

## UPCOUNTRY HISTORY MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

### TRANSCRIPT: LARRY [REDACTED]

(Compiled April 20, 2016)

Interviewee: Larry [REDACTED] Maria [REDACTED] (his wife was present and spoke occasionally)

Interviewer: Katie [REDACTED]

Interview Date: October 7, 2015

Location: Upcountry History Museum – Furman University, Greenville, SC

Length: 2 Video Files, 41:23 total

#### START OF VIDEOCLIP 1 (33:50)

Katie [REDACTED] Let me know if you need to stop. We can stop at any time, take a break. Alright. This is Katie [REDACTED] I'm interviewing Larry [REDACTED] and today is October 7th, 2015. We're going to talk about his service in the military. When and where were you born?

Larry [REDACTED] When I was born?

KW: Mmhmm.

LM: [REDACTED] month, the [REDACTED], 19[REDACTED]

KW: Okay. And can you tell me did you have brothers and sisters, and how many?

LM: I had two brothers and a sister, and all passed away.

KW: What did your parents do for a living? [repeats] What did your parents do for a living?

LM: They worked in a textile mill, up in Massachussetts, and Connecticut.

KW: And what was that like? Did both of them work in it?

LM: No, my father was a weaver, and my mother did burling, [she] picked the specks out of the cloth, and hung it up on the warp.

KW: Was that skilled labor?

LM: Excuse me?

KW: Was that skilled labor? Did they train to do that? Were the conditions good?

LM: At that particular time, that was way back in the thirties during the depression years. They was lucky to have a job. We lived on a farm in Connecticut. We had about 130 acres of land, cows, chickens, pigs. We were self-sustaining, way back then. I was only a kid then.

KW: You grew up during the Depression?

LM: What did I do?

KW: You grew up during the Great Depression?

LM: Say that [again]--[to his wife]--You hear her?

Maria [REDACTED] I can't hear her either.

KW: I'm sorry. I'll talk really loud. You grew up during the Great Depression?

LM: During the Depression? Yes, yes, I was, during the depression, we lived in Waterbury, Connecticut, and we moved down to farm in East Glastonbury, Connecticut, and we

were pretty self-sustaining. We lived on the farm and my father worked, and after that he worked for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company, in East Hartford, Connecticut. And then after the war ended, we moved to Massachusetts.

KW: Did he help make airplanes for the war effort? [repeats] Did he help make airplanes for the war?

LM: My father worked, yes, he was in at Pratt & Whitney when they made the airplane engines. Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

KW: Okay, that's really cool. Did you guys have a Victory Garden at all, or was your farm your Victory Garden?

LM: We had almost an acre of garden of potatoes, and everything. Cucumbers, cabbage, everything you could think of during the war, we. Then we had about a hundred chickens, and it was pretty well sustainable. We had a cow, and a goat!

KW: You probably didn't go hungry, then?

LM: Oh no, in fact, many of our relatives came out from the big city and sat around the dinner table to have a good chicken dinner.

KW: I bet. Yeah, that's great. How old were you when World War II broke out?

LM: World War II. In 1941, I was eleven years old, and both of my brothers went into the Navy during World War II. One of my brothers was in the Pacific. His ship was torpedoed. He was brought to the naval hospital in Massachusetts. He was blind in one eye. But he lived to a pretty ripe old age. Marshall, he lived, was he 63 or something like that? Well, he lived to a ripe old age. My other brother, he just passed away. Roland was 86, 85. He just passed away. My sister passed away, and they lived in Northfield, Vermont. They had two boys and a girl and they

were graduated out of Norwich University. One was an officer in the-- both were officers in the Army. One was a helicopter pilot over in Vietnam at the time.

KW: Oh wow. Yeah.

LM: He was a --

MM: He was a major.

LM: Lloyd, yeah. He retired as a major.

KW: What do you remember about the end of the war, the end of World War II?

