



George Arscott Oral History Interviews, December 5, 2014

Title

“Hawaii, Normandy, Corvallis”

Date

December 5, 2014

Location

Arscott residence, Milwaukie, Oregon.

Summary

In interview 1, Arscott discusses his family background and upbringing in Hawaii, his first experiences raising chickens, his memories of Hawaiian culture in the 1930s, and his family's move to Oregon in 1939. He then recounts his early work in radio, his enlistment in the Army, and his experiences as a radar operator during World War II. Of particular note are Arscott's recollections of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and of the three weeks that he spent living in a foxhole in Normandy.

The session then turns its attention to Arscott's undergraduate studies at Oregon State College. In this, he describes his entry into OSC, professors within Poultry Husbandry who made an influence, the research legacy of James Dryden, and campus life during the late 1940s. Arscott likewise recalls his living arrangements, social life, and experience of Corvallis while an undergraduate, as well as the evolution of the family poultry farm in Junction City.

Arscott next provides an outline of his years as a graduate student at the University of Maryland, detailing his contacts and research while a master's candidate. He then recounts being called back into active duty during the Korean War, his return to university following the conclusion of that commitment, and his work in pursuit of a doctorate at Maryland.

Interviewee

George Arscott

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/arscott/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, George, if you could please introduce yourself with your name, and today's date, and our location.

George Arscott: Well, greetings. I'm George Arscott. The date is December the 5th, 2014, and I think that should take care of it.

CP: Yeah, and we are in your home in Milwaukie, Oregon.

GA: Well, this is an interesting thing. We're south of Milwaukie itself, but our zip is a Milwaukie zip. But I suspect the marketing people at this retirement community made sure that there was a Portland designation on the address.

CP: Okay, well, somewhere in Oregon, is where we're at. [Laughs]

GA: You're south of Milwaukie.

CP: Yeah. Well, we're going to talk a lot about all phases of your life. We'll talk a lot about your OSU experience later on. But I want to start in the beginning with you. You were born in Hawaii, is that correct?

GA: That's correct.

CP: How did your family arrive in Hawaii?

GA: Well, it would take longer than I have in this interview, but both my parents were British subjects, but my dad arrived here first, as a single person, moving from England, across Canada, and eventually landing in the Hawaiian islands, where he became affiliated with the sugarcane industry, which was very prominent in those days.

CP: Mm-hm. And what was his profession?

GA: Well, at that point, he had been trained as a butcher, and that's how he came right across Canada—saved money and moved west. But when he got to Hawaii—well, he was on his way to Australia, and we never knew how he got to Hawaii, but we've recently learned that he hired on as a waiter on a passenger liner. But he must have stopped in Hawaii. Went to Australia because he had been given to believe there were a lot of employment opportunities down there, which didn't turn out. So he turned around, hired back on, and came to Hawaii, and that's where he stayed.

And he must have stopped on the way down so he had a feeling of what was there. And there was a very large Scottish contingent involved in the sugarcane industry in those days, a lot more Scots than Brits. Well, he got a job working as an overseer, and the term that they used in Hawaii is a "looner." He worked through the ranks. At the time, to become a manager, he had to become a head looner.

Well, at some point they made a change, and they decided to take their managers from the accounting office, the business side of the operation. So he went back to school, took a correspondence course in accounting, and he became an accountant. He was never a looner during my time. Well, it turns out that that didn't last very long. They went back to the head looners becoming managers. But he never moved. I think he liked what he was doing.

For the entire time that he was in Hawaii, up to 1939, he remained an accountant. Well, sometime in about 1921-'22—at that point, he was not married. He had been engaged to my mother, but had broken the engagement, the rascal. But he went back. They eventually married, so he came back in 1922, and then I showed up in 1923.

CP: How did your mother make her way to Hawaii?

GA: Well, she was brought over when they were married.

CP: Okay.

GA: She came back with him.

CP: Okay. Okay.

GA: She had never been to Hawaii. And her mother was very upset. They were from a butcher family [0:05:00], and that's how my dad got to know her in the first place. But she thought she was going back to a little grass shack somewhere. But it couldn't be further from the truth, because it was a very—we lived in a very nice home on the plantation, and it was a very good life.

CP: Where were you born?

GA: I was born in Hilo.

CP: And you grew up in Hilo?

GA: No, no, Hilo Memorial Hospital. I grew up at Ookala, which was also called Kaiwiki Sugar Company, and was part of a large corporation called T.H. Davies and Company, which had very strong British connections.

CP: And this is on the Big Island?

GA: This is on the Big Island. There must have been 100 or more sugar cane plantations throughout the islands, and about five corporations that had portfolios of these sugarcane plantations that they were in control of. And they owned it, I guess. The plantation is still there, but it's deserted.

CP: Yeah. Well, tell me about growing up on the plantation, and growing up in Hawaii in the '20s.

GA: Well, it was a good life. At some point, there was an elementary school on our plantation, right next to where we lived, and at some point, I became involved with a 4H project, though it's interesting; I don't think I ever met a 4H agent. But it was tied in with the elementary school teachers, and I started a poultry project. Because we were on a good-sized piece of property that the plantation owned, and it had some outbuildings that were poultry buildings. I got involved probably when I was eight or nine, something like that, with this poultry project.

