



Emery Castle Oral History Interviews, October 14, 2014

Title

“A Midwestern Upbringing”

Date

October 14, 2014

Location

Castle residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

In interview 1, Castle discusses his rural upbringing in Kansas, his early education, and a bout with typhoid fever that he suffered during high school. He then describes his military service as a radar operator on B-17 aircraft during World War II. From there he recalls his university training in Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University and Iowa State University, including the research that he pursued and faculty mentors who were important to him. The session concludes with Castle's memories of his parents and the paths that their lives took.

Interviewee

Emery Castle

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, Dr. Castle, if you would please introduce yourself with your name, and today's date.

Emery Castle: My name is Emery Castle, and this is October the 14th, 2014.

CP: Terrific. Well, we have a lot to talk about today. Your association with OSU is lengthy and important and impactful on a lot of different levels, but I'd like to begin at the beginning, if you wouldn't mind. You were born in Greenwood County, Kansas. Is that correct?

EC: That's correct.

CP: Is that where you were raised?

EC: Most of my life in south central Kansas, south of Wichita, on the Arkansas River. I spent my entire life in that area, until I left to go to college, and in World War II.

CP: Yeah. What was your parents' background?

EC: They were working in the oil fields at the time I was born, and by the time I reached the age of three, they decided to go—to start farming again, and we moved to a farm south of Wichita, on the Arkansas River.

CP: So did you have any siblings?

EC: I have three brothers. I had three brothers. Two are now deceased, and so I have one remaining brother, who is six years younger.

CP: You've said that your upbringing was very important to your Midwestern origins, critical to your lifelong attitudes and practices. Can you tell me a little bit more about how that evolved?

EC: Yes. My parents were tenant farmers, and those were throughout the Depression years in Kansas, and my parents were struggling very hard to survive, very hard to survive. So I think being brought up in a family, very meager resources, where people worked exceedingly hard just to survive influenced me a great deal.

CP: Yeah. You've talked about the Depression; it was very impactful on your upbringing. Can you give us a sense of how that manifested itself now? You said it was very difficult.

EC: It is very difficult to really describe it in today's terms, so that it becomes meaningful, really meaningful. But in particular, my mother prepared clothing from fabric that she would get from all different sources. She would actually sew the clothing, and send us to school in things that she had created. My father worked exceedingly hard on the farm, but then he worked for others, to the extent that he could. When my parents were in the oil field, before moving to the farm, my mother was asked if she would provide food for some of the other workers, and they'd go into town and buy supplies, and so on and so forth, and she'd cook for a large number.

And most of those men working there were single; they were not married. They came to her and asked her if she would let them have a dance on Saturday night, and so they would move all of the furniture out of their house—all of the furniture out of their house, except for a couple of chairs for the musicians, and then they would dance. But she said, before she permitted that to happen, that there would be no cussing, there would be no fist fights, and there would be—let's see, no cussing, no fist fights, and there was third prohibition she had. No liquor. No liquor, no cussing, no fist fights.

So I do remember that, because that shaped my entire life at home. Even after they left the oil field, there was still no cussing, and no fist fights of that sort, and no liquor. Kansas was dry, and they had Prohibition long after it became legal to the rest of the nation. Kansas remained dry. And William Allen White, one of the great literary figures in Kansas history, said, "Kansans would vote dry so long as they could stagger to the polls."

CP: [Laughs] [0:05:00] So they were tenant farmers. What sort of farm was this?

EC: Well, there were two farms. One was on the banks of the Arkansas River, and that involved orchards, and vegetable farming, and that sort of thing. They then moved to an upland farm, and that was grain, and cattle, and livestock. So it was a variety of farms that we moved in. They were tenant farmers, and it was competition for land. And come March every year, there was always a possibility we might have to move to another farm before the next year started.

When I was about nine years old, I remember one incident that occurred. My mother, my father, and myself—I'm not sure where my younger brother was, but, anyway, the three of us went to town, went to the bank, and my dad paid off a loan. And as he was getting ready to leave, the banker said, "What are you going to do next year?" And my dad said, "Well, I'll probably be back to see you before I put the crops in." And then he left, and left my mother and I with the banker. And as he went out the bank door, I recall the banker saying to my mother, "Sid Castle is as honest a man as I have ever met, and he'll always pay his debts, but," he said, "he will always be in debt." That has stuck with me all of these many years; that was his description of my father.

CP: Just because of the nature of being a tenant farmer?

EC: Mm-hm. Yeah.

CP: Mm. Well, it's easy to see how agricultural economics made an impression on you at an early age.

EC: Yes, I think so. I think so.

CP: Yeah. What was school like for you? Did you go to a rural schoolhouse, or did you go to a town?

EC: Went to a rural schoolhouse. We had probably ten people that were in that one-room country school. What was it like? Well, I'll tell you what it was like. We had programs. The parents would come, and the children, or the students, would perform, and so on and so forth. And I had—the older boys and I had discovered that there was lots of mischievous things that we could do in that school room, and we were creating trouble. And we had this program, and I noticed that my teacher was talking to my parents a lot. And when we went home that night, I started to go to bed, and my dad said, "Emery, not now." And he went over the things that the teacher had told him about my behavior, and that was the end of my being an outlaw.

I've never been an outlaw since. But I did enjoy—generally speaking, I did enjoy the one-room country school. And part of my punishment for misbehaving was that she gave me much additional responsibility, and I wrote my first report as a result of that. I was in the sixth grade, I think, when I got into trouble, but she assigned me to eighth-grade geography and government, and I wrote my first article ever, on Canada. I exhausted every scrap of reference material that was in that one-room country school, and I wrote my first report there, dealing with that. I shall never forget that. Then the following year, she had me help her with the first-graders in arithmetic, and I took that quite seriously, and I enjoyed that very much.

