

Oral Interview

September 25, 2001

Narrator: Donald D. Brown

Interviewer: Rheba Massey, assisted by J. Stephen Mack

Donald Dee Brown

Born: York, Nebraska, March 8th, 1920
Died: Cheyenne, Wyoming, February 1st, 2001

Parents:

Terilus Norris "Dee" Brown
Gladys Creery Brown

Wife:

Mildred Elyane "Mid" McRae
Born: August 15th, 1926
Died: September 3rd, 1991

Married: September 5, 1945

Parents:

Archie McRae
Elva Smith McRae

Children: (daughter)

Norma Brown Martinez
Born: May 22nd, 1946
Died: 1968

INDEX

Events

Page(s)

Donald’s parents and foster grandparents.....1-2, 5, 17

Donald’s childhood in Fort Collins.....2

Activities in City Park.....3

Lincoln Elementary School.....2

Father’s barbershop in Alpert Building.....5

Remembers day of beginning of Great Depression in Fort Collins.....18

Artistic ability discovered at Fort Collins High School.....5

Interest in motorcycles.....3-6, 17

Training as commercial artist at Denver Art Institute.....13

WWII service in Army for 5½ years.....10-17

Wounded on Siegfried Line, Germany.....14

Marriage to “Mid” McRae.....10, 18

Art work for CSU.....6

Owned own sign shop – “Brown, Who Else?”.....7, 10

Specialized skills to paint signs on building walls.....8-9

Paints big Coca Cola sign in Old Town Fort Collins.....6-9

Ethnic groups in Fort Collins.....5, 22-25

Creates logo for Charcoal Broiler Restaurant.....20

Don and Mid’s only daughter, Norma Brown Martinez.....21

Don and Mid enlist in Peace Corps 3 times.....12, 21-26

Creates “FACTORAMAs”.....19, 27-29

Fort Collins Speedway.....4, 29

<u>People Mentioned</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
Dee Brown.....	1, 5
Gladys Creery Brown.....	1-2, 5
Fred Blumenthal.....	4
Mr. & Mrs. Kuebler.....	2, 5
Mildred McRae Brown (“Mid”).....	10, 20-21, 26
Stanley O. Norton.....	10-11
Ottie Reese.....	19
Mr. & Mrs. Kunkler.....	20
Norma Brown Martinez.....	21
Charles Reingold.....	22, 24
Dwight Ghent.....	23
Alex Rhine.....	23
Johnnie Ayres.....	23
Dwayne Todd.....	28
Bob Hoyt.....	30
Cyrus Vest.....	19

<u>Places Mentioned</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
York, Nebraska.....	1, 5
Fort Collins, Colorado.....	1-2, 18-22, 29-30
Denver, Colorado.....	7, 13, 20, 29
Fort Sill, Oklahoma.....	10
Camp Barkley, Texas.....	11
Gatun Rocks, Panama.....	12
Panama Canal.....	11-12
Ecuador.....	11-12
Nantes, France.....	14
Maginot Line, France.....	13-14
Saar River, Germany.....	13
Siegfried Line, Germany.....	14
Birmingham, England.....	15
Madrid, Spain.....	20-21
Barbados.....	24
Punta Arenas, Chile.....	25
Western Samoa.....	26-27

Addresses of key figures:

Dee Brown – Home and work address in 1948

Brown and Berry Barbershop
170 N. College Ave
Fort Collins, Colorado

Daniel A. & Emma B. Kuebler – work and home address in 1933

Scott Apartments
h904 S. College Ave. apt. #2
Fort Collins, Colorado

Don and Mid Brown in 1950s-1960s

1008 N. Mason Ave.
Fort Collins, Colorado

Don and Mid Brown-Ibiza Address

Apartmentos Siesta no. L17
Santa Eulalia
Ibiza
Belares, Spain

Don and Mid Brown – Barbados Address

Enfield Flat C
Upper Claymore Rock
St. Michael, Barbados, W.I.

Don and Mid Brown – Chile Address

Peace Corps Casilla
27-D
Santiago, Chile

Don and Mid Brown – 1970s-1980s Fort Collins Address

211 E. lake St.
Fort Collins, Co

Don and Mid Brown – Trinidad address

1710 Pinion St.
Trinidad, Colorado 81082

Narrator: Donald D. Brown=D
Interviewers: Rheba Massey=M
J. Stephen Mack=JSM

M: Don, when were you born and where were you born?

B: I was born in 1920. I was born in York, Nebraska.

M: And who were your parents?

B: My parents were Dee Brown, D-double-E, he went by his nickname all his life--D-double-E.
My middle name is D-double-E, and our oldest child's middle name is D-double-E.

M: When did you move to Fort Collins, then?

B: 1927, and I remember that with good reason. I was just a six year old boy; I only went to the first grade in Nebraska; after that, it was Colorado. And I remember that trip for one good reason. It was the first headlines that this little boy ever knew about. "Lindbergh Has Flown the Atlantic."

M: That was a pretty exciting time, wasn't it?

B: Yeah.

M: What did your father do in Fort Collins?

B: He was a barber. My father was a barber for 52 years.

M: Where was his barbershop?

B: It was in Fort Collins. He worked for his brother who was another barber in York, Nebraska, so when he moved to Fort Collins he established his own shop.

M: What was your mother's name?

B: My mother's name was Creery.

M: Kerry?

B: Creery.

M: Oh, Okay. How do you spell that?

B: C-R-E-E-R-Y.

