



Bob Lundeen Oral History Interviews, July 9, 2013

Title

“Early Years and Military Service”

Date

July 9, 2013

Location

Lundeen residence, Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Summary

In interview 1, Lundeen talks about his early life in Oregon and describes his parents' backgrounds. Other topics covered are his enlistment in the U.S. Army, his wedding, graduation from Oregon State College, early military assignments, wartime experiences and early days at Dow.

Interviewee

Robert Lundeen

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, Bob. So if we could start today by having you introduce yourself? Could you give us your name, and today's date, and our location?

Bob Lundeen: Yeah. I'm Bob Lundeen, and today's date is?

CP: July 9th.

BL: Yeah, July 9th, 2013.

CP: Great. Well, let's start off with where were you born?

BL: Astoria, Oregon. June 25th, 1921. I just had my 92nd birthday.

CP: Now, what was your parents' background?

BL: Let me see. My dad was, well my dad was an Oregon Stater, also. He went, and in 1917, graduated Oregon State in—it was the OAC in those days—in Forestry. And my mother went to what was then Oregon Normal School, which is now Western Oregon University. So that was their background. My father was born—born in Germany, actually, and his parents emigrated to this country in the late 1800s, and then—well, first, yeah, they did, and they emigrated to a place called Rock Island, Illinois, right on the—and that's where my dad went to elementary and high school, and then he came out to Oregon State to do the forestry program.

So, my first recollections of anything was when I was very small, probably about like this. And we were living in a logging camp closest, close to a place called Kesey [?], Oregon, which place doesn't exist anymore. But we lived at the headquarters camp, called the Oregon American Lumber Company, and so I grew up there for, until I was probably five or six—no, a little older than that, seven or eight. And then we moved from the logging camp to the lumber company at Westport, Oregon. Westport's still there, but there's no saw—it was a sawmill town, called Westport Lumber Company.

CP: Is this on the coast?

BL: No, it's in Columbia County. Well, it's just off—excuse me, I've got to wipe my eye. It's on, what's—excuse me, I've got to—give me something to wipe my eye with. This, just give me a hanky, a napkin would do totally fine. [Pause] Thank you.

So, the Westport Lumber Company was, it's about—Westport is still there, but there's no lumber operation, but. Excuse me, again. [Pause] So we went from this operation in the woods to this sawmill town. And I grew up there, and lived in Westport, actually, until I went to Oregon State in 1938, when I graduated. To give you an idea, Westport, Oregon, was a company town. The company owned everything, and only about 500 people lived there. [0:05:06] The company owned everything. I think the rent on our house was eight dollars a month. Common labor—common labor in a lumber company was 50 cents an hour. And Westport was a really nice place to grow up, because, oh, to give you an idea, there were seven in my high school graduating class! [Laughs]

So it wasn't a very big place, but a great place to grow up, because we had a creek ran right through the town, and we could fish there. And so I was there, lived in Westport until I went away to—well, 'til actually World War II came along. And I graduated from Oregon State in '42. But the war had just started in 1942, so like most other young men of my age, we signed up for the—for the Army, and I signed up for the Army Air Corps. I didn't have any great desire to be a pilot, but I enlisted to be an aviation cadet. But, and so I learned to be a weather forecaster by going to the University of Chicago for a year. It was sort of a truncated master's degree program, long on practical experience, and a little less heavy on the theory. But it was a really interesting experience at Chicago. I had never lived in a big city like that before.

And so anyhow, my wife Betty and I were married while I was a cadet. We were married on the 26th day of—the day after Christmas. We were going to get married—we were married in Betty's house in Lake Oswego, Oregon. We were going to get married at—on Christmas Eve, because I had some leave I could take that time. But it turned out that—and we were living in a hotel in Chicago. There weren't accommodations, for recruits for the Army were spread out all over

the country. So I'd arranged this, that we were going to get married on Christmas Eve. And we were living in this hotel, the name of which I have—the Miramar Hotel. Yeah, I remember that now.

And I had a flight all scheduled to fly out to Portland. And then since Betty lived in Lake Oswego, we were going to get married there. Well, the United Airlines, well, whatever airline it was, called me up and said, "Gee, we're sorry, Mr. Lundeen, but the military is taking over all of our flights going to Oregon tonight, so you're going to have to take the train. But we have booked you a train reservation on Union Pacific, and so you are going to get to Portland on the 26th day, instead of Christmas Eve." So we were married on the day after Christmas, Boxing Day, in 1942.

And so I served in the Army for four years. Well, my first assignment—after I finished at the University of Chicago, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the then-U.S. Army Air Corps, because it was before we had a separate Air Force. Yeah, the air operations belonged to the Army; we just had the Army and the Navy. [0:09:56] So, I was first stationed at Santa Ana, California. That was my first assignment. Betty went to work for a radio station, KEIM, the Voice of the Redwoods, in Eureka, California. And she was all set to move down to Eureka and be with me. And I got my orders to go overseas, so we left.

