

OH-3028, part 1-5, Thomas Bell, 4-5-2014 WY in Flight

BELL: [00:00:00] ...mentioned about this, I say, "You know, that ought to -- that might be pretty neat to have the three of us ride together in the Fourth of July Parade." So, I guess they're trying to arrange it. I said, "I'll bet you there isn't another place in Wyoming that could match that."

JUNGE: No, three guys that joined the military together who live in the same town still and they're all 90.

BELL: Yeah. They have to be (laughter) because I was one of the youngest ones in the class, and they're both older than me, and a fourth one just died about two months ago or he could have -- he would have been available. I still hear from another one who lives out in California. [00:01:00]

F1: (inaudible)

BELL: Let's see. One of these papers here -- let me just get -- I -- oh, that's something else I want to show you, too.

F1: Yeah, he's back there.

BELL: OK.

F1: He's cleaning.

BELL: Oh, really?

F1: Yeah. (inaudible)

BELL: I put material in [00:02:00] here that I thought would be of interest to you. Oh, shoot! From which you could also get dates -- well, what the heck?

JUNGE: Well, why don't I go through some of that while you're filling that out?

BELL: OK. You'll be interested in that one or this one might be of more interest to you right off. That's a log that I kept -- this log here -- from the very day we left Mitchell Field, New York. [00:03:00]

JUNGE: I'll be darned. This is the original log?

BELL: Yeah. Yeah, that's my original there, but I made a copy for you -- that.

JUNGE: Oh, good, good.

BELL: So, you can go through and compare it.

JUNGE: Oh, man, this is -- is that -- now, what are you going to do with all this stuff? Are you going to give it to the local museum?

BELL: No. All of my uniforms and medals are over there, but all the rest of this stuff is going down to the Heritage Center.

JUNGE: OK. OK. They have a really good Veterans' Memorial Museum in Casper. Did you know that?

BELL: Yes, and I started out to go there -- to put it there, but I've forgotten who it was -- oh, Gene Gressley. We got

acquainted and became very good friends, and so he talked me into starting to send stuff down there, [00:04:00] to the university. So, I took a box of stuff in there 30, 40 years ago, right after I started all of the *High Country News* and all of that. Let me -- military service and last [training?]. What the hell did I do with that?

JUNGE: Oh, you don't have to be exact on that. I think, Tom, we can pick up some of that from your -- just your --

BELL: Well, I can give you the exact dates. That's what gripes me. I thought I had it in that box.

JUNGE: Here's an entry from your log, February 22, 1944. "First raid over enemy-held territory; dropped 10, 500-pound bombs on Zaro, Italian territory. No flak. No fighters.

BELL: Yeah. Well --

JUNGE: Second [raid?] dropped --

BELL: -- I went in military service May 10, 1943 [00:05:00] and got out September 10, I think it was, '45. That's close enough, anyway, isn't it?

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah. That's fine.

BELL: No, that was May 10, 1942. [00:06:00]

[00:06:10]

END OF AUDIO FILE PART 1

OH-3028, part 2, Thomas Bell, 4-5-2014, WY in Flight

BELL: [00:00:00]...biologically and then we adopted three.
[00:00:46]

END OF AUDIO FILE PART 2

OH-3028, part 3, Thomas Bell, 4-5-2014, WY in Flight

JUNGE: [00:00:00] OK.

BELL: This book, *The Hardest-Fought Battle of World War II* -
- Cassino. It was because of the bombing that I did on
Cassino that I got elevated to first lieutenant. I bring
that out in that thing that I wrote, but I'll tell you what
-- this guy really covered the war. I was going to try to
-- yeah, here it is. Here's -- here was Cassino. This is
a little town. We can right down that highway, and I
dropped my bombs right straight in a line, just like they
told us to do. Some guys dropped bombs 17 miles away. How
in the hell they can do that -- I outline it in there.

JUNGE: Well, let me put something on the front of this tape
before we begin here. [00:01:00] I'm going to clip this on
where it should be clipped on. OK. Today is the fifth of
April, 2014. My name is Mark Junge, and I'm sitting here

in the kitchen/dining room of Tom Bell. Tom is a number of things. Tom is a World War II veteran. He's a conservationist, an environmentalist, a writer, and a historian and numerous other things that I probably don't have time to mention right now. But, it's a beautiful spring day, the first nice day we've had in a while, huh, Tom?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Well, yesterday was pretty nice, but I think today is better.

JUNGE: Anyway, we're at 840 --

BELL: Kimberly Court.

JUNGE: -- Kimberly Court in Lander. Opposite this -- just down the road here --

BELL: The new middle school.

JUNGE: Yeah. We're half a block from the new Lander Middle School. Well, I don't know how new it is.

BELL: Well, this is only the second or third year [00:02:00] they've used it, so it's pretty new.

JUNGE: OK. Today, Tom and I are going to talk a little bit about his career in aviation, his military career, and maybe a few other things. Can we start out talking a little bit about your younger life?

BELL: Sure.

JUNGE: OK. When and where were you born?

BELL: I was born at Winton, Wyoming; not even on the map anymore because it's all gone. But, it was a little mining town out northeast of Rock Springs.

JUNGE: Was it near Superior?

BELL: Yes, out in that area of Superior and I've forgotten the names. There was a whole scad of little mines; smaller mines, I should say. That's why, like, Winton is gone now.

JUNGE: What day were you born?

BELL: April 12, 1924.

JUNGE: So, now, coming up here in one week, you're going to be [00:03:00] how old?

BELL: Ninety years old.

JUNGE: How do you feel?

BELL: (laughter) By golly, considering all the circumstances, I feel pretty darn good.

JUNGE: Good. Well, with all the things you've done in your life, I would assume you're a pretty tough hombre.

BELL: I must be. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, OK. So, tell me a little bit about growing up in Winton, or did you grow up in Winton?

BELL: No. My dad had gone into the coal mines to work as a coal miner when he got out of the eighth grade. He never got to high school; all self-educated and a very smart man. He was born at Lafayette, Colorado and so his folks named

him Lafayette or [Lafe?]. When he -- of course, as he matured [00:04:00] and got older, he wanted to get out of the coal mine. Well, I shouldn't put it that way. I don't know what he wanted to do, but he wasn't in the coal mines. He would go from job to job because he became a stationary engineer, which they needed at a coal mine to pull the cars up out of the mine. He was also very good with figures, so he got to work in the company stores, and that's what he was doing at Winton when I was born. Right after I was born, evidently, they then moved over to Gebo, near Thermopolis, and that's where my little sister was born. She probably wasn't a year old when Mom and Dad decided to buy a ranch just outside of Lander, five miles out here [00:05:00] because -- well, my mother had been born at Milford, which is a little -- there's nothing left of Milford anymore because it's gone.

JUNGE: Where was it?

BELL: It was just -- well, it's right on the edge of the reservation. As you go towards Fort Washakie, when you cross the bridge out there, you're on the reservation. Milford was the little place below that. Just below that was where her great-grandfather had come in in 1874 and set up a -- kind of a store and a saloon. He had been in the Civil War; had been captured and just was able to escape

just before his friends that he was in the prison with died of starvation. So, anyway, he got through it. Then, he had been [00:06:00] sent here or he came here as near as I can determine when Captain Arthur MacArthur made a trip from up on the pass down to the Lander Valley. So, he'd seen it, and he knew what the deal was on it. Of course, he probably heard that the reservation boundary had been moved from clear up beyond South Pass, moved north to North Fork, which is the river just north of us here.