M: C-R-E-E-R-Y, Okay. Where did you live at that time in Fort Collins? Do you remember the address?

B: No, I don't remember the address. It was Fort Collins, because the people that had raised my mother were..., had moved from York to Fort Collins, Colorado; we stayed with them for quite a while.

M: What was that family's name, do you recall?

B: Kuebler.

M: Kuebler.

B: K-U-E-B-L-E-R.

M: Okay. What school did you go to in Fort Collins?

B: I went to Lincoln School. There were 2 schools—but the architecture was the same. On one side of town was a school named Lincoln, and another one just like it on the other side of town named Washington.

M: So they were pretty new schools at that particular time, weren't they?

B: Yeah, they were. Very new.

M: What was your childhood like in Fort Collins? What types of activities did you participate in?

B: Oh, I didn't participate in any one, really. Sports came later in life.

M: So there wasn't.... Did you all go to City Park a lot for picnics?

B: Yeah.

M: Or to hear the band, or...?

B: Yes. They still had a Fort Collins band and a bandstand in the park. They had 2 bandstands in that park at first. There was a lake in the park for swimming, and there was a bandstand

right out in the middle of the water. You would take rowboats and go out to it. The Fort Collins band took all their instruments and went to the middle of the lake and played.

M: What type of music did they play?

B: Oh, classical selections for everybody.

M: Were there any dances at city park at that time?

B: Yes, there was a building at city park right alongside of the lake they had there, and there were dances once a week.

M: Did you go?

B: No.

M: You weren't into dancing, huh?

B: Oh, I was still a pretty small boy.

M: What about when you got into high school? Did they have dances still there?

B: That kind of dance was discontinued when I got into high school.

M: Did you go to the new Fort Collins High School then, the one over on Remington?

B: Remington, yeah.

M: What year did you graduate from high school?

B: Oh, let's see. It must have been.... I joined the army in 1940; I guess it was in 1939 I graduated.

M: What type of activities did you participate in high school?

B: I was a motorcycle nut.

M: Oh. What kind of motorcycle did you have?

B: I had just about every kind. Some of the makes have been long since discontinued. My favorite one was Indian which was the big competitor of Harley-Davidson. Now Harley-Davidson still exists, but Indian went out of business something like almost 10 years ago.

M: What got you interested in collecting motorcycles at the time?

B: Oh, well, who could say. I didn't really collect motorcycles; I sold them to get a better one all the time.

M: Who were some of your friends in high school?

B: Oh, Bob Hoyt was the best friend I had. That's a hard one to answer so far back.

M: Where did you ride your motorcycles when you were in high school?

B: Oh, mostly around Fort Collins. We singled out certain police officers that we imagined would pick on us.

M: (Laughter) Who was that? Who picked on you? Do you remember their names?

B: Yes, Blumenthal, Fred Blumenthal.

M: What would he do, stop you and give you a ticket?

B: Fife and guts, Fife and guts. I remember the name we gave him but I don't remember his last name—another police officer.

M: Well, did you all have a racetrack or anything to go on with your motorcycles?

B: No, we didn't. No.

M: When was that speedway built that was in Fort Collins?

B: Oh, that was built about 3 years after the close of the war.

M: Oh. So there wasn't anywhere before that that you all could go like a dirt track?

B: Yeah, we had a dirt track that we'd go to play around on the motorcycles. It was out near the airport. Fort Collins didn't have much of an airport but it did have an airport.

M: Oh, I see. So what happened to you after you graduated from high school? What did you do at that time?

B: I had been....in high school it was discovered that I had artistic ability. It was surprising, the teacher that discovered it and encouraged me was the agriculture class teacher. I guess I had

no business signing up for agriculture but I did, and my parents held still for it. I was attracted to agriculture because I thought I was a cowboy. I had had a couple horses before the motorcycle.

M: Oh. Did you keep your horses in your back yard, or...?

B: I kept them in a rented garage nearby to where my foster grandparents lived. That “foster grandparents” makes kind of a story, and not a very nice story. My mother, Gladys Creery, was given away, given away by her mother to the people, Mr. and Mrs. Kuebler. And strange enough, the years went by and my mother gave me away to the same people and left town for places like Reno and Las Vegas; that giving your child away happened twice. It happened to my mother and it happened to her child, me.

M: Did you ever see your mother again after she left?

B: Just briefly. She was a wanderer.

M: But what about your father?

B: He stayed put a long time. He had learned the barber trade from his older brother in York, Nebraska, and worked in his shop for a few years before moving to Colorado. Then he set up his own shop and my mother had a beauty shop right next door to my father’s barber shop. They both were basement places, in the Alpert building, to be exact.

M: Yeah, I know the Alpert building. There’s some businesses down there today.

B: Mr. Alpert was Jewish, capable of jumping over tall buildings in a single bound.

M: How were the Jewish people treated here in Fort Collins at that time?

B: Oh, just fine. Fort Collins, with the college here, had several fraternity houses. Just about every fraternity in the United States was represented and one of them was a Jewish fraternity, and it was across the alley from our house, and this man was a member of that fraternity, and he was interested in the motorcycle I had. And after that, he had several, and still has.

M: So he didn't buy your motorcycle, he just went out and bought somebody else's.

B: Yeah.

M: So that Jewish fraternity.... You were living where at that time?

B: On East Lake Street, the second block of East Lake, 211, yeah.

M: So after you found out you had artistic ability through your teacher in high school, what did you decide to do? Were you kind of lost, or were you...?