So I called Betty and told her, you know, "Save your ticket. Don't come to Santa Ana, because I just got my orders to go overseas." And a few days later, I got on a troop ship at Long Beach, I think it was, and 52 days later, I found myself in Bombay, India, because we didn't know where we were going until we got off shore. So we went by ourself across the Indian Ocean. A couple of Dutch destroyers came in to—Dutch destroyers who had escaped from Indonesia had gotten out of there before the Japanese had taken over Indonesia, and came down, then, to be with the American forces in Australia. And then we had a British heavy cruiser, HMS Suffolk. And she was our escort, principal armed escort, to get from—well, we went—I should say we got to, on the west side, the southwest corner of Australia. I forgot the name of the city there.

CP: Perth?

BL: Perth. Perth, yeah. So we got to—I told Betty not to come, because we were—so we left for Perth and got to Bombay. And then I found I was assigned to, actually, the 10th Weather Squadron there, but my posting was in China. So we took—the weather squadron had some, a couple of airplanes of their own, so we flew across India to a place called Chava [?], in the very northeast corner of India, and from there flew across the Hump into China, into Kunming, which was the headquarters of the 14th Air Force, and General Chennault's famous Flying Tigers. We went from there—I went from there, along with a few other of my colleagues, to an airbase in the southeast corner of China, called Suqian [?], in Jiangsu Province.

And I was there for about six months, and then the Japanese sort of cut China in two. They were really getting pinched, because MacArthur and his troops were in the Philippines by then, and the U.S. Navy was giving the Japanese a hard time in the Straits of Formosa. So the Japanese decided they had to get—they were getting pinched on oil and rice, and whatever else they needed to keep their army alive, so they actually cut—they cut China in two, as far as we were concerned. And they occupied a railroad which ran from what was then French Indochina, across China, to a place called Yichang, on the Yangtze River. And so we had—the American forces had to kind of evacuate the southeast. We had been about—well, there was a road. We didn't have a railroad, this place called Suqian, we had just a road. And so the Japanese also had forces, and they run up that road from Hong Kong.

[0:14:58] So anyway, we were there until the end of 1943, I think it was. And by that time, the Japanese had surrendered, and the atom bomb had gone off. So we got in—we were in Shanghai then, and so I got a troop ship coming back to the States, and we left there right at the end of '43. And we came back on a freighter on the North Pacific Crossing in the winter, which wasn't very much fun, I can tell you, and got home in time for Christmas.

CP: What were some of your duties, during this time when you were in China?

BL: Oh. Well, I was a—first, we were at this place called Suqian, and I first started out as a weather forecaster, because that's what I had been trained to do. But by the time the—after about a year, I became the operations officer for this 10th Weather Squadron in China, and really became—my job then was to handle the actual disposition of our operational assets, the people, and the equipment, and take care of all of the administrative operation of the people that lived and

worked at these weather stations. We had about—I don't remember. In those days I would say we had about fifteen of our own American Air Force weather stations, but we had a much larger number of Chinese weather stations. They had quite a good weather reporting service.

So, we got a combination—and they had English-speaking Chinese, probably would be enlisted men in our terms, who would run the weather portion of the Chinese station over to our station, and we could stick those in our own weather maps from our station. And then we had a weather map of sort of the southeast corner of China. That was the data we worked from to make a weather forecast. By the time the war was over, and after I was the operations officer for some time, by that time I was promoted to a major in the U.S. Army Air Corps. So we got back to the States, I'd say, slightly after Christmas, and then I went looking for a job.

CP: When you were in China, what kind of experience did you have with Chinese culture?

BL: Well, I found the Chinese were very interesting people. They were good-natured. They were very poor. In those days, this place Suqian was a—maybe had a population of, I don't know, three or four hundred people, something like that. And a telegraph station, and what else did they have? A post office, and quite a good Chinese restaurant. But there were just small villages around that part. There was no metropolis there at all.

But one of the practical difficulties we had—well, I have to back up here a little bit. We could watch—this place, Suqian, had Chinese villages sort of scattered all around it. We could see how the Chinese lived, and we would watch them plowing their fields with plows, wooden plows, pulled by oxen. [0:20:00] I mean, it was really primitive. But the Chinese were always very happy people, because at night you could see them. I think we had electric lights; we must have had our own generator out in the basement. They didn't have anything like that. But there was a village just a stone's throw away, and you could see them getting out in the evening there, and lit up a fire, and smoking a pipe, or something like that, and you know, having a nice time in the village.

And the war didn't affect them very much. We got bombed quite a few times, but fortunately we always—they had quite a good air warning net there, the Chinese had. And so, they would get word from—they had observers spotted all over the place, connected by telephone. And we called—an air raid was called a jing bao, and so we knew enough Chinese to ask them, was this air raid getting closer, or farther away, or not coming at all? So we could communicate that with these sort of Chinese enlisted people we had. But they were very nice people to be around.

And so when the Japanese tried to cut the country in two, we went back to—we moved back to Kunming then, and sort of finished the war, sort of in the westerly part of China. We were there in the first days when Mao Tse-tung got in charge of the country. You may have heard about the long march he had, of the first Chinese commune, started in Jiangsu Province. We never saw it, but it was some—not too far away. And they went south of where Suqian was, across the southern edge of China, back up around the west to the Chinese, Mao Tse-tung's headquarters, a place called Yunan. And we got back from the war, and that's when I started looking for a job with Dow.