JUNGE: North Fork of --

BELL: North Fork of the [Popowashak?] River.

JUNGE: That's how you pronounce it -- Popowashak?

BELL: Yes. Yes, there has been a lot of to-do over Popo Agie and all kinds of things, but I got it directly from the horse's mouth.

JUNGE: Who was that?

BELL: Well, I got it through the newspapers. Oh, I can't think of Alan [00:07:00] Simpson's great-granddad.

JUNGE: Oh -- he was a trapper, wasn't he?

BELL: No.

JUNGE: Well, it wasn't --

BELL: Finn Burnett.

JUNGE: Finn Burnett -- that's what I mean, yeah, a frontiersman. You got it right from him?

BELL: No, but it was in the newspaper. See -- I used to go through the newspapers, getting the history for the magazine that I put out. I knew that they had been contemporaries here. There weren't that many white men so they had to know each other. I found this deal where Finn Burnett and Ed [Alton?] had gone to this wedding out there on -- near North Fork somewhere. An old fellow had come there who was a miner -- gold miner -- but he was also interested in other things and he built a flour mill out there. Now, I can't think of his name. [00:08:00] Boy, that's -- that's the worst part of getting old.

JUNGE: You'll remember this for your memoirs. You're writing your memoirs, aren't you?

BELL: Well, kind of, yes and no. (laughter) Gee whiz, it's a -- I should have started on this stuff about 20 years ago. At any rate, he had started a flour mill there -- one of the very first ones in the country, before there was even one in Lander. So, it started to be a -- kind of a hub of the community. They had a vote in about 1875 or '76 to see whether Lander or Milford was going to take the lead. Lander out-voted Milford, so that's why there's nothing out there. (laughter) But, that's where he came in. [00:09:00] Then, my mother was born there in 1901. What did we start out talking --

JUNGE: Oh, we were talking about your parents. Your mother came -

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: -- came from Milford.

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: Your dad was a miner who went from Winton to Gebo?

BELL: Went from there to Gebo, then back here. All during World War II, he -- they needed coal miners very badly, and he went back into the coal mines.

JUNGE: In Hudson -- up here at Hudson?

BELL: Well, he did a lot of this while I was in the service, so I'd get a letter from him from Hanna, from down in Colorado; from back over around Superior. He just -- well, of course, he had the ranch, so in the summertime, when there was no coal mining, he was ranching. [00:10:00] So, that's why it was -- how it was. Well, then, of course, during the Depression days, he -- being a coal miner -- he could go to work in the coal mines out east of town here -- Hudson. So, he worked in those mines for -- I don't know how many years. In between there, too, starting in 1921, I think it was, they started the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company -- the big, yellow buses that came out of Lander, went to --

JUNGE: Dubois?

BELL: There's a little lake above Dubois. Oh, it's hell to get old.

JUNGE: Brooks Lake?

BELL: Brooks Lake. Old Eugene Amoretti, who was one of the powerhouses here [00:11:00] at Lander -- he and some other guys got this idea of taking people -- well, I have to back up a little bit. The railroad came into Lander in 1906 and immediately they started thinking about tourists coming into Lander because the railroad ended right here but taking them up through Dubois, over Togwotee Pass, down into Jackson Hole and then into the park. So, because Dad had -- another one of the jobs he had was hauling drill pipe out of Rock Springs, up over these mountains and into the Big Horn Basin. So, he learned how to drive these big, old, hard rubber-tired trucks. So, when they decided to put in the transportation line out of [00:12:00] Lander, they got big, white trucks and modified them to where they were big buses.

JUNGE: This is the brand, White Trucks?

BELL: Yes -- yeah, because the buses were yellow. (laughter)
At any rate, both he and his brother, who I just happen to have a photo of here -- here's his photo here. Both of them had learned how to drive these big trucks, and both of them got a job driving Yellowstone Park buses.

JUNGE: Here's a picture of a couple of boys with their toy --
their BB guns.

BELL: Yeah, I suppose; 1903, I think it says on there. My
dad would have been about 10 years old.

JUNGE: Lafe and George Bell, 1903. You're right. Wow!
That's a really fine picture.

BELL: Oh, yeah, it sure is.

JUNGE: Anyway, so now, he had a brother?

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: One brother?

BELL: Yes, only one brother [00:13:00] but he had three
sisters. But, two of his sisters were killed or died. I
never could -- they're both buried with my grandmother down
at Lafayette. My dad, here -- well, I digress for just a
moment. My granddaughter has a son whom she named Lafe.
She asked me if I could find any photos of my dad, so I
haven't sent this to her yet. I need to get it done before
I kick the bucket. (laughter) At any rate --

JUNGE: So, your dad drove these stagecoaches, did he, or he
drove the trucks for pipe?

BELL: Well, that's how he learned how to drive these big
outfits. So, when they put in the bus line, he knew how to
drive that kind of a bus.

JUNGE: Yeah. I shouldn't have said 'stagecoach,' but they did still call them stagecoaches, even when they were turned --

BELL: Yeah, I think they did.

JUNGE: Trucks, I think --

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, that's how he [00:14:00] learned to drive a truck, and he drove pipe from where to where?

BELL: From Rock Springs to the oil wells up in the Big Horn Basin. I still haven't figured out how in the hell they got them over there except to go up over Birdseye Pass because they hadn't built the highway to the canyon.

JUNGE: Yeah. Birdseye Pass would be just west of the Wind River Canyon.

BELL: East.

JUNGE: East? Oh, OK. What's -- Blondie Pass is the one --

BELL: Blondie Pass is on the west.

JUNGE: Is on the west but he went through Birdseye, maybe --

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- right through the [oil rigs?].

BELL: Yeah, quite a deal. But, anyway, that's how he learned how to do it. My mother -- I've got her story but not here. My mother helped my granddad. My granddad and [00:15:00] his two half-brothers were both very -- their

eyesight was terrible. One of them was really almost completely blind, and my granddad was legally blind. But, at any rate, he had been raised around horses because my great-granddad also -- one of his side lines was raising fine horses. So, he'd been around horses. So, anyway, my granddad, the same way -- he would drive a big, loaded wagon -- a big wagon because he had to have two teams to pull it. Then, he recruited my mother to be a driver for him when she was 13. She would drive a [00:16:00] team -- a single team -- on a lighter wagon, loaded to go to the -- not to the military post but to the agency, which was two miles away. They would start out together, going north, and then somewhere out there, she told me -- it was somewhere around Ray Lake -- she separated off to go to the agency, and my granddad would go straight ahead, over to the military post. So, my mother was a one-team driver for my granddad and his horse wrangler and everything when she was just a teenaged girl. She'd get to the post out there, and the thing she liked to tell about is how the ladies -- they knew she was coming, and they'd make up a big batch of cookies for her. [00:17:00] She just really looked forward to that. The men would unload her wagon, and then she would turn around and head back for home and meet her dad

out there somewhere and they'd drive back together to Milford.

JUNGE: These were tough people.

BELL: Oh, you bet. They had to be. We're going to go back to seeing a lot of that. It's not going to last long.

JUNGE: What's that?

BELL: Climate change -- what it's going to do to us. People are going to have to live a much simpler life, do things for themselves, live very frugally for as long as they live, which is not going to be very long, I don't think, from what I read. It's one of the saddest things I can think of.