CP: Huh. So the dynamic of the school was that everybody was always in the same room, and you would have different assignments from the same teacher? [0:10:00]

EC: Yes, yes. We would go forward to the front of the room when we had, say, fourth-grade geography, or fourth-grade class of some kind. We'd go to the front of the room with a big, long bench, and we'd sit on the bench, and we would converse with her. And then she'd dismiss you, and you'd go back to your seat, and somebody else would come. It was not a bad system. And there were lots of people in a one-room country school that have gone through the educational system at all different times, in different institutions and so forth.

CP: What level of education did your parents have?

EC: My father had gone through the third grade. He was literate. He could read, he could write, and he was a very wise man. I learned a great deal from my father. But not sophisticated material. One of his favorite sayings to me, or his sons, was, "You have to learn to put yourself in the other fellow's shoes." And that became an ethic that was sort of widespread. My mother, however, she went to, I think, to seventh or eighth grade. She was quite literate. She read everything she'd get her hands on, and was very good at arithmetic. I mean, she could calculate, in her head, all kinds of things, and she managed the money for the family, and was very good at it.

You mentioned becoming an economist. I think she had a great deal on influence on me, because she was a marvelous manager, both inside the house and outside the house. And she and my father would spend time discussing decisions that had to be made. They'd discuss them at great length. I never saw any of my brothers—and I never did—go to one parent and try to play them against the other parent. I never saw that one time.

CP: So was education a point of emphasis for them, for their children?

EC: I beg your pardon?

CP: Was education something they really stressed to their children?

EC: Especially my father. Especially my father. He had only a third-grade education, and he wanted his sons to obtain more education, and we all did. My two older brothers—after finishing high school, they went to a business college. My schooling—he pushed me very hard to go to school. Part of it was before World War II, and part of it was after World War II. And then my younger brother, six years younger, who's coming to visit me tomorrow, from New Hampshire—he obtained a degree in civil engineering, and then became—afterwards attended law school, and then became an expert on patents, and became a patent attorney. Spent much of his life with large corporations, as a patent attorney. And his house is somewhat more elaborate than this one.

CP: [Laughs] What did farm life mean for a child growing up? I assume you had a lot of chores to do.

EC: I'm sorry?

CP: What sorts of work did you have to do around the farm, growing up?

EC: Well, I did a wide variety of things. I did hand work. I pulled weeds for all day long. I herded cattle. I herded—many people don't think this can be done, but I herded swine. I did all sorts of farm work. Eventually drove tractors, and so on. Managed horses. [0:15:00] It was a mixture of things that I did.

CP: Did you herd cattle on horseback?

EC: Cattle and swine on horseback.

CP: So you learned to ride a horse at an early age?

EC: We had a neighbor, Ross Thompson, same age as my father. And he came to my dad, and said to my dad, "Emery spends too much time by himself. He reads too much by himself. He goes out in the pasture with a book and sits down and reads." And he said, "He's too much by himself." Said, "He needs a pony, and I'm going to loan him a pony, if it's all right with you." And then when he brought the pony over, he said, "I'm not giving you this pony. I'm loaning you this pony, and if you mistreat it, I'm going to take it back." And I kept the pony until the pony died when I was in high school. But he never did sell it to my dad. He gave it to my dad for five years. And I think that had quite an impact on me.

CP: Yeah. So it sounds like you read a lot.

EC: He had read a lot?

CP: You read a lot.

EC: Everything I could get my hands on. We would go to town on Saturday night. I was just telling someone else this morning. We'd go to town on Saturday night, and I would be given maybe a quarter, or a dime, or something like that, as an allowance. We didn't call it an allowance. It never occurred to me that I was entitled to something like that, but anyway, they'd get a piece of money, and I'd spend it all. Spend part of it on a candy bar, and whatever left, I'd buy a magazine with it. And then I'd read and re-read and re-read that magazine for a week. And then I'd go through it again. Read everything I could get my hands on. Everything.

CP: Did you have any other hobbies as a boy?

EC: Well, yeah, I really—my hobby, to the extent that I had a tangible hobby, it was usually taking care of livestock, in one form or another. My pony, I spent a lot of time with, and I herded swine, and not many people can do that.

CP: [Laughs] You mentioned going to town. What was community life like where you grew up?

EC: Very small high school. Two things, I guess, stand out from my freshman year in high school, that I remember. One was that I was elected president of the freshman class, and I never have figured that out. I came in from the country; I knew almost no one there, and I was elected president. I do remember that, because it was [laughs] lots of responsibilities that I was not prepared to handle. But I learned a bunch from that. And I enjoyed the athletics. I had not had that opportunity before, and I played basketball, so I enjoyed that very, very much.

CP: A sport very near to the hearts of Kansans, basketball.

EC: Yes. Yes. Actually, Ralph Miller was not far from where I was, and we knew—he was a legend, even when I was in high school. He was four or five years older, and he was not far away, and we knew him. I was always aspiring to play against him in basketball. I never got that opportunity, but I thought that would be great.

CP: Did you come to know him later on?

EC: A bit. Not really well. But, yes, I got to know him later on.

CP: How about religion? I assume that was important to the community. Was that important to your family?