LM: Yes I do! I remember 1942 and 1945, there was a friend of ours, Norman [REDACTED]-- this is a sad story. Norman [REDACTED] really didn't want to go into the war. But he took his training at Fort Devens, in Massachusetts, and on the way home, he jumped off the train, and he stopped and got off in Hartford, Connecticut. He went to Glastonbury, and he bought himself a brand-new [19]41 Ford car, and my mother said you've got to go to your unit in Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Norman finally caught up with his unit and he went to England. From there, Norman went to Normandy, and he was killed in Normandy.

Because my brother was the beneficiary. He made my brother Roland the beneficiary. And when the officer come with the death report, came to our house, my mother had two blue stars in the window at the time, and she turned as white as a sheet, she thought it was one of our kids. And come to find out--needless to say, Norman [REDACTED]'s step-mother comes down to the house and they wanted the thousand dollars that was his death money. During World War II that was all you got, was a thousand dollars. My mother got so mad, she threw her out of the house and said, "You take the thousand dollars, and you walk out in that yard, and you get the car, and don't ever come back in our yard again." That was the last of Norman [REDACTED] anyway. But I remember that distinctly, of the end of World War II.

KW: Do you remember when the atomic bombs were dropped?

LM: In Hiroshima? That was in 1945 from the Nagola Gay bombers. I remember it being in the headlines of the newspapers, and they said that they had dropped two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima, one on Nagasaki. That I remember.

MM: I was already here.

LM: No, that was before you was here. That was after World War II. My wife was in World War II. She was on the other side of the line!

KW: Mhmm.

LM: It was in Germany. My wife's a German gal, and I married her in 1949, and she's seen devastation. She's seen people in her hometown bombed, and stuck in tar, and actually, when she was running down to the bunker, she was shot at herself, and she survived World War II herself.

KW: How did you meet your wife?

LM: How did I meet my wife.

MM: [laughs]

LM: I was in the ammunition dump, on guard, and I had to call and report, every hour on the hour. My wife was a switchboard operator, and I told her she sounded just like a girl I knew in New York. It's a good story. She agreed to meet me at the railroad station in Wetzlar, Germany. And I drove down there to pick her up on a rainy day with an open jeep. She told me, "Get out of here, I'm not riding in your jeep!" I had to go back and see one of my friends that had a closed vehicle, and come back down and pick her up, and then we met with all our friends and had dinner at a restaurant. And after that, we've been together ever since.

KW: That's great. I love that you wouldn't get in the open jeep in the rain.

LM: [laughs]

KW: So, why did you join the military and when did you join the military?

LM: Well, when I was fourteen years old in Connecticut, I went down to the naval recruiting station, and I wanted to enlist, with my brother's birth certificate. And they told me I'd better go home, "we have two Murrays now," they caught up with me.

KW: You tried to enlist even though you were too young?

LM: Well, I was very big at fourteen. But they caught up with me, and sent me back home. And then I went down and enlisted in the army in 1948 in Worcester, Massachusetts, and I went from Massachusetts to Fort Bragg, in North Carolina, with the 82nd airborne, and I took a special training unit there, and we went from there, and that way, they wanted us to, I enlisted for the artillery, and they told us that we can go to the assignment which we wanted to, we don't have to stay with the 82nd. At that point, we went to Germany by ship. We went to Bremerhaven, Germany, and from there we got on the train, and went to Ruple-duple, replacement duple. And--

KW: Sorry, what does that mean?

LM: Ruple-duple? Replacement duple.

KW: Okay, it's a military acronym.

LM: Oh, well, army people would know. And that was in Marburg, Germany. And from Marburg they sent us by train all the way down to Sonthofen, Germany. Way down in Bavaria. And that was where the constabulary school was. They learned to be a police officer. We went to school there at what they call the 94th Squadron, and actually it was part of the 94th Field Artillery, and we took the training there, and then from there we was--and the Russians started that cold war stuff, in 1949 and 1950.

KW: Yeah, how did they start that?

LM: Well, first they blocked off the main highway in Wolfsburg. They'd blockaded Berlin off, no troops, so we could not drive to Berlin on Autobahn. Then they started the Berlin Airlift from Frankfurt and [Rhein-Main Air Base] into Tempelhof. And from there, many of the German workers were loading planes from Frankfurt, and at the time, they would take a few soldiers out of each division, in Frankfurt and [Rhein-Main Air Base]. From what I understand, going every ten minutes, into Tempelhof, from other bases like in Wiesbaden, and from Frankfurt, and some of them as far as England, were bringing supplies to the German people.

