

Mr. Webber Borchers Interview

1981

This is Betty Turnell speaking for the Decatur Public Library. Our guest today is Mr. Webber Borchers.

Q. Mr. Borchers, have you lived in Decatur all your life?

A. Yes. I was born and raised here.

Q. You were telling me about the history of your family. Why don't you tell us a little about your family - or a lot if you can. I know there is a lot to tell.

A. I might say that the first person with the name of Borchers came here about 1853. It was a great aunt who married Abe Kramer, who had the only carriage factory in Decatur, located at that time at the southeast corner of east Main and south Franklin. The first member of our family as far as the general background is concerned was David Hummell and another great-great uncle, Henry Hummel, who came to Decatur before 1852. In Mrs. John's book "Personal Recollections" she wrote in 1912 (she is now of course dead), she names the first 35 residents of Decatur. Two of my grandmother's uncles were named in that list - David Hummell and one Henry Hummel.

Q. How did the Borchers family arrive?

A. We came because of the fact that we had female members of the family here. My father came in 1870 to Macon County. He came in a Conestoga wagon from Fairfield County, Ohio. Our family has only lived in three places - Pennsylvania, Ohio, and this section of Illinois. All of the family in Ohio are buried in two cemeteries. They came by Conestoga wagon, and my father tells that he had to walk nearly all the way from Ohio as a little boy to join the family here. We had members of the family on my mother's side thirty or forty years before that.

Q. So they came because relatives were here?

A. Yes.

Q. And your father evidently built this lovely home?

A. My grandfather and father.

Q. Maybe we could talk a minute about the house. It is a very, very interesting residence.

A. Well, five generations of my family have now lived in this very house. When I was a boy, the street out in front (Crea Street) was a country road, and the nearest house was on Decatur Street, which is a quarter of a mile away. There has been a great change in this area. Now the town is pretty much around us. Of course, Lincoln Park protects us from the south. The ravine behind the house is where we brought our cows and horses in when I was a boy - particularly the cows in the evening to be milked.

Q. So you had almost a little farm here?

A. Oh yes - we had plenty of garden. I can remember that my mother made all our own butter and cottage cheese with our own milk. We raised all our own vegetables, I would say. We still have the kraut barrel and a big stone we would use to press the kraut down. It actually came from Ohio. It's in the barn right now. We don't have a garage - we have a barn. It's filled with things from the frontier.

Q. You were showing me a record of your family - a huge book.

A. That's just from my grandfather's generation. There is one before that and before that and my father's after that and my own. Each generation has its own. At present I am the head of the house of Borchers and in due time my grandson will be. Upstairs we have the sword of Borchers, the sword they call "a hand and a half". It's been handed down for 500 years from oldest son to oldest son.

- Q. In this book you were showing me - which as I said is huge - it must be 3 feet long and very thick - and filled with newspaper articles, pictures, and articles of dress - laces and so on.
- A. And titles of land and daguerre-O-types, like the picture of Abraham Lincoln on copper sent to my great-uncle from the White House in 1862. In the convention where Abraham Lincoln was nominated for the presidency as a favorite son of Illinois in Decatur in what they called the "Wigwam" - that was behind where the National Bank and the Millikin National Bank used to be. They put a tent up there and they had delegates from all over the state of Illinois to nominate the favorite son of Illinois for the presidency. Lincoln became the favorite son. Right here in this house - well, you can see it right there - a part of that rail. That is one third of one of the two rails that carried the first banners of the Republican party in convention. According to John Hanks, that rail was cut by Abraham Lincoln in 1831. Of course, you saw the statue in Lincoln Square in relation to the first speech. That was the time the Lincolns lived here and it happened that Richard Oglesby, who you could say was a king-maker of Abraham Lincoln, went out on May 9 or 10 of 1860 to the old homestead down the river from us here and brought back a half dozen rails. I know this is in conflict with a history which says two rails, but we have here a newspaper article quoting an eye witness that there were six rails. As I mentioned, my great uncle had the carriage factory just across the street from where the Wigwam was, so Richard Oglesby and John Hanks, when they brought the rails in tied under the buggy took them to Isaac Jennings carpenter's shop. The carpenter, Isaac Jennings, had a shop where the Presbyterian Church is today. John Hanks took the rails to Isaac Jennings's carpenter's shop on the morning of the beginning of the convention and they attached

a banner saying something like this: "Abraham Lincoln for President of the United States" and then when the convention was in session and that morning John Hanks and Isaac Jennings took the rails to my great-uncle's carriage factory across the street and left them there, waiting for a signal from Oglesby to bring them in from Oglesby and when the signal came, they carried the six rails across the street into the back flap of the Wigwam. They walked to the platform, threw four of the rails on the platform, which made a clatter and everybody looked. They held up the banner and paraded around the hall, and everyone yelled and shouted. Lincoln, of course, was nominated for president of the United States. Immediately after the nomination the four rails that were on the platform disappeared - probably taken as souvenirs - but the two rails of the banner were brought back to the carriage factory. And there was a man from Kentucky came over and bought one of those two rails of the banner. He gave John Hanks a five dollar gold piece which was way out of proportion to its true value. But my great-uncle, Abe Kramer, saved this one rail, and after Lincoln became president, he cut that rail in three sections and gave two sections to friends and kept the third section. Hanging above the door there is one-third of the two rails that Abraham Lincoln cut and which carried the first banner for the beginning of the Republican party, which still exists, and has hung in this house since 1912. My great-uncle kept it in his house from 1860 to 1912, and then he gave it to my father. This rail has been used as a gavel to open the general assembly of the state of Illinois in the past and different people who have run for president - Nixon and Eisenhower, for example, have rubbed it for luck. Nixon said, "This is for luck".

In 1908 when my father was for the first time elected mayor of Decatur, the ladies of the DAR came to him and asked him to have the

City Parks Department. (In those days the mayor was not only head of the police and fire department but also the parks.) He had appointed Frank Torrence to be superintendent of parks, and he told Frank Torrence to go out and help the ladies of the DAR, who were interested in locating the original site of the Lincoln cabin erected by the Lincolns in 1830 by the Sangamon River. This was done. Frank Torrence drove out in a buggy and they did locate the site of the first cabin. There were four logs that were buried in the earth. The cabin itself had been dismantled by John Hanks and Dennis Hanks after Lincoln's death and taken to a fair in Chicago. They re-erected the cabin in Chicago and charged 25¢ apiece for people to go into the cabin. Then we understand that the cabin was again dismantled and taken to Boston or Philadelphia Sanitary Fair and there, according to rumor, some Englishman bought the log cabin, which was all of walnut, by the way, and sent it to England and it disappeared. So the original cabin was gone but the four original base logs remained. They were all rotted except for a very small fragment in the interior of one log, which Frank Torrence brought back and gave to my father and many years later, we had a frame, which you see there, made from what was left of the original base logs of the cabin. So that frame is the only remainder of the Lincoln cabin in Macon County.

In the frame are two Lincoln legal cases from Macon County. Dennis Hanks' wife lived on West Main Street about in the 3 or 400 block. When Lincoln was riding the circuit as a young lawyer, he'd have to come either by horse and buggy or on horseback because the court in those days went from county seat to county seat and was a regular gala

affair, so to speak, and he would sometimes stay at the house of his cousin, Dennis Hanks, who lived on West Main Street, which was just a road then. Because of the weather and the roads, which were obviously not made, just mud, he would leave the legal papers that had to do with cases in Macon County at his cousin's and then on the next round, he'd pick them up. So Dennis Hanks' wife after Dennis died had some of the paper. Now we had a county judge named John H. McCoy. He was from Oakley Township in Macon County and was born and raised on a farm adjoining my grandmother's and of course our families knew each other for many, many years. He knew that I was interested in the history of Macon County. He had no children that lived. When I was a young boy I used to go to work with him on my way to Decatur High School. Before he died, he gave me the Lincoln things he had been collecting himself. He became interested in Lincoln when he received a license to practice law about 1875 and in due time he became a Republican county judge. He bought at public auction the big walnut table from our second court house. Our first court house was the one standing now in Fairview Park - the log court house in which Lincoln practiced one or two cases. The second court house was a brick building that stood on the southeast corner of Lincoln Square. The log court house had stood on the southwest corner. After the Civil War in the 1880's or 1890's, they built the third courthouse of stone. It stood on Wood Street across from the Hotel Orlando. When they built that court house, they sold some of the things from the brick court house, the second court house. Judge McCoy bought one of the large walnut tables used at the time Lincoln practiced law on the judicial circuit. (I have that in my possession - it's in a warehouse right now) plus some of Lincoln's original copies of his cases

in Macon County that Judge McCoy got from the wife of Dennis Hanks. During the W.P.A. days most of the Lincoln signatures and cases were stolen out of our county records and are gone.

To continue the story of the Lincoln cabin, we have a reconstructed cabin on the Sangamon River, but it's not on the right spot. Can you imagine any of our grand parents or great grand-parents allowing their men to build a cabin on the top of a hill that's practically straight down to the nearest water 30 or 40 feet down and having to carry up water for washing and drinking? It's impossible. Actually the cabin was located at a spring, long ago. I don't believe the spring is there anymore, but the cabin was supposedly built on this never-ending, flowing spring. In 1908 or about that time the DAR had a boulder placed at the original cabin site. That boulder is still there.

Q. Is it near by?

A. Oh, it's close - about a quarter of a mile away. It's still there, with the bronze plaque on it. I think Garry Johnson owns the land now and I think he has stated he will not permit anyone to move the stone to where the reconstructed cabin is. And I don't blame him. After all, he has the original site and that's the original stone placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Why not leave it there? And the other's all right for all the people coming there.

Q. It gives a picture of life at that time, doesn't it?

A. You can understand that no woman or man in his right mind would build a cabin where he had to haul water up and down a hill. All you have to do is think about it.

My Aunt Myrtle died last February - 98 years old. Her husband was Reverdy Miller, whose brother married one of the Hanks girls. I have

listened to some stories of the Hanks through my aunt. I hope if the Hanks hear this part of the story that they will forgive me and not go gunning. It has been inferred to me that John Hanks liked his liquor. Now it happened when they took the cabin up to Chicago and charged a quarter, I have been told that most of the money that John Hanks received was drunk up. Also, John Hanks was quite an entrepreneur. I might tell you that in the library of the archives of the state of Illinois is an actual letter written by Richard Oglesby. I can't quote it exactly, but I sure know the meaning along these lines: "John Hanks, after he got \$5 for the rail after the convention in Decatur where Lincoln was nominated, went into the business of selling rails." The old-timers (I've heard this from my grand parents) said he sold them all over the country - in the East, West, New York, clear out to San Francisco in the West, at \$1 a rail. It's rumored that there was hardly a rail fence left in the west side of Macon County after John Hanks got through. There is a letter which I have seen something like this in the archives written in Richard Oglesby's handwriting. Richard Oglesby stated: "I did all the corresponding and John got all the money."

Q. He had a good deal there!

A. I want to say something about Richard Oglesby. He was without doubt a kingmaker. He was the one who conceived the idea of the "rail-splitter" candidate. That became the slogan of the Republican party in the first election for the White House. Richard Oglesby, being a king-maker, has never been properly recognized by this community. I do not agree with the name of "Richland" college. I think it should be called "Oglesby College" because of the historic background. Not only was he a king

maker, the man behind the scenes to cause the election of the President of the United States, but he was also a very civic-minded Decatur man. Like many people of that time, he emigrated from Kentucky to Decatur about 1840, as I recollect. He became a colonel of one of our five regiments. Macon County founded five regiments in the Civil War. We have an outstanding Civil War record. We also had five generals in the Civil War - Pugh, Oglesby, Loeb - I can't recall the other two. Oglesby was wounded in the lungs while leading the charge of the 8th Volunteer Illinois Infantry, mostly from Macon County. He nearly died of his wounds, but recuperated here. Lincoln made him a Brigadier General. Oglesby became not only a U.S. senator, but a state legislator, I believe, and the only man in the state of Illinois to be elected Governor three times. Our only recognition of Oglesby, an outstanding citizen, is to preserve his home through the efforts of Linley Hurtt.