And I used to watch the maritime labor situations, because all the feed was shipped from the mainland to Hawaii. There were no feed mills. And so if I suspected there was going to be a strike, I'd load up on feed, and then I'd be able to sell my eggs for \$1 a dozen.

CP: [Laughs] Wow. That's very savvy for an eight-year-old.

GA: We did pretty well. And then there was a storekeeper who was from the mainland, who was in charge of the general store on the plantation, and he went back to the States on a sabbatical. And when he returned, he had bought a trio of about a dozen different breeds of bantams. And for some reason—I guess it was because he and my folks were very close friends—I got first pick. So I ended up picking a trio of Chinese silky bantams, or Japanese silky bantams. And I raised them for pretty much the rest of the time that I was there, or the folks did it when I was away at school. See, after you get through the sixth grade there, you either go into the public school system—which really wasn't at the level that they thought I should be at, so we were sent away to boarding schools in Honolulu.

CP: Oh, okay.

GA: And I was sent to 'Iolani, which was an Episcopal boarding school, and our biggest competitor was Punahou. And you may recognize that our president is an alumni of Punahou. Well, we always used to say our alumnis far surpass Punahou, because we had Sun Yat-sen, who was the founder of the Chinese Republic. I often wonder what they're saying now, having President Obama for an alumnus at Punahou.

CP: Maybe evened things up a little bit, yeah.

GA: Yeah. But that was a nondenominational school. But both schools were good prep schools for going on to college, and that's what I ended up doing.

CP: So the environment—you adjusted to it just fine, being at boarding school on a different island away from your parents? [0:10:03]

GA: Yeah, there was no real problem, because I would go back for the holidays. I may have flown once during the 1930s, but most of the time it was by inter-island steamship navigation. There was a company that covered all the different islands, and we'd go back on that. There was a cattle boat, and once in a while we'd decide to go back on the cattle boat. And I think you could do it for a pittance, really. But they didn't land at Hilo. That one landed at a place called Kwaihai [?], and you didn't have a dock. You had to come in on a tender.

CP: What was Honolulu like back then?

GA: Well, it was a regular, good-sized city. Of course, you have, on one side, Diamond Head, and then Waikiki, and then the city itself, and 'Iolani was located on Nuuanu and Judd Street. It's no longer there. But Nuuanu Street goes up into the mountains, over the Pali, and down through a magnificent piece of engineering—switchback roads all the way on the other side. It's a tourist attraction today, because they've drilled tunnels through the mountain, and so it's not used for commerce anymore. And then, if you kept going west—yeah, west—you would come to Pearl Harbor, and that sort of thing.

CP: Hm. Were there aspects of Hawaiian culture that your family adopted into their lives?

GA: Oh, boy. Not a lot. There was quite a British influence, more than anything else. Oh, they had luaus, but I don't think my mother, for example, did any Hawaiian cooking. It was pretty much a British fare.

CP: What was it like for you to be a non-native Hawaiian in Hawaii at that time period? Did you get along okay with the —?

GA: Well, first of all, even during my time there, Hawaiians were a very small part of the population. I was probably a minority. Not probably, I was. I think at one point I was the only male child on the plantation. And at some point in time, that moved up to there were two others that arrived. One of my best friends, who I still keep in touch with—his father was the engineer for the sugar mill that is on every plantation. And the other one was the manager's son, and he's no longer living. He was the youngest of the group. But Red Snarz [?] and I—he now lives in Forth Worth, Texas.

And this is the one that we noticed, in my growing up. Most of my generation did not stay in the Hawaiian Islands, because it was controlled by about five or six large corporations, and there was very little you could do on your own. But that's all changed, from what I understand. But Red went on to making a career out of the military, and then I became involved up here in Oregon, when my folks decided they were going to change, and move up here, and go into the poultry business in Oregon.

CP: Yeah. What was it about chickens that fascinated you as a child? I mean, this is a fascination that seems to have lasted your entire life.

GA: Yeah, well, I enjoyed working with them. They're an interesting animal to fraternize with.

CP: [Laughs]

GA: And when we moved up here—the folks moved up in 1939, and I moved in 1940, after I finished 11th grade in 'Iolani. [0:15:02] Then I finished my senior year at Eugene. Well, they were in the poultry business, but when I graduated in 1941, in the fall I started at the University of Oregon. I'm not going to get negative on it, but I didn't care for it, and so I dropped out. Well, Pearl Harbor came along, and I thought to myself, "I better get with it, find something that I'm trained to do."

So in January of '42, I went to the Eugene Vocational School, and I said, "I'd like to take your course in electricity, wiring, and that type of thing." They said, "You and about 900 others. There's nothing available." Well, so I ended up turning around to leave, and they said, "Oh, yes, we've just had a cancellation in the radio-repair course. Would you be interested in that?" Well, I didn't know very much about radios. I'd had crystal sets in Hawaii, played with them. You could bring

stations in from the mainland, and that sort of thing, but that was the extent of it. I said, "All right, I'll give it a try." And I took a three-month course there, and I really enjoyed it.

I no sooner got through that they found a job for me in Eugene at Lightning's, which was a sports company that had a radio-repair shop in it. I was working there for about three more months, and one day, the instructor came by to check in on his students. That's what I thought he was doing. And he asked me how everything was going. I said, "Fine." And he says, "Where are you in relation to the draft?" "Well," I said, "things are getting a little close." And he says, "Well, we have a program. I'll tell you the good news first. You'd come back to the vocational school on a civil service salary," which was considerably more than I was making where I was employed. And he said, "You would be with us for three months. It's in electronics. You would go to Sacramento Junior College for three months, San Mateo Junior College for three months, Stanford University for three months, and then you'd go into active service in the Signal Corps."