JUNGE: Did you obtain, then, your love of the outdoors and love of Wyoming from your grandparents or your parents or [00:18:00] did that just come naturally?

BELL: Mostly, from my parents and some of it, of course, came naturally. I don't think that I included it in there but I -- yes, I did, too -- about growing up, living a very simple life; a very frugal life.

JUNGE: How would you describe it?

BELL: How would I describe it?

JUNGE: Yeah. Why was it frugal? What did you do?

BELL: Well, my folks, of course, had the ranch. If you had something like a ranch or a farm, you had a way of feeding

yourself but that was about it. Beyond that, you had to scabble, and so I grew up under those circumstances. I've got a write-up here somewhere that I didn't put in there about the grange hall. [00:19:00] Well, I hate to digress.

JUNGE: No -- go ahead. I want to know about your early life and how things were for you.

BELL: Well, they were damn tough, so I can explain. I got one pair of overalls in the fall - bib overalls - to wear to school. That pair of overalls had to last me through the year. When school was out in the spring, I just kept wearing them until they wore out. Then, my mother somehow or other could afford to buy me a new pair. So, I got new socks and new bib overalls and, maybe, a new shirt to wear to school and to wear anywhere else. Of course, I had old pairs of stuff that I could wear around home and so on, but that's kind of the way it was. It was just really tough.

JUNGE: What did you have to eat? [00:20:00] I mean, you said you barely got by.

BELL: Well, we got by because dad had the ranch and he butchered his own beef, his own pork, his own mutton. My mother kind of had a side line in chickens, and because -- I should have finished the story -- what Mom did while Dad was starting to drive this bus. She had gone to work for Amoretti and had gotten to know the two Amoretti girls.

They became friends when they were all in high school. My mom did get to go to high school but never graduated. So, at any rate, Amoretti and these other guys decided to set up the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company. Amoretti hired my dad and my uncle and a bunch of other guys, of course, to drive [00:21:00] from here to Jackson Hole, and then they would turn around and drive back the same way. Their first stop on the way out of here was at Brooks Lake.

The second day, Dad would take the dudes down to --

JUNGE: This side of Brooks Lake, you mean?

BELL: The other side of Brooks Lake.

JUNGE: Oh, Moran Junction?

BELL: Moran. Moran, at that time, was a bigger place.

JUNGE: Oh, because of the construction of the dam?

BELL: The dam and this new transportation company. So, Dad would take them to Moran, and then another bus driver came out of Yellowstone, picked them up, and took them back in. So, Dad got to spend two nights out of the week at Brooks Lake. [00:22:00] My mother had gone to work for old Amoretti, first at his EA Ranch up by Dubois and then, when they built the Brooks Lake Lodge, she went there with one of the -- one of his daughters -- to be waitresses for all the dudes. They had put in quite an elaborate system. So, anyway, my mother, who was already there -- my dad would

spend two nights and they got acquainted. That fall, they got married. The next year, I was born. (laughter)

JUNGE: Things happened pretty quickly, then.

BELL: Yes, they do.

JUNGE: Did your mom or dad ever tell you how they actually -- how they met or what they --

BELL: Oh, yeah, and we would -- because of their memories of that, if we went anywhere -- got a chance to go anywhere, had the money to buy [00:23:00] a tankful of gas to get to Dubois, that's where they'd go is Brooks Lake because there were still folks that they knew around there.

JUNGE: Now, is this Brooks Lake Lodge, Tom, the same one that's right along the highway?

BELL: No, no. It's just way back off the highway now. But, the highway, at that time, went right to it.

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah, it didn't go the route it goes now --

BELL: No.

JUNGE: -- it takes now over Togwotee.

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: Then, down Black Rock Creek. It goes a little north of there.

BELL: Yes. Yeah, so, at any rate, they got acquainted, and so that's how I came onto the earth. But, to go back to our life there, everybody had a tough life. Right now,

from what's happening in this country, it's becoming very much like the depths of the Depression when you read the number of people out of work [00:24:00] and the goddamned Republicans who will throw anything, any roadblock, in the way to thwart Obama -- that damn black guy in the White House. That's what it comes down to, I'm sure.

JUNGE: Racism?

BELL: Oh, yeah, racism -- just flagrant.

JUNGE: Yeah. How can you not like a guy who got us out of Iraq? He's trying to get us out of Afghanistan; who is responsible, ultimately, for the death of Osama bin Laden -
-

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- who tried to give everybody health insurance, who has perked up the economy. What else can this guy do that they don't like?

BELL: Well, if he could just scrub that black skin off, that would probably help.

JUNGE: I totally agree with you.

BELL: I'm just so disappointed in this country, and I think I put it in here for you to read [00:25:00] of what people will do to thwart somebody else politically. Oh, it's terrible.

JUNGE: Well, you've had a lot of experience in politics. You know the mentality of some of these people.

BELL: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. Oh, gee!

JUNGE: Well, anyway, let's go back to your mom and dad. You said life was tough. You only had one pair of bib overalls.

BELL: By the time I got into high school, I was working out in the summertime with the neighbors. My dad was still working in the coal mine, so it's a long, involved story. The second place that he bought -- he never farmed it. He just rented it out to neighbors. So, I worked for those neighbors, mainly stacking hay and threshing grain in the fall. I would make enough [00:26:00] with that, along with the trapping that I did of beaver, and muskrat, and mink that I could buy my own clothes in the fall.

JUNGE: Where did you trap?

BELL: Out along the river and up into the hills.

JUNGE: The Popo Agie?

BELL: Yeah. The beaver had come back to some extent. You had to go to the game warden and get your tags for your beaver. You had to tell him about how many beaver that you thought was there, and he'd put it down on there. So, once you got that allotment, that was it. But, one -- the year I was a senior, I made \$220, I think it was; enough to buy

my graduation suit and some other clothes. Now, that doesn't mean my folks didn't buy some of the clothes, too, [00:27:00] but I was enough fixed up that way that I could wear decent clothes to school.

JUNGE: But, you had to pull your share of the load?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That was just a taken --

JUNGE: Did you contribute then to the family -- what they call the 'family larder?'

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Did you?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Not only that, but, well, when I was a junior and a senior, one thing we did have -- I said Dad didn't work the ranch. But, he did get some milk cows. So, I did the milking, night and morning, as I was going to school. That -- well, that just -- I just figured that kind of paid for what I ate. But, the folks would buy other things for me. They got two news magazines [00:28:00] which kept me up to date with what was going on out in the world. That's how come I knew about a lot of this stuff coming up, and we would sit in our history class and discuss all of it.

JUNGE: What magazines were they? They weren't like -- they were like --

BELL: Do you know *US News and World Report*? The forerunner to it -- I've forgotten what it was called. But, it was a pretty good source of news. *Liberty Magazine* was another one. Then, Dad would just -- well, he'd get the *Sunday Denver Post* religiously, and he would go through that and so would I. That's how I kind of learned to read. He got it for me for the funny papers, and I got so I could just zip through them. So, there was a big, old [00:29:00] junior high kid who was neighbors to us and he just loved the funnies, but he didn't know how to read. So, he'd walk up from where they lived, down below us, and I'd read the Sunday funnies to him. (laughter)

JUNGE: This is like Mayor La Guardia, New York, reading the Sunday funnies over the radio to the kids.

BELL: Yeah. (laughter) Yeah. But, you know, you just accepted it. Everybody was in the same boat.