EC: I was not in a church until after I graduated from high school. There was no church in my community of any significance, in that little town. [0:20:01] We moved. I was a sophomore in high school, and we moved to another community, and there was organized religion there, but where I grew up, until my sophomore in high school, I was not close to organized religion. We always had a Bible in the house, and practically the only book we had in the house was the Bible. But we did not spend much time reading it.

CP: Do you think it was just because the population was so scarce, that was the reason for no church? Or did people observe in their houses, I assume?

EC: I think so. I think so. We would often have itinerant people come through that would provide certain services. I mean, when it came time for the harvesting of grain in the summer, itinerant farmers would come through, and they often were very religious. But religion played no role that I can tell.

CP: Did your family have any contact with extension agents?

EC: No. Absolutely not. I didn't know what extension was until I went to college. Didn't know what it was. It never came to our community. I did have vocational agriculture in high school, and my high-school vocational-ag teacher had some impact on me. I remember him vividly. But not extension.

CP: In what way did he impact you?

EC: He thought that I should go to Kansas State University and study agriculture. That's what he thought that I should do. And I think that he had an impact on me, and that I studied vocational agriculture while I was in high school, and probably not as much mathematics as I should have.

CP: Who else made an impact on you in high school?

EC: My English teacher. She was very good, and very rigorous. And I enjoyed reading; I read a lot. And I really did enjoy term papers. I liked to do term papers. And I think those two things. She put me in the senior play, too, and I played the lead role in the senior play. And then I was president of my senior class, and I think that that had quite an impact on me, because there were a lot of responsibilities then for senior class president. I did quite a lot of public speaking. But those two people, the vocational-ag teacher—he didn't guide me into the right classes, but on the other hand, he attached himself to me, and I attached myself to him. He followed my career.

And when Jimmy Carter became president of the United States—he was an outstanding Democrat, my teacher was, and he had moved to Colorado by that time—he was acting in the Democratic Party. And he told the Carter people that they should make me Secretary of Agriculture. He didn't ask me if I had any interest in the subject, and I have no reason to believe they had the slightest interest me, but he was convinced that that should happen. And it even went to the place where they did do an investigation of me, but I had no interest in that, at that time. I was doing other things. He was very proud of my career. He followed me until his death. He stayed right with me.

CP: Well, it sounds like your high school years prepared you pretty well for what was to come. You developed public speaking skills, you developed your writing skills, you were obviously a very good reader. Is there anything else that you took away from that time period?

EC: Well, I don't think so much. I think that Jim Samuels did have an impact on me. [0:25:02] As I say, I was both freshman class president and senior class president, and that was learning by doing. And I liked that. I liked it.

CP: Yeah, you mentioned there was a lot of duties. What sorts of things did you have to do as class president?

EC: Public speaking. The teachers pushed you out into the community as much as they could, and seemed like I was giving a speech every place, all over the place. I was in a public speaking contest. I won two county public speaking contests, and then I went to the state and I bombed out at the state level, and I didn't do a very good job.

CP: So I assume you were aspiring to go to college from pretty early on?

EC: Yes. My high school teachers all thought I should go to college, and when I was a junior, the summer I was a junior, I had developed typhoid fever. And when school started, I was in bed with typhoid fever, and I guess a lot of people were not sure that I was going to live. I never—I thought I was going to live. I was just sure I was going to get well. But it was a horrible illness. Do you know how it manifests itself? We had, I think, quite an able doctor, and he came out to my house, and I think he wanted to see how my mother kept house, because it was—cleanliness was very important.

But he came out and observed conditions there, and then I remember his telling her that I would be as well off there as I would be in a hospital, perhaps better off. And so she moved me into the front guest bedroom, and I would be there until about four o'clock in the afternoon. And at that point, my fever would peak, and it would be up in the neighborhood of 103 degrees, and it would break, and I would just sweat profusely. She would come in then, and put me over in a chair, and cover me up with blankets, because that would be followed by a chill. And she'd change my bed, and put me back, and then I would shiver until the fever would start. And that was a 24-hour ritual.

But that doctor told her that it was a contest between me and the germ, as to which would last the longest. And he said, "You have to starve the germ." And so I ate rice from her double-boiler, and skim milk, and I did that for six weeks. And I starved the germ to death. But six weeks, I lost all of my hair. I went back to high school to try to pick up my classes, and that was very rough. I could not hack the algebra class, and they were all ahead of me, and I didn't have any notes, and so I didn't take my algebra class, and I really missed that. I had a handicap for quite some time, but anyway, that was profound.

That had a profound impact on me, and I think one thing else that made me really want to be a scholar of sorts, because I felt deprived when I went back. I couldn't do the things I wanted to do. [0:30:00] Never did do some of the things that I really wanted to do. But my teachers helped me, without question, they helped me a lot. And my classmates obviously liked me, or they wouldn't have elected me president when I was—the following year. Well, I don't know whether this is relevant or not.

CP: I think so, yes. So did you go to school before the war at all, to college, or was it straight from high school into the war effort?

EC: I went one semester to college, Kansas State, to study agriculture, and it became obvious that I was going to be drafted, or was going into the military. So I just went one semester, dropped, went home, and was drafted from my home. And so I went into the service when I was nineteen years of age.

CP: You enlisted in the Army Air Corps.

EC: Mm-hm.

CP: Can you take me through your experience, your war service?

EC: I can. I think, based on the information I had, I think I tested pretty high when I went into the Army Air Corps. Looking back, I think I did. But anyway, I did go into the Army Air Corps, and went to basic training, and then was classified for Army Specialized Training. Made a dumb decision, a really dumb decision. I was sent to Lincoln, Nebraska, to go into this Army Specialized Training, and this would have been university training. They had two categories. One was military government, and the other was engineering.