And, "Now you need to know two other things. You've got to join the Signal Corps Reserve, and become an inactive reservist, and two, anytime you don't make the cut from A to B, to B to C, you're automatically in the service, into active service." Well, that was pretty good challenge. We went all the way. When we got to Stanford, we figured out what they were trying to do. What it had to do was with radar. And nobody had talked about radar to us until that particular point in time. And so when we finished that, we went on to basic training at Miami Beach.

We were inducted at Fort Douglas, Utah, and there were three of us. Our age was really spread. I was the youngest, and the next one was about ten years older than I was. He had been manager at Braley & Graham up here in Portland, the Buick agency. And the other one had been a French teacher, and he was fifteen years my senior. We were all in the same program together, and we all kept in touch. Max, the French teacher, went to India. Art, the manager, went to Okinawa. And they went with organizations; they were assigned to groups. I was not assigned to a group. Oh, I jumped. I was not assigned to a group until I got overseas, and I went to Europe.

Well, when we finished our basic, we were sent to Camp Murphy, Florida, which had every piece of radar equipment known to the military up to that point. And that's when we were assigned different aspects. All three of us were assigned to artillery outfits [0:20:01], so we were Signal Corps, in artillery outfits in the Army. Well, the interesting thing there was, when I got to Europe—I landed in May of 1944—I got in the pipeline, which was going, getting ready to go over to Normandy. And lo and behold, I came down with the German measles.

CP: [Laughs]

GA: So I ended up in a general hospital just about the D-Day time. I would never—I was a non-combatant. I was a behind-the-scenes person. But I didn't get to Normandy until D-18. As soon as I got out of the hospital, I went back into the pipeline, and we went over to Normandy, went up and landed at Omaha. There was no fighting done there. It was just the most heavily armed spot in the world. And we were in a field, told to dig a foxhole, and that's where we were going to live until we were assigned to some—but I was there for three weeks, and nobody ever called for me.

One day they lined us up, shipped us back to Stanstead, in England, and gave me a crash-course on airborne radar. And then I was assigned to the Ninth Air Force, 442nd Troop Carrier Group, 100th Service Group, which was under the troop carrier, and a signal company that was in charge of doing depot maintenance on all the radar equipment that was in an airplane—which was essentially designed so that people like me on the ground wouldn't shoot them out of the sky. They were designed to protect themselves. I was a specialist on IFF, "Identification, Friend or Foe"—type equipment. And that's how I spent the rest of the war.

In October we went back over, so I had the unusual opportunity to land on Utah, that time. Then we had three bases in France. The Ninth Air Force, contrary to the Eighth Air Force, moved with the movement of the battle lines. The Eighth Air Force stayed in England, on the same base that it had always been on. And so that's where I spent my war years.

Well, when I came back, I immediately got a job in the radio-repair business, but I decided that I was going to go back and take advantage of the G.I. Bill. It was a choice between electrical engineering and poultry husbandry, and it was going to be at Oregon State this time around. And the folks were in the poultry business, and I thought, "Well, I'm going to try that."

CP: Yeah. I have a couple questions, backtracking a little bit, before we get to Oregon State.

GA: Okay.

CP: I'm interested in knowing your memories of the attack on Pearl Harbor. You obviously weren't there anymore, but you knew that area so well. It must have been staggering for you.

GA: Well, I was in Oregon when Pearl Harbor occurred, but during my time in Honolulu, beginning in about 1937-'38, we used to practice blackouts. We had blackouts, and they were very serious. If you violated a blackout, you'd be arrested. And it always puzzled me, as careful as they were supposed to be, how this thing crept up on them and they got blindsided. Probably lots of reasons for it.

But I do know this: the last year that I lived in Honolulu, I didn't live at the boarding school, I lived with a family whose son was one of my classmates. [0:25:00] But his father owned a photography studio in downtown Honolulu, and he was contracted by the Secret Service at one point during that year, because Japanese naval training vessels would come in, but they wouldn't be allowed in Pearl Harbor, but they'd come into Honolulu harbor, and these fellows would scatter all over the place taking pictures. And the Secret Service asked him to provide them with a copy of every picture that these—I don't think they were doing anything, because they were mostly scenic pictures, but maybe they had something in mind. Who knows?

And so to that extent, that was the type of thing—we knew that relations between Japan and the U.S. were not what they should have been. And the other interesting thing was—I wasn't there then, when Pearl Harbor occurred. There were no camps created for Japanese, but apparently most of the Caucasian overseers on plantations were deputized, and things more or less went along as usual. The Japanese there did their job, and a lot of them—I mean, I grew up with Japanese friends. And it's kind of sad how things turned out, but that's the way things go sometimes when a war starts. But there were no concentration camps in the islands.

CP: Mm-hm. I'd like to know more about the three weeks that you spent in Normandy, as well. You said that you showed up, and lived in a foxhole for three weeks.