I want to say something else about John Hanks. When Lincoln became president, John had visions of glory, I think, He wanted to become high in the army. Lincoln, of course, Knew John Hanks. As I recollect, John Hanks even went to Washington to the White House to get that appointment. But he didn't make it. He ended up as a wagon master, driving a wagon with supplies for the Army of the West or the Army of the Cumberland. Well, John could neither read or write. An indication of that is the letter of Richard Oglesby in which he said that he did all the writing and John took all the money. That backs it up. All he could make was his "X". If I'm wrong, I hope I don't get shot!

I think it would be interesting to tell something of the so-called Lorton Brothers' trading post, which was located where Friends Creek runs into the Sangamon, up in Friends Creek Township; when I was at the

University of Illinois I chose as my thesis the pre-white history of this area, Macon County. I discovered that the name of the Lorton Brothers that my grandfather had talked about was really Lortonere. They were French traders. There was Antoine Lortonere and I don't remember the name of the other brother. I did locate in Quebec, Canada, a record of the King's Trading Company - that is, under the treaty of 1763, Canada had been ceded to England, but under the authority of Louis XIV, King of France, a trading company had been set up that had the right to give trading areas. Now since there were no roads, the rivers were the roads, it was river valleys that were important, and I located the grant to the Lortoneris dated in 1802 for them to create a trading post - "Le midi du riviere Sangamion." It stands to reason that it's our Sangamon River and when you look at a map you'll see the "midi" of the river is about where Friends Creek runs into the Sangamon. Now in Smith's history - the first history ever written of Macon County - printed in the 1870's or about then, Mr. Smith stated that the Lortons abandoned the trading post in 1816 and went north. This doesn't jibe at all. My grandfather has said that he remembered that older people in his time said that as high as 500 Indians came to trade at this trading post. I suggest that you don't have 500 Indians come in one year to a newly established trading post. Under Smith it was established in 1816, but I know it was established at least by 1802 and I'm sure it was older than that. And there's another interesting thing. In the old days when my grandfather talked of Indians, 500 Indians to him didn't mean women and children. 500 Indians to him meant 500 warriors. So I don't know what the situation was, except that I know the Lorton brothers' post was not English or American. Now another thing that backs this up. They went north. In 1816 the Kickapoo who lived right here had just ceded

in the treaty of Greenville the Kickapoo lands in this part of Illinois - in 1816. If the Lortons were Americans, they would have lost their scalps, because the Kickapoos furnished their warriors in the war of 1812 to the British to fight the Americans. It was the Kickapoo who led some of the raids on the Kentucky settlements to make Kentucky the "dark and bloody ground." They were allied for war with the Shawnee, the Miami - and I have two third cousins who are part Miami Indian - and the Mingo and the Wyandot and the Pottawotamee - all went against the settlements.

Another reason that they couldn't have been American is that they went North. Now that was the direction of Canada, where the French were. Now at that time there were no real trails over this country. You had to go by rivers. To go back East - if they had been American, they would have had to go down the Sangamon to the Illinois, down the Illinois to St. Louis, and on up the Ohio or take an overland trail from St. Louis through southern Illinois, perhaps. But I'm sure they were French.

Around 1900 - 1906 - 1912 the population of Decatur was about equal to the population of the county so there was an equality there that no longer exists. Today Decatur has over 90,000 people and the county doesn't even have half of that so the political power has switched from the county to the city. It used to be the county people who elected people to the legislature. For example, my great-uncle Harmon Manecke was elected state senator. Because he was a farmer and in the Civil War, it was possible for him to be elected. Another example is my Aunt Leona Bowman. Aunt Leona died just a couple of years ago at 98 years old,

nearly 99 - the same age as Aunt Myrtle, who died last February at 98. They were very long-lived. So the point that I wanted to make is that Aunt Leona was from the county - (all my aunts taught school and were very well-known throughout the County and not nearly so well known in Decatur). The family decided that they were going to run my Aunt Leona Bowman for county superintendent of schools and they did!

Q.. A woman?

A. Yes - and not only did they run her, but she was elected in 1906 - County superintendent of Schools and at that time women didn't have the right to vote - so there she was - possibly the first woman ever elected in the state of Illinois to a county position - and she couldn't even vote for herself. But she was elected and did a very good job. Later on she went to get her doctor's degree and taught home economics at one of the universities in Ohio. It goes to show you what could happen. I doubt if a non-city person could be elected today under that kind of situation.

I think it would be interesting to know what happened right after the Battle of Shiloh. In 1862 the Battle of Shiloh was fought. Now the Illinois Central Railroad line ran directly through Cairo, Illinois, then right through Decatur to Chicago. I think I gave a copy to the library - a record of the Long Creek Ladies Aid Society (That may not be the correct title, but it's the idea.) We received in Macon County a notice after the Battle of Shiloh that trainloads of wounded men and prisoners would pass through here on their way to Chicago. And they came - many, many trainloads. One trainload consisted of refugees. These refugees were Kentucky back-hills people. The record gives a description of these people. The women of course were smoking pipes

and chewing tobacco and spitting tobacco everywhere. The children were filthy and lousy, and the women of the Long Creek Ladies Aid Society cleaned them up and fed them, and a lot of them liked it so well that they dropped off to stay in Decatur. We have some of their descendants to this day - some have been theoretically on welfare since the Civil War. Others have done very, very well. But I want to tell you what the Oklahoma district in Decatur was. The Oklahoma district is the area north and south of where the Red Cross building is now on Lake Decatur. This, of course, was long before Lake Decatur was built. The district got its name - Oklahoma - because of events that always seemed to happen there. On East Eldorado Street, which they called "the levee", near where the Wabash station is they had so much trouble they had to put a special jail there. It was a trouble-making spot. They had "houses" on the levee and taverns - called "saloons" in those days. It was wild and wooly. According to the stories, every time there was a fight or a going-on, and arrests had to be made, nearly half of them came from the area that came to be called "Oklahoma" - on the north side of the present bridge by the dam. That's the old Oklahoma area. There were four plats - the only ones left are one and two. Number three is under the state road network and runs down to the bridge, and number four is under the lake. That's where they settled - putting up little shacks and so it was for a long time. The district received its name from the Oklahoma Territory where at that time the Dalton gang was riding and it was Indian territory with all the trouble going on. So they called that area in the southern part of Decatur "Oklahoma."

I had a total of six great-uncles in the Civil War and most of them would come right to this room where we're talking - that was before World

War I. They would tell stories. I remember a couple of stories of the Civil War. One was told by my great-uncle William. He was with one of the Ohio Infantry regiments in the Army of the West or the Army of the Cumberland. At the Battle of Chickamauga on the ridge (He belonged to what was later called the "Iron Brigade.") he was shot through the knee with a mini-ball early in the fighting. There was a lot of oak timber around so his friends hauled him around and put his back up against a big oak tree so the balls coming from the rebels - the confederates - wouldn't strike him. The rebels charged and took the ridge and forced the union forces back. The times were different then, I guess, because when the rebels reached the tree and the Yankee bullets were coming in his direction, they hauled him around and put him against a tree so he wouldn't be hit by the Yankee bullets. Well, the rebels in turn were driven off, and the ridge was retaken. So they hauled him around again, and again the rebels charged and took the ridge, and they did the same. And the last time the Yankees kept it so it became all right. He was sent off, and he carried the scars of that until he died.

Now my great-uncle Henry Borchers was a cavalry man. We've all been cavalrymen - I'm a cavalryman, my brother, - my father wasn't a cavalryman but when the Spanish-American War came along, he was elected (as they did in those days) the first sergeant in a company of infantry raised by the Durfees of the Durfee, Clark, and Nicholson Insurance Company in those days. They were never called, however, and never got into the Spanish-American War. So he was an outcast - not a cavalryman, as all the rest had been. Well, my great-uncle Henry Borchers was with the 11th Volunteer Missouri Cavalry, again with the Army of the West - the Seige of Vicksburg, etc. One day on patrol among the thickets along the Mississippi, they heard the rustling of some brush on one of the ridges. The patrol stopped because

they thought there might be an ambush of some confederates there. They moved very, very cautiously to see what the rustling was. Everyone was on alert, ready to jump, flee, or take cover - and here came a black bear cub over the ridge toward them. So that's how they found a bear cub instead of a confederate unit waiting for them.

We have right in this house the drum and bugle of the Illinois 116th Volunteer Infantry. Now that drum and that bugle were carried by the 116th through the entire Civil War, and that was one of the five regiments mostly composed of Macon County men. Colonel Tupper, who was buried half a mile from here in Greenwood Cemetery, was shot through the lungs at Balls' Bluff, leading a charge of the 116th against the rebel lines. He died as a result of that wound and is buried, as I said, over here in Greenwood.

That drum and that bugle went with the regiment through the entire Civil War. The bugle was used for every call - from the evening ceremonies, attack, pay call, mess, taps, or whatever. It's rather "beat up", but it still can blow. The drum and bugle were carried by our soldiers at Chickamauga, Kennesaw Mountain, the siege of Vicksburg, the battle of Atlanta and other battles. It was carried at the last time at the discharge of the regiment in the grand parade in Washington, D.C. after the close of the war. The regiment was one of 50,000 men under Sherman, who made the circle of the South.

In the family records we have an invitation to a dance in honor of the Confederate General Joseph E. Johnson. General Johnson was the commanding general of the Confederate forces of the Confederate Army of the South-West. The reason that we have this invitation is that my great-uncle Henry was on patrol. His group captured a confederate officer.

This officer had this invitation to the dance in his pocket. He also had a little confederate money, and a railroad ticket - I presume to go to the dance. So my great-uncle Henry confiscated the money, the tickets, and the invitation to the dance. However, I have an idea that he did not use them. That would not have been very good judgement on his part - as a Union soldier to go to a confederate dance.

(End of Side 1)

My grandfather was born and raised in Fairfield County, Ohio. He was the one who determined to come West to settle in Decatur, where some of his family had preceded him - one sister and some of his great uncles. Before he settled in Decatur, he went to the Gold Rush in California about 1852. He did not go when the rush started in 1849, but he went with his brother, Henry Borchers, a few years later. They traveled across the plains and landed in California. They found that the prices were high and the gold so little that they determined to come on back. He did bring with him - and we have it - a small locket with a crystal on both sides and inside the locket is a pinch of placer gold that he had made for his mother when he returned from California. He did bring his family - my grandmother and my father and my aunts and my uncle to Macon County and settled here. He became in due time a friend of E. A. Gastman, for whom Gastman School was named. The two of them were greatly interested in ornithology. So my grandfather and E. A. Gastman would go into Macon County and hunt and shoot specimens of birds that were found in Macon County - as migratory birds or permanent residents or winter residents. Right in this house are the birds that my grandfather had mounted with E. A. Gastman over 200 of the species of birds that occur in Macon County. This was all done in the 1870's and 1880's - before 1900.

Right now in the basement in a case are three passenger pigeons. The passenger pigeon is now extinct in the United States, but we have mounted male passenger pigeons and one female and one of the most remarkable things is that we have one passenger pigeon egg. My grandfather, who died in 1918, told me stories of the frontier. (I was about

12 or 13 years old.) He told me that passenger pigeons came in such flocks that they would actually darken the sky. A flock would be going by for hours, and they would settle in a huge area of forest land in Macon County and what they would do in those days was at nighttime the birds would roost - they wouldn't fly. The men would build big bonfires and then throw brimstone or sulphur. The fumes of the sulphur would go up into the trees, which were absolutely loaded with pigeons, every branch bending down. The pigeons, overcome by the fumes of the burning sulphur, would fall by the hundreds and hundreds. The men would pick them up and put them in sacks to sell or feed to the pigs. This is something that may not be remembered anymore, but this is how they did it - besides the shooting. As a result all the passenger pigeons - the only true native American pigeon - are all extinct now. I suspect that we have more mounted passenger pigeons than the State of Illinois Museum has. It wouldn't surprise me. How many people have sparrows? They are so common you don't even think about them. If they became extinct, then it would be something to have one.

My father, of course, was born in Fairfield County, Ohio. They came on foot across the Wabash River at Crawfordsville, I think.