CP: Did you have a sense of what was to come with Mao at that time?

BL: No. No, we didn't. We couldn't—see, we were, in practical terms, the air force for the Chinese nationalists. They didn't have much of an air force; they had something called the Chinese-American Composite Wing, where it was a mixture of Americans and Chinese, but only a few airplanes. Most of them were 14th Air Force planes. We had either P-40s or P-51s. So it was a really interesting experience.

I have to go back to a, backup at the time—the time before [pause] before I went to the University of Chicago, where I got my meteorological training, because it's really an interesting thing to reflect on it. I had just finished at Oregon State. I had enlisted, but I didn't have an assignment to go back to the University of Chicago yet. So I was sort of waiting for that. So I had to go to work some place, and I was staying with some friends of my folks in Portland. So they needed some technical training people to go to the shipyard there. This was in Vancouver, Washington, just across the river. And they were building tank landing ships and C-2 freighters. That was in the base when ships were steam powered, not like they are now. But this is one of the most amazing things that happened to me.

This was in August, let's say, of 1942. And Vancouver, the Kaiser Shipyards; Kaiser was running this one. They had equipped, then, a modern shipyard with very modern equipment. [0:25:05] Mind you, this was six months after the war started; just, that's all it was, six months after the war had started. This thing was filled with bridge cranes, so they could haul the parts of the ships from the building part right out to the ways [?], and drop the things in proper place. And I was called, I was a material expeditor, because I could read a blueprint. That was a skill that I needed. But I reflect back on that now, to—oh, and these LSTs, tank landing ships—one just had a U-shaped hull, a cross section like that.

So, and I remember they had automatic welding machines, which I thought were marvels, because these two pieces of the ship kind of fit together like this. And they drew a—had a long weld. They just had an electric welding machine that ran around the whole hull. And then in the other ways, they had these C-2 freighters. Can you imagine now, building a—in these days, with all of the rules and regulations that you have, you could imagine building a shipyard like that, and have it running in six months? No. But I reflect back on that, and I think that was really a marvel of operations. So that sort of took us to—oh, I should tell you about, too, Betty's experience. This is retrospectively a little bit, but she—she was very active on the, with the *Barometer*, the student newspaper at Oregon State. Do we still have it there?

CP: Yeah.

BL: And so, she was a Home Economics major. But we don't have that at Oregon State anymore. I don't know what it is, but it isn't Home Economics anymore. But her boss was—her boss, a fellow by the name of Bill Smullin, and he owned three radio stations, one in Eureka, one in Grants Pass, and one in Medford. And he very wisely decided that all of his male employees were going to get, were going to be drafted, so he had better do something about that. And he had a person on his staff who was an Oregon Stater, a woman. And so she said, "Well, we should go hire ourselves some girls from Oregon State who have had some experience working on the *Barometer*, or something. And also, who can handle some of this journalism business that we need going on."

So she wound up not only keeping the student newspaper well supplied with information, but also worked with the *GT*, and did—oh, they sold—they sold ads collected from the locals, and they ran the advertising. Sold the advertising, picked up the copy from the owner who wanted the advertising done. And then they also got the information from news, on teletype, in those days. They got information from teletype, and then they rebroadcast it from KIEM, the Voice of the Redwoods.

And, oh, they used to have ads in the paper for fellers, and loggers, and high climbers, and the whole works. And then we had the sawmill operation where I worked in the summer time. I'm retrogressing a little bit, but I worked very closely—my dad was a log buyer for Westport Lumber Company by then. We had moved away from the logging camp and moved to Westport. And so I worked for him in the summer time, as a measure-boy in the log rafts. And a really interesting thing, but fortuitously, my dad was a very close advisor of mine. [0:30:01] And when he would go to scale these log rafts, because in those days, it's not like now, where they do truck logging, and they scale these log rafts.

Oh, I should point out: in those days, the trees were big. I mean, they were really big! And Westport Company didn't own any trees of its own, any timber of its own. So we bought it from gypo loggers. That was not because they were gypping anybody; that's just what they called them. I mean, they were people who had owned—some farmers that had owned some land with timber on it. And so these gypo loggers would—because the Westport Lumber Company didn't have any of its own timber, it had to buy timber on the open market. So, that timber was—the gypo loggers had cut it. They would take it down to the Columbia River and dump it in the water, and make log rafts with it.

And then my dad, who was a log buyer and scaler for the Westport Lumber Company, would have to go down in this river in caulk shoes and everything—cork shoes we called them in those days—and I was the measure boy. And the measure boy was—had a long stick like this, which you had a handle that came up like this, and it was ten feet long. And so you grasp it. So the handle kind of went around like this, and then a flat stick marked off in two-foot intervals. So I'd just go along ahead of the loggers—I mean, of the scalers, and lay that stick down at point after point, and tell them how big the logs were. There were no even—there were no odd numbers long, odd feet measures. It was all even feet. I forget what the convention was. But I'd give them the length of the log; the scalers would measure the diameter of the log.