B: He gave me the encouragement needed to enroll in a commercial art school, going into commercial art. It's not all the goofy art that you see around and about; it's a school for art to make a living at, and I graduated from that and I became a commercial artist. Worked for two five-year periods for the agriculture department of CSU, and then I had my own business. Being a commercial artist, it was natural that I pick up the sign painter's skill, and I painted signs for a few years. Also had, I owned my own sign shop; that was on East Mountain Avenue in the Poudre Sales Building. And during that time, I painted the sign in question, the big Coca Cola sign.

M: The Coca Cola sign.

B: Yeah. I painted signs for Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola both, in different towns around, including Denver. I'll never forget the first, the first I'd signed up with Pepsi Cola and they wanted me to go with one of their old time sign painters. Turned out he was a real drunk. We went five stories up on a swing stage, as they called it, so the sign painters can walk back and forth while they do their painting. And every little bit, he'd say, hey, punk, let's go down and get a cup of coffee, and I learned after a while that every time he got a cup of coffee, what he really got was a double rooster tail and a beer. I finally kept on talking and told him off about it and he just called me a punk kid and did whatever he pleased about it. Is that the kind of story you want?

M: Yeah, that's a great story. What about...how did you get these commissions from Pepsi and Coca Cola? Did they call you on the telephone or how did this happen?

B: No, I just went in person and inquired about it, and I got the job from.... Well, every time they'd set up a new location, they'd try to get in some place that had a wall, a brick wall to put the paintings on, and they managed to get a lot of them. I painted them in Fort Collins and Denver; I painted one in Wellington and I kinda think that's still there. I know the one in Fort Collins still is.

M: So there would be like an ad in the newspaper, and then you would go and inquire about doing the sign?

B: No, I'd just butt in and inquire. I got turned down a lot of times, but I kept busy. I had a competitor; he's still living, I think, or did he die?

M: He died just recently.

B: Yes, Harold Asmus. At the bottom of his signs he painted: "Asmus of course." And I thought I had to have something as cute as that, so on the bottom of my signs I painted: "Brown, who else?"

M: That's neat. Well, why did they stop painting signs on the side of brick buildings? Why did they go to just the commercial big signs?

B: Oh, I didn't know they did.

M: Well, you don't see very many of them any more. That's why they're kind of rare when you see these beautiful old signs on the sides.

B: It was a specialized skill.

M: What kind of skill did it take? Tell me the process of painting a sign like that.

B: Oh, you have to have a swing stage which is a long platform with a big ladder brought from the Fort Collins Fire Department served as my swing stage. And on each end of it you have a

pulley and block to move up. If you work with a helper, one gets on each end and it goes level all the way up. If you work alone, which I did most of the time, you pull it as high as you can on one side, at quite an angle, and you walked half the way to the other side and bring it up even with that, and you'd keep it up that way till you get to the top.

M: And what kind of paint did you use to paint your signs on the building?

B: It's called bulletin enamel.

M: Bulletin?

B: Bulletin.

M: Bulletin enamel, okay.

B: It's made especially for sign painters. The Sherwin Williams Paint Company was the brand I used.

M: And so how long did it generally take you to paint a sign like that?

B: Oh, took 3 or 4 days. One like the Coca Cola sign you're talking about.

M: So did you draw first on the brick, or did you just do it with the paint brush?

B: They have what sign painters call a pounce pattern; it was made on wrapping paper. You have to get or buy some paper from the meat market or some place that had a big roller, and it was seldom big enough for a whole sign so you'd tape it together and draw in pencil with the whole thing on this paper. And then you'd go over it with a pounce wheel, which is like a spur, only real sharp spikes on a circular wheel, and it perforates the whole design. Then you have to turn it over and sandpaper it so when pressed against the wall it doesn't close the design. Then you have the pounce bag, which is, it contains powdered chalk, preferably in some color, and you press it and bang it against the wall on the pattern, and it goes through and leaves the whole picture there, and you put the paint on next.

M: Wow. So how would you restore a sign like that? I mean, what would you do if you were going to restore your sign on the side of that building, what would you do?

B: Oh, I think I'd find myself lucky because you wouldn't have to make any pounce pattern. There'd probably be parts of it missing, but I would expect it to hold up better than that, and just repaint it.

M: Just repaint it, huh? Did you ever restore a sign that you had painted? Did you ever go back and repaint one?

B: Never did. I painted signs in all those little towns around Fort Collins, I think all of them.

M: So at the time you were painting signs on the sides of brick buildings, you were also painting large commercial signs just on wood for their businesses?

B: Yeah. And I was painting on their trucks.

M: So was the process working any differently for the wood signs and the trucks or pretty much the same?

B: Just small. Used a different kind of brush. On the brick wall they used stiff brushes, stiff bristles. On a truck or a car, you use sign painters' quill brushes, they're called. And they're very limber.

M: What was your favorite sign that you painted? Which one did you enjoy painting the most?

B: I think the one we're talking about.

M: The Coca Cola one?

B: Yeah.

M: Why is that?

B: Because we won that bid, and "Brown, who else?"

M: What year was that that you painted that one?

B: Oh, I can't remember. I can remember that an old girlfriend of mine that had gotten married left Fort Collins to live in Pennsylvania where her husband came from, she died during the time I painted that sign, and I had reason to recall it for that reason.

M: So where did you meet your wife?

B: I met her in Fort Collins.

M: And her name was...?

B: Mildred McRae, a proud Scottish name, but she preferred to be called Mid, and everybody called her Mid.

