office is in Denver, Colorado. They just opened up a new plant, Trinidad ... in Savannah, and he went down and set up the computers in the office in there for them like that. The other two went to college; he didn’t. But, I’m gonna tell you, and it tickles me ...

TINKER: So he didn’t go to college?

SWANSON: No, but he makes more money than both of them put together. (Laughter) And both of them went to college. What Brenda—she’ll retire this year I think. She is head of the welfare in North Carolina. So she’ll probably retire this year. She’s sixty—she’ll be sixty-six this year.

TINKER: When we were out there, when you were having coffee, and you had mentioned at one point you were the president of the Pearl Harbor Survivors’ Association.

SWANSON: Oh, yeah, I was there for two years: ’64 to ’66. You could only serve two years as president, that’s all.

TINKER: Oh, okay.

SWANSON: I served two years as vice president.

TINKER: When did you join the association?

SWANSON: It started in '58, but I didn't join 'til '76 or '77—'76 I think is when I joined it.

TINKER: Why? You just weren't really interested until then?

SWANSON: Well, I didn't even know nothin' about it 'til ...

TINKER: Oh, they didn't send you an invitation or anything? (Laughs)

SWANSON: No, Milton Vogel—he's dead now—he was one of my motorcycle men. He's in that picture. He called and told me, he said, "Durward," he says, "Why ain't you joined the Pearl Harbor Survivors' Association?" I said, "I didn't know they had one." (Laughter) He says, "Yeah, they formed it in '58." And he give me the name of James Maddox, which was a state chairman of Georgia, and I called James and went to—I sent my discharge in and everything, and they sent me back, sent me my membership back. I stayed—the first meeting I went to, they elected me as secretary of Georgia. So I served as secretary, I served as treasurer, and I served as state chairman of Georgia. And then I was vice president and then president.

TINKER: Since you joined, have you been to every annual meeting?

SWANSON: Not every, no, not every one of them. I didn't go back to—they disbanded, and that tore me up when they disbanded. See, we had our ...

TINKER: When did they disband?

SWANSON: Last year. We was in our charter—our charter was formed in Missouri. That's where the eleven people met and formed the Pearl Harbor's Survivors, and figured the bylaws, wrote them and everything. It's in Missouri. Alright, in our original bylaws, we was not supposed to disband until our membership got 500 or below. Then everything, our assets and all, was goin' to our sons and daughters, which they've got a—I've got them a charter in Washington. Alright, last year, they had the election in 2010, everything was in California. The president, the vice president, the treasurer, secretary, and everything was in California. So they got the people and got them—they cut our—we had eight districts, they cut them to four. And then they decided to disband, and they give all our assets—we had over two and a half million dollars—give it to the Park Service. And it was supposed to go to sons and daughters. So I got ticked off at them. I didn't have nothin' to do with them no more. Now, we goin'—I'm goin' back ...

TINKER: So they didn't even put that to the membership for a vote?

SWANSON: Yeah, they put it to a vote, but they persuaded them, see. They held a vote where they knew some members couldn't get there, see. They held it where they knew the members couldn't—hell, they wanted to take it back to Hawaii and hold it.

TINKER: Well, at least, I would hope, that if they gave the money to the Park Service, that it's earmarked just for maintenance of the memorial.

SWANSON: That's what it's supposed to be. Now, I hope that's what it—that's what, I talked to Mal. He was a published at the Gram and all. He said, "Well, Durward, that's what—" he says, "We couldn't—y'all couldn't." I said, "I could've went, but I didn't go." I said, "Y'all fixed it where you took it back to Hawaii and voted it over there, didn't you?" He said, but I said—the money was supposed—he said, "We changed that where it went to the Park Service." I said, "You didn't get my vote on it." So, it's supposed to go for memorials, and that's all it's supposed to go for. We've got the *Arizona* Memorial sinkin'. They've got to go back in there and—they didn't do it right the first time. If they'd have went down, and drove pilin' far enough where they have good bearin', they didn't do it, and then put ... tubes around the pilin' and pour concrete on, it wouldn't have been sinkin'. Now they've got to do that.

TINKER: So how much is it sinking?

SWANSON: You can tell it, but I mean, with a naked eye you can't tell it.

TINKER: Yeah, it's like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, it's just like inches every ...

SWANSON: Yeah, I would say maybe about an inch every year or somethin' like that. But you can put a trenchant out there and put a grate on it and see. You can see how much it's sinkin', see that way, probably instrument. And we—it's gonna cost about \$30 million to do it. Well, we've already—they've already—we all helped. We already raised almost \$16 million. Bill Gates give us \$2 million.

TINKER: That's nice. He can afford it.

SWANSON: He was always good to us, he was.

TINKER: Did you join other veterans' groups?

SWANSON: I'm a life member of the Legion [The American Legion], I'm a life member of the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], I'm a life member of the DAV [Disabled American Veteran].

TINKER: Now, are you like me and you're just a member, or are you actually active with those groups?