They settled in Oakley Township, where we still have land, and he grew up and went to the Berry School. He worked on the farm and worked for other farming families in Oakley Township. Then he decided he was going to teach school. He taught in many of the old country schools of Macon County before 1885 or 1890. Then he decided he was going to study law and become a lawyer. So he engaged to study law under Albert Webber, I. He was one of the old lawyers of Decatur just after the Civil War. That is why I have the name Albert Webber. He was my godfather. My father

always admired Albert Webber. Then he began to practice law, decided to go into politics and ran for mayor of Decatur in 1908 and was elected mayor of Decatur. The reason he ran was that Decatur was a very wild town, filled with saloons - we had over a hundred saloons at the time - and we only had a population of maybe 13,000. It was a real drunken town, I'm sorry to say, so the ministers, Catholic and Protestant, under Father Murphy (I'll tell something about him later) and Reverend Penhallegon and others all joined together to support my father if he would close the taverns and clean up the town. Well, he was elected and he closed down all the taverns. This town was dry. The fact is - I remember the story - is that a group even tried to kidnap me and even grabbed me but dropped me when my baby nurse yelled out of a window. They were going to put me in a buggy and gallop away - a thrilling adventure, but I don't remember a thing about it.

He did close down the town and did such a good job that in 1912 he ran against McKinley for United States Congress. Although McKinley had been in the White House and was president of the interurban line and had a great deal of money to spend and a lot of political power, my father defeated him in a very hot battle and was elected to Congress. In 1917 or thereabouts the Staley Company found that about every August the river would go dry. Sometimes this would last until October and Staley's would have to close down and the Wabash Railroad Shops couldn't get water and would have to close down. Staleys actually bought land on the Illinois River near Peoria, where they would have plenty of water supplies and were getting ready to move. It would have meant the death of Decatur. My father called a meeting of the members of our family who owned land all around Decatur. At that time we didn't raise soybeans - it was corn. The loss of our corn market was not in the best interests of the family. The family encouraged my father to run for mayor on the

proposition of building lake Decatur. So on May 30, 1918 (there is a bronze plaque on the fireplace) my father called a meeting of the important leaders of Decatur at that time to our home. As I remember, there was a country road out front. We were in town, but it was unpaved. I was just a small boy at the time, but I can remember the big old cars coming down the road and the dust a-flying. I do remember some of the people who were here. There was A. E. Staley, Sr. There was a fellow from the Millikin Bank by the name of Brownback. I think he was a vice-president of the Millikin Bank. There was Jim Allen. There was also Horace Bering present, Robert I. Hunt, and Mr. Hardy, who was one of the editors of the Decatur Herald. There were others here besides those, but I just can't remember all the names.

Now at the meeting it was determined that if my father who was an attorney, and an ex-congressman, would run for mayor and build the lake, they would support him. At that time the salary of the mayor was \$3,500 a year, as I recollect. That would be quite a loss in relation to family finances, but he felt that since Staleys had actually bought land near Peoria on the Illinois and were going to move, it was necessary to save Decatur and to build a lake, because we had to have the water. Decatur could not expand in the future without a lake. So he agreed to run on the proposition and the platform of building Lake Decatur if they would support him, which they agreed to do. And he was elected. So he began the process of building Lake Decatur. They had to buy the land - and incidentally I think the land cost less than a million dollars. The whole dam, land and all, as I recollect, cost around three million dollars. My father conceived the idea of forming the Decatur Water Supply Company. The stock of this company was sold to the people of Decatur and our own banks. All

of it was sold. I was carrying papers at the time, and I remember, I even bought a \$100 bond myself with my paper money. They had the money to finance the dam. The board of directors of the Decatur Water Supply Co. was composed of leading citizens of Decatur, who served without pay. In fact, everyone served without pay. The lake was started around 1920. By 1923 or 1924 it was built; the land had been cleared of timber and the water impounded - the first man-made lake of this size in the state of Illinois. A big celebration was held in 1924. I remember going to that celebration. It had been suggested that they name the lake "Lake Borchers," but my father said he didn't want that. He wanted "Lake Decatur", as it is now.

My father went to the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois and one of the things he got permission to do was to place the city water works and the dam and the lake and all the water revenues - everything that had to do with water - turned over to a civilian operated - not government operated-company. This was done. The proper financing of the lake - of the water - the control of the meters and all that assured that, despite the depression of 1929, by 1932 the directors of the Decatur Water Supply at their last meeting, gave as a gift, before they disbanded forever, the title to the lake, the dam, and turned back the city water works to the people, and they own it to this day.

Q. And that has been a great asset to this city, hasn't it? It kept Staleys here.

A. Oh, yes - and the Wabash Railroad and everything else... Since we were talking about Staleys, I would like to mention the Mueller Company, which grew out of the inventive genius of Hieronymus Mueller. He was originally in the gun-making business and turned to plumbing and now they have plants

in Canada, one in Tennessee, and for many years they have had a certain kind of valve, which is very successful. They have a patent on it. They sell it to cities. I forgot to mention that Adolph Mueller - I think he was the son of Hieronymus Mueller - was also at the meeting at our home with my father when the decision was made to build Lake Decatur.

Some of the people of interest whom my father introduced at meetings in Central Park or in Lincoln Square from the old Transfer House were Marshall Foch, commanding general of the French Army during World War I, General Pershing, Commanding General of the American Army during World War I, William Jennings Bryan, who was running for President of the United States. My father introduced him from the platform at the top of the Transfer House in Lincoln Square to quite a large crowd. We have a picture of that. I know that he was at the dedication of Millikin University - of course, not as Mayor, but as a citizen. We have in the records that Teddy Roosevelt came to give the speech at the dedication of the University. We have one of the programs. My father was a very good friend of Uncle Joe Cannon, who was for many years Speaker of the House in Washington. We have quite a few invitations to affairs in the White House. One is an invitation to a dance in the White House and the dance program of my Aunt Emma Borchers, who danced with Uncle Joe Cannon. My Aunt Emma Borchers worked for many years in Washington in the Department of War. In World War I there were just five women who were entrusted with the secret intelligence codes between the War Department and the American Army in France under General Pershing. Aunt Emma was one of these five girls entrusted with the codes for translating the messages from the Army in France to the United States. We still have in our records her copies of the secret codes of the United States Army in World War I. After she worked for the War Department, and the war was over,

she was transferred to the Department of Labor Statistics. That's where she retired some years ago. She also lived long - she was nearly a hundred years - 96. She ended as the fifth ranking member of the Department of Labor Statistics of the Federal Government.

Q. Quite a record!

A. I went out for football at the University of Illinois. Then my right ankle was broken by Garland Grange, the brother of Red Grange, who was playing in practice. This was in 1927. I was playing in left end. I still don't remember what happened. I blocked in and he came around and caught my ankle. That put me out of football.

I want to tell about Chief Illiniwek. In 1926 or 27 Lec Leutwiler at the Pennsylvania game had a turkey feather outfit and the band went to the Illinois - Pennsylvania game that year - the first year the band had gone to the East. We skunked them, I might say, and impressed them with our bands. Between the halves Lec put on an Indian dance before the stands and it went over big. So he came back to the University of Illinois and put on the dance several times there. Then he graduated in 1928.

I saw this and I thought this was something that would be appropriate with the name of the state - Illinois, the land of the Illini. It could be all tied together in a good tradition for the university. We had no symbolism at that time. So I went to Ray Dvorak, the head of the Marching Band under Prof. Harding, who was the head of the band and I proposed to Ray Dvorak that I raise the money for a real outfit and that we continue the dance as a tradition. Ray gave me permission to do so. But this was 1929 and the depression was on. I went from sorority to fraternity - I had a lot of bean meals, but very little money. As I recollect, I raised about \$34, but I wasn't about to quit. Now Robert Drake was the Scout executive of Champaign-Urbana and a very good friend of mine. He had

suggested some time before that Joseph Kuhn who had the Kuhn Clothing Store was interested not only in the band but in the university. He was a loyal fan of the university. I remembered this and went to Joseph Kuhn and told them my idea of perpetuating the tradition - but to have a kingdom and a king, you must have a crown to pass down - to keep it alive. In other words, the war bonnet and the regalia were necessary to maintain tradition. So I told him I would go out to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota at Kadoka. When I got out there, I found it was just a little place - a filling station, a trading post, a store or two, and an Indian agent's house. I told Kuhn if he would provide the money I would go out there and see that there was a genuine war suit made in the old way. He said for me to come back in a week or two. He would think about it. When I returned to see him, he said, "Yes, I will. I'll support you up to \$500. If you'll go out and personally see that it's the right thing."

So I took letters of introduction from Ray Dvorak and from Prof. Harding and from Kuhn, representing the funding of the university. I turned these letters over to the Indian agent of the Pine Ridge Reservation. I don't remember his name, although I have it written down somewhere. He called in the Indian trader then and told him what I wanted. They in turn called in an old Indian woman who spoke no English and told her what I wanted. She agreed to superintend the making of a war suit in the old way. This was in August of 1930.

I had a peace pipe - a real calumet peace pipe from my own family. That summer in 1929 the Boy Scout Jamboree was being held in Arrow Park near Liverpool in England. I led a Boy Scout troop from here over there. I took a tepee. I had the boys make up Indian outfits. Of course, they weren't eagle feathers and the like. They simulated the real thing. The tepee was made in the old way and I took the peace pipe. The reason I

mention it is that later on I gave it to the University of Illinois for the use of Chief Illiniwek, where it subsequently disappeared. I understand it was stolen.

Anyway, in regard to that peace pipe, the Prince of Wales came into our tepee and smoked the peace pipe. Then he invited me and a friend of mine to the lodge of Arrow Park near Liverpool. So I was the guest of the Prince of Wales one afternoon. Also the Duke of Cannaught or the Duke of Gloucester (I don't remember which now) smoked the pipe of peace when he was visiting the American contingent. He was the one, along with Lord Baden-Powell, the Jamboree.

To return to the Indian war suit, after I arranged for the suit to be made, I had to come back to go to school about the first of September. But the uniform or outfit was not ready because I had designated that it had to be genuine. They had to get the tail feathers of bald eagles. It's illegal now, but I had designated that it would have 102 tail eagle feathers. That was the number of feathers in the war bonnet of Red Cloud, the war chief, during the Civil War period, of the Oglala of the Sioux. It took 22 male deer to make the breast plate. All of the bead work and the tanning of the skin was done in the old-fashioned way. The war bonnet had a spirit feather with a medicine bundle tied to it. That has disappeared, too, I understand. There was a grizzly bear paw necklace. That has disappeared. The war club that belonged to my family also disappeared. However, all of the rest of the outfit was used by the Chief Illiniwicks from 1930 when I first wore it, leading the Illinois band down Fifth Avenue when we played Army in Yankee Stadium. I wore it in 1930 and 31. It came in time for the Army-Illinois game of that year. They brought the Army mule from West Point to the Yankee Stadium. Two cadets (and I have movies of this, by the way)

got on the mule and that mule tossed them off in front of 70 or 80,000 people. So I took off the war bonnet and got on the mule and rode that mule down the field and it didn't throw me off. Since I had taken care of horses from the time I could remember (I don't even remember learning to ride), I could ride it without being tossed on my head.

Q. And Illinois won the game?

A. I'm sorry to say we lost the game.

Q. But you won your contest?

A. I won the mule!... Anyway, I have movies of the whole game, including Ray Dvorak dancing. He was in a train wreck later on and had one of his legs and one arm cut off, and became the leader of the Wisconsin band. I've attended some of the reunions lately, and I have shown movies of Ray Dvorak as a young man dancing on the edge of Niagara Falls, when we were going through, risking his neck.

Q. When they choose someone to wear the suit, it has to be the right size, doesn't it?

A. No - not necessarily - but it does have to be a big guy. I made the rules and I hope most of them are still obeyed. "How to become a Chief Illiniwek." It's been over 50 years so I hope it's here to stay - I hope so!

Q. This is about the 50th anniversary, isn't it?

A. It was in 1930-31...when I was at the Indian reservation. I lived right with an Indian family in a tepee. The Indian I lived with was called in Indian language "Guards alone." Before I left for home, I was formally taken into the Oglala clan of the Sioux. They passed the pipe, smoked it to the sky, the earth, and all directions, passed it from hand to hand. Then they washed my hands and arms and declared I was a member of the Oglala clan of the Sioux. I lived right in the tepee. It's the finest tent you could find to live in. Actually it's a double tent. There's

an inside tent. No matter from what direction the air comes, it will go up between the inner and outer cover. It was very comfortable.