M: So did you go to high school with her then?

B: No, she was younger than I.

M: Okay. So what year did you get married?

B: Oh, 1950. Oh, no. Let's see, I joined the Army in 1940, that was before the United States was even in the war. I came back from the war in... 5 years after that I came back, in 1945, yeah.

M: So you were in World War II.

B: Yes.

M: Where were you stationed in World War II?

B: I got all around in the 5½ years that I was in the Army during the war. The first place I was sent was Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After that, I was sent to Camp Barkley, Texas. After that, we got into the war and I was sent to Panama; I volunteered to go to Panama, me and another buddy of mine from Fort Collins, that was Stanley Norton, a dear, dear buddy. I seem to have crossed him up and made him angry at me. I never hear anything about him anymore; I've tried to run him down and can't. It's a sad, sad thing, and there never were better buddies than me and Stanley O. Norton.

M: So did you do commercial art then for the Army? Did you do anything? What did you do?

B: No, I was an infantryman.

M: Okay. So where were you then when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

B: Pearl Harbor? I was in Camp Barkley, Texas.

M: So you had already gone into the Army.

B: Yeah.

JSM: Didn't you join the Army from the National Guard and you were underage at that point?

B: I guess I was. Anyway, anyone would do about anything to come up to strength.

M: So after you got out of the war, after you....

JSM: Well, I think there's a lot more to the war. Right after Panama....

M: What did you do after Panama?

B: After Panama, I volunteered to go to a place that I don't think any of my countrymen heard of ever heard of American troops being sent there. I volunteered to be sent to Ecuador.

M: Ecuador? That is unusual during World War II.

B: Yeah, there was a reason for it. They had formed a great circle of early warning bases one hundred miles or better out from the Panama Canal. One of them was in Ecuador; another one, the northernmost one was in Mexico.

M: So what did you do on these bases then?

B: I was in the coast artillery. I got out of the infantry and got into the coast artillery, and before it was all over with, I got back into the infantry again.

M: So you just more or less were on this base, just watching the base.

B: Yeah.

M: Did you..., actually there was no invasion or anything...?

B: No invasion of Panama. That Canal was a prize. I'm proud to have known it.

M: So how many years did you spend in Panama?

B: Oh, I think two, about two years.

M: Did you ever go back later on in your life?

B: Yes, I did. My wife and I enlisted in the Peace Corps three times. On one of the trips back home, we passed through Panama and stopped. I hope it didn't bore my wife to death, for all I could talk was Panama all the time we were there. Panama is a wonderful thing, that Canal. I was on Gatun Rocks for the most of the time I was in Panama. It's the easternmost, faces the Caribbean—Gatun Rocks.

M: So then after you were in Ecuador did you do anything else before you got out of the Army?

B: Yeah, got back into the infantry again, and they sent me to the United States then of Ecuador. In Ecuador they have something that's purely Ecuadorean, you wouldn't find it anywhere else. They have the Jivaros Hebero Indians; they are the people that shrink human heads.

M: So you had contact with them?

B: No, I didn't have contact with those Indians, but there were pawn shops in places that had the shrunken heads in their windows for sale. Carnivals would have them.

M: Oh, my goodness. Did you buy one?

B: No. They tried to make it illegal for those Indians to do that once, because they thought they were setting a trap for old Grandpa when he came down the forest trail and knock him off and get his head. Anyway that's the way the story went.

M: When you came back to the United States, did you resume your art?

B: Yes. I got married and I got back into the same art school in Denver, the Denver Art Institute. It was not like most art schools—it was a commercial art school, it taught all the kinds of work used to illustrate printed matter.

M: Had you missed that during World War II? Had you missed drawing, or did you kind of continue drawing in your barracks or whatever?

B: No, there was no time for drawing.

JSM: You jumped over one thing, because you ended up over in Europe, wasn't it in Germany and France?

B: No, I just haven't gotten to that.

M: Well, tell me about Germany and France.

B: We have a new nurse here, her name is . . .

(End of TAPE I, Side 1)

TAPE I, Side 2

B: . . .he was the commander of our unit—I like to think that he came to look one time at the Saar and said: “Brilliant!”

M: That's what you did, you built a bridge across it?

B: The engineers, the army engineers put up a pontoon bridge and we crossed it and just barely got on the other side of the Saar which is in Germany. On that one first side of the Saar is the Maginot Line which was French, and the Germans took all the heavy artillery out of the Maginot Line and sent it to the English Channel in preparation for the Invasion. But I saw the last of my war just on the other side of the Saar in Germany. It was also a very famous place to be wounded in; I was wounded in the Siegfried Line, right across from the Maginot Line, and I was evacuated. . . .very lucky, I've been lucky all my life, very lucky—I got wounded by a mortar shell that exploded and hit me with shrapnel in four places, no, five places. It hit, I got shrapnel in both arms and both legs and my chest wall, and I was so lucky

the one in my chest wall did not penetrate the lung. I was very lucky in Panama too; I was operated on for a burst appendix, and I had malaria at the same time they operated, and I came through it just fine.

M: Boy, you did. That's fantastic. Well, now, what year did you go over to France and Germany to fight? Do you remember?

B: The year didn't make any difference to infantry.

M: I see. You just went where they sent you.

B: Yeah.

M: So they had already done the D-Day Invasion when you were over in Germany and France?

B: Yeah.

M: So you went over after that?