SWANSON: Well, I was active in the Legion here in Maryville. I was a commander down there for a while. I told them, I says—when I give it up, they wanted to re-elect me for another two years. And I says, "No," I says, "I've got some other things I've got to do, and I want to do." I

said, “I don’t know how much time I got left, if the Lord’s gonna let me stay here. But I want to fulfill what my destiny is, and I want to do that.” But I attend the meetings, but I attend them.

TINKER: When you first started going to the Pearl Harbor Survivors’ Meetings, what was that like?

SWANSON: Good, you got to see a lot of your old buddies that you’d seen. In fact, one guy, Paul Butterball (Laughter) was a flight engineer in the 23rd—he was a flight engineer for Brookes Allen. And I knew Paul, we was both at Hickam. He was in the 23rd, and I met him. He was the treasurer for the Pearl Harbor Survivors’ Association then in Georgia. Yeah, I belonged to chapter three at Macon. That’s where my membership was. James Maddox, he was in the Eleventh Air Force there, at Hickam. So, yeah I got to meet a lot of old good buddies. And then I got to California, I got to meet one guy there, I never will forget him. (Laughs) He had bought several, I think four or five cars and turned them into taxi cabs and had guys drivin’ ... And when the war started the government took them all away from him. (Laughter)

TINKER: Why?

SWANSON: I don’t know. I don’t know why, he don’t know why. But they confiscated them.

TINKER: Just took his cars? (Laughs)

SWANSON: Yeah. He was a staff sergeant out at Hickam.

TINKER: He probably wasn’t supposed to be running a business on the side.

SWANSON: No, he wasn’t. He wasn’t. There was some funny things happened there before the war and all started.

TINKER: I bet.

SWANSON: There was—this here, I didn’t even know nothin’ about it. There was a guy come in there, and he went on, they put him on guard duty. And he was lookin’ for a jewel heist. He was a FBI man, didn’t nobody know it. They was lookin’ for a guy that had joined connected with a \$5 million jewel heist in New York, and he slept about three or four beds down from me there.

TINKER: And they think he had joined the service?

SWANSON: The FBI got him in the service ...

TINKER: No, but I mean the thief.

SWANSON: Yeah, he was at Hickam. (Laughter) And it happened he was in another branch. He was in the Signal Corps, but he was stationed at Hickam. And so, one morning, here the FBI man come back with this guy, and he pulled his credentials out and showed Charles Kramer and

everything. Showed him who he was, and he said, “This guy here, we’ve got him for a \$5 million jewel heist.” And I think they recovered—the jewels was hid. There was three of them in it; they done caught the other two, and I think maybe they spilled the beans on him. But they recovered all the jewels and everything.

TINKER: Wow, that’s unreal.

SWANSON: It is! I couldn’t believe it. It’s things like—one woman, that morning of the 7th, one woman called the guard house, says, “I wish—I’m gonna report somethin’ over here.” Says, “Somebody’s shootin’ through my windows.” And Tanner was on the telephone operator there. He says, “Lady, that’s the Japs. You better get the hell out of there.” (Laughter)

TINKER: She didn’t realize there’s planes flying overhead? (Laughter)

SWANSON: No, she didn’t. Well, she was an Officers’ Corps is what she was, officer’s wife, yeah. They had—they didn’t hit that too much. But the first thing they hit was the Hawaiian Air Depot. That’s where the first bomb fell.

TINKER: Kendal, did you have anything, before we get close to wrapping up?

YOUNGBLOOD: I don’t think I have—I don’t think I have anything we haven’t really talked about.

TINKER: What about you, Will?

RALL: I want to know—so you said when you started college, you sort of cut ties with Hank Williams. Did you keep playing music through college and when you got your job?

SWANSON: No, I didn’t play. No, once in a while on the weekends, we’d go out to nightclubs, and they’d invite me up to do somethin’ like that. I’d do—be a guest or somethin’ like that, yeah. I still love to sing. I sing in the choir at my church. They done a song I asked—we got a lady out there. Her name is Pat Hollenback. She lost her husband about six years ago. She woke up, and he was dead in bed, had a massive heart attack. Young—he passed at about maybe thirty, maybe thirty-four, thirty-five years old. But anyhow, she’s got a high tenor voice. I told her when I first heard her sing, I said, “You can go with any gospel group you want to. You can name it.” And so her and Jeff Tupp—he’s a choir leader, choir director. I asked him to do a song for me, and they done it last Sunday. And it made chills run up. I’m tellin’ you, I cried, I couldn’t help it. Guess what the song was? “He Touched Me.”

TINKER: Oh, that’s one of my favorites.

SWANSON: I never will forget when—I forget the guy now that wrote it. He’s still in the gospel business. What was his name? When it come out.

TINKER: He’s still alive?

SWANSON: Yeah, he's still alive. Yeah, he's still got gospel. They got gospel singin' in Atlanta, that's where he's from. Who was that that wrote that song?

TINKER: I don't know. All I know is I like to hear Elvis Presley sing it. I listen to a lot of Elvis gospel. (Laughs) I listen to others too, but I like my Elvis gospel CD. (Laughs)

SWANSON: You know where he's originally from?