And in the logging industry in those days, there was a—if you had a perfect log that was all even up and back, you know, because logs were fatter at the bottom than they are at the top. So we'd have some scaler on one end, and they had a

company called the Columbia River Log Scaling Bureau. They would represent the seller, and the other men would, which was my dad; he was representing the buyer, and also the scaler and the buyer. And so, I can remember those summer days when we might have a raft along the Sauvies Island, and so we would have to go there, and we'd meet the bureau scaler there.

But to get to Sauvies Island, so to start the day off, we'd have to go to Portland the night before. Mind you, from Westport to Portland was 72 miles, 72 miles, and you could never get there. You'd have to go to Portland and stay overnight. For me, that was a big adventure, going to the big city, and I liked that. So, that was one of the—but the very important thing is that, travelling with my dad, we had a lot of time to talk together, and he really became a very important coach for me, probably more so than my mother. And he taught me how to drive, I remember, because I wanted to learn how to drive in high school, so. There was a couple stretches of road, concrete, paved road, between Westport and Astoria. And so, we could drive on that without fear of the police constable stopping us—the state police stopping us. So he taught me to drive there. But we had a long time to visit together.

CP: How old were you when you learned how to drive?

BL: Oh, probably sixteen.

CP: What car was it?

BL: Oh, I forgot what it was. I can't tell you. Cars then didn't look like they do these days. But anyway, that's when I learned to drive. It was thirty miles from Westport to Astoria. [0:35:03] We had this—did I tell you about the school in Westport?

CP: No.

BL: Oh. Now that's very important, too. We had a school in Westport, which had from—we didn't have any kindergarten. It was first grade through the eighth grade. But there weren't very many kids in it; it was all in one building. And almost all of the teachers were from Linfield College. It was a great teachers college in those days. So John King was the principal, and Ted Stinsland [?] was the—oh, he taught the very limited science courses we had, which were pretty modest, and he was the basketball coach, too. And Westport wasn't—we couldn't have a football coach because we didn't have enough boys, but we could have a basketball team.

So one year when I was in school, we had—and we were in the small school department. I don't know what it was called, but it was the smallest school department. We weren't able to compete with big high schools in Portland or even in Astoria, because they were in the higher class. But one year, in whatever the fourth, this lowest class of basketball class was, we won the state championship, and that was really a big thing to go around beating your chest about, so. I'd had a lot of good experiences. As I say, my dad had a very good sense of—and we talked about politics, and all of that kind of thing. He gave me a kind of a sense of values that, you know, I kept with me all my life. And they were really important. So, let's see; what else to talk about?

CP: Did he ever talk about his days at Oregon Agricultural College?

BL: Yeah, not too much. Let me see. I'm trying to think what—well, he did a little bit, because I remember when I was at the university, I was a Kappa Sig, and he was—and my dad was an ATO. And he actually—my wife and I—I'm rambling now because I'm picking up pieces of my memory. [Laughs] But my dad grew up in—did I talk about Rock Island, Illinois?

CP: Yeah.

BL: Yeah. Yeah, well that's where my dad grew up; where I grew up. My dad—I can't think whether—

CP: It's interesting to me that he travelled so far to attend OAC, that he must have had a strong interest in forestry that was—

BL: Well he did; he did. And a friend of his named Fritz, Fritz Motts, went from Rock Island to Oregon State to be in the School of Agriculture. And he spent all his career as an employee, I think, of the Department of Agriculture. And he and my dad emigrated to Oregon State at the same time. My dad had three brothers, and one sister. [0:40:01] And his next—Curt—my dad was the oldest, then there was Curt, who was his younger brother, and then Erna, who was third, and then Walter, who was the youngest. There were four kids in the family. So, and we didn't see them. I mean, it was a long way to travel back in those days, the early days after the war. In the first place, it was very expensive. [Laughs]

CP: So your dad was the only one who moved to Oregon?

BL: Yeah, he was the only one who went to Oregon. Yeah.

CP: Did he meet your mom at college? Well, I guess she went to the Normal School, so.

BL: Yeah, well he did. He did, he met my mother at—her brother, her brother who was an ATO, she met him there. I never met him because he died in the great flu epidemic right after the end of the war, huge flu epidemic. So I never knew him, either. But my Aunt Erna survived him. She lived, actually, to 103. She lived, and her husband Henry, Uncle Hiney [?], a rabid far-right Republican [laughs]—he worked for the Roseburg Lumber Company during the war, and I think the Roseburg Lumber Company still runs, actually. He couldn't stand anything having to do with the Democrats. I mean, he was rabidly—in school in those days, it was kind of a quaint thing. Betty and I met on our first day, at our first class at Oregon State. And we both tested out of Freshman English; didn't have to take that. So we signed up for Extemporary Speech and took classes from Prof. Mitchell, who was the head of the Speech Department in those days.

In class in those days, we had the quaint practice of everybody sat in alphabetical order, in assigned seating. So Betty was a maiden—her maiden name was Anderson. Both of her parents were University of Washington graduates. So the A's were in the first row, the L's were in the middle row, and you know, the Y's were in the back row. So I didn't really meet her, but she was in—we were in this first class. So we had about six weeks to get acquainted, and we became engaged. Well, we went—so my dad was in the—I think he—I'm not quite sure. I think he served briefly in the Navy also, but it was in World War I, not World War II.