JUNGE: But, that says something about you, too, Tom. It says that you -- some kids weren't interested in current affairs and you were.

BELL: Yes -- oh, yeah. I always have been. My dad was, and so I got that from him. I got the local paper, and that told about -- I was right there when this -- a lot of this was happening. What's the [00:30:00] date on that?

JUNGE: Three-thirty-forty-four.

BELL: Forty-four, see?

JUNGE: March 30, '44.

BELL: See, that's just before I had my eye blown out.

JUNGE: Well, boy, we ought to come back and talk about your youth, but let's go. Let's talk about your military career, because that's what I came here for.

BELL: Before we do that, I want to get rid of this. You see these big holes here?

JUNGE: In the picture in this book that you -- what's the name of the book? Let me see. It's called, *Monte Cassino* --

BELL: *Monte Cassino*.

JUNGE: -- By Matthew --

BELL: Parker.

JUNGE: -- Parker. OK. What page is this now we're looking at? Oh, well, we're just looking at the photographic section in the middle. There's a picture there of some holes. It looks like bomb holes.

BELL: Did you read there what size bombs it was we dropped on Cassino?

JUNGE: Five hundred-pound, I think.

BELL: Thousand-pound.

JUNGE: Thousand-pound?

BELL: Oh, man. They were big. You could really see them falling out of the plane. [00:31:00] So, at any rate, they told us in the briefing that morning, "Do not drop your bombs short of the target." Some of those guys dropped them 17 miles away. I couldn't believe it. Anyway, my bombs went right, right at the town. I presume this was the highway here. Those holes were 60 feet across and 20 feet deep; 1000-pound bombs. I would bet anybody that one of those holes that we see there was made by one of my bombs because I put my bombs exactly where they told us to put them.

JUNGE: OK. So, when did you -- why did you enlist? You enlisted in what -- the Army?

BELL: Army Air Corps. It was the Army, yes. There wasn't an Air Force then. [00:32:00] It was the US Army Air Corps.

JUNGE: Why the Army Air Corps?

BELL: Well, because I had an uncle who was a bush pilot up in Alaska and he wasn't that much older than me, but we grew up together. I've got photos of him here -- of him holding me on his lap. He was about 15 or 16, I suppose, when I was -- well, I don't know. I've forgotten when he was born. But, he was just not that much older than me. He was the bush pilot, and not only that, but I'd always been fascinated by planes. When I graduated from high

school here, I was still just 17 years old; had just turned 17. My buddy, who was the son of the neighbor -- he wanted to go, too, so the two of us took off for Alaska. He was just 16 and I was just 17.

JUNGE: [00:33:00] You drove to Alaska?

BELL: No, no. Our folks loaned us 100 bucks to get there.

(laughter) So, then, the folks took us to Shoshoni to catch the bus to go to Billings, where we transferred to another bus to take us to Seattle, where we got on an Alaska steamship boat to take us up to Alaska. We wound up at Anchorage that summer and I worked on Elmendorf Air Field. We worked at different things. They'd catch up to us and say, "You aren't 17, are you?" and I'd have to confess. I wasn't going to lie. I'd say, "No, I'm not 18."

JUNGE: This was in 1941?

BELL: Yeah, in 1941. But, when we came back, the folks, in the meantime, had decided that, if I wasn't going to stick around, Dad didn't want to keep the [00:34:00] ranch. So, he had sold it. Then, his mother, during -- back during World War I -- they had lived up in Montana. My dad and my granddad both worked in the coal mines there but they also had a great big wheat ranch. But, the war ended and everything just -- they just dropped everything. Dad said they had this great big steam engine that they used to pull

the gang plows to plow up the ground for the wheat up there. They made quite a lot of good money, and my grandmother ran a boarding house. But, she somehow got so depressed, she committed suicide. So, that was the end of that. But, at any rate, I lost my train --

JUNGE: Well, you were talking about Anchorage. You wanted to go to Alaska. But, this is before the war broke out, in '41.

BELL: Right, [00:35:00] right.

JUNGE: The Japanese had not yet bombed Pearl Harbor.

BELL: No, no. We used to sit in our classes over here and talk about when we were all going to have to go and serve. We knew we were going to be gun fodder -- every one of us young guys. There were 39 men in our graduating class, just from Lander, and then some guys came down from Dubois -- four or five. At any rate, all of those 39 guys all enlisted, and some of our girlfriends -- female graduates with us -- also joined. So, we all served together. Only one of us was actually killed in combat -- Gerald Appleby. He was killed over in the Philippines. The rest of us all made it back alive, but several died shortly after getting back from the wounds [00:36:00] and one thing and another. I didn't have but one eye, and there were some others that were pretty badly injured, too. But, at any rate --

JUNGE: Didn't you say that there were -- before we went on tape, you were talking about there being three guys in this town.

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: Tell me about that -- three other guys that served.

BELL: Well, of those 39 men, 3 of us are still alive and living right here in Lander and now have to be 90 years old because I was one of the younger guys in the class.

(laughter) So --

JUNGE: Who are they?

BELL: Andy Boulette.

JUNGE: Boulette? How do you spell that?

BELL: B-O-U-L-E-T-T-E. He and I ran against each other for the president of the student body, and I beat him.

(laughter) We still laugh about it. The other, Harold McCaskey -- [00:37:00] he was the son of farmers also out on the reservation. So, he and his folks went through the same thing. Just -- boy, you just struggled to get by.

JUNGE: Who was the other one?

BELL: Harold McCaskey.

JUNGE: Then, this Boulette?

BELL: Andy Boulette.

JUNGE: You --

BELL: Me.

JUNGE: Wasn't there another one, you said?

BELL: Well, Ed Field and I -- when we got out -- well, I went to Alaska. I don't know what Ed did that summer, but he'd been appointed to Annapolis. So, when we both -- and then we both were down at the university together. So, when the -- and that's where I enlisted. I think he had already been appointed to Annapolis, but you had to wait your turn, which I did, too, after I enlisted. They said, "Well, we'll call you." [00:38:00] This was in May and they didn't call me until October. So, I'd get itchy about it. But, he and I got a job working on a Japanese relocation camp, and I think I've got the write-up that I did about that -- about when I was in the hospital in Bari, Italy. Some of the orderlies were Nisei -- Japanese-American, young guys.

JUNGE: Second generation.

BELL: Yeah. But, they had fought up in this Cassino. What a hell of a place. Oh! I've forgotten. Well, I think this guy's got it right. That was probably one of the most -- the hardest-fought battles of World War II. I've forgotten how many people -- how many men were killed there, but --

JUNGE: Was this Nisei you're talking about -- was he part of that 442nd?

BELL: Yes. Yeah, sure were.

JUNGE: The most-decorated outfit in [00:39:00] World War II, wasn't it?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. So, you've got --

BELL: But, they had -- these young guys that I got to know -- they had gotten terrible frostbite; had even lost toes or feet or fingers or hands, and that's why they made them orderlies. They wanted to stay in after even -- after they'd been crippled. So, they kept them on as orderlies, and I got to know some of them. But, I -- you know, after working on the relocation camp, I didn't think that much about it, you know. They'd taken those -- just ripping those people right out of their homes and businesses and sending them off to the boondocks. But, after meeting those young guys, and we had a family out here, right close to this Harold [00:40:00] McCaskey's dad's place -- the [Hirosawas?]. They were Nisei. So, we all got to know Bill Hirasawa -- a heck of a young guy. We all liked him and everything. They did not have to go into one of those camps, anyway. But, they were still -- you know, well, it's just like the same with Obama. If they've got slanted eyes, they're not worth a damn. If they've got black skin, don't have anything to do with them. So, after I got to

meet these young guys and got to know them, boy, I began to think about it. That was one of the worst things we ever did.