GA: Yeah, the first thing we had to do was dig this foxhole. Each one of us had half of a pup tent, so I had to team up with another fellow. He was a radio repairman from—potential radio repairman from Washington, D.C. And we made ourselves quite comfortable. Any shelling, we'd be below the level, as far as the foxhole. There was no fighting out of our foxhole, and actually, we never had any shelling where we were. We were probably a mile in from the coast. We were at a place called Catz. You start it with a C, not a K. Interesting that you should ask this.

Our two sons were over in Europe, and so they met in Paris. The older one, John, had been to Normandy once before with his wife, and his wife was with him this time, but the younger one, Bill, had never been to Normandy. So they met in Paris, and they were going to go to Normandy, and their job was to find my foxhole. Well, I got a call here one night, about roughly 1:15 in the morning, that, "We're standing on a hedgerow, and we cannot see the ocean where you said it was going to be, so we're not there." Well, that's right, it was near Catz, but it was a little too far inland. They talked to a Frenchman, and they told him what they were up to. He laughed at them. He said, "I was twelve years old when this occurred. This place was full of foxholes."

And he says, "You say your father says there was a manor house with it. Well, the only manor house that I know of is two kilometers north, on this little lane." So they headed down there, and sure enough, that's where the field was. You certainly weren't going to find any foxholes. But anyway, they could see the ocean from it, the manor house and the ocean, so we saw the field that I was in for three weeks. And we lived off of K-rations, C-rations, and that type of thing. Didn't think too much about it. We were too young, I think, to worry about your mortality or immortality, or whatever you want to call it.

CP: Yeah. [0:30:00] Where were you when the war ended, and what's your memory of the victory being declared?

GA: I was in St. André, France; that was the base. We had three bases—Le Mans, a farm just outside of Le Mans. That was a disaster, in October, and we were there only a month. Then they moved us in November to St. André, which is a former German airfield, and our entire group was there entirely, but at some point—it was before. I had come back there.

I had been sent up to Metz, which was also a German airfield, servicing C-47s, and their gliders, and that type of thing—anything that had electronic equipment, radar equipment, and radio equipment, because there were both types of fellows in this Signal Corps company. But I was in St. André, which was probably 40 miles north and west of Paris, and so we were able to, a little bit afterwards, get into Paris, to see the celebration.

CP: And what was that like?

GA: [Laughs] Oh, it was continuous! We were there only for about four or five hours; then we had to come back. But Paris had been a saved city. There was very little destruction. The same with Rome, I guess, but not with the German cities, or London. Those were subject to terrific bombing.

CP: Yeah. Was the transition back to civilian life an easy one for you?

GA: I didn't have any real problems with it. Probably if I'd have been in combat, and that type of thing, it would have been much more difficult. But I immediately got a job as a repairman. I got back in '45—no, '46. I got back in 1946. I immediately got a job working for Montgomery Ward, in the service group in Eugene. And then in the fall, I enrolled up at Corvallis in the College of Agriculture.

CP: Right. Well, tell me about how your academic career, or your undergraduate academic days—tell me about how your academic work progressed.

GA: Well, my objective was to get as much up-to-date training in Poultry Husbandry—or Poultry Science, whatever you want to call it—as I could, with the idea of going back to working with my folks. We had a poultry farm at Junction City. And it had been quite successful, but it one of those small farms that existed up and down this valley. And well, largely because, I suppose, my 'Iolani experience kicked in, I knew how to study. I was able to handle courses pretty well, so I did very well. And I don't want to sound like I'm bragging, but I did pretty well academically, and I guess that was noticed. And at some point during my early senior year or late junior year, the department head took me aside and said, "You really ought to give some thought to going on to graduate school."

Well, to be perfectly blunt, I didn't know a master's degree from PhD when I started, but this is what he said I needed to do. Because I learned later the poultry department had a policy—and they were just looking down the road, I guess—that not all of your degrees would come from OSU, to be able to work in the poultry department. So I ended up going to the University of Maryland [0:35:01], where I got my master's degree. And between my master's and my PhD degree, I got called back into the Korean thing.

CP: Right. Well, we'll talk about those here in a second. I want to talk a little bit more about Oregon State.

GA: Okay. Well anyway, so I applied and was accepted at Maryland.

CP: Right.

GA: But I never went back on the farm. So you can take it from there on what you want to know about Oregon State.

CP: Sure. Was the department head James Dryden?

GA: No, no. James Dryden was the first department head, 1907 to roughly '22.

CP: Okay. Was he around then?

GA: I hope they don't hold me to the exact year, but I think I'm pretty close.

CP: Yeah. So he wasn't around when you were a student?

GA: No. And then he was followed by Al Lund, up into the 1930-some time, and Hubert Cosby, up into the mid-'40s. And the year I showed up, in the 1946, the new department head showed up, because Cosby had passed away in harness, Jess Parker. And he was head until he had a heart attack, and after coming back and trying to continue, decided that

he wanted to step down. He wasn't ready to retire. And that's when, in 1969—'68, '69—I was acting. And then I just continued on as department head.

CP: Who was an influence for you when you were an undergraduate, in terms of your instructors?

GA: Probably, initially, a person that was known as Dean Wilbur Cooney, who wasn't a dean during my time. He was a member of the Poultry Science, the Poultry Husbandry or Poultry Science department. When I started there, he was my advisor. And I would say probably he steered me in the right direction academically. For example, he said, "Don't overload yourself for the first quarter. Get yourself stabilized." So I did. I did very well. Well, then in the spring quarter, I loaded up, because I had missed some courses the first time around. Everything worked out. But I always maintained contact with him, and it was his position that I was eventually recruited for. He had moved in as Associate Dean of Resident Instruction in Agriculture, so I had contact with him. And then he became dean, through a major part of my career at OSU.