Q. How did they treat you?

A. Fine! I had a fine time. I enjoyed it. I attended some of the Indian dances - a social dance and one thing and another.

I think what I will do is to go back to the Indian reservation to pick up a few things I should have put in. The Indian Chief at the Oglala reservation was named "Black Elk." As I understand it, his father was one of the lesser war chiefs under Crazy Horse, who led the attack on Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, which was decimated in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. In relation to the family I lived with - "He Who Guards Alone" - or something like that is the translation - he had his wife and a grandfather living with him. The bed of the chief was at the rear of the tepee. The tepee was about sixteen or eighteen feet across. The bed was on two small logs with two saplings across the logs. Across the saplings and counter to them were small twigs, covered with blankets. Hanging from the tepee poles, which went higher than the interior canvas backing of the tent, he had some leather thongs holding a rifle case for a Winchester rifle. His grandfather, who lived in the tent with us, was what you might call a "blanket Indian." Every night he would strip naked and roll himself in a blanket on a bed similar to that of his son. I thought it was interesting that he always rolled himself up with a tomahawk. Why he would do this I don't know - perhaps a precaution in case of attack. He spoke no English, so I was unable to converse with him, but I was told that, as a young man, he was one of the warriors who had ridden with the Sioux on war parties against the whites and also had been at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

- Q. Was there any other family living in the tepee? The wife or others?
- A. Sure, the wife lived in the tent - and the son - in the tepee, I should say.

I want to go back to the Macon County School System. Long ago, various farmers who owned land would donate an acre to put the country school on. For instance, my grandfather, Andrew Bowman, donated one acre for a school that became known as the "Blue Door School." It's no longer in existence, of course, but the name of the school came about this way. It was a log cabin school. They made a door for it and it just happened that my grandfather had a bucket of blue paint so they painted the door, and it came to be known as the "Blue Door School."

I had six aunts; every one was a school teacher before 1902 in the country schools of Macon County. Since there were six of them, and they taught all over the county (I know my mother taught for 16 years before she was married. Many started to teach very young.) That gave our family a tremendous advantage in knowing so many people over such a wide area - for example, in Oreana, Long Creek, Macon, and the Blue Mound area and the Maroa area. Some of the schools have disappeared, but I know that for a period of 56 years my aunts taught in Macon County. At that time, they were very prominent in the education of the young people of Macon County outside of Decatur. When my Aunt Leona, whom I've already told about, ran for office, that was a tremendous advantage, because the Bowman sisters were very well known in Macon County as teachers and as a family. Therefore it aided my father and great-uncle, who were interested in politics, to help her get elected for County Superintendent of Schools in 1906.

I'd like to tell a minor incident that made a big impression on my mother. She was teaching at the time at the Kirby School.

Q. Where was that?

A. The Kirby School was southeast of Oreana. She was teaching there and staying with the Kirby family. I think they're gone now, but the old farm and the barn are still out there. I've driven by there several times just to look at it. The Kirby family, the Bowmans, and the Borchers were all great friends. The Kirbys had some sons and although they lived quite a ways from Decatur, they used to come to this house here and play pinochle with my father and some of his Decatur friends.

Q. It wasn't so easy for them to come then, was it?

A. After they had cars, it was easy for them to come. When they used horses and buggies, I don't know if they would have come in, but in the period before World War I, they had cars, and were able to come in... Well, my mother would stay the week, as the custom was, with a farming family in the school district, and this particular weekend there had been some heavy rains along the Sangamon River. Now at the Coulter's Mill (this was before Coulter's Bridge was built there), the river had risen because of the heavy rains. My mother was going home to our own farm on the Sangamon River -

Q. How did she travel?

A. Horse and buggy. Of course, it was dark and in the spring. John Coulter knew she had to ford the river, and he wasn't sure she knew the river was up. He was watching for her with a lantern, and when he heard the horse coming down the hill from the north to cross the river where the mill was, he waved the lantern and called out - (my mother's name was Alice), "Allie, Allie, don't come down! Turn back! Turn back! The river's up!" She heard him and turned back to stay with the Kirby's. Then, I suppose, in the following weeks she was able to go home.

Q. Well, he saved her from an accident or maybe saved her life.

A. Possibly. There was another time at Coulter's Mill when an interesting event took place. It was the custom of the people to have picnics on the north side of the Sangamon at a wooded area at Coulter's Mill. They would come from all over. One Sunday there was quite a picnic, and my father had taken my mother to the picnic before they were married. When he was there, my father, who was very, very active and very strong, met a guest from Chicago, who was with one of the families. This man was a boxer, and he wanted to box. Everyone encouraged my father to box, and he finally said, "all right." And he won the fight.

Now I might tell about another time about the Sangamon Oakley Baseball Team. One spring before my father and my Uncle Ed Borchers were married, some of the Shambaughs and the Hisers were there. They had formed a baseball team and there was quite a big game being played between Decatur and St. Louis at Oakland Park. That's where Millikin University is now. So they borrowed a hand car. (One of the boys worked for the Wabash Railroad). The team hand carred in to Decatur across the river and to Oakland Park, where they set the hand car off the tracks. They waited for the team from St. Louis to come on, and there were many people from Decatur out to watch the game in Oakland Park. I might tell you that we still have the newspaper clipping about this event in the family records. Anyway, the St. Louis team didn't turn up, and the Decatur team insisted that they play the Sangamon-Oakley team play. They thought they would beat the devil out of them. The Sangamon-Oakley team said, "OK, To give the people something to watch we will play." But the umpire was from Decatur. Things didn't go the way the Sangamon-Oakley team liked. They were beating the Decatur team, but the umpire was leaning very heavily in the direction of the Decatur team. It was so noticeable that they got very angry about it, and it turned into a free-for-all fight.

Someone called the police, who galloped out in the "black Maria" they had at that time, and they came out West Main Street to Oakland Park. The news got around that they had called the police. They had the baseball bats, and the Oakley Sangamon team put the handcar back on the rails, and with my Uncle Ed Borchers and George Fisher holding off the Decatur fans with baseball bats and the Decatur team screaming at them, they finally got the hand-car going at a good clip. About the same time the black Maria arrived with the police. They got along side the tracks trying to catch up along with the Sangamon-Oakley team, but they never made it. They headed off and were able to return to the Oakley area without the police stopping them. Of course, my father at that time didn't realize that he would become a resident and, later on, a mayor of Decatur.

Long ago, they used to have dances. I've heard my father tell these stories. They were very proud of some of these young men escapades - my Uncle Ed Borchers and my father and another brother, George Borchers, from Oakley Township. They would have weekly dances in the schools, and they thought themselves pretty tough.

(End of Side 2)

As I said before, my cousins, the daughters of my Uncle Ed Borchers, when they were in the Oklahoma Territory, remembered that the Daltons, one or two of the brothers, had stayed at their home one night, but just what the situation was at that time whether they were bandits or not - I don't know, but they did stay at their home in the Oklahoma Territory.

I think it would be interesting to tell about the adventures of Father Murphy. Now, my father was elected mayor the first time to close up Decatur in relation to "houses" and saloons. It was a wide open town at that time, and Father Murphy, who was the head of St. Patrick's Church here and the Protestant ministers all supported my father in his election as mayor to clean up Decatur. Father Murphy ruled his parish with an iron hand. He was a very, very strong-minded and able priest, very much beloved by the people. My father and Father Murphy were very good friends. One day after my father had been able to run all the girls out of town and to close up all the saloons, Father Murphy came post-haste into my father's office in the old (number 3) Court House. He said, "Charles, Charles, something terrible has happened. Last night two men came to the parish house and asked for the girls. Do you know where they are? They're in the house just east of the church! I want it closed up right now! I'm not going to have anyone else come knocking at the parish door." (just west of the church)

In order that there wouldn't be a tip-off, my father said, "OK, come with me and we'll get in my buggy and we'll go out there. I'll have the 'Black Maria' with the horses and police, and we'll go raid that place right now and close it up."

Father Murphy had his cossack on. He got in the buggy with my father. They went out Eldorado Street and east of Eldorado to raid the house. Of course they had the police with them in the "Black Maria." They got out there and Father Murphy was so incensed at the indignity of having a "house" next to a church that he was the first out of the buggy, and he led the raid. He went up to the front porch without knocking, pulled up his cossack and kicked in the door.

My father always enjoyed that story because it was so typical of Father Murphy. He was very quick and able, made up his mind in an instant, and he wasn't about to have this going on next to his church - and I can't say I blame him.

So they raided the place and closed it up.

Around 1908 or 1909, when my father was mayor the first time, he had gone down to the old dam. There were some boys fishing there, and one boy fell in and was drowning. That was before there was a road there. It was just back in the woods. My father took off his coat and shoes and dived in with the rest of his clothes on. He rescued this boy and pulled him out on the bank. It wasn't until the boy was rescued that my father realized that he had jumped in with his solid gold watch. It had to be cleaned and repaired. Two or three years ago some man came to me and told me that it was his grandfather, when he was a boy, that my father had rescued.

About 1923 when my father was mayor the second time, the Ku Klux Klan held a big meeting where Mound Hill is in the north part of Decatur. Some 10,000 klansmen and their families came in, from all over, from Indiana and Illinois. They came to my father and asked

for permission to parade. They were going to march down what is now North Water Street, into Decatur, circle, and go back to their encampment at the mound north of town. My father told them it would be OK to parade. They could wear their sheets, but they could not wear anything over their heads. Their heads had to be bare so their faces could be seen. They agreed that they would do this.

When the time came for the parade, the Klansmen lined up. I suspect it was quite a long line, with 10,000 members. The Grand Dragon (or whatever his title) was in front, leading the parade. There is an old schoolhouse to the north, close to where the tracks are and not far from where the Traver Supply Company is today. Right in the middle of the road, which was not, of course, paved at that time, was a huge poplar tree, later cut down after a big fight in the community over cutting down that tree. It was a very popular poplar tree because during the summer it was a nice place to rest for a breather for the horses and wagons and farmers coming into Decatur. Anyway, it was near the edge of town. My father and some of the police went out to meet and check the incoming parade of the Klansmen. They came up to where my father and the police were standing, and they all had their hoods on. My father stopped them, and the Grand Dragon stopped the parade.

My father said, "Now you understand that our agreement was that you are not to wear your hoods."

The Grand Dragon said, "We are going to wear our hoods on this parade."

My father said, "No, you are not."

The Grand Dragon looked up and down the line and said, "How are you going to stop us?"

Upon which my father reached for his belt, pulled out a revolver, and stuck it against the stomach of the Grand Dragon and said, "This will stop you." He said, "I want you to know you can certainly overpower us, but you are the first to go. If you think I would be afraid to pull the trigger, you'd better not take the chance. I'm not afraid to pull the trigger."

Upon which the Grand Dragon had them all take off their hoods, and they paraded through Decatur without their hoods.

During the time my Aunt Leona was teaching school in Macon County, she would drive home, like most of her sisters, to their home around Rhea's bridge, where our cattle farm was. We raised cattle around there. One weekend, she got home a little early and she discovered that her parents (my grandparents) had driven into Decatur for supplies. She was there by herself. She heard a noise, and she went out to a well that was there and saw that a young pig had somehow fallen into the well. How that happened, I don't know, but the pig was down there. So she climbed down in the well to try to get the pig. She found she couldn't get out. She held the pig and herself, but she was thoroughly wet. It was cold in that water and cold in the well. Then she would yell. Finally, she heard someone riding on the road, and she yelled and attracted their attention. It was someone passing by. They came and looked into the well. To their surprise, there was my aunt, a young woman, down in the well holding

up a pig. After a good deal of looking around for a rope, they finally dragged the pig (Aunt Leona wouldn't let lose of the pig) and Aunt Leona out of the well. Upon which then, she came down with a very good case of pneumonia from being down in that well. As I recollect, they said there was one telephone line to a doctor in Cerro Gordo, and the telephone was three miles away. Then she came down with pneumonia, they had to drive three miles to the telephone to call the doctor in Cerro Gordo to tell him about it and ask what to do. By means of the telephone, he gave the instructions for the preliminary care of Aunt Leona down with pneumonia as a result of saving the pig.