JUNGE: Why did you -- now, this -- the camp up at Heart Mountain was built in '42. You helped build it? Why? What was the circumstance?

BELL: You get a job. Ed -- Ed Field [00:41:00] and I both were waiting to go in, so we were looking for jobs, and they were just crying for them up there. Ed got a job as a carpenter. He was bigger than me. So, I don't know what the deal was. Anyway, I got a job of counting the stuff off the railroad cars as it was brought in because they kept track of all of it and everything.

JUNGE: What -- lumber?

BELL: Yeah, lumber, cement, and kegs of nails and all that kind of stuff.

JUNGE: You watched them put up a camp in a hurry?

BELL: Oh, boy! Oh, boy! It was just slam, bang.

JUNGE: Tarpaper shacks?

BELL: Yeah, yeah. It really was. It was an awful thing. I -- when I -- you know, I'd be able to take off and go out and see ahead and see what they were doing. I'd say, "People are going to live in these?" Terrible -- what we did to them. [00:42:00] But, at any rate, I got to meet

these young fellows, and I got to thinking then that was the most terrible thing -- one of them -- that we did was -- they were Americans, just like us. Bill Hirasawa out there -- you know? Just because his name was Hirasawa --

JUNGE: Bill Hosokawa, who was an editor for the *Empire Magazine* of the *Denver Post*, told me one time -- he said that there was a hell of a fight in the barracks they were in. They called them -- well, latrines. They'd go in the latrines and they would have fights about whether or not they should fight for their country. Some guys said, "You know, I think we have to fight. I think we have to show this country that we're loyal citizens."

BELL: They did.

JUNGE: They did, and they went into the 442nd. But, there were others who said, "I'll be damned if I'm going to serve until they make me -- give me my citizenship -- the right to be a free American again."

BELL: Yeah, yeah.

JUNGE: [00:43:00] These guys went to court and I think it was Ewing Kerr who was the judge. Maybe, it was -- maybe, it wasn't Kerr. It might have been Blake. Anyway, I can't remember, but they were tried, convicted, and sent to prison.

BELL: Yeah, terrible. Yeah, either one of those two judges
--

JUNGE: Blake Kennedy, I think. It was either Blake Kennedy
or Ewing Kerr who succeeded him. So, OK, it was just taken
for granted that you were going to go into the military.

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Anyway, then to go back, when I
got back -- when we came back from Alaska, I got so
homesick that I told all my friends, "You know, I think I
could walk home on water, just to get home." (laughter) So
homesick! One of the best things that ever happened to me
-- I got in the service; never homesick a minute -- no.

JUNGE: [00:44:00] Why?

BELL: Because I'd already been through it, going up to
Alaska.

JUNGE: How did you get back?

BELL: Well, the same deal - got on an Alaska steamship --
steamer -- one of them that -- I came out in the fall when
they were -- had just finished canning all the salmon. So,
that's what they were doing was picking up this salmon, all
the way down the line. Then, when I got to Seattle, just
got on a bus and when I got to Billings, that's where my
folks were. That's why I just stayed there with them until
Christmastime. Anyway, I enrolled in Billings Polytechnic
Institute. It was just a small -- like a community

college. But, it had good instructors. One of my instructors -- [00:45:00] now I can't think of his name. I didn't think I'd ever forget it. I've got it written down in here. My zoology instructor was also a pilot -- had his own plane. We got -- of course, we got acquainted, and he found out I really liked to fly and he said -- and I had never flown yet. He said, "Would you like to take a flight with me?" I said, "Oh, boy, you bet." So, we did; took off and flew around Billings and so on. While we were there, he told me about one time that he'd gone up by himself and he got up there and the wind came up and was blowing so hard that he couldn't land for an hour or so. So, anyway, that was my [00:46:00] first plane ride.

JUNGE: Were you hooked at that point?

BELL: Oh, you bet. Yeah, (laughter) you bet. Yeah, this photo here -- the one of -- there it is. This fellow is -- his name was Edwin Barksdale. When I finally got called, I was with my folks down at -- they had moved. Well, I actually moved with them the spring of '42, it would be. Dad wanted to go down around Colorado again, so they did, and I helped them move and was with them. So, I was living in -- they finally wound up buying a place at Longmont, and I was living with them there when they -- when I got the call to go in. Went down and got on the train at Denver.

When we got to Pueblo, [00:47:00] they picked up a whole bunch more young guys, and Ed Barksdale was one of them. So, then, whenever they had a roll call, Ed was Barksdale, Bill. We were right together. We got to be good buddies and went through primary flying and -- I mean, primary school and primary flying, and then went to Coffeyville Kansas. Ed went on to become a single-engine pilot but never got overseas.

JUNGE: Now, you went to -- where did you go to flight -- when you joined the military, where did they send you first?

BELL: San Antonio -- San Antonio [00:48:00] Aviation Cadet Center -- [Sad Sac?]. (laughter)

JUNGE: (laughter) So, is that where you learned? Did you learn to fly?

BELL: No, not there. You went through all of your ground school there, and then they sent you to your primary flying school, which was at Muskogee, which is where McGovern went. Went through without a hitch; had a heck of a nice instructor. We just hit it off just great, and I just loved it. Went over to Coffeyville and they were just newly-minted Second Lieutenants who had just gone through the school. I don't know how they allotted the men out, but each instructor got five students. Now, out of five students, you would think that out of that [00:49:00] five,

there would be one who would be kind of outstanding. Out of the five guys of my bunch, one of them was outstanding. I mean, we just all knew he was going to be a real hot pilot someday. Anyway, the first guy washed out, about the first day. The next day, another guy washes out. The next day was my turn. No -- well, it was almost too close together -- two of us went together. That left one student with this instructor, and we all knew that he was going to be a hot pilot someday. We got to Bombardier school and I just made up my mind I was not going to wash out again for any reason. So, I led my class in day bombing. [00:50:00] Boy, I just really concentrated on it. You marched out to the flight line, and then you marched back when -- you know, when your tour was over. So, I -- one day, we were marching out, either to or from the flight line, and then there was another group of guys just right over, just to one side of us, and we passed. I looked over, and there was the fellow who we thought was going to be the hot pilot. He had gotten washed out. They had a whole trainload of us -- a trainload of us, going back to San Antonio to be reassigned. I got to reading about it. Well, we heard through the grapevine these things about -- they had misjudged on the number of men they needed to be pilots, for instance, [00:51:00] and so they just wholesale

wiped a whole bunch of us out, and I was one of them. Boy, it just broke my heart. You know, when we got into combat and got up to doing our job, which in my case was Bombardier, I was so damned glad that I'd washed out. It's just like he says in this book -- that B-24 was the hardest plane to fly.

JUNGE: What was it like to fly?

BELL: Oh, in our training, the flying that I got to do -- I just loved every minute of it; never had a problem -- never in any part of it. They just arbitrarily said, "That bunch is going to go."