CP: What was the program like when you were a student? I assume there was a lot of hands-on work, or was it more in the classroom, or both?

GA: It was both, but it was very intense. One of the things that I noticed when I got to Maryland was they both all said, "You know what you're doing with chickens," more so than many of the graduate students that they were getting. And it was largely because of this training that I'd had at OSU. It was very practical, but it wasn't just—there was a lot of a theory with it. And a lot of people think, "Well, it's just chickens." Well, chickens are more than just chickens.

CP: Where were the chickens?

GA: Huh?

CP: Where were they, on campus?

GA: Oh, we had three—as a student, the central plant, which was right behind Dryden Hall. There was a turkey farm, out on Harrison, just north of the dairy operation. It was 40 acres there. And then south of Dryden Hall, across the Philomath Highway, was the south farm, which I think was probably 30-some-odd acres. Don't hold me for that, but that's what I think it was. And that had been, originally, some of the property that Dryden had worked on, because some of those houses were very, very old. It went back years and years.

CP: So he was an important guy, Dryden, I assume?

GA: Oh, yes. Dryden [0:40:00]—I guess some people don't like me to say this, but I'll say it—put Oregon State on the map. And it's in the literature, so I'm not making it without a little backing, because he is the first person in the world to have ever developed a hen capable of laying 300 eggs in a year. That's Lady MacDuff. And not just by raising chickens; he actually applied genetic principles. And I'm not a geneticist, but some of the principles that he was using back in the 1909 to 1912 period are principles that were being used by geneticists affiliated with very large poultry-breeding companies during my tenure, which goes from 1953 to 1987.

So that wasn't the only thing that he did. He also is known for having developed the "Oregon," which was—they tended to name their birds—the first hen in the world, recorded, to have laid 1,000 eggs in a lifetime. And you've got to realize that egg production during those—prior to that period was maybe anywhere from 40 to 60 eggs per year. This was something big. Well, that's why we'd say—because Oregon State University, or Oregon Agricultural College, was bombarded with visitors and newspapers during that period of time. It was unheard of. And Dryden, some time in the early '90s—he was deceased—was brought in to membership of the Agricultural Hall of Fame. And to do that, it isn't necessarily just what you have done academically; it also brought in a factor of economically, and what he did certainly had an impact on the broiler industry, on the egg industry. Tremendous!

CP: Hm. I assume that the eggs that were laid were used for part of the study and research, but did the campus use them to feed people, also?

GA: Yes to both. During my time, we had a sales component. It was built into our budget. And we used to sell eggs to people, to companies that would process eggs and market them. We had a sales end to the department that was a major component of the budget. For example, we provided fertile eggs. Fertile eggs were—like, Biochemistry would buy fertile eggs from us, and we had to be sure that they were fertile. So we would maintain pens for that purpose. If there was a research end to it that we could apply to the birds without affecting fertility, we would do it, or we might do it. We didn't always do it.

CP: And you were part of this enterprise as an undergraduate?

GA: Yes. One of the early experiments that Dr. Parker—or Jess, as I call him—got me involved with was working with him on attempting to determine the minimum number of males required for 100 females, see? And that's how I really—that was sort of a management end of it, because I became the nutritionist at Maryland. And we, for example, found that, roughly [0:45:00], that you had to have about sixteen males in a pen of 100 females. So one day I asked him—I said, "What would happen if we put one male in that 100-pen of females?" Well, he didn't know, but when the experiment was over, we did it. Well, the first male died within two or three days, not for lots of things, maybe, that we might be thinking about.

CP: [Laughs]

GA: But it turned out he had a—we didn't know it, but he had a disease condition. So we put another one in there, and by golly, he was able to maintain about 85 percent fertility in those eggs. Well, that's certainly not satisfactory. You've got to be 98 to 100 percent, because you don't want a lot of infertile eggs going into a hatchery, see? But, anyway, that kind of stimulated my interest in doing research, and probably had an influence on me over time.

CP: Yeah. What do you remember about campus life during this time period? The war had just ended; there were a lot of GIs coming back.

GA: Well, you know where Dryden Hall is. We were probably—we were off-campus. We had very little to do with on-campus affairs. Good or bad, that's the way it turned out. If you asked 95 percent of the students at OSU in those days where the Poultry Department was, or if you asked students where, 95 percent of them would say they hadn't a clue. And I don't know whether that exists today or no, because there's no Poultry Department today. It's part of Animal Science. So maybe they could easily turn to Animal Science, because Animal Science is in a much bigger building.

CP: So you spent most of your time on the edge of campus. You didn't spend a lot of time elsewhere?

GA: Oh, well, I got involved with the Nutrition Research Institute, which was made up of nutritionists across the campus—Home Economics, Food Science, Biochemistry, Animal Science, Fisheries and Wildlife, that type of thing. It was the nutritional people that got together and met periodically, so to that extent, we participated. But we didn't get on the campus—I guess I got in once, with the faculty senate, that type of thing.

CP: Right. This is later on, though.

GA: Yeah, this is later on. But as a student, even the Nutrition Research Institute was post- that period. We were pretty much—unless we had to go to classes like Chemistry, we'd be up off on Monroe Street, and that type of thing.