KW: These were allies bringing supplies to Germans, and did these supplies make their way to other communist countries?

LM: Mostly, it was liberating Berlin. But there was a comment Truman made, back during that Cold War period. Russian MiGs were scrafiging American planes. They weren't shooting them down, but they were scrafiging them. Truman told--

KW: What do you mean, scrafiging?

LM: They were diving towards the American planes [that were] bringing supplies in through Berlin. As far as I understand, in history, Truman [sic: Kennedy] told Khrushchev, "If you shoot down one of our American planes, we have bombers in London ready to bomb Moscow." That was during the cold war, and it reminds me very much of what's going on in Syria, to this day. We're having another one of those cold war events.

KW: How so, what does it remind you of?

LM: Excuse me?

KW: How does it make you think of Syria?

LM: Well, they had the communist sector. The east zone and the west zone, and Germany. The French had their sector, the British had their sector, and the Russians had their sector. And a lot of times they started with the East German police, and they set up these borders along Fulda. There were checkpoints, that a lot of the DPS, displaced persons, would try to escape from the communist sector, and they would be-- and some of them, that happened in Berlin, but some of them, would happen in Fulda. And those people were picked up by, one of the United States Constabulary Troopers, or military people, and they were brought to Wies--

KW: Were you part of these patrols that picked up these people?

LM: Yes, we was the United States Constabulary. That's what they call it. If you look on the computer, you'll probably pick up the information about the United States Constabulary. But what I was going to say was that those DPs, that were picked up at the border, displaced persons, were brought to Wiesbaden--Wybing ["Why-Bing"- unclear whether Oybin or Obing, Germany] at the Red Cross center. They were interrogated and whatever country would take them, Canada, England, France, and Israel. Israel would take a lot of the Jewish people. What was it, in 1958 [sic: 1948], they established Israel.

KW: Okay.

LM: They would take a lot of the Jewish immigrants to their country. But that's as far as I know. Actually, I stayed in the service until 1952, [when] I came home, with the wife and kids. That was it, went to work! That was about the size of it. Fortunately, I worked for automobile [industry], and I went to work under the G. I. Bill, and I went to vocational school for three years, and I got a job in General Motors as an industrial truck mechanic, and I spent twenty-five years there and retired out of there.

KW: That's great. That's wonderful.



LM: That's, and then we moved to Massachusetts, and then we moved to Florida, and then from Florida, we moved to Virginia, and from Virginia, we moved back to Florida, then we moved back to South Carolina, and that's about it.

KW: How long have you been in South Carolina?

LM: Well, we had the two houses in Florida, we had one on Palm Coast, and we had bought the house in South Carolina, over in Greer. Unfortunately, the house wasn't sold right away, we decided to sell the house in Greer, and move to the house in Florida. And when we moved from the house in Florida, we put it up for sale in a matter of, what was it, a couple of months?

MM: It was very, very, short time.

LM: In a matter of about four months, that house sold, we turned around and moved back to Greer, where our daughter and our grandkids were. And that's where we are today.

MM: They are the ones. The reason we are there is because they made us move there.

LM: Yeah. Yeah.

MM: Well, you might as well say that.

LM: The grandkids and the daughter wanted us to move back to Carolina, that's what we did.

MM: And, well, it's a good thing we did, because I got real sick and there was somebody there--

KW: Okay, good.

MM: Because I don't have no family, so--

KW: In the United States.

MM: Yeah.

KW: Was how much you got paid in the U. S. Constabulary, was that enough to support a family in Germany at the time?

LM: I was a corporal.

KW: Okay.

LM: I'm making a hundred and thirty-six dollars a month. And we managed to sell a few cartons of cigarettes and scrape--

MM: Ssshhhh.

LM: --enough money and the wife worked. She worked as a telephone operator, so. We had our own little apartment, so. We managed pretty good.

MM: Mom and Dad helped too.