My Uncle Will Bowman, the only brother of my mother, was interested in raising cattle. My grandfather raised cattle, and they would sell cattle in Chicago and other places. They wanted to buy some cattle in St. Louis. It was coming in from off the plains. So my grandfather gave some thousands of dollars to his son, my Uncle Will Bowman, to go down to St. Louis to buy cattle to ship back on the Wabash Railroad to be put out on the land to fatten. Well, he went to St. Louis and he attended the auction down there at the stockyards. He spent all the money buying the cattle and then he made the arrangements for the cattle to come here on cattle cars. He paid the money. Since he was a young man, I suspect he wanted to show what a big shot he was so he decided to come back, not with the cattle as he should have, but on a passenger train, which he did. When he got back to Decatur, he waited to meet the cattle. When the cattle came in, he immediately discovered that the cattle they sent him was not the cattle he had bought.

Q. And not so good?

A. They were not so good. There was quite a little loss as a result of his deciding to come on the passenger train and not right along with the cattle.

When the Lincolns first came to Macon County, they came because their cousin, John Hanks, lived near the Boiling Springs area. At that time there was no road west of Decatur north of the Sangamon. The road went south of the Sangamon towards Springfield. There were no bridges at that time so there was a ford across the Sangamon River. Now that ford is still in existence. I doubt if many people know about it, but there are still some of the cut stones by that ford. It lies between the present state route 48 bridge southwest of Decatur and the Northwestern Railroad bridge. The Lincolns always used that ford to go to their home on the north side of the Sangamon. They would cross that ford to take the road south of Sangamon in the direction of Mount Auburn, the old Post Road, past the Warnick Tavern, which they called the "Half Way House", then a short distance from there would cross by another ford to reach their home on the north bank of the Sangamon, near where Harristown is today. Now on that Mount Auburn Road was an old trace, an early road before the first railroad came here. That road was followed by countless streams of people moving west by their Conestoga wagons. They went through Springfield and on to the west towards St. Joseph, Missouri, the jumping off place for crossing the plains of the west toward California. I suspect if the dead could rise out of their graves, there would be scores and scores of unknown graves all the way east and west of Decatur to Springfield and on west because they had to bury the dead along the way.

In 1828 my cousin, Floyd Austin's great-great-grandfather went to Vandalia, along with John Ward and a fellow by the name of Smith. The purpose of this trip was to go to the legislature in Vandalia, our first capital, to get permission to form a new county, which of course became Macon County. The reason they did this can be explained as follows. At that time we were part of Shelby County and Shelbyville was the seat of this area. But because of the great distance and the terrible roads, which were practically impassable in the spring and fall and in the time of rain. These people felt that it was necessary for the development of what became Decatur and Macon County to form this new county and a new county seat, Decatur. The legislature did give permission to do this and we did detach the land that became Macon County and part of what is now Piatt County and DeWitt County. Macon County was named after Nathaniel Macon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and of course Decatur was named after Stephen Decatur, who was a commodore during the war of 1812. He also led the attack on the Barbary pirates in Tripoli.

The Austin family is not extinct in Macon County. The original Austins on the male side are gone except for Floyd Austin and his wife Leona Jostes Austin are now retired in Florida and have been for many years. The originally farmed in Pleasant View Township south of Decatur. Floyd Austin, as a boy, lived on a farm southwest of Decatur where the Lincoln cabin had been erected in 1830. He knew exactly where the stone was that I have mentioned before. It's now on the land owned by Gary Johnson.

My thesis for my bachelor's degree at the University of Illinois was the pre-white history of this area, which is now Macon County. I went

back into the records clear to Quebec and the records of the French. My purpose in doing this was to locate any village sites or camping sites of the Indians along the Sangamon,¹ Stephen's Creek, Big Creek, and Friends Creek. I went up and down the banks everywhere along these creeks and the river. I never found any village site in Macon County. However, there are countless camping sites. It's very easy to locate camping sites. The Indians had to drink and always located along the water. We had quite a few camping sites along Friends Creek, Big Creek, and Stephens Creek. It's easy to locate a camping ground by walking over a plowed field near these creeks or a river. All you have to do after the fields are plowed or the rains have come is look for chips. For every arrowhead, for every spear point, for every knife there will be maybe three or four hundred chips - and all of these chips will be conoidal in shape - bigger or smaller in size. So just by walking along the ground in a plowed field after a rain you can immediately discover these chips if there was a camping place. It was nearly always on a slope to the south so the water would run off and the ground would dry faster in the heat of the sun. We have many of these camping places in Macon County, not only archaic but those of woodland Indians toward the end, before the whites came. The people last known to have lived in Macon County, according to the records, were the Kickapoo. They had, I am sure, camping places on top of camping places for maybe 10,000 years, after the retreat of the last glacier.

I went into the R.O.T.C. - that's the Reserve Officers Training Corps at the University of Illinois. In 1931 when I graduated, I was

also given my commission as second lieutenant of cavalry. From then on, during the training periods, I attended such training places as Ft. Sheridan, Camp Custer, Camp Perry, Ohio, where I shot on the National Rifle Team at the national matches, and received quite a few medals for shooting, not only rifles but the 45 colt automatic. I became an instructor in small arms in the Armies of the United States with a certificate as instructor. When World War II began to approach in 1941, (I had received by that time a captain's commission), I was ordered as reserve officer to report to Ft. Knox in February, 1941. From there I became one of the first officers to command a company of trainees in the newly-formed armored force under General Jack W. Heard, the commanding general of the AFRTC - The Armored Force Replacement Training Center. During the period at Ft. Knox, I was sent on special missions by order of General Jack Heard. I don't know what I carried. The orders were in pouches. But I was flown numbers of times to Gander towards Iceland, where I met a British officer who picked up the packet I carried to Gander. Then I was flown back to Ft. Knox. I think it had to do with formation of armor because this was an armored force training center. I also was sent to our base in Guantanamo with similar packets in the summer and fall of 1941.

From Ft. Knox I was assigned to G2, the intelligence of the army. I ended up in France under General George Patton. Now Patton was a cavalry officer, as I was. Of course, I was only on a saluting basis with him. He would say, "Capt. Borchers - or Borchers - do this or do that." But he was general of the cavalry - or rather armor since all cavalry had become armor.

When I landed in France in August of 1944 the Third Army had just been formed. We became operational, and I was assigned to the 80th

infantry division as a G2 member. During the first week of August the Fifth Corps of the Third Army was formed. The Fifth Corps consisted of the Second French Armored Division, called the Division Blonde, as I recall, and the 80th Infantry Division. We were in the process of breaking through the German lines. There was a re-establishment of areas of attack. It necessitated (in the normal general army foul-up) that three divisions: the U.S. 80th Infantry Division, the French Second Armored Division and another, possibly the 26th or 28th Division of another corps, had to pass through the same area simultaneously to take up their new attack positions. There was an absolutely incredible foul-up of traffic. After all, just a train of a division could be maybe 15 mil long, and here we had three trains of armored divisions all trying to go through the same network at the same time, and it was just a mess. The 80th Infantry and the Second French Armored Division were in the process of colliding with each other in the rear areas to take up their new battle positions. Now I speak French, and there was a very big mess-up at a certain town. Nobody wanted to give way. By VCOG (the Verbal Order Commanding General) the question was asked if anyone could speak French. I said I could. I was told, "Go with that French column."

Now an armored division is not just one column - it's many columns. This particular column I was assigned to was under the command of a French Col. Dee, as I recollect. Anyway, I was to go with that column until the time came that I could be released. I didn't know how long it would be - I thought it might be a day or two, but it ended up that I was with the French Second Armored Division ten days. I went as far as Rambouillet, which is about 14 miles south of Paris. There we had an assembly area to liberate Paris. Patton was in command because this was in the Third Army. The Second French Armored Division was

commanded by General LeClerc of the French Army, a very fine general. The French wanted to have their army liberate Paris. So on August 23 we were assembled at Rambouillet to attack Paris on the 24th. That evening the order came that all Americans (there weren't very many of us there), that the few Americans who were there were not to go into Paris with the attacking French Army divisions, to liberate Paris. So unfortunately, I missed the liberation of Paris, which was quite a ball, according to friends I heard from afterwards. Most of the fighting was done in the environs of Paris. The Underground the Force Francais Internor, The F.F.E. had practically liberated all of Paris except some German troops in the Bois de Boulogne and the Hotel de Ville and some hotels on the Seine River. Perhaps they had the George V still - I don't know. But the Resistance had already liberated Paris when the French Second Armored went into the city. I went to Versailles on the 24th. The attack on Paris was made at two points by Col. Dee and Col. Biloutais as I recollect. Col. Dee went in at the Porte Orleans and Biloutais at the Porte de Versailles. Since I had to return to my division on the 24th, and Versailles had already been liberated, I went to the Palace of Versailles. The guards were there, not the military, but the police who guarded the chateau. I ordered them to bring me a tall step ladder and I took two droplets from the chandeliers in the Petit salon at the end of the Grand Salon of the Hall of Mirrors. If you look up at the chandelier in this room, you will see the very bottom drop of this chandelier and the bottom drop of that chandelier are the two crystals from the Petit Salon under which the Emperor Napoleon has walked, along with Josephine and later on his wife, the Empress of Austria-Hungary, the Hapsburgs and after the Franco-German

war the German Empire was formed and the German Emperor was crowned, and all the Marshals of France. Right in this room are two crystals from the great chateau or Palace of Versailles, built by Louis XIV, King of France.

I had a jeep and a driver and after I had collected these two crystals as souvenirs, I had to report to the 80th Infantry Division, which I did. I was then assigned to the Reconnaissance of the 80th Infantry Division, but simultaneously I was still working for G2, Third Army. I was with the 80th Infantry Division Recon. from September to around the middle of November. I was then assigned to the I and E section of the Forward Echelon of the 80th Infantry Division Headquarters, but I was still reporting to the G2 Division of the Third Army. Of course, during the time of the Recon, every other day or so for approximately two months and a half, I was the actual point of the advance of the Third Army in my area of the 80th Infantry Division. We were advancing through the Foret de Hag and at Dieulouard. Of course, we attacked across the Moselle River at Pont a Mousson. I had a slight artillery wound at Pont a Mousson from a German counter-attack on the morning of September 12. They opened up with artillery, and that was followed shortly by German Infantry. They re-took the village of St. Genevieve, near where I was in a little forest. The Germans took the village. I could hear them taking the village, with the artillery still falling on our patch of timber. It let up and the Recon. outfit took off, leaving me there. I had to get away by getting on a half-track with some artillery observers of the 313th Field Artillery. As we came down the hill through the forest across the bailey bridge at Dieulouard, a German tank started to fire at us and the machine guns were firing all around us but never hit any of the vehicles or any of us. I thought

I was going to be bounced off of that half-track because we were going about 300 miles an hour or so it seemed out across country.

(I hope that's not taken seriously.)

Q. Were you injured?

A. I was wounded by artillery fire that morning - my legs.

Q. But you didn't get help?

A. It was impossible. That's when I got on the half-track and took off with the Artillery observers and took off across the bailey bridge at Dieulouard and across the Moselle.

The reason I was left behind by the Recon is that I had gone forward to check out a machine gun position we had at the far eastern edge of the patch of timber. But they had already cleared out. Now what had happened is that there was a little road from St. Genevieve that runs to Bezamont and another German tank had come down from St. Genevieve and had seen the vehicles of the Recon in the timber. So they had opened up on the timber with their tiger tanks. Whole trees were flying through the air and branches were everywhere. All hell was breaking loose. Our people got into some German foxholes that were scattered throughout that timber. It just happened that the 702 Anti-tank battalion was in a little patch of timber to the south, as I recollect. It was very foggy that morning, but they heard the noise. The artillery fire started at 4 o'clock that morning and continued until 6 o'clock when the counter-attack came in. When the 702 Anti-tank battalion recognized the sound of the German guns, they moved their vehicles forward through the fog and they saw this German tank firing through the timber where this Recon was being pinned down. Now the very first shot of that tank hit the jeep that I had all my clothes and my blankets and bedding roll in - the first shot. It knocked it

all to pieces. The second shot hit one of our trucks that had the "loot" in. When I say "loot", I think I'd better explain that. We had captured a German truck quite a time before. Any time one of the Recon went out and captured some goodies like alpine silver cheese or German sausage or confiture, the jelly, or anything that was good to eat, they would send it back to this truck. Now Patton had given orders that all German vehicles had to be turned in to the motor pool. So we kept this truck hidden away from the Third Army and the Division Headquarters. We needed it for our "loot" - our food and drink - cognac, rum, and wine. We were well equipped. We had captured the best Swiss cheese from a German mess some time before and that was in this particular truck. The second shot hit this truck and all our loot was destroyed - all the things we had been collecting for a couple of weeks. It was a sad day.