JUNGE: Somebody I talked to yesterday, John Goss, is the head of that vets' memorial museum in Casper, and he said he talked to some -- he interviewed somebody who said [00:52:00] it was like sitting on your front porch and flying your house.

BELL: Yeah. Yeah, I would suspect that. I watched how my pilot and co-pilot just -- they would just sweat blood, and it was so difficult. It was such a great, big, old plane. It was terrible.

JUNGE: But, it carried more -- what do you call it -- bombs than the -- more bombs than the B-17.

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, but the thing about it is, you know, if you're flying a P-38 or P-51, you are the pilot.

You kind of control your own destiny. You get into one of those bombers and you have to fly in formation. Let me get that book for you. I was going to show you.

JUNGE: Well, we can do that later, but anyway, you had to fly in formation. [00:53:00]

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, you had to. You really realized the importance of learning how to fly in formation. Of course, the Bombardier and all the other guys -- 8 of those 10 guys on the airplane didn't do anything but sit on their butts and wait until you got to the target. That's when I got to do my part.

JUNGE: Who did you have on board? What were their jobs?

BELL: Well, we had the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, Bombardier. That takes up four of them. Then, you had your engineer. That's five.

JUNGE: Did you have a navigator?

BELL: Yeah. The navigator was one of the first four.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. All right. So, you had an engineer. That's five. Oh, and then you had gunners, too. Didn't you have gunners?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, you're darn right. Those gunners were pretty darn important. See if I can find it here.

[00:54:00] No, that's not the one. I've got -- yeah, here

it is. There was the list of our guys. Those were the ones that we flew overseas together.

JUNGE: But -- so, the rest of the -- you had the first four or five, but the rest were gunners, then?

BELL: Yeah. Johnny [Crommy?] was the chief engineer and a gunner. Martin [Sefsik?] was the telegraph operator and a gunner. He would fill in. Gerry Carswell and Henry Cross were the side gunners. Lloyd [Melchaw?] was the tail gunner, and Jim [Jolten?] was the ball turret gunner.

JUNGE: How about the other guys, then?

BELL: These down here.

JUNGE: Oh, I thought these up here were --

BELL: Well, Bill Beck [00:55:00] was the pilot and Joe [Venoto?] was the co-pilot. They were the ones who did all the work. I mean, it was really work. They would just be -- well, old Bill in particular -- Bill Beck -- he would get to sweating so much that he would unzip his flight jacket and then, if he was still too hot, he would open his -- all of the clothes on his chest -- and his old, hairy chest was sticking out here and just steaming; steam just coming off. I'd laugh at him. You know, I didn't have to be in the Bombardier's compartment until we got up in the air and quite a ways away. But, they had to be right there. But, I'd stand in between the pilot and the co-

pilot; the pilot here and the co-pilot here. [00:56:00] I'd stand in between and just look out, you know. Old Bill's chest would be bare. He'd be steaming; the steam just coming off. I'd reach down and pull hairs on his chest. (laughter) I shouldn't have done it.

JUNGE: Were you a practical joker?

BELL: Well, kind of -- sort of -- yeah. (laughter) We had to have some fun.

JUNGE: So, how did you --

BELL: Anyway, I wanted to show you this. See these men standing here?

JUNGE: Yeah.

BELL: That gives you an idea of the size of those things. But, I --

JUNGE: The holes in the --

BELL: Yeah, if I could trace my bomb back, I bet anything that one of those holes was made by one of my bombs.

JUNGE: So, how many missions did you fly?

BELL: Well, I was actually over enemy territory only 22 times.

JUNGE: Only 22 times.

BELL: Yeah, but 10 of those times, [00:57:00] it was such a long mission and such a tough mission that you got double-counted, kind of for 2 missions. So, I think some of that

-- you'll read in there 32 missions but only 22 times over enemy territory. But, each one of those times, boy -- (laughter) I mean, it was really something.

JUNGE: What did you -- tell me what you -- what was going through your mind before you got on the plane on any one mission?

BELL: Well, you know, it's just like anything new. The first time that I -- well, our first mission was just to bomb this little port, as I remember. There wasn't any flak, no fighters, so we just thought, oh, boy, this is going to be a -- well, we -- somebody coined the [00:58:00] term, "milk run," like going off to the grocery to get a half-gallon of milk. It was that simple. The second time was a little tougher. That third mission, if I remember correctly -- what did I do with it? Oh, here it is. The third mission was a hell of a mission. We got a double on it.

JUNGE: A double?

BELL: A double mission.

JUNGE: Oh, you got credit for two missions?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. You're going through your log book now.

BELL: Yeah. Yeah, I can't remember all those things. It's a good thing I -- second grade -- no, it was the second mission.

JUNGE: Why don't you go ahead and read that, Tom?

BELL: Well, February 22nd -- now, we landed on our field on February 1st. It had been raining and snowing and -- but still, our [00:59:00] squadron guys -- commander and so on -- said, "We're going to draw -- just go out and practice formation flying." If it was really raining and snowing, of course, we didn't. But, if it was anywhere near decent, everybody flew, and they flew on these training missions. Then, as the weather brightened, February 22nd -- it took 22 days before we got a real break. "First raid over enemy-held territory. Dropped 10, 500-pound bombs on Zaro, Italian territory; no flak, no fighters. February 25th, just three days later, second raid. What a hell of a tough raid that was, too. Dropped 10, 500-pound bombs on Graz Talerhof, Austria. Light flak and a number of fighters encountered. Tech Sergeant [01:00:00] Gerald V. Carswell," and I put their names and addresses down. "Gerry Carswell, Jim Hilton -- he was the belly turret gunner. Lloyd Melchaw was the tail gunner, left waist gunner, belly turret gunner and tail gunner, respectively; get credit for probably downing --" now, I left space in between each of

them to fill in if I wanted to, "for downing an enemy aircraft -- a German Messerschmitt 110; the first of our group." The very first gunners were on our crew. We were flying Tail-End Charlie, which meant we were clear at the tail-end. When you flew Tail-End Charlie, oh, boy, that was kind of bad. [01:01:00]

JUNGE: Why?

BELL: Because, as the German enemy fighter planes came up, they would look for what they thought was the weakest spot, and the weakest spot was that lone plane, clear at the back of the formation; a plane here, a plane here, a plane here, and plane here.

JUNGE: So, like a diamond, kind of?

BELL: Yes, and so that was the easy spot for them. If they were really good pilots and they persisted, they quite often got the Tail-End Charlie. So, you just hated to have to fly that position. But, anyway, on the third mission, a fellow named Sam Archibald filled in for our pilot, and I don't know -- no, no, no. [01:02:00] I changed -- here and here. Sam Archibald flew the fourth mission; heck of a nice guy, really a great pilot. He got killed in June when they pulled this really big raid, well, somewhere up in this area here. I just made these for you, too, to kind of

give you a guide to go by as you read some of that stuff.

See here? We were --

JUNGE: Oh, this is a map that shows parts of Italy.

BELL: Yeah, and it shows where we flew most of our missions
-- Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Italy, Austria.

JUNGE: Did you take -- what did you think when you first took
flak -- the first time you took flak?

BELL: Well, yeah, that's what started me out on this. You
asked me how I felt. [01:03:00] After those first two
missions, no -- the second mission was to -- Graz Talerhof
wasn't -- boy, that was a tough one. "The second raid: 10
bombs on Graz Talerhof, Austria." It was a long mission,
and to start with -- doggone it. I'm going to get this.