LM: Yeah, then Maria's folks helped too.

KW: Mhmm.

LM: Yeah, that was quite an experience, walking up to an ex-German soldier and ask him to take his daughter to America.

KW: Yeah. How was that? What was that like for you?

LM: What was that like for me? It's, it's--

MM: Love.

LM: I guess love conquers, all, right?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

LM: That's what happened. But her father--small man, but very intelligent man. We've had him over to America a couple times. He was a pretty good man. But you've got to understand. After Americans liberated the country, it's pretty hard to talk to a German when you're an American. Because some of her relatives were SS [Schutzstaffel]. Not her father. Her

father was a ground troop. But some of the other relatives were SS. And I used to tell Willie, and he was a cook and a butcher in the SS. He wasn't-- he wasn't a-- more like worked in the mess kitchen and stuff like that. But I used to tell Willie, "If I'd seen you during the war, I would have shot you!", and he said, "I would have shot you too." [laughs with wife]

KW: Would you tell him this over dinner and eating and sharing memories, and hanging out with him?

LM: Willie was good. He owned quite a bit of real-estate in my wife's hometown. And every time we'd go down there, I'd get [23:16] and he'd say, "Well, what do you want? Do you want a couple of slices of pork, or schnitzels?", or whatever, and he'd make up a little package for us.

KW: That's great.

LM: Give it to us. He was good. Even though he was a-- But he had a whole cellar-full of paraphernalia from the German war. And they called him a communist. They made him get rid of all his stuff.

MM: Yeah. He had to get rid of everything. Flags. Everything he had. They made him get rid of it. Which is really...it didn't hurt nobody--

KW: Nnm-mm.

MM: --but, it was from the days prior, so, I guess, it must have been [24:07].

KW: Mm-hmm.

MM: But he don't live anymore and his wife don't live anymore, either.

LM: No, they've both passed away. You see--

MM: Very-- excuse me, he had a very, very, big business. A butcher's market. But I'm telling you, and his brother helped him kill all the pigs and cows.

KW: Mmhmm.

MM: To make that business grow big-time. It was a big business.

LM: Mm.

KW: And where was this?

MM: Pardon?

KW: Where was this?

MM: This was in my hometown, Grunberg.

KW: Grunberg, okay. Were there any other soldiers who fell in love with German women and got married, like you did?

LM: Well, I imagine there was quite a few German war brides that went home. I remember Litchmond, he had a couple little kids. And I never know what happened to him, and then there was Pendergast, married--

MM: Married [25:18].

LM: --Married a German telephone receptionist. She was the telephone boss.

MM: Yeah, she was my boss.

LM: And Stevens, he had a German girlfriend. Stevens, I understand, he's gone, he passed away. But those are the few people that I know that had German girls, or German friends-

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MM: Oh, well, what about--excuse me--what about the one who lived in [25:45]?

LM: The one who lives in --

MM: The one who lives in --

LM: Oh yeah, Kabinsky! What was her name?

MM: Renata.

LM: Yeah, Kabinsky married a German girl, Renata. That's about it, huh, that I know of.

MM: There were [26:08] can't remember the names.

LM: Yeah, well that was about it.

KW: I've been told by Korean war veterans that at the time when they were serving in Korea, people were more focused on Europe. Like people in the United States weren't really talking about Korea.

LM: Oh, Korea.

KW: Yes.

LM: When we was in Frankfurt, and they took our division, and they loaded us up on cargo planes during the Korean War, summertime alert. They were very skeptical about taking the troops out of Europe because they thought maybe the Russians would start a war in Europe. As a result, we were loaded up several times, but we never did go to Korea.

KW: Mmhmm.

LM: What they did is we had foul-weather gear, you know what foul-weather gear is? Parkas, fur-lined parkas, fur-lined hats, chute packs [unclear], and we had to turn all that equipment in, and they took it, and in turn, they flew it to Korea for the troops that were freezing over there. Because they were getting frostbite, and they needed the warm clothes more than we did in Europe at that particular time.

KW: You said that you signed up around the time that Korea started, and they placed you in Europe. And you told me another time that your son signed up, and then they didn't send him to Vietnam.