CP: What did your mom do in Westport? Was she a teacher?

BL: Yup. She was a school teacher.

CP: At the school you were at?

BL: No. She was—. [0:44:58] Well, I think my mother grew up on a—my grandmother, who was a west—my grandmother had a dairy farm in Westport. And so my mother grew up on this dairy farm, which was in Westport. So—

CP: So there were roots there before your family?

BL: Yup, yup. Right. So, yeah, I think that's how it was. Anyway, her brother Ralph, who actually was an ATO, and he knew—[pause].

CP: It sounds like that was the connection between your parents?

BL: Yeah, that was the connection between the parents, right. So, go ahead.

CP: Did you have any siblings?

BL: What?

CP: Did you have any siblings?

BL: Just my brother.

CP: Was he older or younger?

BL: Younger, two years younger than I. My birthday is on June 25th, his was on June—July 25th, which made it easy to remember. He died. He was a mechanical engineer, and he, during the war—this is World War II now—during the war he enlisted in the Navy, to be a Navy pilot. But he was two years younger than I was, but actually—well one thing I failed to mention, an important thing—when we went to this little school in Westport, we had to walk down the railroad tracks to get to school from our house. And so my mother would take me down to school, and walk down, and come down the railroad tracks to pick me up after school, because there was no—the only way to get to campus was to come to the logging railroad. And there were two logging companies that shared this railroad. One was the Westport Lumber Company, and the other was this company that was based in Inman-Poulsen. So anyway, that school we had this—we had the four classes in that school—no, we had eight classes in the school. But at the end of the—and there were, for our room I think we had four rows of seats, and then the school building was U-shaped, one school building here, one here, and then there was an exercise place to go for recess without—you're under an open shed here. And there was, you know, pretty modest resources. [Laughs]

So anyway, when I was in this school, we had this school teacher who said that—because I was sitting right there, she told my parents, you know, "I don't think with Bobby ought to mess around, because he already, you know, can answer all of the questions that the second graders are answering, anyway. So he ought to go into third grade next year." So I jumped one grade in school. So that put me—that put me—very importantly, it put me in what was Betty's class. If I hadn't jumped that grade, I mean, she would have been a class ahead of me at Oregon State, and I probably wouldn't, you know, have gotten to know her well enough to marry her. So you know, Mary Patrician, who was school teacher, did me a big favor.

CP: Mm-hm.

BL: Yeah, that was. Oh, in the winter time, winter time when it was snowing, it was a little more complicated to get to school, [0:49:59] because my dad worked for the Inman-Poulsen Lumber—the I. P., and the other logging—and so, in the winter time, to get to school, my dad—he would fire up the speeder, and the speeder was a—they were these handcarts, and gangsters used to use them, like this. Well, he let me off the hook in winter time, because it was cold. So he'd fire up the speeder and drive my mother and me—drive me down to school, and then he'd fire up the speeder and bring me back home. So, you know, when there's no electricity, it was a different world.

CP: I'll say.

BL: Well, another thing was important. I mean, we had—most of the kids in the school, their fathers worked in the fishing industry, because fishing and logging were the big parts of—that's what happened in Oregon. That's how people made a living. And these kids, they were Swedes and Norwegians, and a lot of Finns. Astoria still has a big Finnish population, and we had Finnish kids in high school when I was there. And we had the Arvolas, and the Sarpolas, and the Tuomis, and I could go down a long list. Back in those days, Astoria had the biggest Finnish-language newspaper in the United States, and that's how we got—I think there's still a few remnants of that may be around. Yeah, those were interesting times. So, what else?

CP: It sounds like school came pretty easily for you?

BL: Yeah, yeah, I was a good student.

CP: Did you like to read, growing up?

BL: Yup. Yup. Read a lot, something that's carried over with me for the rest of my career is that I'm a big reader. That's what I do for occupation now, and—

CP: What types of things did you enjoy reading as a kid? Just anything?

BL: Oh, I like history. I just finished reading a fascinating book about the father of the atomic bomb.

CP: Oppenheimer?

BL: Yeah, Oppenheimer. That was really—it's a fascinating book. I can remember when the atomic bomb went off. We were in China then, and that was a source of great—after that, it wasn't very long before the war got over, actually. So, yeah, well I just read this book. Just finished this book about Oppenheimer, called the American—I forgot the last part of it, but anyway.

CP: What was the reaction on the base to the news of this?

BL: Oh, well. See, we had been fighting—well, by that time in the war, the—well, a couple of important things had happened. The U.S. Army Engineers had built an aviation gasoline pipeline across the Hump, so we were able to get supplies by land, and we didn't have to go around the outside of China in those days. So, that was a pretty happy time, when we heard about it. [0:55:01] And, in addition to gasoline, aviation gasoline, we could bring things like beer. We didn't have anything to drink. The Chinese cooks in our airbase—well, even in Kunming, we ate in a mess hall where, oh, the food was okay. I remember one thing in China: we didn't have any—we couldn't get eggs. Not chicken eggs. You got duck eggs. The Chinese didn't have chickens. They didn't grow chickens. I mean, that wasn't the—they grew ducks, particularly when we were out of this place called Suixuan. So, let's see, what else? Oh, and in addition to bringing avigas, and—

CP: Beer?