JUNGE: You're hooked up there.

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Well, why don't we -- can we do that a little later?
We could just talk about the - or do you need to get to it?

BELL: Yeah, the more -- I'll just take it off first because
I've been meaning to get it to show to you. Oh, that's
right. (inaudible) Now, if I can just remember where the
heck I put the darn thing.

JUNGE: Tom -- what are you looking for? Tom?

BELL: I'm looking for [01:04:00] a very thick book with blue
covers. It's got to be right here somewhere.

JUNGE: Is that it there, next to the --

BELL: No. Oh, where the heck? Everything is such a damn mess.

JUNGE: Well, you're in the process of organizing all this. I would assume it would be a mess for a while.

BELL: Oh, you should have seen it two months ago. Oh, gosh! Hang on a second. What time is it getting to be?

JUNGE: A little after twelve o'clock noon. Do you want to stop and take some lunch or do you want to go out to eat? I'll treat you to lunch. [01:05:00]

BELL: Well, I may just take you up on that because I'm -- I don't really eat very much so I don't have much. Well, what the hell! It's a big book. I wonder if I left it in there by my coffee machine. Let me go look.

JUNGE: While Tom is going to his room, I'll just mention that I've got all sorts of papers in front of me, and photographs, and copies of photographs, and the copy of a map of Italy. He's got a couple of books. One is *Wild Blue* by -- oh, gosh. I don't even know the guy's name but -- *Wild Blue* by Stephen Ambrose: *The Men and Boys who flew the B-24s over Germany*. He's got a book called, *Monte Cassino: The Hardest-Fought Battle of World War II* by Matthew [01:06:00] Parker. Then, there are boxes all over

the place on the kitchen table, on chairs, in the living room, on the front porch.

BELL: I did leave it in there.

JUNGE: You did? OK. This is called -- what is this? This is called *The 455th Bomb Group, (H), Flight of the Vulgar Vultures, 1943 to 1945.*

BELL: I mean, that's loaded with good information. I made a lot of good copies out of this for you.

JUNGE: OK, and it's the -- all right. Here -- let me put this back on you. Let's see. Now, wait a minute here. Let me put it on here. OK. This is the story of the 455th Bombardment Group --

BELL: Heavy --

JUNGE: -- 'H' or heavy -- World War II. *Flight of the Vulgar Vultures.* It's compiled by Alfred Asch, Colonel, retired, Hugh Graff, Colonel, [01:07:00] retired, Tom Ramey, Lieutenant Colonel, retired, and it was published in Appleton Wisconsin in 1991. This is the second printing, 1999.

BELL: Yeah, now, go back to that -- what you were just reading. I think it was Colonel Asch that got shot down and became a prisoner of war.

JUNGE: Alfred Asch?

BELL: Yeah, and he was shot down at about the same time that my old, original crew had been shot down. Of these guys, when they were shot down that day, Bill Beck lost his life. Joe Venoto, the co-pilot, lived through it. Jay [Gainzle?] had been switched off of our [01:08:00] original crew with me when I was promoted. Johnny Crommy lived through the shoot-down. Sefsik was killed. Gerry Carswell, Henry Cross, Lloyd Melchaw -- no, Lloyd Melchaw was not killed because that particular day, somebody had flicked their cigarette ashes and it got into his eyes. So, he wasn't with them. So, he lived through it.

JUNGE: Imagine that -- that little incident.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: I'll put this on you right. I don't think I had this microphone on you right. OK. There we go. So, a little incident like that kept him alive.

BELL: You can't believe. I just saw something this morning as I was looking for stuff for you. You can't believe the coincidental things. When they got shot down, it just would blow your mind. They were flying -- my old, original crew was [01:09:00] flying the B-24 that my new crew normally flew, and we had some other -- just a fill-in plane, I guess. We had never had any trouble with the engines when we were flying that plane that they got shot

down in. The day they got shot down, two of the engines -- one of them, particularly, quit. So, once an engine goes out, you can't keep up with the formation. So, they have to turn back. When they turned back, there were German planes doing 'S's overhead, and when you saw that, you thought, oh, hell, no. That's the way it was. Five of them were killed right there.

JUNGE: Shot down?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Why weren't you in that plane?

BELL: Because I'd been transferred [01:10:00] off into this lead position with Bill King's crew. But, here they were, flying the plane that we normally flew, and they got shot down. We had never had any problems or maybe we might have gotten shot down.

JUNGE: This was in the 455th that you were in?

BELL: Yes, 742ND.

JUNGE: OK. It says -- in the dedication, it says, "This book is dedicated to all members of the 455th Bombardment Group (H) for Heavy and other organizations that provided outstanding support for defeating the German War Machine. It is in loving memory of those who paid the ultimate price for peace. One hundred and forty-seven killed and two hundred and eight-six missing in action of which one

hundred and seventy-nine suffered the hardships of being prisoners of war and to countless wounded. San Giovanni, Italy, [01:11:00] 1944 to '45, and then there's a quote from the bible. They show a mount up with wings, like eagles. "They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." Isaiah, 40:31.

BELL: One of them that he refers to in there was the Tuskegee Airmen -- the black men. They were the ones that protected us, flying P-47s and P-51s. I mean, they were called the day my crew -- my old crew -- was shot down, but they couldn't get there in time. By the time they got there, the plane was shot down.

JUNGE: So, it didn't matter if they were black, white, Latino, Asian, as long as they were protecting you. That's what counted.

BELL: That's part of the irony of this whole thing. It goes back to this miserable, blasted, racist business. There were pilots who, when we first started out and they found out there were black guys [01:12:00] protecting us, they said, "Oh, man. We don't want to be protected by them. They can't do anything." They were damned good pilots. That racism business is awful.

JUNGE: Well, the -- now, tell me what flak is. A lot of people who may be listening to this someday in the future are not going to know what flak is all about.

BELL: Yeah, it's something that really throws you until you've been through it. When you go to a target, of course, you're adversaries want to protect that target. In other words, if it's an aircraft factory or a big marshalling yard where all the big -- the great trains come in and so on and all these other things -- getting ready to take off, son?

M1: [01:13:00] Yeah.

BELL: All right. See you later, then.

M1: Bye.

JUNGE: Bye. Can you make it?

M1: Yeah.

JUNGE: I can close that door after you.

M1: I've got it.

BELL: Doggone it. Do you get *National Geographic*?

JUNGE: Well, anyway, so what is flak?

BELL: Flak -- now they want to protect this area down here, let's say. They put great big guns that shoot straight up all around this target so that when -- here we come here. When we're out about here, they start shooting those up --

JUNGE: Just before you arrive at the target?

BELL: Yeah, because you look ahead and here's -- there's nothing out there and all of a sudden, the sky is just filled with all these little black dots and white dots, mainly. [01:14:00] That's these big guns, shooting that stuff up.

JUNGE: Why would some be white and the others black?

BELL: The size of the shell. We didn't know that. All we knew was that when they were white -- when the blossom was white, it made a big white cloud. It was a great big shell, probably 155 millimeters, which meant that the shell was that big around and probably stood this high.

JUNGE: Three feet high and a foot around? Really -- that big?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: One hundred and fifty-five millimeters. What was the other one -- the black one?