CP: Mm-hm. What did you do for fun?

GA: Well, we really didn't—first of all, you've got to remember, we were all older. And the first two years I was there, I didn't even live in Corvallis.

CP: Did you live with your parents in Junction City?

GA: I lived in Junction City. There were three others of us that lived there. You couldn't get housing.

CP: Oh, yeah.

GA: See, it was very tight, and so the three of us would drive up—and we had a rule. We'd get there at eight o'clock in the morning, and we would not leave until four o'clock in the afternoon. So that's how I became kind of interested in the library. I spent a lot of time studying in the library. It was a place you could get away—go to your lectures, come back, try to organize things. And as a result, I think it helped us. But we didn't get involved with the dormitories or the fraternities or the sororities. I think the agricultural fraternity was Alpha Gamma Rho, yeah. [0:50:00] But by the time somebody approached me, I was already pretty much a senior, and I wasn't interested in going on. We kept our nose to the grindstone.

CP: Yeah. What was the library like? This was in Kidder Hall at the time.

GA: Well, a lot different than what I've seen since. But it had little areas that you could study, and no one ever complained about us occupying space, although we weren't really utilizing the library as you think of a library being used. And it was set up so that you could study there, and I thought it was a good library.

CP: Did you ever visit the rare book room, the McDonald Rare Book Room?

GA: I've heard about it since, but no, not during my time.

CP: Uh-huh. Do you remember them erecting a lot of a Quonset huts on campus?

GA: Oh, yes. There were Quonset huts in several different locations.

CP: Uh-huh. And that was—?

GA: Well, we didn't have any with Poultry, but Crop Science, for example, had some, and maybe Soils might have, but I know Crop Science did. And Animal Science—there were some out on the Animal Science farms.

CP: Were you expected to follow some of the traditions, like the freshman beanie, that sort of thing?

GA: Some people thought we were, but that didn't go over well with the veterans. They'd be challenged by somebody, and here was a young senior challenging a veteran of several years. "You're going to make me do it? Try." You were supposed to walk in certain directions, in a certain way. Beanie caps were out.

CP: That's when that tradition started to die, it sounds like.

GA: Yeah. But has it come back?

CP: No.

GA: Oh, it hasn't. Okay.

CP: Did you spend much time in the Memorial Union?

GA: Oh, yes, quite a bit. Yes.

CP: It was a little different then than it is now, I gather.

GA: Yeah, I don't know how it is now, but we liked the library better, because we could get off and study. One of the groups was an Engineering—no, two of the groups were engineers, and I was the only Ag student living, down in Junction City. But we only had one car up there, so we weren't going to leave until everybody was through class.

CP: Did you go to sporting events?

GA: See, you're going to embarrass me or get me in trouble in a minute. I hate to tell you, but I think I could count the number of football games on the fingers of one hand, and there'd be less than five. No, we didn't. But I don't know that anybody—I'm sure other GI Bill people were involved with going to sports events.

CP: Yeah. I know that you have a history with radios that you mentioned. Did you know Jimmie Morris at all? He was the guy who ran KOAC Radio for 30 years or so.

GA: No.

CP: No. I was just wondering about that. What was Corvallis like during this time period?

GA: Well, a little town, I think, of roughly 5,000. It wasn't too much different than it is today, except there's a lot more building going on. And being up here, in Portland, we were amazed when we'd go down there to see how things have changed. See, the last year I was there, I lived with a family who had a private home, and maybe a block away, there was a boarding house that opened up meals to not necessarily people who were actually living in their house. [0:55:00] We could go there and eat, and that's what we did. No, it was a small town, and there was still a lumber mill there, initially. But I enjoyed my time in Corvallis, once I got up there and was living there. I'd generally go home weekends, that type of thing.

CP: Mm-hm. So you were working at the farm on weekends, were you not?

GA: Yeah, I worked at the farm. I also worked at a radio shop in Junction City on weekends, or generally on holidays. The fellow always wanted me to come in and help him service equipment. I hadn't forgotten it. That's the one thing I came out of the war with. I had a pretty good background. Because when I got called back in the second time, I worked on equipment I never even knew existed. But they gave me a month to learn it, at Mather Air Force Base, and I ended up being pretty much the fellow responsible for seeing that APQ-13 equipment was operating.

CP: Mm-hm. So I would gather that you had the opportunity to apply some of this knowledge that you were picking up as an undergraduate on your parents' farm. Was that the case? Were you able to improve their operation as a kid?

GA: I like to think I had. I did, occasionally. I'm not sure my dad was always too impressed.

CP: [Laughs]

GA: But on the whole, we got along pretty well. But I'd get some negative remarks about—oh, I remember we were improving the water-dispersing troughs, and I had a design that I had developed up at Corvallis, and I wanted to try to down there, and we did. We worked it. And at first, he didn't think much—he didn't like it. But I think he got to see what I was up to, that I was trying to avoid spilling, wet spots, and that type of thing. Well, that's the sort of thing we got—see, we only had about, what, 2,000 birds. But 2,000 birds, in those days, was a pretty good size operation. It would carry a family. But beginning in the late '40s, it blossomed out. In order to survive, you had to get bigger.

CP: Did they get bigger, or did they move onto something else?