And so I went there, and we were given a choice, and I put down "military government," and took all this battery of tests, and at the end they brought me in and said I tested much better in mathematics than I did in language, therefore, they're going to put me in the engineering. And I made a dumb decision, a really dumb decision. I said, "Well, what would you do with me if I refused?" They said, "We'd send you into combat." And so I said, "Well, I refuse."

And I was in the Air Force, and so they shipped me off to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to study to be a radio operator, and that's what I did. And I went, and I had training. I got gunnery training, and then I got with my crew, and we did very, very—I went six weeks, maybe longer than that—Sioux Falls, South Dakota—studied radio operation, and there's not much to that. Anyway, I did that very promptly, and then we did our training for overseas, and did that at Dyersburg, Tennessee. And then we flew our plane to England, and did our missions out of England, over Germany. I did 30 missions.

CP: Any standout memories from those missions?

EC: Mm?

CP: Any standout memories from any of those missions? The 30 missions that you engaged in?

EC: What about them?

CP: Anything that stands out, in terms of your memory?

EC: Two missions in particular. One mission, we went to Hamburg, Germany, and by that time, we were a lead crew. We led a bombing group of 36 planes over Hamburg, and it was my responsibility as radio operator—we were lead plane, and it was my responsibility to give certain reports. And I recall that when I sent my message in, of the 36 planes we had 18 left, and I sent that in. I discovered later that our fatalities were not as great as I had reported [0:35:01], and I don't know what happened to those other planes, but I assume that they went back independently, or they joined another bomb group or something, but some of them got back that I reported missing. Not very many. I've forgotten—maybe six or so. That was quite an experience.

We had fighters join other flights, and I saw planes go down, and so on and so forth, but that one was fundamental, because—I think because I saw a real battle, and kind of put battles in perspective. Otherwise, we'd lose planes here and there, and we'd have fighter planes that would come in, but this was real, real battle. It was toward the end of the war, and the Luftwaffe sent everything up that day, and it just was—this was real battle, and I think I learned a lot about war from that one battle, just a lot of things about war. One was why it's so hard to get an accurate picture of what goes on, because you see a little bit, and there were things about that battle that I learned 25 years later, in reading about it, that I didn't know. And so I think I learned a lot about that.

The other thing that happened was more personal, and it was a horrible thing. And it still bothers me to this day. But after we had dropped our bombs on a mission, the crew chief, who was up with the pilots on that side of the bomb bay, and I was at the back of the bomb bay, but the crew chief called me and said he couldn't get the doors closed. The system, hydraulic system, had gone out, and we were going to have to close them by hand. And he ordered me—I don't think he really had the authority to do that, but I thought he did. But he ordered me to help him out, and I had to put on my oxygen bottle, and I had my parachute on, and I crawled out into the open bomb bay and helped him. He was on one side, and he leaned out and cranked by leaning out, but I was out there on the catwalk, way below zero about 45,000 feet, and we cranked up the bomb bay doors, and that was the most horrible experience for me. But those two things stand out.

CP: Mm. What types of aircraft were you on?

EC: B-17s.

CP: Well, the war effort was, for many people, an exposure to completely new worlds, new people, new continents. I'm sure for you it was some of that, getting out of the Midwest, and living in England, and seeing people you probably would never have encountered otherwise.

EC: That's right. But I had read a lot. I realized—the other soldiers I was with, I had much better knowledge of what was going on in England—even then some of my officers, due to my reading. I mean, I just knew. We would go to London. I would know a lot of things about what was in London that they didn't know. I mean, it was completely new to them.

CP: Where were you stationed?

EC: The little town of Disk [?]. It was north of London, and not far from Ipswich.

CP: And what was the environment like there?

EC: Wonderful. And I loved the English people. I got acquainted with them, and I liked them, and we could talk about things. No, I enjoyed that part.

CP: Was there anything about English culture in particular that you specifically enjoyed?

EC: Well, I think I admired them very much, because they had been at war for a long time. [0:40:00] They were rationed on all kinds of things. I went to a dance one night in London, and a young woman invited me to come into her house, and I went with her. She lived in a small apartment with her father, and no one else was in evidence. And I remember that when we went into that apartment, he made me feel comfortable, and he went to the kitchen, and he fixed a cucumber sandwich. And I thought that was a great sacrifice, because green food often times was very difficult for them to get a hold of but he fixed me a cucumber sandwich.

CP: Mm-hm. To what extent was the extermination of the Jews known amongst the rank and file while you were in Europe?

EC: Well, first, all of that was going on, and I didn't know about it. I didn't have an acute sense of—I knew it was occurring, bad things were occurring, but that was all I knew. I didn't feel personally involvement in that, at all. That just passed me by.

CP: What do you remember about the conclusion of the war? Were you still stationed in England when victory was declared?

EC: I was. I was. When I went over, just as I went over, the required number of missions was 25, and it was raised to 35 just as I went over. And by the war's end I had 30 missions, so we would have had five more missions to do. But, I've lost your question.

CP: The declaration of victory in Europe, and your reaction, the memories of that moment.

EC: Well, it was bedlam. [Laughs] It was bedlam. Not just for the soldiers, but for the civilian—everybody. It was weird. And it was really quite remarkable. One thing about the war that has not been written about generally, although I think the military probably has detailed records on it, was the ending. I mean, we got on our plane, and we flew home, and everybody was going home. And when we got home, and Japan, that war ended, and we were out of Europe. I was in the service back in October, and I was in college by January. And that was absolutely remarkable, as I look back on it, when you've got the ending of the war, and all of the things that were done to get people back, and get them to work, and so on and so forth. It's absolutely marvelous.