TINKER: Yeah, down in Mississippi.

SWANSON: Tupelo.

TINKER: Yeah.

SWANSON: He was workin' in Memphis, I mean—yeah, in Memphis at the glass company when they found him singin'.

TINKER: Did you ever meet him?

SWANSON: Oh, yeah, yeah. He played on the Opry one time when I was there. (Laughter)

TINKER: You met Elvis?

SWANSON: Yes, sir.

YOUNGBLOOD: What was he like?

SWANSON: You know what song he sang, was "Mystery Train."

TINKER: (Laughs) I've never even heard of that.

SWANSON: Oh, yeah. "Mystery Train," that was a song. There's only two people I ever know that got seven encores at the Grand Ol' Opry. One of them was Hank Williams. The other was Bob Wells. Bob Wells come in there one night, and Dale Potter was a seventeen-year-old kid from White Plains, Missouri playin' the fiddle. And buddy, he could play a fiddle. And they got after Bob, says, "Do the 'Beaumont Rag'." So he looked at Dale, said, "Son, you mind if I borrow your fiddle?" Dale said—so he had to re-tune it, see? And he played that "Beaumont Rag," and I thought the rafters of that buildin' was gonna—boy, they—seven encores they got that night.

TINKER: Bob Wells.

SWANSON: And Dale Potter, he died last year. He was the only fiddle-player I've seen that could play three-string harmony. Man, it was sweet, too. It was good.

TINKER: I'd like to hear that. Now, Bob Wells is out of Texas, right?

SWANSON: Uh huh. He's dead, he's been dead.

TINKER: Yeah, he's dead.

RALL: I've heard of Bob Wells. I do, I know Bob Wells.

SWANSON: When I first got to Hawaii, you know what the favorite song over there was?

TINKER: What?

SWANSON: "San Antonio Rose."

TINKER: Oh, that's funny. (Laughs) Did you all go off base and into—what was the nearest big city to ...

SWANSON: Honolulu.

TINKER: You went to Honolulu?

SWANSON: Yeah, but we'd go—if you ever heard the Pali—you ever been to Hawaii?

TINKER: Mm mm

SWANSON: You oughtta go. The Pali is a high place. I'll tell you somethin' about the Pali. The wind current is strong up there. There was a boy from Fort Shafter was datin' this Hawaiian girl, and they was gonna get married. Well, the girl's parents didn't want them to marry, didn't want her to marry him. So they decided to go up on the Pali and hold hands and jump off of the Pali.

TINKER: Now, you're saying the Pali. What's the Pali?

SWANSON: That's a high place, a mountain, like. But the wind current so strong, they held hands and jumped off, and the wind current was so strong, it brought them back. And all he suffered was a broken ankle. Alright, he goes back to Fort Shafter, and tells the first sergeant, he says, "The girl's parents jumped on me and beat me up." They didn't. But the wind current—you stand there, and right at the edge is the Pali and you feel ...

TINKER: You mean they tried to jump, and literally the wind blew them back on the ground? (Laughter)

SWANSON: The wind—alright, they're goin' down from the Pali, on the other side is called the upside-down waterfalls. The water comes down, and the wind current is so strong, it takes it right back up like that.

TINKER: (Laughs) That sounds amazing. I'm going to look that up.

SWANSON: But that's actually happened. And another thing I bet you all didn't—you've heard of Gene Autrey, I know. You know where they found him at? Fort Shafter. He was a sergeant in Fort Sergeant. Somebody heard him singin' and got him in the moves. (Laughs)

TINKER: And the rest is history. Well, is there anything you'd like to end with, since copies of this will be given to your family. Is there anything about your service or your memories?

SWANSON: Well, I'm going back to Hawaii. We're gonna have not Pearl Harbor Survivors this year; we're gonna have Hickam Field survivors this year.

TINKER: Including everybody, huh?

SWANSON: Well, that's includin' everybody that's been at Hickam. I think we're—I think Jessie told me—she is a historian at Hickam. That young lady has got more history in her head than most history books has got in them. You can ask her somethin' and she can go back—her mother was Chinese, her daddy was Japanese. She married a Japanese—he went and come back to Air Force Academy, and he's retirin' this year as a lieutenant colonel. And she got to diggin' in her history, and she found out her great-granddaddy was sheriff at Molokai, full-blooded Hawaii. So she's got Hawaii, and Japanese, and Chinese blood in her.

TINKER: And she's the one doing the Seventh Air Force history?

SWANSON: Yeah, she's the one. Yeah, she is. She's a historian down there. And I'm goin' back there, and she told me when I talked to her, the last time I talked to her, she says, "Durward we gonna have Hickam Field Remembrance Day." But she says, "It ain't gonna be all that." I said, "What is it gonna be, Jess?" She says, "Durward Swanson Day." (Laughter) I said, "God bless."

TINKER: Well, I guess we'll just say thank you for your time.

SWANSON: Well, it's been my pleasure to do this for y'all.

TINKER: Thank you.

(Tape Ends)

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