We had to conceal that truck by keeping it forward. If someone saw it, it would be commandeered and sent to a motor pool. Anyway, that taught us a lesson.

To continue about the 702 Anti-tank battalion, the gun that went forward saw a German officer or tank commander in the turret of the German tank. The Germans didn't see the 702 battalion, so they took good aim and the first shot hit the turret of the German tank with the officer in the turret. The last they saw of him, he had a smitzer in his hands and was peppering our woods with his smitzer. With the first shot he and his smitzer disappeared in the timber and it knocked out the German tank and that ended that. When the fire let up, that's when the Recon loaded us into their vehicles and took off. We didn't lose a man. We were very, very fortunate, because there had been heavy

firing there. They took off and left me at the point where I thought the machine gun position had been, but it had left.

There was a cow path where I had been lying for two hours during this artillery bombardment, and I could hear firing coming in my direction. I could see some figures running down the cow path, but I couldn't tell if they were American or German because of the fog. The problem was solved instantly because all of a sudden a German machine gun opened up on this column so I knew these figures were Americans - maybe five, six, or eight men falling into the path. It just happened as I was lying there that my eyes went to the sound of the machine gun that was being fired. It was one of the machine guns with a removable barrel. One man can operate it. I could see the flashing of the machine gun and right above the stock of the gun I could see a round helmet, just like a perfect bull's eye on a rifle range, and my gun was pointed exactly at his head even though I hadn't known he was there. I just squeezed the trigger. The firing instantly stopped, and he fell over the gun. About two days later, after that village had been lost and retaken two or three times, I went back.

Two days later when I returned to that area in my jeep, I saw this German soldier still lying over the machine gun. I stepped out of the jeep and picked up his helmet, which had rolled off his head and was lying there. I picked up the helmet and saw tha it had my bullet hole through it. I threw the helmet into the jeep, put it in a box and sent it home. Right now it's upstairs in this house with the other war souvenirs.

(End of Side 3)

My division was one of the five "Iron Divisions" so designated by General Patton and, of course, we were in action about 250 or 260 days. I was in action during this period every day as a Recon. or an INE man. I was always at the front. During 250 days I was never outside of German rifle range, let alone artillery. I can't remember a time when I wasn't shelled up to a half dozen or a dozen times a day. This is normal procedure when you're at a front. There were many things happened, just as I've recounted. Every day had different adventures. Many of the stories stick in my mind, but it would be too difficult to tell them all. After all, I was just one of many soldiers in the army from Decatur. Many of them had similar experiences. For example, one man from Decatur did receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. I'm sorry I don't remember his name. The highest medal I received was the French Croix de Guerre with palm, equivalent to the Congressional Medal of Honor. I think I'll tell about the time bombs at St. Avold as another period of time. We had crossed the Sarre River under intense bombardment. The river was in flood. It was very difficult, but the Third Army did it. I could have read a letter at 6 A.M. without any daylight as yet on the morning of November 8 by the light of artillery fire. It was our fire against the Germans. We didn't have to protect ourselves. We could walk around pretty safely because of the intensity of our fire so we could cross the Sarre River near Nomeny. We crossed the river and headed in the direction of Saarbruchen. On the way was the French town of St. Avold. It was the headquarters of the German general staff in the defense of the western front, until we drove them out.

We went in around December 2 or 3rd or 4th, 1944. We had captured a German prisoner, who told us that 32 time bombs had been left in different buildings in the town. He didn't know where they were, but they had been placed by the engineers of the retreating German army. It was bad weather, and we made it a practice to stay under cover whenever we could instead of in the field. We picked out a big building that had been a barracks. One of the first things we did that evening was to check that building very carefully to be certain there were no time bombs there. Everybody checked - officers and men. I remember that in the basement there was quite a pile of coal, these little round briquettes they use overseas, and we had checked the building and moved this pile of coal to make certain no time bombs were buried in it. Then someone who had helped shovel and move the coal said, "My God, we forgot to check the floor where we moved the coal."

Q. Had you moved it back?

A. No, but nobody said a word. We just moved the coal back to its original place and checked the floor. But we found no time bomb. However, the engineers of our division had moved into another building, and that building did have a time bomb, and to our surprise and I suspect theirs, they did not find the time bomb, and it did blow up and as I remember, some 150 of our men were buried in the ruins of that building. It was a very bad time.

I might say that I was in the Gestapo headquarters in St. Avold looking over it. There was a very beautiful little paper weight with a dove in the paper weight. It's sitting right over there, and I'll show it to you. I picked it up off the Galletier's desk. I picked it up and stuck it in my pocket to bring it home. It was such a nice little souvenir, so easy to carry. And that building about two days later

blew up also. They had set the time bomb for anywhere from one to thirty days. It blew up. The only thing I know that came out of there intact was this little paper weight.

That was the story of the time bombs. That was something we had to watch all the time - booby traps, whether they were time bombs or bouncing bettys.

Q. What was a bouncing betty?

A. A bouncing betty is buried in the ground. It has three little prongs. It sticks out of the ground a couple of inches. If it's covered with leaves, you can't see it. If your foot strikes any of those prongs, it discharges a cartridge in the ground underneath the bomb, which is then thrown up about 6 or 8 feet in the air. There is a small explosion - the cartridge - followed by a real explosion in about 3 seconds of the fragmentation bomb. It throws fragmentations all around. If you hear that first small explosion, you should fall instantly to the ground. Even then you might be hit in the back by the bomb fragments. You should never move any German equipment without tying a fishing line to it and pulling it at a distance. Even pretzels could be booby-trapped to blow your hand off or blow out your eyes. So you had to be very, very cautious no matter what you did because of the booby traps left behind by the German troops.

Going on, on December 16 Patton received notice to attend a meeting in - probably - Luxembourg to prepare for the great attack of the Germans through the Ardennes. The purpose of the allies was to drive a wedge with our 1st and 3rd armies. Patton was an incredibly great general. When he arrived in Luxembourg, the situation didn't look too good. At that time the Germans were headed well into Luxembourg. So Patton told Eisenhower, Bradley, and the other generals that we would

be able to move immediately. That was true. Our army was in an attack position and were attacking. Our artillery - the 80th Infantry - we actually firing with our artillery on Saarbrucken, and our forward elements of infantry were actually engaged with the enemy defending Saarbrucken. On December 18th or 19th they pulled in a green division from the states and their artillery was placed along our artillery batteries that were firing, and our infantry and their infantry were together. The following morning we pulled out, and this new division took up the firing patterns, possibly TOT or whatever and the Germans didn't realize that our division was pulling out. There were three divisions pulled out by Patton to make the first initial movement toward the city of Luxembourg. This was important because a great radio station, one of the biggest in Europe, was in Luxembourg, and we had to seize it before the German prong headed for Luxembourg city would reach it. Those three divisions were my own, the 80th Infantry, the 4th Armored Division, and, I believe, the 26th Division. We pulled out in the dark and when for the first time lights were turned on in the vehicles, the trucks and tanks, it was snowing, and we jammed every road headed toward Metz. We passed through Metz. It was an incredible sight - all this armament going toward Luxembourg at the north. I was with my driver in the very first jeep of my division to enter the city of Luxembourg. Now most of the people were expecting the Germans to be back there. The Germans were already on their radio saying they were coming. When we entered, we saw hundreds of people fleeing in cars and vehicles of all kinds.

Q. They thought you were Germans?

A. No, they never thought we were Germans. They knew we were Americans, but they didn't think we could stop them. They didn't know the Third Army was moving. We heard later that some committed suicide. When we saw them as we went in, we shouted, "Go home! Clear the streets! Patton's coming! Patton's coming! The Third Army's coming!"

By this time we were a very famous army and Patton a famous general in Europe, and when the people heard that we were the outpost of the Third Army, they began to clear the streets and went home. If they hadn't, our tanks would just have had to shove them out of the way because there was no time to stop. We passed through Luxembourg City and took a defensive position about fourteen miles outside of Luxembourg in a little town called Raquera les Merches. I'll never forget it. There was a hillside outside it with a lot of trees. When we went into the town, the thing that struck us was that there was nobody on the streets. The civilians had disappeared; there were no soldiers, nobody in sight. When nobody is in sight, it's important to be careful. We saw that there was no enemy occupation of Raquem les Merches. We passed on through and took up a defensive position on the ridge of a hill covered with Christmas trees. As we lay there waiting, at about 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning, we saw the German advance guard coming - a group of infantrymen. Behind there five or six hundred yards, half a mile or more, was the support of their point, and behind them a larger group, which would be in front of their main body. Their support would have a couple of tanks to back up the advance guard. They had a few guns, a part of them horse-drawn. We had one artillery observer - I suppose from the 313th or 314th field artillery. We knew all the division was

behind us, on the other side of Raquen les Merches because we knew we were on the move, but we knew that our artillery probably had not dug in, but they were partially dug in and ready to go into battle, dug in or not. The artillery observer with us gave the range by radio to his own artillery unit, and we were lying there watching. The first shells came in a little bit on the wrong side of the column. We had let the point of the German infantry go through. After all, they were riding into some of the best fighting soldiers of the Third Army, and it was their tough luck to run into our infantry, who were expecting them. When the artillery observer told us he had given the coordinates, he said, "Here she comes!"

We all went down, but the first shots were away from us, on the other side of the German column. Very quickly he corrected the range, and the second salvo just came short on the other side. He corrected it again, and the next landed right on the road. The Germans knew what to do - they jumped from their vehicles and took cover in the ditches, but the horses couldn't do that. Those shells landing among the horses tore great holes in their bodies and blew off their legs and great chunks out of their necks. They were screaming terribly. Most of us were ex-cavalry men and hated to see this so when the shelling ceased we went down, took the prisoners and shot the horses because we couldn't stand to see them in that condition. So that stopped the German advance to Luxembourg in that sector.

Our infantry was advancing in the direction of Ettelbruck, which is on the Siire River. On the other side is Diekirch, another Luxembourg city. We didn't cross the Siire. The Germans were still in Diekirch, but we took Ettelbruck. I had to go to Ettelbruck to find out how it was going, and I wanted to pick up a few bottles of

wine for my friends, which we did. It's the first bottle of Malaga wine that I had ever run into in France. It came out of a doctor's basement. Of course, everybody was gone, but the wine was there, and it was delicious. So I took it back to my friends in IKE Section.

Just before the city of Ettebruck, I personally took a little village all by myself. It's name was Unterfeulen. Later on, after the war I went back to see some of my friends, and I ran into two old ladies who acted as hostesses and at whose house I stayed that night with some of my friends. Just before I went into Unterfeulen, at a little crossroads there was something I had never seen. There was a dead horse attached to some sort of two-wheeled wagon. This horse had been struck by the tongue of another wagon or by a timber that had gone all through its body lengthwise by the force of explosion.

Some time later I took my wife back to visit some of my friends, and these old ladies were still alive. They greeted me like a long-lost brother and called me the liberator of that village. They got together the people of the church and the priest insisted that my wife and I stay. They had mass and a big dinner for us that night. It was quite an interesting remembrance.

After the 4th Armored Division took Ettelbruck, followed closely by our own 80th Infantry, the German advance continued toward Liege and Antwerp. Of course, we were watching our situation maps all the time. When I got home, I found there was a lot of worry from the people here that the Germans were going to make it, but I can tell you that we were never worried. We could see by looking at the map that the German drive was like a big fist heading toward Liege, but we were toward the south going north and we knew we could cut them off. We were never alarmed about it. We knew that the more Germans advanced

toward Bastogne (and they did surround Bastogne), the more prisoners we could take. We were not really alarmed at all.