CP: What do you remember thinking when you read about the atomic bombings in Japan?

EC: I was on the West Coast. I was all set. They had me all set to go to the Pacific Theater. I would have been a radio operator on a B-29, altogether different kind of a service, and I wasn't happy about that. I felt I had—I felt that my 30 missions had relieved me of the responsibility of doing anything in Japan, and so I wasn't happy about that. But I did read about it, and I began to really take an interest in Harry Truman at that point, because he didn't hesitate to use the bomb. I mean, the minute he found out about it—well, he knew about its development, but it was ready to go, and he didn't hesitate at all to do it and that ended the war just like that.

So I guess my reaction to that, I sort of shrugged my shoulders at it. [0:45:01] I didn't fully appreciate the horribleness of the bomb, but I did appreciate a quick decision on it, and I became very interested in Harry Truman, and I followed his career until his death. And I later met him.

CP: Oh, yeah? On any meaningful level, or just a handshake?

EC: When he left the presidency, I was working for the Federal Reserve Bank in Kansas City, and he came back to Kansas City and officed in my building. And one Saturday morning, my five-year-old daughter and I went up to my office. Nobody else was there, and I had to pick up something at the office, and she went with me. And when we came out of my office, we marched down to the elevators, and punched the button, and opened it up, and there Harry was, grinning from ear to ear. And when that little gal got on the elevator, he had no time for me. He just spent his time with her. [Laughs] But she was a great conversationalist, and they just had a great time. He said, "I remember when my little girl was just your age," and my daughter said, "And what was her name?" And he told her. She said, "Margaret, that's a nice name." And she grabbed a hold of his hand, and when we got off the elevator, the two of them got off and walked out to the street. I was coming along behind, trying to figure out what I was supposed to do with an ex-President. And she handled him beautifully. [Laughs]

McCullough wrote a book about Harry Truman, and included those years in Kansas City. And there's one thing about that book that I really was impressed with, and that was the name of one of the women that was an elevator operator in that building got into that book, and she was a charming, charming woman, and really, really service-oriented. She had people on that elevator. She was helpful, and she did all sorts of things. And I felt the fact that the Truman people were sensitive enough to get her name in that book, was really remarkable. I just thought that was funny. I knew her quite well.

CP: Yeah. Well, what was your assessment of Truman, having studied his career in full?

EC: I admire him very much. I admire him. I really do. I think that almost any way you measure it, his was a remarkable presidency, and one that he was not prepared for. The system didn't do anything for him. Roosevelt didn't do anything for him. But there he was, with all that responsibility. And I think how well he handled that responsibility, as compared to LBJ, who took over from the Kennedy's, and it isn't that I'm critical of LBJ's decisions so much as that he was intimidated by the Kennedy's and the eastern establishment, and Harry Truman had the same kind of problem to face, but he decided, "I'm President now, and Roosevelt isn't, and I'm President now," and he was President. He really was President. And so I admire him a lot.

CP: Well, you talked about how remarkable it was to complete your war service in October, and be in college in January. Want to tell me about that transition? That must have been pretty significant, I assume, for a lot of GIs that came back and went to school.

EC: Yeah, and I didn't realize at the time how significant that was. I just didn't—it was just going on all around me, and it was happening. But now that I think back on that, and I think about that, that was really a remarkable performance by the government, to do what they did in that short a period of time. [0:50:00]

CP: So what was it like for you, personally? You'd spent a term at Kansas State before the war, and then you started again after the war. Did it seem significantly different? Your perspective certainly had changed.

EC: It really was. It really was. I was—[laughs]—this'll sound boastful, but I started in—I started back to college in January. Two years later, I had my degree. And I had one semester before the war, but in two years, I did essentially three years' work. They were organized so that you'd go during the summer, and I made the decision; I made an economist's

decision. I decided that I wanted to get through as soon as I could, and get out and start earning some money, become independent of—I wanted to be independent of the government, and so I wanted to do it as rapidly as I could.

I made an economist's decision that my minimum grade would be a B, and I would take as many courses as I could, maintain a B average, and get through school as quickly as I could. That was a very deliberate, calculated decision, a far better decision than I made when I was in the service and had the chance to go to the university and ended up in combat. But I did that in two years, and then the department head gave me an assistantship. I graduated with honors. I was shooting for a B average, but I did graduate with honors. I don't know. I got some Cs along the line, but more As than Cs.

CP: Did you decide on the outset on ag economics, because it sounds like your first term was agriculture, before the war?

EC: No, I was an economist really from the beginning, I think from my mother. She was such a good manager, and somehow or another I connected the word "economics" with what I observed her doing. I don't know just how I did that. But one thing I didn't mention to you—when I graduated from high school, I managed a local dry-goods store for a year before I went to college that one semester before the war. I didn't mention that to you.

CP: No.

EC: I didn't know what I was going to do when I graduated from high school. I wanted to go to college, but I didn't have any money, and I didn't know about such things as assistantships, and scholarships, and so on and so forth. But I didn't have any money to go to college. And my ag teacher put me on for a scholarship. I missed out on it the first year. Then I went into the local merchant, who was going to go up to Wichita and open another store, and he went to high school and talked to the principal, thinking that I was the person that should manage the local store. I didn't know anything about that. But he stayed with me for a couple months, and then he turned the store over to me. And so I did that for a year, and then I was able to get another, a second try at the scholarship, and I got that, and I went to the college. That's why I went to college for one semester before the service. And so I was—well, that's enough on that.