BL: Yeah, beer, we also could get—what we'd have to do kind of in the interim was that [pause] they sent grapefruit juice to us. That was includable in the rations, with a lot of other things. They sent grapefruit juice, and we would get alcohol from the—from the nurses and dilute it, so we'd make high balls with it.

CP: [Laughs]

BL: Yeah. Yeah, a lot of funny things we had. So, what else have I?

CP: What other things interested you as a boy, besides reading? What did you do in Westport for fun?

BL: Well, I liked to play basketball. I never quite made it on the first team, but I was on the second team, so every now and then I got thrown in as a sub. We went fishing. We had this creek that went by, right in front of our house, actually, there in Westport. We could fish in there. Yeah, they also had movies in Westport while we lived there, and the movies were open on Friday nights. And they ran a lot of serials. They'd keep you right up to the end, and then the heroine would be tied over the railroad tracks with a train rushing down on her, and it said "To be continued next week." So. [Laughs]

CP: Was that the sort of thing the whole town would show up for?

BL: Sure. I mean, that was the only—the theater was one of the few private things that was owned by a fellow by the name of George Mosteller. George had a grocery store there that was in competition with the company store, so. God, I've been back there a few times since then. In Vernonia, Oregon, the Oregon American had a big sawmill in Vernonia, where they had a huge log pond and a big sawmill operation for many years. Of course, Vernonia is now kind of a suburb of Portland. I mean, it's not very far away.

CP: You grew up during the Depression?

BL: Yeah, it sure was a depression. My dad—yeah, we had strikes in those days, too. Harry Bridges was the chief of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Unit, ILWU. And he would call a strike, and then the whole west coast shipping operation would shut down. The Westport Lumber Company shipped almost all of its lumber away by ship, not by rail. So that introduced an interesting variable. [0:59:59] And the Luckenbach Steamship Company was a big—they had mills. The typical—typically, these ships would take lumber from, take it to the west coast. I think a lot of it went to Los Angeles, but some of it went through the canal, and came back to the east coast. The Luckenbach Steamship Company was a big supplier of lumber, and so we always had ships in there. And then we had the Masters, Mates and Pilots Union. That was another union we had to put up with. And then we had a company union, a 4-L: the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen. That was the company union at our place, and they weren't very militant.

Back in those days, the mail all went by railroad. At least where we lived, it went by railroad. There was a down train that went from Portland to Seaside, went down in the morning and came back in the afternoon, the SP & S, Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway. And my grandmother, by that time, Grandmother West, Grammy West as she was known, she lived in Seaside. And my folks had a house in Seaside, too, which they had as really a rental place. They'd made an investment. It was a house that was kind of on two levels, and one end of it was where Grammy West lived. There was a garage on that end of the house where a car would go down like half a level and park inside, and then Grammy had an apartment above that. And then, the house was separate over here on this side. So, we had a lot of experiences with Grammy. [Laughs]

You asked for what kind of a car we had. Well, I'll tell you a story about the car. Back in those days, cars didn't have trunks built into them. They just, they had kind of a folding lift which would kind of hang out from the back to carry a load, but typically it came up like this, so the profile of the car—when it was running, the cars just had a straight back, and then they had, typically, all had some kind of a carrier on it. So it had a hinge on it, and you could fold it down like this, and you could put a big load in there. And the model we had was called a Karikenn, K-A-R-I-K-E-double-N.

So, when we were going to make a trip down to see Grammy West, my mother wanted to—she was a big gardener, my grandmother. And she knew the fellow that ran the farm where she lived in Westport, so she always wanted us to bring down a load of manure from the farm. And we would [laughs]—she put it in a, kind of a big wicker basket, fill a basket up, so Grammy West had plenty of fertilizer for the plants. Of course, it used to drive my father right up the wall, you know, to have to carry that thing down! [Laughs] Oh, a lot of funny things happened. And we could have hikes in the woods, and as I say, we'd go fishing in the creek, and there was George Mosteller's movie on Friday night. And that kept us occupied.

CP: Do you remember anything else about growing up during the Depression?

BL: Oh, let's see. I'm trying to—

CP: I imagine a company town might have been a little different than elsewhere?

BL: Well, I think we actually—my mother had a—I think actually, I remember we lived in Astoria for a while. [Pause] [1:05:01] I think actually my dad probably was—had his salary cut probably in half because of the hard, the hard times. But my mother, she was a very—she could make a little food go a long ways. So we always had—one thing we always had at Westport was we always could get salmon, and we had—there was a ferry that ran from Westport over to Puget Island. I don't know if you know where Puget Island is? And then it crossed to Cathlamet over on the Washington side. And there used to be two ferries; there is now a road over to Puget Island.