As we were there in Ettelbruck and around Diekirch and in the direction of Wiltz, and Heiderscheidergrund the defense of Bastogne was developing. The 101st Air-borne, and elements of the 10th Armored Division and other odd lots of troops were surrounded in Bastogne. We were only about 20 miles away, and we could see every night through the snow the firing of the German guns and our own guns in defense - just lighting up the snow and the sky in every direction. We also heard German V-2 rockets being fired over us in the direction of Liege. They had a very peculiar high whine we grew to recognize. The weather was terrible. On Christmas eve a few of us got together in a Catholic church with the roof off. We sang Christmas carols. On the 25th we had Christmas dinner with turkey, (although I might mention that the people of the U.S. still owe me a Thanksgiving dinner. I never got that because I was too far forward for them to send anything up. That was in the direction of Saarbrücken.) To go back to Christmas, on the evening of the 25th, I was ordered to report to Arlon, where the 4th Armored Division was preparing a force to break through to Bastogne, which was surrounded by the German Army. One or two battalions of the 318th Infantry Regiment of our division were ordered to accompany the 4th Armored Division as the infantry force to try to break through. I was to go with them with a jeep and driver to make a report directly to our own divisional headquarters as to the outcome of the attack. By 4 o'clock I hadn't been able to get to Arlon, but the attack force had already left in three columns to attack Bastogne. I followed one of those columns, and the Germans were firing on our columns at a distance of 1000 yards. Our people

had two lines of German soldiers on either side, and they were firing at them. Tanks were being knocked out and set afire and many people were being killed and wounded. It was pandemonium, but we continued to press forward. I joined up about 10 o'clock that morning with the column I was following at a little place called Assinois or something like that. When I joined up, the column was halted. Now that column was given orders to attack a town to our left. It was quite some distance away and filled with German troops. The artillery was just getting ready to fire on that town. Now this was the first clear day - the 26th of December. Suddenly we heard a roar in the skies, and everybody looked because we thought it came in our direction, but you never know. There came squadrons of planes - hundreds and hundreds of planes as far as the eye could see in every direction. As far back as you could see, our bombers were coming. They flew over us. Our general immediately gave the command to stop the attack and pointed out the little village of Assinois and said "Take the same plans, attack that town, and we'll go straight into Bastogne. Those bombers are going to make a way."

As we watched, the bombs were beginning to fall on the German forces around Bastogne. The whole earth just trembled from the tremendous number of bombs falling around Bastogne. Great columns of smoke were going up from the ammunition dumps and tanks and vehicles that were being hit by our bombers. So we immediately began to drive directly into Assinois and take the town. Now our infantry, the 318th Infantry was the force that was helping to take the town. Later we found out that the town was defended by the 5th German Parachute Division. There was one sad part of this. Our artillery didn't judge

the timing quite right. As our first vehicles and our tanks loaded with men got to the edge of the village, and jumped, our artillery were still falling on the edge of the village and killed and wounded some of our own men. As my jeep arrived, the driver and I jumped out of the vehicle because of the artillery and we lay down beside the first little house in the village. As I started to walk around the house, a German "potato masher" landed at my feet. Instinctively I gave it a kick and knocked it out of the way and jumped behind the house. That was enough for me, and I lay down beside the driver and waited until the members of the 318th and the 4th Armored Division had cleared the first houses. Then many of the houses were on fire. The 5th German Parachute Division was making a very strong defense. If I knew who the German officer was, I would certainly recommend that he receive the Iron Cross because when the firing in my particular area ceased, I went to the third house, and I walked into the room with my driver. There were German bodies in the place, and we were looking out of the window up the street when I felt a tap on my shoulder, and there was a German who spoke perfect English. He said, "We surrender to you." There were three Germans there, who were pretending to be dead.

I turned them over to the guard of the 4th Armored Division to take care of. They had an area where they collected prisoners.

As I looked out, I saw one of our 4th Armored Division tanks dashing down the street, and suddenly a young German officer (he had to be young because he ran so fast) took a Teller mine about this size - like a disc that you throw. He swung it with his hand right under the tread of the tank. It ran over it. I don't think it killed anybody, but it blew the track and stopped that tank right there. A

little later on, toward the German command post was located in several rooms, our tank shoved its gun right down the long hall toward the kitchen at the back. They fired into there. I walked into that room later on and found one German with a German helmet blown completely into his chest and bodies all over the kitchen from the explosion of that shell.

We went on to the town and went on toward Bastogne. About 8 o'clock that night a lieutenant of the 4th Armored Division made a contact with the outpost of the 101st Airborne Infantry on the outskirts of Bastogne in the perimeter of their defense.

I didn't get to go into Bastogne at that time. We had made the contact, and my duty was to go back and report what I could. I started back to my own area, about 20 or 25 miles. It was a little hazardous because there were still German units passing back and forth across the corridor we had made. We had no trouble getting back. On the way up to join the attack on Bastogne, we were fired on from a patch of timber by German machine guns. Every fifth shot they had was a tracer, a shell that leaves a light so you can judge where you're shooting. We knew the tracers were passing right behind us. It made us feel like moving forward in the jeep to make sure your fanny was out of the way of the bullets! But we got over the hill all right and it stopped because we were out of range. But it was quite exciting.

Anyway, we returned and reported to our division and corps. At that time we had been transferred to the 20th Corps and were under the command of General Walker. I suppose from there the information went on to the Third Army and Patton.

I hate to skip so much of the war because every day was a day like this, but I'll skip over. We broke through the Siegfried Line.

My Division went through it three times - twice without any opposition. We went in the direction of Bamberg, Nuremberg - oh, I could tell about a little incident in Nuremberg. We got into Nuremberg and took cover in the house of a man who had been a major in the German army. He had sent loot back from Poland in German ammunition boxes. In the basement of that house we found a solid block of silver about 2 feet by 1 foot by 1 foot. The silver had been beaten together in a block. When we looked at it closely, we saw that it was silver taken from Catholic churches in Poland - freizes of saints, etc. We wanted to make certain that he didn't have it after the war so we took the block from his home on the edge of a park in Nuremberg during the night found a bomb hole, put the silver in the hole and ran some of our vehicles over it. I have an idea that that block of silver is still in one of those parks in Nuremberg.

Then we went on into Germany. We were advancing toward Gotha. Near Gotha was a concentration camp. It wasn't like Buchenwald or Treblinka in Poland but it was a concentration camp. It was named Ordruf. I was one of those who helped liberate Ordruf. When we went in, I saw hundreds of children, boys and girls, all naked, lying in a pile, all waiting to be burned. We also saw the ovens at Ordruf and of course many, many dead. We liberated the camp. When our men saw the children, many of them were actually crying, it disturbed them so. I don't believe we took any S.S. men as prisoners or even gave them a chance to surrender for a couple of days. We shot them as fast as we saw them because we had no use for the S. S.

We ended at Linz, Austria, and a little beyond Linz on one day Patton came up. The war was still going on, but the high command, SHEAF, determined that we would go no further. Patton would come up

with some of his staff and take his field glasses and look ahead of us. Germans would come in and say, "Why don't you go ahead and take Prague? or Czechoslovakia? The underground is fighting there." But we wouldn't go on, and we wondered why. Patton would come in and look down the road toward Prague. He would be standing on a little rise of ground, and we would all be watching. He said, "God damn it! They won't let me."

So we knew that it was through no fault of his that we couldn't take Prague and advance. It was about that time that he sent the 45th Division, the Recon, as I recollect, to rescue the Spanish horses that had been taken from Vienna in the direction of Prague. I wish I could have been in on that rescue, but I wasn't.

We'll jump over some more time and go to the end of the war. By the end of April we had practically conquered Germany. We were in what we thought might be the redoubt, where the S.S. and the die-hards were going to make their last stand, which did not materialize.

Hitler had a chatelet at Berchtesgaden but below the Eagle's nest. Now this chatelet had been bombed by our force about a week or so before. When I arrived there, it was in ruins, but in the caves that went into the hill were all the furniture and all sorts of things which the S.S. had taken there for protection. Some members of the Second French Armored Division were looting the place when I got there. I went in, and I have in this house right now a beautiful solid silver bread pan with a swastika, taken from Hitler's hang-out, the chatelet at Berchtesgaden. I also have a flag upstairs that I took out of there, and there were some little Bavarian tea cups, all hand-painted, that I brought home. Some of them were broken, but some arrived safely.

From there we went to our Division in Bavaria. After the war was over, we held an area in the Bavarian Alps named Kaufberen. I might say the last thing I remember about this are two events. There were two swans in the little lake at Kaufberen. We shot the swans because we were hungry and we took hand grenades, threw them in some of the trout pools, stunned the fish and ate them. I remember that as some of our activities right at the end of the war. Of course, we also took their beer and their Rhine wine.

I returned home in November, 1945, from Camp Lucky Strike. I came home on what they called a "Liberty Ship." It took us 10 or 12 days to get back. We arrived in New York and went to Camp - oh, I don't remember the name of the camp, but I remember that we had our first big steaks there and the first ice cream I had had in nearly two years. I ate two big steaks, and I ate ice cream, and I got thoroughly sick.

Like many Macon County boys I was sent to Camp Grant - or Ft. Sheridan. I was sent to Camp Grant, where I was discharged. Of course, they wanted us to stay in, but I decided that with all the fighting I had had, I wasn't about to stay in. I'd had enough of the military for a while. I wanted to come home. I might mention that a very good friend of mine who lived just a few blocks from here and belonged to my boyhood gang was killed during the Battle of the Bulge. That was Mac Henderson. I didn't find that out until I came home.

It's a wonderful thing to come home. My little daughter met me at the door, and she looked pretty suspicious. I had only seen her two years before - she was only three years old when she came to open the door. I'm not sure if she was particularly anxious to see me or not. But she was suspicious. That was my daughter Elizabeth. That night

when we were having our first dinner together in our dinette, with my wife and my two daughters Mickie and Elizabeth. During the meal I reproved her for something. She looked very coldly at me and said, "Why don't you go back into the Army where you belong?"

After I returned home, I went right back into what I had always been doing - managing our property and taking the burden off my wife.

Shortly after I returned, I decided I wanted to be on the Board of Supervisors of Macon County. I'm a Republican, and I ran for the Board and was elected. This had to do with local affairs, county taxes, etc. I was greatly interested in that. I was twelve years on the board and then continued to take care of our business interests.

In 1966 I decided I was going to run for our state legislature - the general assembly. It was quite a fight with some of the political powers in Decatur who didn't want to see me elected. When the final votes were counted, I had lost by 250 votes. When I checked it out, I found that in six of the precincts, there were more votes cast than there were registered voters. When I checked by a discovery by law on 1/4 of them, I found that I would have won the election. But I had to have permission of the legislature to have a full recount. When I went there, they refused to do it.

(End of Side 4)

As I said, George Johns was one of the big powers in the legislature and in Macon County in this district, and when I went to the legislature to try to get them to have a full recount, they refused to do it - that is, the elections committee refused. I'm sure they wanted to keep George Johns there, and I was a stranger, a freshman so to speak.

So I determined to run again. I pointed out to the people that I had really had the election swiped from me. That was true. You simply cannot understand how six out of fourteen precincts had more votes cast than voters registered. So I won by a landslide.

I won and went to the legislature and immediately got into a fight over open housing and busing and ideas of that nature because I don't believe in that. I feel that if I have a pen and I want to sell it to Bill Jones or Tom Smith, it's my business who I want to sell it to, not the federal government. Color of skin is unimportant. The point is that it's my freedom and my property, and I have a right to sell it to whom I please. If I'm a bigot and prejudiced, that's my tough luck for being that way, but the government doesn't have the right to take my freedom away from me. So I put in bills along those lines and had some very bad fights. One of the reasons I ran was to stop the radicalism on the campuses. They were burning buildings; for example, they burned Old Main at Southern Illinois University - a three million dollar loss, a fifty thousand dollar loss at the University of Illinois at Union Hall among the portraits of our presidents of the university. They did thousands of dollars of damage on the first floor of the Administration Building at the University of Illinois; I got in on the very middle of that. I hired a young black boy to discover and

report to me what was going on on the campuses in Illinois - at Southern Illinois, Eastern Illinois, Northern Illinois, University of Illinois, up here at Normal. I was very active. In fact, the Chicago Tribune said I was a leader in the legislature in 69, 70, and 71 for the opposition and the control of the campuses. I put in bills to try to control this; for example, anyone convicted of rioting and destroying of university property could be automatically put off the campus and thrown out. Some bills passed; some did not. I had quite an interesting time with many threats against my life. The fact is that a group of five men came from Chicago to my house to kill me. They caught my daughter, my grandchildren, and a friend in front of my house and threatened to kill them. They had one of my granddaughters in hysterics. When I was driving back and forth to Springfield, I never went on the same road, and I never came back on the same road. I changed my roads all the time. Someone loosened the lugs on the back wheels of my car one time. I nearly lost one of my wheels. I had to send for a wrecker to get the lugs tightened, and the wheels back on. One fire bomb was thrown at the house here. It didn't come through a window, fortunately. It hit a brick wall and fell onto the porch. The cork with the fuse in it popped out far enough from the gasoline that it did not ignite. It was very lucky.