B: First station happened right after the D-Day station, not very long after they landed our unit in Brittany—that's one of the many provinces in France. They sent us to surround, the Germans were still in one place, they still held a big submarine base in Brittany in the city of Nantes, and we surrounded that until we got sent on to Germany.

M: So what was it like marching through France to Germany?

B: We didn't march through France; we were taken in convoy. Our unit had the trucks and automobiles to do it.

M: So did you have much fighting along the way until you got to Germany?

B: Oh, the Germans were off into Germany by that time.

M: So where did they take you after you got wounded?

B: They took me to a hospital in England, and that was an interesting place, an American hospital in England. And the nurses gave, I learned a medical word from those nurses, *spiritus fermenti*, that's whiskey in hospital talk.

M: They're still doing it, aren't they?

B: Yeah, and they're still, and they gave us *spiritus fermenti* every now and then, and when it come victory and we were still in the hospital, they really gave us *spiritus fermenti*. And we went into town with a couple of the nurses and celebrated it in an English pub until the nurses had to shut us up before we insulted the English. We were trying to sing "God Save the King!"

M: Well, I'll bet that was a victorious moment. So, were you in that hospital in Southampton, or do you remember?

B: The closest big city was Birmingham.

M: Birmingham. What did you all think of Patton?

B: Oh, I got to see him in person one time, just short of going into Germany. He asked non-commissioned officers from every company be picked out to send back to where he was, pretty well away from the shooting, back to where he was, and he had a speech to make to them. And the speech was colored with profanity, he just breathed profanity.

M: So what did you think about Eisenhower then? Did you have any connection with him?

B: Never had any connection with him; all the reports on him were good.

M: And, then, Montgomery?

B: Montgomery. He was a Britisher. Well, he went ahead along side of our troops that went across the Saar. He came up through Holland and Belgium.

M: So do you remember the battle that you were in in Germany where you got wounded? What were you trying to....were you trying to get a town?

B: We were trying to skirt the Siegfried Line and didn't make it.

JSM: You were a motorcycle courier, weren't you?

B: Yeah, I was very lucky at that too. It was before the war, I had an Army motorcycle to ride, and that was just heaven to me. And they sent us to the biggest maneuvers the world had ever known and had to go through Jeanerette, Louisiana to join up with the maneuver, and the motorcyclists were charged with riding along the convoy all the way, and any time the trucks weren't far enough apart to give them slack and separate them, and I'd done that for 2 or 3 days and I met another motorcyclist from a different unit, and I was very lucky with him. He got whiskey every time he could, and I came upon a truck that was alongside the shoulder of the road, and motorcycles were supposed to stop and offer to run an errand for them whenever that happened, and I'd gotten up on the back of a big GI truck and was about to ask if he wanted a message taken to some officer, and here come this guy on the other motorcycle drunk as a skunk, and he hit me and both motorcycles were under the back of that truck, and I didn't even get hurt, and he didn't either. It was understandable, him not getting hurt, but I didn't either.

M: That would be kind of fun, riding those motorcycles across France and Germany.

B: Yeah. This was in the United States, the last big, biggest maneuvers ever held anywhere. No, I had worst luck in that same maneuver, riding that same motorcycle, riding the convoy after night. When the officers needed a message sent to some other officer, they'd give it to the motorcyclist and he'd chase the convoy down and give the message to the right officer. And I'd been riding and riding in the dark, when all I had was a little blue invasion light, black-out lights, and I came to a place where a bunch of medics had sent up an aid station, and I thought, "By God, I'm going to stop. This is hopeless trying to take this message." And I stopped, and shortly after I stopped there, they moved the aid station, all the medics were gone. I didn't care. I parked the motorcycle and laid down on the ground; it was soft

ground, in Louisiana there's a lot of places that's almost a swamp, and that saved my life.

After awhile, a big truck came, a GI truck, and ran right over me, sleeping there.

M: Well, you're a person with nine lives, aren't you?

B: Yeah. Pressed down into the soft, swampy ground, and that saved me. Honest to God, the officer riding in that truck was nearly crazy. He thought he was really in trouble for that. I was sent to the hospital in Camp Carey, Louisiana. After that, I was sent to the hospital in San Antonio, Texas, and then I was dismissed out of that to go to my unit in Camp Barkley, Texas.

M: Oh. So, did you have other brothers and sisters that served during the War?

B: No, I'm the only child.

M: I bet your parents were quite worried about you during all that time, weren't they?

B: My parents were divorced; they divorced when I was 15 years old. My mother sued my father for divorce, and I never gave her, I never excused her for that. What she wanted was Las Vegas and Reno. She didn't want a son or a daughter. That's a sad story.

M: So did you and your father correspond a lot while you were in Germany and France?

B: Oh, quite a bit. I corresponded more with these foster parents that had really raised me.

M: Did you spend a lot of time down at your father's barbershop when you were growing up?

B: No. Motorcycles were a lot more interesting. I spent some time there when I needed to mooch some money to buy something for the motorcycle.

M: What was downtown Fort Collins like to you during that time period growing up?

B: Oh, I remember the streetcar line, and I remember the day of the beginning of the Depression. They had the National Guard posted on both of the big banks on the front steps of the two big banks, the Poudre Valley Bank and the...I can't think of the name of it....

M: First National?

B: First National Bank, yeah. They had machine guns and National Guardsmen set up on those stairways to both banks.

M: I had never heard that before. That's interesting. So they were just trying to keep everybody from raiding the bank, huh?

B: Yeah. People were about crazy with what had happened.

M: So how did the Depression affect Fort Collins?