But they had this ferry, and so, if we needed some—oh, and there were quite a few of the fellows that worked in the sawmill also were fishermen, or had in their family, gillnet fishermen, because there were thousands of gillnet fishermen, fished in the Columbia River in those days. So if you wanted some meat, my dad would have one of these sawmill workers who worked in the—who had a relative who worked in a sawmill. He ordered one fish, and we'd get a salmon, you know, about like this, for a dollar. And my mother really made that go—made one fish go a long ways. We went right down to, she made a kind of a casserole with salmon on it. That was the last of the salmon.

Oh, I can tell you one thing about my dad, too. The scalers had a scale stick, maybe I'll duplicate a little bit here, but, a scale stick was made out of a very hard—I think it was made out of maple or something, a very hard wood. And it was measured off in inches. And then it went down to the end of the scale stick, and at the end of the scale stick there was a very sharp stainless steel point, which this stick—so that's what it was like, hanging down like this. And my hand here is the scale stick with the spud on the end of it, we called. And then there was a piece that came out like this, so the scaler could reach down underneath the log, and pull that up like this against the bottom of the log, and measure what the diameter of the log was. And because logs are smaller at the top than at the bottom, then the other scaler would have to do that log, too.

And sometimes the logs were split, or they were damaged because of the way they had fallen, so they had some formulas where they would deduct so much of footage from the value of that log, or they had a—there was a disease that made the wood turn kind of purple, called conk. So we used this scale stick to spud the end of the log, and see if it was discolored.

Well, that scale stick was very heavy, and so my dad, for years, and years, and years, was using that scale stick. And I always remember, the muscles on his right arm were so much bigger and stronger than they were on his left arm! It was a marked, I mean, a marked difference!

Then there was another very important thing that was something I can remember my dad saying. When these logs were in the water, we had a towboat company, too. Louie Olson owned the Westport Towing Company. It had two towboats. One was a big one, and one was a smaller one, and the big one was the Louie One and the Louie Two. And when these log rafts were in the water, sometimes they needed to be rolled. The log needed to be rolled to see how much, to see if there was any damage underneath, or just, the scaler just had to do that to make sure there wasn't any damage. And my dad said, "The one thing I've got to tell you, Bob," he says, "Keep your feet on one log. Don't straddle from one log to another." [1:09:58] These log rafts, you may not have seen, ever seen these, but these log rafts had, had just, you know, booms, floating pieces of log with a chain between links of it, and they could make a raft bigger or smaller. And then they had very sturdy wires that would run across the top of the log raft called swifter wires. So, that looked very secure, but, like my dad said, "Keep your feet on one log."

Well, I can remember a couple of times not depending on that advice, and pretty soon, these logs would start to move a little bit, and a little bit, and pretty soon, they couldn't hold anyone, [laughs] so you would go into the water and have to be fished out. Then you put your pants back on, and managed then to pull a lot of bark and stuff back over your pants, from the top of your caulk shoes. [Laughs] You've got all of the bark in your pants, so it took maybe just one or two trips, [laughs] taking a nosedive like that, you learned it. And I always thought that was a good lesson for life. You want to keep life uncomplicated, stay on one log. [Laughs]

CP: Words to live by.

BL: Yeah, rules to live by. So that was—

CP: Your dad was clearly a big influence on you?

BL: Yeah, he was.

CP: Were there other mentors, growing up?

BL: What?

CP: Did you have other mentors, growing up?

BL: Oh.

CP: People who were influential to you as a boy, or in your high school years?

BL: Well, not so much. When we were—I'm trying to think when this was. When the war was over, I went to work for Dow, and we lived in Pittsburgh—we lived in Concord, California. And we lived there, and all of our kids were born there. And they went—so I had a couple of important—besides my dad—a couple of important, well, advisors, models, I mean, people I got a very good sense of values from. I started to work in the research department at Pittsburgh, because I thought—and then I kind of morphed over to the engineering department. And, well, I should go back a bit.

When I was at Oregon State—I want to make sure I've got this. [Pause] Well, this is my first days with Dow; I'm past Oregon State now. I had one fellow there who was the chief—who was, he was an electrical engineer; he had come from the Texas division, and name was Neal Ross, an MIT graduate. He was a very good advisor to me. He had worked elsewhere, and I had only worked in Pittsburgh up until that time, so I didn't—the other advisor who was probably more important, very important, was a fellow by the name of Wilhelm Hirschkind. Hirschkind was the director of research. He was German, and he had—a scientist, and had come to the United States after the war was over. And he was the director of research, and had been a student of Fritz Haber's in Germany. [1:15:00] Hirschkind was one of the interesting fellows that, if he decided you were worthwhile coaching and making more capable, you could be one of the boys, his boys. If you didn't make the cut there, you might as well not have existed. He didn't say anything bad about you, he just ignored you.

But Hirschkind had a lot of experience, and he would sort of talk about the old days in Germany when he was a student of Haber's, and he also knew the people in the Dow family. I'm jumping ahead of this myself, but talking about mentors. He was a—he didn't know H. H. Dow, who was the founder of the company, from Cleveland, but he knew—he knew his son. So Hirschkind would, I'd say he would—probably more by example than anything else, would talk to me about his experiences, and sort of the value system he had, different from mine, but he was really good about that.