GA: No. No. My dad says, "When that checkbook doesn't balance," he says, "I'm out of it." And then about 1962—well, he was getting up in years, but I was already back at OSU. I wasn't coming back to the farm. Well, he says, "George, I've reached the point where the checkbook is not balancing out. This is it; we're selling it." They sold it and moved to Corvallis.

CP: Ah. Spent the rest of their lives there, I see.

GA: Yeah, right.

CP: Yeah. Oh. Well, you mentioned the reason why you decided to go to graduate school. You went to the University of Maryland. How did you decide on Maryland?

GA: Well, I applied at several different institutions, but nobody played games with me. Let's put it this way. Maryland was the only one that came right out and said, "We would like to have you here. Here's what we would offer you—this, this, this, this." Nobody else would give me specifics. And so that's where I ended up going. They offered me an assistantship right off the bat.

CP: Mm-hm. How did the environment and the program differ from what you knew at Oregon State?

GA: It was much more [1:00:00], let's say, much more research-oriented. They had extensive laboratories in nutrition, physiology, processing areas—than we did at OSU. But management-wise, I knew how to take care of the birds, which is where they had problems. And it worked out pretty well, I think.

CP: So I gather you were one year into your program, and then you got called back to service?

GA: I got called back. They allowed me—they gave me a deferment to write my thesis. Well, I had it pretty much written, but to get it put together, and take my exams.

CP: So you finished your master's degree, more or less?

GA: I finished my master's degree, and I had started on a PhD. I had a project that was part of the department's program, but somebody else had to take it over.

CP: Well, tell me about your master's work.

GA: Well, the master's work dealt largely with vitamin B-12. See, I don't know how many people remember. It was roughly 1948, '49, somewhere around there, vitamin B-12 was identified as a vitamin, per se, and it actually crystallized. And once that happened, then—up to that point, it had been an unidentified factor. Well, it turns out that there was a lady by the name of Dr. Mary Short, who was in the Poultry Department, but she hadn't always been in the Poultry Department. She was a microbiologist. She was in the Dairy section at Beltsville. And she developed this assay, and the people in the Dairy area at Beltsville, for whatever reason, said that this outside the area of her working with the dairy operation.

But she developed a microbiological assay that was very sensitive to these unidentified factors, which turned out to be vitamin B-12. Well, she talked to Dr. Joel, who was the head of the Poultry Department at the time at Maryland, and she said, "If you will provide me with a laboratory, I will provide my own salary and funding." And he gave her a laboratory. And she tied in with Merck and Company, at Rahway, New Jersey, I guess it is. Merck would do a fractionation, send it down to her, and she'd run it in the microbiology—using her bugs. And it was very, very quick. And as a result, Merck and Company has the credit for crystallizing vitamin B-12, way ahead of Glaxo Laboratories in Great Britain, who were working with humans, with a much slower process.

And she stayed with us pretty much the rest of—entirely throughout my graduate career. So we had access to B-12-rich sources. We knew we were dealing with B-12. And so I was working on the project. It involved hatchability. How much B-12's needed for hatchability, that type of thing. And that's what my master's degree was all about.

CP: So she was sort of your mentor during graduate school?

GA: No, it was another fellow. Dr. Gerald Combs was my major professor. But they worked very closely together. He had just recently come down from Cornell University. He was an officer during World War II, in the nutrition end of it. He was quite ahead of me, as far as academic training was concerned. But anyway [1:05:00], what my master's had to do with was to be able to give a recommendation as to how much was required for growth, how much was required in the breeder ration, to make sure that eggs would hatch.

CP: So you started to really focus on nutrition, it sounds like. At this point, you described yourself as a nutritionist?

GA: That's right.

CP: Had you been thinking along those lines at Oregon State, too, or did you get to Maryland first, and then decide that that was—?

GA: No, probably I was more management-oriented at Oregon State. But you mesh these things together, and it sorts itself out.

CP: Yeah. Well, tell me about being called back into active duty.

GA: Well, that was kind of a trying experience. I was an inactive reservist. I never went to being active the entire time I had signed up as an inactive reservist. I had just met what turned out to be my wife. She was from western Pennsylvania, and she'd come—she taught with a lady whose husband was a student in the Poultry Department at Maryland. And she'd come down, and we'd gotten together, and we went into Washington, and went to the Congressional hearings on the U.S. getting involved.

See, actually, I should never have been called, as an inactive reservist, but they broke the rule—but Congress broke the rule, because the military said they needed people, and to pull in as many active reservists as they did, they would deplete certain communities almost—in a very serious way. Whereas we, who were inactive, were spread out all over the place. But it caused a lot of trouble for inactive reservists who were in the process of building businesses, and that type of thing—more so than in my case. But we saw the activity that went on in Congress, and I think we probably commented that this could have an effect on us. Well, what Congress did was, they said, "If you're going to pull the inactive reservists in, we are going to say, 'You're not going to keep them indefinitely. They will be called in for one year, and one year only.'"

So that's how I went in. And in my case, I went right to work on radar. A lot of them just sat around for months, waiting to get assigned, but I went right to—there was a training. Mather Air Force Base was a training base for bombers, and, gee, I'd never worked with bombers, and that's where the APQ-13 came into the picture. And then there was an APQ-24. Well, I noticed that they weren't interested in me getting involved in it, because I'd have to go back to school for that one. They said, "You aren't going to be here that long." But the closer we got to twelve months, the pressure mounted to waive the twelve-month deal, but Congress would not back down. So we were discharged in twelve months' time.