LM: During the Vietnam War. Our son enlisted. They were going to draft him, so he enlisted.

KW: Mhmm.

LM: And he ended up in, instead of going to Vietnam, he ended up going to Korea. And he was in Camp Casey in Korea. He was collecting combat pay because he had to deliver war material, machinery and stuff, over the 38th parallel.

KW: Oh, wow.

LM: At that particular time, the 38th parallel, the soldiers that were on the parallel were collecting combat pay. But our son, after he got out of the service, he married and he spent how many years as a teacher? Twenty? Twenty-nine?

MM: He had two years left.

LM: Where?

MM: As a teacher.

LM: Oh, two, yeah, he was a teacher. He taught the seventh grade in Orlando, Florida, and he died of a diabetic coma. And he went into a diabetic coma.

MM: He went and taught in more than one school. At first, he taught in the black school, remember?

LM: Yeah.

MM: In Orlando. And then he--

LM: Then he went to Reedy Creek.

MM: Yeah.

LM: And then he went to John Montgo[mery] Elementary.

MM: Yeah. That's right.

KW: What was your least favorite part of being in the military?

LM: In the army?

KW: Yeah, your least favorite part.

LM: Well, I, I liked my unit. I enjoyed being in Fort Bragg, in a special training unit, because we had a training sergeant that was captured during World War II during the Battle of the Bulge. He was the 82nd Airborne. And he was very STRAC-ed. He would tell the troops, "I'm going to teach you how to stay alive." And his name was William [REDACTED] Sergeant William [REDACTED] I remember this to this day. I couldn't get a pass until I remembered the number of my M1 rifle. I [wanted to] go downtown for one day, and I had to remember that by heart. Had to learn my RA number by heart. I know my RA number to this day. That was RA 11166706. But he was a good leader, in other words. He was quite a man. I don't think he's living today, either, because he, I'm 86, and he was a lot older than I was at that time. But he was quite a guy.

KW: What do you want people to remember about the Cold War in Europe?

LM: What do I know about the Cold War?

KW: What do you want people like my age to remember about it?

MM: [coughing]

LM: The cold war is very much like what's happening in Syria. The people were escaping from Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany. They were trying to get away from the communist dict--, dict--

KW: Dictatorships?

LM: Yeah.

MM: They went.

LM: They wanted to escape the communist sector.

MM: Tell her about all the ways the people got out of the Russian, out of the German section, practically--

LM: That was in Fulda.

MM: Any way they could.

LM: Oh yeah. As you've probably read in papers that during the, after they put up the Berlin Wall, they would try to escape any way they can, to get out of the East Sector. Get into Berlin and actually, to where the American sector was. But a lot of people, they put up what they call a "no-man's land", and they put barbed wire on one side and barbed wire on the other, in the American sector, and then in-between that sector, they put up land mines. People would escape from the communist sector and try to go through these minefields and they would get blown up.

MM: Yeah, but after they downed the wires, they put the wall.

LM: Oh yeah, well, when it first started, in 1949, when they first started with that cold war stuff, they rolled out barbed wire. That was the borders. Shut-down of the border. Real long strips of barbed wire. Pretty much like they did and you see what's happening in Serbia and Czechoslovakia--

KW: Hungary--

LM: --where they keep the people out. And that's how that started. Then they started to buil[d]--

END OF VIDEOCLIP 1 of 2 (33:50).

BEGINNING OF VIDEOCLIP 2 of 2 (7:33)

LM:--[buil]ding the wall. I can remember, we had M4 rubber tire vehicles that were something similar to a tank, but they had rubber tires on them. We would patrol the border. And



the Russians would be thirty feet on the other side of that barbed wire. And they would aim their weapons--

MM: [laughs] They would say bad words.

LM: Oh, well, they would aim their weapons at us, and we would turn around and aim at them. And luckily there was no drunken Russian over there, they'd pull the trigger, we was fortunate. But they was on one side of the barbed wire, and we was on the other. In fact, a few of the guys used to reach over the border and sell them cigarettes and candy and stuff like that--

MM: Nylon stockings [laughs].