B: Oh, I wouldn't be the one to know. I really wouldn't. It didn't affect my family as my father still carried on in the same barbershop he had.

M: Well, what, when you came back from the war to Fort Collins, what was it like in post-war Fort Collins?

B: In what?

M: Post-war Fort Collins, I mean, with all the returning veterans of the war and so forth. What was it like in Fort Collins?

B: Oh, just so pleasant, it was just like heaven.

M: Seeing your old friends again, and....

B: Yeah. Fort Collins is a good town.

M: And so you immediately went to work for CSU after you got out of art school?

B: Yeah. I went back and finished art school after I was married, the first thing I did shortly after coming back to Fort Collins, I married the old girlfriend, the one with the proud Scottish name, Mildred McRae, but she wanted to be called Mid, and everybody that knew her called her Mid. Now she's dead, died a horrible death, awful. She died of cancer of the liver. I can still see them taking her out of the house dead, carried on a litter like the medics had.

M: So that was a pretty traumatic time in your life then, wasn't it?

B: Yeah, it was.

M: Now, did you have a lot of friends when you worked for CSU? Name some of the people you worked with and some of the activities you were involved in.

B: Oh, there was 2 shop teachers. Otie Reese was the metal shop teacher [of Fort Collins High School], and he was just wonderful with his students. He gave them a lot of encouragement. And the other one was Mr. [Cyrus] Vest [at Fort Collins High School], who taught wood shop, and he was pretty inspiring to the students too.

M: Now when you worked for CSU, did you do just drawings for their bulletins, or...?

B: I did most of the drawings for their bulletins. They had established a printing shop of their own, shortly before they got me, and I was kept quite busy all the time illustrating bulletins, and they sent them out all over the country.

M: Did you enjoy that period?

B: Yeah, I enjoyed that period.

M: Now, is that when you started doing your facts graphics?

B: “Factorama?”

M: Uh-huh.

B: No, that was a long time after that.

M: So you were just working for CSU—you weren’t doing any private work at that time?

B: No.

M: What businesses did you most enjoy working for in Fort Collins, doing their signs and their graphics?

B: Oh, I think it was Fred Kunkler Trucking.

M: What did you like about that?

B: Oh, he was a character. Came from Missouri, led me to believe that all Missourians are characters.

M: What about when you did the steer that's still the logo for the Charcoal Broiler?

B: The what?

M: The steer, the black steer.

JSM: The rear of the steer.

M: For Charcoal Broiler Restaurant.

B: Oh, yeah. I don't remember what happened there, do you?

JSM: Well, it's just that they still, even today, use your logo.

B: Oh.

M: They never changed it.

JSM: And you know, Kunklers still uses it; it's on the side of their semis, a big cornucopia.

B: You're not very far from Kunklers.

JSM: No, I used to live just down the street from Kunklers.

M: So when you finished doing your artwork here in Fort Collins, where did you go after that?

B: Went to Denver. I finished the art school in Denver with my newly wed wife; we bought a trailer house, and we lived in a place called the Trailer Village in Denver on West Colfax Avenue while I went and finished my art school. It was the Denver Art Academy, was all commercial art. I was glad people directed me to that because a lot of art is utterly useless and downright silly, but not commercial art. I enjoyed it.

M: So when you left Denver, was that when you went to Spain?

B: We went to Spain after our daughter and only child was married. Oh, that's a long story. She had graduated from CSU and enrolled for her master's degree at CSU. At the same time, across the sea in Madrid, Spain, a young man, Fernando Martinez, had graduated from the University of Madrid, the capitol city of Spain, and in graduating he won a Fulbright scholarship, and of all places, to CSU in Fort Collins, and that's where he met our daughter.

Then he left not long before she finished her studies there and went back to Spain, of course. And not too long after that, my wife was very upset when our daughter told her that she was applying for a job in Paris on the strength of two years of French and two years of Italian she had graduated from. So she went to Spain, and there she found Fernando Martinez, and we were invited to her wedding. So we flew to Madrid. We had been in Madrid before, on a circle trip around all of Europe, Madrid was a favorite place of ours. So we went there, and the Spanish people are real big on family matters, like weddings, and things like that. They had an unusual custom at the wedding; the wedding was held in a great cathedral in the heart of Madrid. That wedding, believe me, believe me, that wedding was like a fairy tale. And Norma was married there. And not long after they were married, she was killed in an automobile accident, and it damn near killed my wife. Not that my wife was in the accident. Her husband was in the accident, and he came, flew to Fort Collins for the funeral, and that was appreciated, of course, but it was a terrible thing that happened.

M: So she was killed in Spain?

B: Killed in Spain, and buried in Fort Collins in a funeral plot we had there.

M: So then, when did you go into the Peace Corps? Was it soon thereafter?

B: It was rather soon thereafter.

B: Yes, I remember Charlie Reingold. There were very few Jews in Fort Collins. Mr. Alpert was a Jew. Charlie Reingold was a Jew. Charlie had his little...., he collected junk and sold it and made money, how, nobody but a Jew could do that, I guess. Bud he did, and his little shop was just a block away from my Coca Cola sign. I got to know Charlie pretty well. Everybody did highly respect him. He was such an honest man, and he showed it. Then, later, I never heard the end of this story, they started to build a synagogue in Fort Collins on the south end of town. I never have heard whether they completed that or not, did they?

M: Yes, they did.

B: Well, that's interesting to know.

M: It's on Drake Road.

B: Oh, Drake Road.

M: Between Shields and College

B: Yeah, that's the place.