CP: Where were you stationed?

GA: Mather Air Force Base. I did not go to overseas that time. During those years, you went overseas based on prior overseas service. And another fellow and I in the electronics shop had all the overseas service, and we were exempt. Whenever there was a call for somebody to go to the Far East, it was somebody else who had never been overseas. I might raise one other little comment. [1:10:00] We were talking about the signal company. Over the years, some of us have been able to keep in touch, and now, out of 25 people, how many do you think are left?

CP: Not many.

GA: You want to come up with a figure?

CP: One?

GA: Oh, no, no. I'm not it.

CP: Okay.

GA: There's four of us.

CP: Yeah.

GA: And I don't know; I guess you can cut this out, if you want to, but we had a C.O. in Europe that was what I call a soldier's commanding officer. And we all had high respect for him. He didn't tolerate any nonsense from us, but he wouldn't let anybody pull any nonsense on us. But after the war, I lost track of him, until 1962. I was up in Canada with Betty and the boys, on Vancouver Island. We were checking out. And I remember Clyde Wallace—he was probably fifteen or more years older than we were—had been in Immigration.

You had to get in line to get to Port Angeles about two hours before the ferry came over, so we were there, and I was looking at the guy way down the road checking cars. And I said to Betty, I said, "I know that guy. He was my C.O. in Europe." "Oh," she said, "No." Well anyway, he came to the window, and I didn't have a passport; that was before passports were required. I had a driver's license. I handed it to him, and he looked at it and handed it back to me. I said, "You don't recognize me, do you?" He looked at me. "Should I?"

CP: [Laughs]

GA: I said, "Arscott, 10-61st Signal Company." You know what his first question to me was? Before he said anything else, he says, "Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?" That was probably the best thing that came out of World War II. I said, "Yes." He says, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm a professor at Oregon State." "Oh," he says, "Great!" He says, "Come on and visit us this evening." [Laughs] I couldn't get away. I was on my way back to Corvallis, and we had reservations in Port Angeles. But we started to correspond, and that went on for two or three years. All of a sudden, it disappeared, and I took a chance and called the Immigration Service in Seattle. And I said, "You, you may not want to tell me about him, but here's the background." And when I told him that, "Oh, you're talking about old Clyde! He took an early retirement, moved to Alaska."

But he never contacted me, but he had maintained contact with one of the fellows that I shared a tent with, and I found that out in 1974 when I went to New York City, where most of our group came from. I looked up Charlie Savella, and there were three pages of them in the telephone book—Charlies! But there were only four without middle initials, and I called those four, and one of them turned out to be Charlie, and his wife and family, and we reestablished contact. And then he told me that Wallace's wife—unknown to us, he was his designated driver. He was a radio repairman, spent his civilian career at Kennedy, and he apparently maintained contact with him even after the war. And then he said in 1972, he got a letter from his wife saying he'd toppled over with a heart attack. But I've had other COs [1:15:02], but there was nothing like Wallace.

CP: Yeah. That's an amazing re-acquaintance.

GA: Yeah. What's the chances of running into a thing like—? He was originally from Idaho. He'd been a football player. He'd gotten a degree from the University of Idaho, and he went in the Immigration Service.

CP: Huh. Well, let's talk about your PhD work, and then I think we'll take a break after that.

GA: All right.

CP: What did you do?

GA: Well, when I came back—I told you early on, I lost the project that I was going to be working on, but I ended up working on what they call—not unidentified flying objects, but unidentified nutritional factors. There were still, in the eyes of some of us, something that would stimulate growth; in some cases, it might have an effect on hatchability. And so there was a project going on the department, under Gerry Combs, where were trying to see if we could fractionate feedstuffs that were supposedly rich in something that was stimulating growth. But that wasn't an easy project to get involved with.

But I was able to show that we could, in our case, using a young chick as an assay animal, that we would do something to the feed here, and then incorporate it back into the poultry feed, feed it under very strict conditions, and measure whether or not these birds were responding to it. And as a result, you'd keep lowering the amount that was present there, so long as you were getting a response. And that's basically what we were attempting to do, and what we attempted to do in my PhD work.

CP: Did you do any teaching?

GA: Oh, I did—well, very little. It was strictly a research assistantship that I was on. See, I was able, with the GI Bill, within three months of finishing the PhD, with GI Bill support. But the whole time I was at Maryland, I had research-assistantship support, so I was able to get through without going into debt, or anything else.

CP: Mm-hm. Was there any connection with Extension in Maryland?

GA: Oh, yeah. They had a good Extension program, just as Oregon State had a good Extension program. But I imagine—looking back, I probably learned more from my experience with Extension people in Maryland than I did—because we only had one person in the Poultry Department, whereas there was sort of a small team of Extension people at the University of Maryland, in Poultry. Because Poultry, at the time that I was there—Maryland was No. 1 in Poultry in

the U.S., on what you call the Delmarva Peninsula, which is Delaware, Maryland, and a little tiny part of that peninsula devoted to Virginia.

CP: Yeah. So they had a big staff at Maryland?

GA: Yeah, they had a big staff, and it was a bigger staff than it was at OSU.

CP: Yeah. Okay. Well, why don't we take a break, and we can come back later, and we'll start in on your OSU career.

GA: Okay. Okay.

CP: Sound good? [1:19:34]