LM: --nylon stockings--

KW: Uh-huh.

LM: And it was funny. Then there was this little Polish kid. This is good. He would say, he'd sell them some cigarettes and stuff, and then he would put up his finger and say, "Put-sav-i doop-ya". Which meant, "kiss my buns" in Russia--in Polish. And the Russians would laugh like, "hey", they thought that was funny. Little kid, Strum, from Chicago. He would tell them to kiss their buns.

MM: I went to the border with a friend of mine, right along the border. It was a little bit, I explain it like that. There was a little, um, there was a little bit of water between, and then there was the wall, where the soldiers were beyond it, in these, what do they call them, high [towers].

LM: They were watchtowers.

MM: Yeah, like a tower. They were in there. And they were laughing with us and they were talking to us, but that was only about--

LM: That was after, that was years after.

MM: That was only about ten years ago.

LM: More than that, because they had, that's when you went with Hilda and Hugel [?] up to the --

MM: No, I went with Anita.

LM: Oh, that was in Wolfsburg. That's where they make the Volkswagen today.

KW: Well, is there anything that I didn't ask you about that you wanted to talk about?

LM: Oh yeah. There was one particular guy [who] bothered me. I came back from Germany and had a broken leg, and I was in the hospital, Murphy General Hospital, in Waltham, Massachusetts. I came back with um-- when I was in the hospital, I walked by one of the beds, and one of the guys [said], "Hey, Larry!" I said, "Who the hell are you?" And I looked around, and this was this young kid we knew from Maine. He was in Korea. He had two legs shot off, of whatever, and part of his arm.

We used to, it was easy, even though he was all messed up, he had a sense of humor. And his girlfriend would come down to meet him, and pick him up, and his girlfriend and his mother. And they'd take him to Maine. When he came back, we kidded him, we says, "Hey, how'd you make out with your girlfriend?", and he said, "Don't you worry," he says, "I was alright." And I said, "How'd you hang on to her?" He says, "Don't you worry, I took care of that." He had a sense of humor. Shot up, during the war, and all messed up, and he still had that, we could joke with him, and have a conversation. And that bothered me, when I seen that. Things like that stuck in your [head].

A lot of the guys that I know that instead of staying in the 80th, they wanted to go to the First Calvary. The First Calvary was one of the units that was in Korea. And John [REDACTED] and Vick [REDACTED] and Johnny [REDACTED] their artillery office [?] got overran, but I know--I never knew

what happened to John [REDACTED] but I know one of the guys got shot in the stomach and I guess he survived, but other than that, I went to work, and I didn't hear much of that afterwards.

But I did [meet this] man one day, John [REDACTED] He [we?] was in Fort Devon, separating, we're coming in the back gate, and John [REDACTED] was a friend of mine that I was kids with. And was about 16 years old. And that big John [REDACTED] he stood about six foot four. Hey, he stopped me when I was driving in. He recognized me, he said, "Hi, Larry", I said, "Hey John, where the hell were you?" "I was in Korea." I said, "You mean to tell me you didn't get shot?" He said, "No." And I said, "How the hell did they miss?" With him being so big. We used to kid him. And come to find out, John [REDACTED] became our postman in Worcester, Massachusetts. But he was a good guy, John [REDACTED]

KW: Alright. Well, I guess that's it, unless you--

LM: There isn't much to really describe. I got out of the service, and went to work, and that was it.

KW: Mhmm.

MM: Round two! [laughs]

LM: Yeah. Well, [when] I got out I had hernias. I had to go to the veterans hospital and get it taken care of. And then after that, I went on down to job training, and White Truck [sic: Motor] Company, industrial trucks, and then I spent twenty-five years in General Motors, and that was it.

KW: Yeah. They took care of you.

MM: And this is today!

LM: And this is today! That's where we are today! In Greer.

MM: Yeah.

KW: Thank you so much. Thank both of you so much.

LM: Now you got all that on tape?

END OF VIDEOCLIP 2 of 2 (7:34)

END OF INTERVIEW

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Transcribed by: Katie [REDACTED]

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