M: What about the other ethnic groups in Fort Collins, like the Hispanics? Do you remember how they were treated?

B: Oh, yes. Oh, when I was a boy, a Mexican family moved to Fort Collins from Chihuahua, Mexico, and they had 2 sons, were just about a year apart in age, and one of those sons still comes to visit me in this hospital. He's been here 4 times now. The first time I woke up and he was sitting by my bed. I raised up and I thought it was a doctor I'd never met, and I fumbled around, didn't know what to say, and I said: "Are you Doctor So-and-so?," and he said, "Wrong! What's the matter with you? Don't you recognize Clancho?" "Clancho" was his nickname in Spanish. Cienfuegos, if you pronounce it correctly. I've learned quite a bit of Spanish in Spanish places I've known--Panama and Spain and some other places.

M: Now these were the people at the upholstery shop [Joe's Upholstery on Linden]?

B: Yeah. The upholstery shop. Oh, he's a good honest man, and he comes in to see me. He had an interesting experience in his life. He went into the Army, and when they were about to cross the English Channel for the Invasion, they somehow discovered that he wasn't an American citizen, and so they nationalized him an American citizen in Plymouth, England. I think that's an interesting claim to make.

M: That's interesting. What about the German Russians that had come to town and were working the beets? Do you have any recollections of them?

B: Oh, yes, several of them were my friends. A lot of people never realized that they were German Russians; they called them German only. But they were interesting because they had been in Russia

M: Who were some of your German Russian friends?

JSM: What, Dwight, Dwight Ghent?

B: Oh, no, Dwight Ghent wasn't a German Russian. Oh, I don't remember their names now. Alex Rhine, Alex Rhine, like the Rhine River, and his little brother Raymond Rhine.

M: What did they do in town?

B: When they grew up, Alex had an upholstery shop, he had an upholstery shop. A man had that same business before when they were still kids, oh, I can't think of his name. He took them in and taught Alex the automobile upholstery trade. He...Johnnie Ayres, he was well known for the things he did. He went several years, he went to Africa for big game hunting, so he was making money.

M: So did you do his signs?

B: No, I didn't.

M: What made you and your wife decide to go into the Peace Corps?

B: Sadness. We were trying to run away from the terrible sadness of losing our only child.

M: Where did you go first when you went into the Peace Corps?

B: We were assigned to the Caribbean island of Barbados; all of the people of that island are called Bajans whether they be black or white, and blacks are the majority. It was an interesting time to go there. Barbados had been a British possession for 300 years, and they had just gotten their independence.

M: So what did you do there on Barbados?

B: Oh, commercial art.

M: For whom? Who were you doing it for?

B: I only went to Barbados once. That's what I'm talking about.

JSM: Do you remember the book you did on botany?

B: Oh, yeah. A book. Yeah. Bird experts from all over the world come there.

JSM: But that was down in Punta Arenas.

B: Oh, that was down in Punta Arenas.

(End of TAPE I, Side 2)

TAPE II, Side 1: Don starts to tell a story on Charlie Reingold, so tape is turned on again.

B: I guess he died in Wyoming.

M: This was Charlie Reingold?

B: Yeah.

M: What did he do with his sheep pelts?

B: I really don't know.

M: He just collected them, and he sold them?

JSM: He sold them, as a fur trader. And I think he used to tell me, Don, how he used to travel all over Wyoming in a Model T.

B: Yeah. And he was respected by ranchers all over Wyoming. He was a very respected Jewish man.

M: Well, now, when you were in Barbados, and you said that they had just got their independence three years earlier, how were they accepting their independence? How did this affect you in the Peace Corps and what was happening there?

B: Well, we didn't stop there for very long.

M: Did you go on to South America then?

B: Yeah. Our next enlistment in the Peace Corps was in South America, Chile, in South America--Long narrow country that reaches clear to the tip of the continent. There's something famous to see there in terms of sea stories—Cape Horn—it's just a big rock seven miles out to sea from Punta Arenas, Chile. Another thing famous in sea stories is there—the Straits of Magellan—goes right through the city of Punta Arenas.

M: So you did drawings of all the birds that were down there?

B: Yeah, I did. Yeah, there sure are a lot of birds down there, big and small.

M: How would you draw them? I mean, would you just go out and observe them as they were sitting on a rock or something?

B: No. They photographed them first, then I drew them. Why, I don't know.

M: What did they use that information for?

B: Oh, they used it for preservation, working on greater preservation of the wildlife in that region. That's why bird experts from all over the world came there. I remember some Belgians that came there.

M: What did your wife do while you were drawing?

B: Oh, she volunteered to do—I don't know what you would call it—carrying messages, and one thing or another.

M: What kind of housing did you live in when you lived there? Did they have regular built housing for the Peace Corps?

B: No, not built for the Peace Corps; the Peace Corps had to find a place and rent it.

M: So how many years were you in the Peace Corps?

B: Oh, two, two years.

M: So you went to Barbados and you went to Chile. Was there anywhere else that you went with the Peace Corps?

B: Yes. The third enlistment in the Peace Corps was to the South Pacific island of Western Samoa.

M: My, that sounds like an interesting place to be.

B: Oh, it was in a way. We got mad at the Peace Corps and told them to send us home from Samoa.

M: What happened?

B: Oh, I wouldn't know how to describe it. Interfering with privacy.

M: What did you do on Samoa while you were there?

B: Commercial art.

M: Drawing brochures again for the Peace Corps?