CP: You said it was a dry-goods store?

EC: Yeah.

CP: So what did you gain from that experience, do you think?

EC: Well, quite a lot. He really did delegate a lot to me. He let me do the buying. He spent the summer with me before he took off for Wichita, but he trained me well, and I did it all. Advertised, and I bought stuff, and my brothers laughed at me [0:55:00], but I learned how to sell brassieres to the women in the community. I thought that was a worthy accomplishment.

CP: So at Kansas State, did you ever consider just studying economics, or was it was always agricultural economics?

EC: I didn't know the difference. The two departments were together there, Economics and Ag. I didn't know the difference. I thought of myself, and always have thought of myself, as basically an economist who studies agriculture. I came here to the university. That was not the—and still isn't the ethic, but that's the way it was there. When I went to Iowa State, the two departments were together, and so I've always thought of myself as an economist first, who has a special interest in agriculture.

CP: Not long into your schooling, you got married.

EC: Oh, that's right.

CP: Yeah. You want to tell me about Merab? Did I pronounce her name correctly?

EC: Yeah, that's correct. Well, she was a high school teacher, and I had written her during my missions, and asked her if she'd correspond with me. I felt the need for the need for that, as I was flying those missions. I wrote to my family all the time, but I really didn't have much connection with civilian life other than my family. But I knew her through high school, and so I wrote to her and asked her if she would correspond with me. And then we had a whirlwind romance when

I got home. There isn't much more to say about that. She was a marvelous woman, and she was a great help to me. I was confused. I wasn't oriented real well to civilian life, but she was great. She never indicated nervousness, casting her lot with someone such as myself, and no, she was great.

CP: Well, it sounds like you were bearing a full academic load as an undergraduate, but did you have any extracurricular activities during that time?

EC: No, not as such, no. I guess I was a member of the ag-econ club there, but I didn't—I was full-time, student, full-time student.

CP: Did you have a mentor at that point?

EC: I did. I did. His picture is hanging up in the study in there. Ed Bagley had a tremendous impact on me. I went back to school in January, and the first summer—I was taking summer school. First summer I took a course in applied economics from Professor Bagley, and the students all said, "Avoid Bagley's class. He's tough." And I didn't care. I thought I could get a C in his course, regardless of how tough he was, and that was all I was shooting for. I was so excited in that course. There were a few things that I could look back on that distant, but I was so excited. He made that so exciting that I couldn't sleep at night. I'd lie awake at night in bed, thinking about that. And he had a multiple-choice final examination, and it was one of the toughest examinations I think I ever had, and I went through it carefully, because I was excited. I wanted to do well on the exam, just for my own sake; not for him, or not because I was worried about it, just because it was so exciting to me. [1:00:00] Those were really good questions.

And I was going down the hall one day, after I taken it but I hadn't learned my grade, and he saw me. And he called me in, and he asked—he said, "Where did you take Principles of Economics?" And I said, "Well, I took by correspondence the year after I graduated from high school, and I enrolled in a correspondence course in economics." I thought it was the worst course I'd ever had, and I knew that wasn't really economics, but I didn't get a very good grade, and I didn't understand what I was doing. But I told him. "Well," he said, "That explains it." And he said, "I have used this examination for a large number of students," and he said, "There's only been one student that did better than you on that examination. She missed one question, and you missed two." But he said, "You missed the two easiest questions on the test. Where did you take it from?" And I told him. "Well," he said, "that explains it." And we became friends as of that experience, until he died, just about three years ago. We just became very good friends, and had a similar hobby in growing roses. And he was proud of me as an economist, and we just—we've been associates ever since.

CP: Do you remember what it was about the discipline that captivated you so much at an early age?

EC: Yes. I can tell you exactly. He talked about all of the economic, social problems that I knew about, and he could analyze every one of them. And he could—he put it on the blackboard. He had drafts, and he could analyze, and I thought, "My God, I wonder if I could ever do something like that." He was absolutely wonderful! When I became president of my professional association, he flew to Florida to introduce me. But he just had an enormous impact on me.

CP: So this perspective, that it provided a framework for understanding the world, it sounds like, was what really captivated you?

EC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And he was so good about explaining it. I mean, that he was so patient about explaining it. It's been one of the great mysteries in my life, as to why it is that a teacher like that cannot get recognition? I've been—there's two or three economists I then subsequently had association with, and so on and so forth, that don't—he never got that kind of recognition. Never. But with me, he was number one.

CP: Well, you're providing some of it right now for him. So you flowed pretty much directly from undergraduate to master's studies, is that correct?

EC: Yeah.

CP: And was he your major professor?

EC: No, he wasn't. There was an ag economist who was my major professor, but he was on the committee, and when he read—and what I did on my master's thesis, I picked up an idea from Alfred Marshall that Professor Bagley taught, and then I wrote an article based on my master's thesis and published it. And he was so delighted that I published an article from my master's thesis, and I was only student around there who was doing that, and did that. And I got it published in a journal, and he was so pleased about that. And in retrospect, I'm very pleased about that. I'm very proud of that article, because I took the idea from his class, and from Alfred Marshall's book, and then I went out and did the empirical work associated with the model. No one around there was doing anything like that. That subsequently became the way you did things, but that wasn't the case then, and everybody was impressed by that. I was pleased. [1:05:00]

CP: What was the work?