Then I had another fellow who was very important to me, and who I'd later work for for quite a long time, Ben Branch. Branch later became the president of the company, and I worked for him for several years—an extraordinarily capable man. And he didn't like staying in headquarters; he liked to be out where the action was, so he would come to, this was when I was living in—we were living in Hong Kong. So he would come out there for a trip, and he liked to visit, so he'd just go out for dinner together, and he'd just visit. It wasn't like he was purposely coaching you, but if you listened closely, you could learn a lot of good things. So that was a, Branch was a pretty important fellow in my life. Those are the ones I can think of. So, where are we now?

CP: Well, I'm interested in knowing how you made the decision to go to OSU, or Oregon State College at the time.

BL: Well, because my dad had gone there for.

CP: So that was the main reason why?

BL: Yeah, right. And I'm not sure—I'm not sure why he did go to Oregon; why he wanted to go to Oregon State. I did tell you, he had this other fellow called Fritz Motts, who went there, and went to work for—after graduation, he went to work for the Department of Agriculture. But I just don't remember why, but my dad wanted to be a forester.

CP: Did you have a sense of what you wanted to do when you went to school, when you first left high school and went to college?

BL: Oh, well, I wanted to go—let me back up a little bit. While we were living in Westport, my mother had a friend of hers whose husband was a senior—was a senior official in the fishing industry. I want to say the Columbia River Packers' Association. [1:20:00] It might not have been that, but anyway. Yeah, anyway, this friend of my mother's, he lived right across the street from the Point Adams Coast Guard Station. And maybe this answers the question. In those days, and I don't know if you've—I think the station is no longer there, but my brother and I had learned to sail small boats when we were—when we belonged to the Sea Scouts in Oregon.

So, I actually—I would say, I actually wanted to go to the Coast Guard Academy, I thought, because I had been on the water quite a bit with our own boat and then with the Sea Scouts. And so, at the Point Adams Coast Guard Station they had these surf boats, pulling surf boats, where they took a team of horses and hooked them up to a four-wheeled contraption, which the surf boat was on. And the horses would go right out into the surf and launch the boat from the surf, into the surf. And then they would pull on the boat to the ship which was in distress. But they also had a motor lifeboat, which was called a Triumph Class lifeboat. And I was very keen on getting on the water. I thought, what a great deal, to get a job with the Coast Guard, and I could save peoples' lives, and have all of the fun of driving this big boat at the same time.

So, well, that's when my dad came, and he said, "Well, Bob, let me tell you a couple of things about working for the government." And when he went to school at Oregon State, he'd had to work in the summer time—summer time jobs in the U.S. Forest Service, so he'd had some experience of working for the government. And he said, "Look." He said, "There are a couple of things about working for the government you ought to remember." He says, "One," he said, "They frankly don't pay very well. That's one thing. And the second thing is, most of the promotions come just for longevity. If you are smarter, you don't get any higher marks for that." So, he said, "You had better think about that before you sign up for the Coast Guard."

So, I took him seriously, and so he actually, now that you asked me about it, he actually—well, when I was at Oregon State—this was before the war had started—when I graduated from the school, I wanted to go to the Institute of Paper Chemistry in Appleton, Wisconsin, to work for a PhD. And so my dad knew that, but he had this commentary about working for the government. And he said, "Well, if you still want to stay and become a chemical engineer, you ought

to take a look at Oregon State, because there you can actually be a chemical engineer, and you can work in the pulp and paper industry, and so you can be both a scientist, and—." But I didn't think that was such a good idea, so that's when he said, "You ought to look at Oregon State." That's why.

He had a friend, a fellow who had been a fellow student of his at Oregon State, who worked for the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, and he knew quite a bit about the jobs in the pulp and paper industry. That's why I thought going to school in Appleton would be a good idea. And I actually worked, after my sophomore year in school at Oregon State, I actually [1:25:02]—oh, where was I taking this story? Oh, I actually worked at Weyerhaeuser at a sulfite mill in Longview, Washington. And so I got a summer time job there and lived in Longview.

And Weyerhaeuser had a—Weyerhaeuser was a very leading company in the pulp and paper industry, and they were trying to—but they had this raw material that went into a chemical plant, so Weyerhaeuser was trying to develop enough data from the way they ran their own mills, to see if they could somehow correlate the condition of the logs when they came out of the water, and how long they cooked in the digester. And they didn't make paper in this place, they just made pulp. And they made pulp for, actually, for explosives, among other things, because they make nitrocellulose. So, I had this vision of coupling chemistry and engineering, and working for—kind of having the best of both worlds.

CP: So this is an idea that came about about your second year of college?

BL: Yep, yeah, I think it was after my sophomore year in school. Yeah. So that was a—my dad was a big influence. Well, we had this—we'd make these trips together, you know, and we had a long time to talk, and a lot of things rub off when you're talking. So, yeah, we spent a lot of time together, and that's—and you know, reflecting on that, I realize how fortunate I was to have that experience with my father, when he would just talk about his experiences in life and when he was growing up, and that kind of thing, yeah. So.

CP: Well, we've been going now for about an hour and a half. It's about 11:35. Do you want to take a break?

BL: Yeah, we can have something to eat, too.

CP: Sounds good. [1:28:05]