B: Yeah.

M: Was it of any particular subject that you were drawing?

B: I don't even remember it. We weren't there very long. American Samoa is a beautiful place. It's just 80 miles from Western Samoa, but we weren't stationed in American Samoa. We went over there because we liked it.

M: So did you have quite a bit of contact with the Navy people there?

B: Yeah. They have a Samoan man here in this hospital on the staff, and every time he sees me he says, "Talofa." That's a Samoan greeting.

M: "Talofa." Like "Aloha" in Hawaiian.

B: And I answer him with: "Tooshi tawa." "Tooshi tawa" is storyteller. A famous storyteller lived, when he wrote his stories, on Samoa, Western Samoa. Who wrote Treasure Island?

M: Robert Louis Stevenson.

B: Robert Louis Stevenson lived there and wrote Treasure Island, and in Samoan it's "Tooshi tawa," means storyteller.

M: Oh, I see.

B: I answer this Samoan here by shouting: "Tooshi tawa." He didn't know what I meant when I first did it.

M: So after Samoa, you came back to the United States. Where did you and your wife live then?

B: Oh, we lived in the place Steve was telling you about, on East Lake Street, across the alley from two fraternity houses.

M: Did you continue your drawing then?

B: No.

M: When did you do your "FACTORAMA?"

B: Oh, I did that really just for myself. All along in Denver I had hopes of selling it to newspapers. It seemed to me it was good enough to qualify but I never did it.

JSM: You did those in the early '60s?

B: Um-hum.

M: So did you just start researching that material all on your own? Tell me about your research process for it.

B: Yeah. I really started that when I had quite an interest in Indians, particularly Colorado Indians, the Utes. And I dug up a lot of information on them and made the illustrations accordingly. It should have sold but it didn't.

M: What about all your drawings on all of the antique automobiles? Tell me about your interest in the automobiles.

B: I did that for the same reason. I had been wrapped up in the antique automobile for quite a long time. Went up to draw pictures of what I had learned, but I didn't get it sold.

M: Now, were you a part of building that speedway in Fort Collins? Were you involved in that?

B: No. I knew a man named Dwayne Todd, headed that up. I had known him all my Fort Collins life.

M: What promoted him to do that?

B: Well, he drove racing cars himself.

M: Just in Fort Collins or in other places?

B: No, other places.

M: Was that a pretty popular speedway, then?

B: Oh, reasonably so, not like the one in Lakewood, Denver, or Merchant's Heroes Park, Denver.

M: Did they do it every weekend, the races?

B: Yeah.

M: For how many years did this go on? Do you recall?

B: Oh, the one in Fort Collins lasted only about 2 years. It lasted for a long time in Denver, first in Merchant's Park, then they had to move out of that because they wanted to tear Merchant's Park down, and they moved racing to the amusement park in Lakewood, in Denver, Lakeside, sorry. There is a Lakewood in Denver.

M: So did you ever drive a car on the speedway?

B: Yes.

M: What kind of car did you do?

B: A midget.

M: Did you do it frequently, or...?

B: No, not frequently.

JSM: Don, going back to “FACTORAMA.” Why don’t you tell Rheba about getting the letter from Mrs. Louis Chevrolet. Do you remember that letter?

M: Yeah. When I was doing the “FACTORAMA,” I tried to make it interesting enough for newspaper use, and I decided to draw, as well as the cars, I’d also draw some of the famous people connected with that. And almost forgotten are the Chevrolet Brothers, who raced at Indianapolis and a lot of other big speed racing at that time. They came from France, that’s how that name, a curious-sounding name, is French, and I got a letter from the widow of Louis Chevrolet—I’d asked him questions. I didn’t know that he was dead.

M: Now, you did some national advertising for people like Mennen, didn’t you?

JSM: Fram.

M: Fram and Mennen. I saw some of those. You don’t remember Fram Motors?

B: I don’t remember.

M: Fram Filters.

B: Yeah, I remember that. What that was was a sign exercise to do in art school. It was typical commercial art.

M: Well, now, you have those wonderful scrapbooks. You put all of those scrapbooks together?

B: Yeah. Can’t hardly remember them now. I remember one was a real big one, about yay by yay, and the paper that was inside was all black. And I pasted all kinds of things that I’d done in that. I just cannot remember it.

M: Now you’ve got some wonderful business cards and pictures of tracks that you painted on the side of it.

JSM: And bulletins, and stationery, letterhead that you did for different businesses in Fort Collins. That’s your portfolio. Then there’s a couple of more scrapbooks of local Fort Collins things. And maybe we can come up again, and we can flip through the pages,

because there's pictures of all of you as young guys on motorcycles, and pictures of you and Mid, pictures of Bob Hoyt and all sorts of characters that you went to high school with, I think, are in there, and pictures of some of your houses. So maybe we can come up and you can update us on who all these people are.

B: Hoyt would have something to contribute there.

JSM: Well, maybe we'll bring Bob with us when we come the next time.

B: The Kemp family was, they run the little gas station and small store, grocery store on the corner of Shields and, oh, I don't remember the other street, one of the big streets, Linden [it was Vine].

M: Oh, Shields and Linden? No, it can't be Shields and Linden.

JSM: That would be downtown.

B: Yeah.

JSM: So it would be either LaPorte and Linden, or, no, it couldn't be, that would be LaPorte and Walnut, wouldn't it?

B: Oh, I just can't remember. You expect me to remember more than my brain is capable of.

JSM: Well, I think we should take a break and do another one on another day.