EC: I dealt with farm leases, in the case of the crop-share lease, and that had been a problem that had intrigued economists from the very beginning. Adam Smith has something about it, and then Alfred Marshall picked it up, and then some other people. But the way you paid for your rent on farmland has quite an impact on what you will do with that farmland, and it affects the owner, and it affects the tenant, and so on and so forth. And you'd expect certain things from the crop-share lease. That was what I was investigating, and I was just doing some pick and shovel work for one of the other professors there, and I could see how that data that I was collecting for him could be used in this economic model that I had learned from Marshall, Smith, and Bagley, so I wrote that up in my master's thesis. And it was kind of original.

CP: What sort of data did you collect? Did you go out and interview farmers, or was it more numbers?

EC: Yeah. It was interviewing farmers, their actual operations, and I just put in several questions on my own. They had a standard questionnaire that I was filling out, but it was just pick and shovel work, dealing with some facet of the operation. Actually, I think it came out of USDA, and it was something that came to the department to do, and the department turned around and asked me if I'd like to take six weeks in between classes, in between my summer session and beginning—well, I would take that six weeks in there, and go out and do that work for them. So I did, and I got paid for it, but the windfall was that those data could be used for my master's thesis, and that's what I did.

CP: Did you do any teaching during this time?

EC: Yes, I did. I did. And I learned that I love teaching. I was standing in the hallway one day, and the department head walked by, and he said, "Oh, by the way, Emery, I signed you up for a recitation class in economics." [Laughs] Two weeks later, I was in the classroom. [Laughs] And I'd never taught. They wouldn't help me or anything. But I knew who I was teaching. I was teaching veterans, and I knew they had—and I told them right off what my background was, and told them I didn't have any experience, but if they were with me, we'd get along okay. And I told them if I didn't know something, I'd admit it, and I'd get the answer. They were fine with that, because they'd had really lousy teaching. A lot of the teaching after World War II was really pretty bad. When someone would just tell them that they'd help them, well, that was all it took.

And so I've loved teaching. But I worked hard. Oh, I worked hard. I'd come out of that classroom; I was just soaked with perspiration. But I had that really good experience with my thesis, and then that good experience with teaching the first time, and then I had found my niche.

CP: Yeah. So you decided to pursue your doctorate from there?

EC: Yeah. Again, I don't take a lot of credit for that. Kansas State—I was enjoying what I was doing; I was teaching there, and I thought maybe I was set for life. But they sent word down, Kansas State, that if you expected to get anywhere then, you better have a Ph.D. That had not been the rule up to that point, but that was what came down the pike. So then I went home, talked with my wife, and she said, "Well, if that's the way it is, let's get the Ph.D." [1:10:00] [Laughs] So went to Iowa State to get the Ph.D.

CP: Why Iowa State?

EC: Because there was a young man there named Earl Heady, who was getting national and international attention for what he was doing in production economics. So I went there to study with him. And his picture's on the wall. I'll show that to you.

CP: Well, so you were focusing on production economics then during this time period. How did that evolve?

EC: Oh, I think it came out of Bagley's courses. That master's thesis then became what was known as production—they didn't call it "production economics" when I did it, but that was a part of production economics. It was natural for me to do that.

CP: Was Iowa State appreciably different from Kansas State in any way?

EC: Yeah. It was, well, appreciably different; it's hard to say that. The subjects were the same, but it was taught far more rigorously, far more—Bagley was rigorous, but everything at Iowa State was that way. And Iowa State had had a tremendous reputation as being the place to—in agricultural economics, as being one of the places to get advanced work, and there were a lot of famous names associated with Iowa State. Earl Heady, Theodore Schultz, Kenneth Boulding—those were all people that were there. And I went there, and Earl Heady, who was my original professor, I got along well with him. But I enjoyed Kansas State more. I enjoyed Bagley and Kansas State more. It was more exciting, intellectually. Iowa State was getting so routine. I mean, they would do certain things over and over and over again the same way, and maybe give minor changes one time to the next, but it wasn't exciting intellectually.

CP: What kind of work were you doing as a Ph.D. candidate?

EC: I wrote my thesis on risk and uncertainty in western Kansas, and I've used that quite a bit. I still use it.

CP: Were you gathering data as before, or was this more of a theoretical piece?

EC: It was both. I stumbled onto some experimental data from western Kansas, one of the branch experimental stations there—on wheat growing in western Kansas, under extreme drought conditions, and risk and uncertainty kind of a thing. And I supplemented that with some other work, other data that I did, and I got some journal articles out of it. Earl Heady rubber-stamped it. He made a suggestion that I could use [unclear], and he just rubber-stamped it. I got through the—

CP: Hm. It sounds like it wasn't a real invigorating culture for you.

EC: No. It really wasn't. I don't know why, but I never really got excited about Iowa State. They ended up giving me an honorary doctorate some years later. But when I came out of my prelim at Iowa State, Earl Headey came out of the room, after they had examined me for a couple of hours, and said, "Would you like to go over to the Admin for a cup of coffee?" [1:15:00] And I said, "Sure." I knew what would be over there, and what time of day it was. I knew we'd go over there, there'd be a big, round table, and seated all around the table would be my fellow graduate students. So we did. We went over there, and I could tell they were just dying, and finally some of them screwed up his courage and said to Earl Heady, "How did he do?" And Earl said, "Oh, pretty well. He didn't get all excited and forget what little he did know."

CP: [Laughs] Was Iowa State your first engagement with extension experiment stations, or had you done that at Kansas State, as well?