My daughter received calls. My son-in-law received threats that they would burn us up, bomb us out - all because of my activities in relation to radicalism on the campuses. I hired this young 21 or 22 year old black boy. You have to pay by voucher, but he would not sign a voucher personally. One of the items on the voucher is your social security number. Since I sent him also to the Black Panthers, the Black Pea stone nation, the Vice Lords, the Students for a Democratic

Society, the Weathermen, he was afraid that this would be a give-away and he would be killed, so he wouldn't sign a voucher. I got one of the secretaries to sign the voucher and give the money to him. I got into a lot of trouble about this. On the other hand, my training in the war has always been that a commander must do everything he can to protect the men under him - protect their lives and their safety. I thought it was my duty to do my best to protect his life and his safety because without any doubt I feel right now that his life would have been in jeopardy if he had been discovered. So I had to go to court to fight it out. It cost thousands of dollars, but the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois eventually backed me up in what I had been doing.

I put in bills, but the campus radicalism died down after 1971 or 1972. It's a very different breed on the campus today compared to what it used to be. It was wild. You really have to have lived through that time to realize that you could hear young men (some of them came to this house) from the universities say, "Better Red than dead." When you hear them say, "A little violence is a good thing," it's ridiculous. For example, they had a big rock festival at Kickapoo Creek, which is between here and Bloomington. Some 30,000 of these young people were up there. I determined that I was going to go there and see with my own eyes what was going on. I didn't shave for a few days and met my young investigator and we drove to Kickapoo Creek, which is on the other side of Heyworth. We went in. They had motorcycle gangs with chains around their middles guarding the area of their meeting. They could use the chains to attack you. I watched drugs being bought and sold. I saw them "spaced out" with drugs. I saw

open sex right there in the corn field - or what was a corn field the summer before. I put in some bills relating to the control of groups like this. These later became part of the law of the state of Illinois - not denying them the right of assembling, but before they could assemble, they had to see that there were proper toilets and proper health standards. There had been no rules. Those 30,000 (half I would say from Chicago) were sleeping on blankets or piles of brush. There were only a couple of toilets. There were boys and girls shacking up together. My goodness, if they had to go, they would just step outside the tent. I never saw anything like it. I showed movies of this from the state police in the passage of the bill. I suspect the state police still have the movies of the activities up there.

On the 30th anniversary of the liberation of Paris, I received an invitation from the French Embassy in Washington to participate in the ceremonies of the dedication by President Pompidou of France of the statue of General LeClerc in honor of his liberation of Paris on August 23, 1944. Now the statue was erected at the Porte d'Orleans, where LeClerc and the Second French Armored Division entered for the liberation of Paris. I went to the dedication, and they had a seat for me not too far from the president of France. The fact is, I nearly started World War III because right in front of me was the Ambassade de Chine - the ambassador of China. He had a beautiful little name plate on the back of his seat. My Third Army background was irresistible to me so I stole the little plaque with his title: L'ambassade de Chine, as a souvenir of the occasion. I don't regret it a bit. I also have the souvenir bronze medallion of General LeClerc. I have it in the house right now that I was given as a souvenir of the affair. Before

I went, I told the Governor of Illinois, Governor Oglesby, what I wanted, and I had a resolution passed by the House giving me the authority to represent the state of Illinois at the dedication because of our long friendship with France and because the state of Illinois was once a French colony. I took these resolutions with me and a letter of introduction signed by the Governor of Illinois and presented them to the government of France. I went to our state department first, which I found was protocol, and told them what I wanted to do. They took me in a limousine with a driver and an aide to the French state department. I presented the documents. We drank champagne. It was quite an affair. We toasted the United States and the French. It was well worth going over to attend this affair.

Also I helped re-light the flame at the tomb of the unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Elysees.

In all I have spent ten years in the legislature of the state of Illinois. I'm not in the legislature right now, but who knows what will happen in the future? It's hard to say.

I have not told all the innumerable experiences - too much time - it's impossible - in relation to the Army, Scouting, the French, General Patton, G-2, in the legislature, the radicalism. There is so much that I haven't touched upon that I suppose we could sit here five or six days just telling these experiences.

Q. Mr. Borchers, you've really had a marvelous life, with all these exciting adventures, and you have given us a glimpse not only into the history of Decatur, but that of the whole country and some of our military activities as well. I really appreciate what you have given us, and we thank you very much.

A. That's all right. I might straighten out one little matter in relation to General Patton. He could swear in three languages! I don't think the movie of Patton showed him quite as it should have. It should have had him swearing a little more.

I probably shouldn't add this on, but I just happened to think of another little story about Patton that ought to be recorded somewhere. After the break-through and advance through France, we were approaching the Moselle River. During World War I Patton had been in command of this particular area after World War I. He knew some of the people there in this village. He and his staff went to call on the Mayor. I suppose the mayor met them with all the ribbons of state and all that sort of thing. They drank a toast or two I presume and talked. Patton spoke French very well so it was possible for him to do these things. The Mayor in their conversation happened to mention that there was still an American soldier buried right outside their cemetery, in a trench. Patton couldn't believe this. He said, "Why, all my soldiers have been moved from here and have been sent home. If they aren't in a military cemetery in France, they are in the United States."

"Oh, no," the mayor said. "We have one. We've kept it decorated. It's decorated right now with flowers. We renewed the cross every time it needed to be renewed."

I want to see it, said Patton.

Patton and his staff, the mayor and the consul went to the grave, just outside the stone wall of the town cemetery. Sure enough, there appeared to be a grave there and a cross at the head of the grave. The grave was covered with flowers. The mayor said, "Ever since 1918 we have kept that grave covered with flowers."

Well, we could almost have had a war with France at that time because it was all Patton and his staff could do to keep from laughing. Because, you see, on that cross was printed the name of the Unknown American soldier who had been abandoned in France and not taken home. That name was "Abandoned Rear." Now in army terminology that means a latrine trench that has been filled in and abandoned. They took "Abandoned Rear" for the name of an American soldier. All it was was a latrine trench properly covered over as regulations say and naturally abandoned. For all those years from the end of World War I until Patton's army arrived in World War II they had been decorating "Abandoned Rear."

(End of Side 5)

I want now to talk a little bit about my experiences in scouting. I joined the scouts when I was 12 years old in Decatur. When I was about 16, I became the assistant Scout Master of Troop 3 in Decatur and then Assistant Scout Master under E. J. Muffley and then I became the Scout Master. For 29 years I was in Scouting, most of the time in Troop 3. During this time I had 403 boys go through my hands of whom 123 became eagle scouts - all of them - All of them became first class. I determined long before that I was going to develop a troop that I could take anywhere in the world if I so wished. I had the boys sell doughnuts. We sold potato chips. We controlled the fireworks sales in Decatur until the state passed a law prohibiting fireworks. We controlled the fireworks business in the city of Decatur. I suppose some people were a little mad at me because of that. We made a lot of money selling fireworks. With this money I determined to build a completely mobile troop, completely equipped. So when a boy would come into the troop, all he had to do was to be voted in. We furnished his complete equipment - everything. We had one caisson to carry the packs for each of four patrols. We had a field kitchen. Later on during one of the times I took the troop to Europe, as we were going through Switzerland, the Swiss army chased us down and took pictures of our field kitchen so they could copy it for the Swiss Army. We went everywhere. I took the boys many, many places; for example, I led 21 expeditions of Troop 3. If we had to fill the ranks with older boys (you can't take 12 year old boys to Europe), we would fill the ranks from other troops from Decatur. I led them on expeditions to Hudson Bay, Rupert's Land, Ungava land, the Mal-Paris, Yellowstone; we went to watch John McDavid graduate from West Point. (John later on became a brigadier general in the United States Army.) I took them on canoe hikes

down the Rock River; twice down the Wisconsin River, the Wabash River, and down the Harricanawa. These are the kinds of expeditions I took the boys on. As I have already said - 21 expeditions. At any time the boys decided where they wanted to go at a meeting of the officers of this troop, and then we had the equipment, we could have gone anywhere in the world - even to Africa or South America. We still have this equipment stored away. We even have field radios and field telephones. We were as well if not better equipped than any unit in the United States Army comparable in size except that the boys were not armed. I didn't allow guns to go along.

I believe I mentioned 123 eagles out of 403 scouts.

During World War I Troop 3 sold more War Bonds than all the other scouts in Decatur put together. Now that was, of course, before my time. However, after World War II, we found that over half of the boys who had been in Troop 3 had been officers of the Armed Forces - the Army, Navy, or the Air Force in World War II. We had one admiral, one general, many colonels and officers of all ranks in the war. I feel that the training I gave them was such that, as Paul Lyons said after the war that he had gone into the army as a draftee and that when they first put up their tents he was the only one who knew how to give the commands to line up and erect their tents and he had to instruct everyone how to do this. He, of course, became an officer.

I feel very proud of the accomplishments that my troop has achieved in scouting. I might also say that, in the early 1950's after the war, I offered to give a camp of 80 acres up the lake to the scouts of Decatur. They would not accept it. I think that was very foolish, but I cannot help that.

Q. You have certainly given these boys some excellent training and experiences that their lives after scouting show was well spent.

A. Let me go on a little further. When I took the boys to Europe in 1948, Bill Cannon was the historian of the trip with a movie camera. We still have the movies of this trip. During that trip in 1948 we were in Paris. (I wanted to take them to Paris for the ceremonies for the liberation of France at the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Elysees.) You must visualize that here was just a Boy Scout troop - they were all completely uniformed - they could march, they were thoroughly trained - a scout troop from Decatur, Illinois, a little town in the Middle West of the United States. They were invited by the French government to participate in the parade with the Foreign Legion, soldiers of France, and this little troop from Decatur marched up the Champs-Elysees to the Arc de Triomphe with the French flag ahead of them, and they were given a position on the east side of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. To the south side were the officers of the French government. To the right were officers of the legislature and the French Underground. To the left side were officers of the Army. Around them all were the flags of French divisions brought in for this ceremony. They relighted the flame at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Amongst all these notables, Historian Bill Cannon with his movie camera took a movie in color of this ceremony.

It's incredible to me that events like this should be forgotten and ignored by scouting in Decatur today.

Q. Well, now we have a record of it.

A. When I took the boys in 1948 - and I took them again in 1949, by the way -

I also took them to the battlefields where my division had fought - the Foet de Morey. I knew the area had been stripped of land mines. But the French didn't know this. When we arrived, there were signs all around to keep out. I knew it was clear, so we went to camp in those woods. I knew there were some of the defense establishment there; for example, there was an underground shelter. We went down in that shelter. I went first to make sure there were no booby traps. There were all sorts of German pieces of equipment there. I had to make a rule, when we came out, that if a boy decided to pick up a German helmet or piece of equipment, he had to lay down another piece. They were riding in cars loaded with German equipment we brought back to Decatur. In that same woods I showed them where a German machine gun had started to fire on my friends and myself, but we wiped out the Germans. Some of the skulls and helmets were still lying there.

Q. Mr. Borchers, we want to thank you for this very colorful account of experiences not only in Decatur, but in Europe, in the state legislature, and in many other places. You have truly made the past very vivid and real. Thank you for your help.

You have been listening to the reminiscences of Mr. Webber Borchers.
This is Betty Turnell for the Decatur Public Library.