EC: Both. I mean, I was just beginning to figure out those things at that time. And then I got quite interested in extension. I wasn't sure that I wanted to do it myself, but I was quite interested in the fact that society would provide something like an extension service, that could serve people wherever they were. That was a new idea to me, because I hadn't seen anything like that. I knew at Kansas State that there were extension people out there working, and doing things like that, and I thought maybe that someday I might take a job doing that sort of thing, but I had no personal experience with it.

CP: Who was impacting your thinking at this point?

EC: Well, I guess just my fellow graduate students and our fellow beginning faculty. I don't think there—later on, when I came under the influence of a person named Theodore Schultz. Does that name mean anything to you?

CP: No.

EC: Well, Theodore Schultz, an ag economist, economist, really a great economist—South Dakota—who couldn't get into Harvard, but who went to the University of Wisconsin. We were talking about—?

CP: Theodore Schultz?

EC: Theodore Schultz! [Claps] Great, great, great man! He [claps]—he graduated from the University of Wisconsin, and got his PhD, and went from there to Iowa State, and became department head at Iowa State, and built up a great program there in economics. Then, one of his people wrote an article dealing with margarine, relative to butter. A great controversy developed in the state. The dairy farmers didn't like this, and demanded that the publication be squashed. In the uproar, he resigned, because it was in his department, and an economist named Brownlee had written it, and he would not—did not want to discharge him for that, and so he resigned.

It was a great furor, and Schultz went to the University of Chicago, joined the economics department there, and became department head of Chicago. And when I was working at the Federal Reserve Bank in Kansas City, of course, it's a famous name, but one day I get a letter from Ted Schultz, of all people, a person I'd never met. And he said that he'd been told that I was doing some work on agricultural capital, and would it be something that he could learn about it, or something? He just—out of the blue, just wrote to me. It turned out that what I was doing was not anything very fundamental, and he wasn't really interested in it, but we became acquainted. Then I felt free to write him later about some things. And we became good friends, and remained friends for the remainder of his life. [1:20:03] I turned to him for advice on almost every move I made— position move that I made from that point on.

CP: And you mentioned he won the Nobel Prize in Economics?

EC: Yeah.

CP: That must have been a special thrill for you.

EC: Yes. It was nothing that I had anything to do with. He won it for his international work, and essentially, he wrote a little book that I had nothing to do with, in which he said that the peasants of the world were not stupid, and when they did something, they did it to improve their life, and that we shouldn't think it was because they were ignorant, or because of their culture, or anything else—the reason they did it. They did it because they were doing the best they could with the opportunities available to them. And this is why he won the Nobel Prize, because he could document that, and he did. It was an anthropologist that he worked with that dealt with the cultural aspects.

But he took an interest in me, and when I asked him for advice, he gave it. And I had him here when I was department head, and he came here, and he saw what we were doing in the department, and was pleased, and went back east. And the next thing I knew, I was getting letters and telephone calls from people all over, wanting to know about this and that about our program, and so on. He was a great advisor.

CP: You mentioned that your thesis—you didn't get a whole lot of feedback from within your department. I'm wondering if you got feedback elsewhere, perhaps after it was published in the journal articles, that made you feel like that you had done something that was on the right track?

EC: Yeah. Yeah. I did. I did. And that's been one of the good things about both Kansas State and Oregon State, that many of those people couldn't do, or didn't do, or wouldn't—motivated to do the sort of thing I was interested in, but they all were proud of me. They were proud of me. And that's why I stayed at Oregon State as long as I did. I had offers to go elsewhere, but they were proud of me here, and always have been. That's why I'm here. [Laughs]

CP: Well, the last thing I want to ask you about for today is your parents. Were they ever able to move into a more comfortable situation?

EC: No. No. My dad died when I was in graduate school at Iowa State. That was another thing. It was sort of like my typhoid fever in high school. When I began my graduate work at Iowa State, he was ill, and I got a letter from my mother. And I showed it to my wife, and I said, "I think I'd better go," and she said, "I think you better." And just—my first semester at Iowa State in graduate school, I missed the first six weeks because of his death, and so in effect, I shut down the farming operation there, and sold the farm, and all. I did all of that in six weeks, and went back to graduate school. And I was handicapped, because all of my associates were way ahead of me. And it was just—just like high school in a sense. And it was hard. I never did recover from it completely, but there were just things I didn't learn. [1:25:00] It was too intense.

CP: How about your mother?

EC: My mother—oh, it's hard for me to talk about her. She lost him; we sold the farm, and she moved to town. We got a small apartment for her. And she wouldn't take a penny from any of her children. She said, "Nobody pays my bills." And she lived, I think, in terms of her standards, that she had a comfortable life. Summer came; she bought bus tickets. She bought them so that she could go all the way around, and see all of her children and her grandchildren on one bus ticket. She didn't have—she didn't go home between trips. She'd see them all before she'd go back home. She did things like that. I said to her, "You need a telephone so that I can call you." She said, "Nobody pays my bills, and I can't afford a telephone." And I called the people in Oxford, Kansas. I told them, "Put in a telephone, and send me the bill." And she said to me, "Nobody pays my bills." But she did, and that—she made an exception.

CP: [Laughs] So you were able to phone her?

EC: Yeah.

CP: Yeah.

EC: Yeah. Now, she eventually developed dementia, and passed away in a rest home in Kansas. My parents—neither of them had a very affluent lifestyle. Neither of them. I wish my dad could have lived to have seen of the things that I was able to see, but I think he would have been very pleased.

CP: Yeah. Well, thank you very much, Dr. Castle. We'll start up next time with the—

EC: Emery, Emery. My name's Emery.

CP: Okay, very good. The Federal Reserve job, and then we'll get to OSU. [1:27:42]