BELL: Probably, an 88. I could never figure it out and I never asked. I just knew that that was flak. So, here you'd be flying along and all of a sudden -- and what they did -- they learned very quickly that if the target was here, they would [01:15:00] put guns all across here, down here, across here so that when you looked ahead, there was just a box. A black cloud or a white cloud or whatever -- that was flak. That's the one -- when that burst showed,

that's the one that had already exploded. It's the one still coming up that you were going into that you had to fear.

JUNGE: But, flak could explode -- the bombs could explode and you could take shrapnel, right?

BELL: You bet. Did I show you that photo of that --

JUNGE: No, but I'm -- you know what? I'm interested, Tom, in knowing -- what about your accident? What happened? Can you describe that?

BELL: Well, again, let's go back to this flak. When you looked ahead into it, the first time that that happened and I was [01:16:00] flying, we were approaching Vienna, Austria. I have forgotten what it was we were going to bomb. At any rate, we were flying along through a sky that was pretty and blue, but we could see clouds ahead of us, and when we got to those clouds, we just plowed right on through. But, it's just as if those clouds had all of a sudden exploded. It was such a surprise to me that I was petrified with fear; just completely petrified. I couldn't have moved. That was a mission where -- I lost my train of thought. [01:17:00]

JUNGE: You were on your way to Vienna in that particular mission that you took flak.

BELL: We were just flying along and all of a sudden, here are all of these black puffs all around us -- black and white, just thick, so thick -- oh, I know what it was that I started to say. Earlier on in the game, they gave us flak jackets to wear and a helmet -- a metal helmet. I often wondered why the heck a helmet up there. You soon found out. But, at any rate, I was wearing the helmet and the flak jacket, and all of a sudden, it's all around us. We were close enough [01:18:00] to some of it that you could hear it hitting the plane. It sounded like hail on a tin roof. So, that first experience -- it just paralyzed me. I couldn't have moved. You know, the thought that I got was if I could just shrink myself down to the size of a mouse, I could get in under this flak jacket. Then, all of a sudden, it dawned on me, what the hell good would that do me? But, it just took that one experience for me to just be paralyzed with fear. By the third or the fourth mission, I just said, "To hell with the flak jacket or the helmet," because I'd seen what happened. I suppose the flak jacket did save some lives, but of the ones -- like, I had a Bombardier friend [01:19:00] that was killed who was wearing a helmet but the flak came right in underneath that helmet, right in the forehead, and killed him. My buddy, the navigator -- he was flying in the front gun -- front

turret -- while I was bombing that day. See if I can find a photo of the plane. There was our commanding officer, Colonel Cool. He was sure a cool character; a great guy. Well, here -- Jay was flying in this front turret, right here.

JUNGE: Nose turret --

BELL: The nose turret.

JUNGE: -- of a B-24.

BELL: Yeah, with twin, .50 caliber machine guns in it.

[01:20:00] The Bombardier's compartment was right where this little hump is here.

JUNGE: Underneath it.

BELL: I was sitting down and underneath it, see? Well, boy, I could hear the flak hitting the plane, just rattling things. Then, all of a sudden, I saw the turret moving, and I looked up in time to see Jay go back like this, and then the blood just squirting out of his head. I thought, oh, boy. It was terrible, because I thought he'd really == probably really been hit. It turns out, though, that this -- when this flak came in, it hit his helmet -- a glancing blow - but it blew plexiglass from the plane -- from the turret into the side of his face and a big [01:21:00] piece of plexiglass had cut him pretty badly. So, he was bleeding from that. He got a purple heart for it, but,

heck, he was only out of commission for two or three missions. So, you asked about, well, what happened with me. In my case, where I was -- and I was flying as the lead Bombardier that day for the squadron, which meant that I -- when I dropped my bombs, then everybody else -- the six or so planes following us would drop theirs. I was the guy who put the crosshairs on the target. Then, they would drop on me. That happened, of course, the day I got hit. I had my bomb side all set up and ready to go, and we had two little deals that were like [01:22:00] this. I reached out and did that, and that released the bombs.

JUNGE: Two little prongs and when you pulled them together, that released the bombs?

BELL: That was the trigger, yeah. I had it all set up with those just for me, just waiting for me to put them together, and I decided that I would take a quick look ahead. So, where in the heck is there a -- this shows all kinds of things. This shows it -- (laughter) the art work. Look at this B-24. This one, I think, was "Flak Alley Sally." No -- yeah, this -- both of them. "Flak Alley Sally" I flew in. It was a good plane. I've forgotten what [01:23:00] happened to it that day, but by the time we got through, it was a wreck.

JUNGE: Now, what are you looking for?

BELL: I'm looking for a photo of the B-20 -- oh, here, this right here, yeah. My Bombardier's compartment is right directly down underneath this astrodome.

JUNGE: In the front? In the --

BELL: In the front here. This is from the front of the plane, looking back, and so the pilot and co-pilot are right here in this one. I'm here, and the front turret is right here. So, no, it doesn't show it.

JUNGE: Oh, we're looking -- we're looking at a -- it looks like a dome here in the middle of the plane, more or less.

BELL: Well, it's between the pilot and the co-pilot here and the front [01:24:00] turret here.

JUNGE: Oh, I got you. OK, I see.

BELL: This is where the navigator stood to use his sextant to get a read on where we were; pretty darn good, and we had a great navigator. Anyway, I was the only one up front that day except for the front turret gunner. Once I was made a lead Bombardier, I could no longer fly in the front turret. It just meant too much hassle. You just had to be ready to drop your bombs. So, you couldn't climb out of a turret or anything. So, anyway, I was all suited up and ready to go. I knew we were only about 5 or 10 minutes away from the target, and I just wanted to take a quick look ahead before I got down on the bomb side. [01:25:00] I

stood up and your feet are down here on the gun kind of (inaudible) on either side and your head just fits into this.

JUNGE: Into this little dome above the plane?

BELL: That little dome. You stood up about this high -- just high enough for you to get your head in so that you could see around. I stood up and, as I stood up, I couldn't help but look over here because there was a great, big, beautiful, red flak and white flak against a blue sky. I thought, how ironic, and I felt something move my head, *bam*, like that. The next thing I know, I'm picking myself up from down on the floor. Just in that instant, it's one of those things again. [01:26:00] The only thing I could attribute it to is the good Lord. My head was like this and I felt my head get pushed like this. At that instant is when that big chunk of flak came past. When it came past, it cut my earphone right here on my side of my head -- cut it right in half, just like you take a big knife and slice it, even including a little chunk of metal about that long and about as big as your finger. It had cut it this way.

JUNGE: Transversely.

BELL: You know, I put that in a safe place way back when I first moved in here, and I'll be damned if I can find it.

JUNGE: Oh, it will turn up. It's a part of your ear --

BELL: Earphone.

JUNGE: Earphone.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Now, did you know that you had your eye -- your eye
was gone?

BELL: Well, I picked myself up off the floor and, [01:27:00]
boy, the first thing I felt was my ear, because it felt
like my ear had been pulled off my head. That chunk of
flak had gone by that close. So, I reached up for my ear
and I felt that it was still there, but then I felt around
here, and I thought, oh, man, that's -- it's bad. But, I
was still trying to get a hold of my pilot and co-pilot to
tell them that I was alive. So, I looked down here because
the connecting line from the intercom system into my system
was a little deal down here that you pushed together just
at waist-length. I looked down there just to see if it was
there, and everything was all right. But, then, I saw this
big, big gusher of blood coming out. I thought, oh, man.
I'm going to have [01:28:00] to do something about this or
I'll be dead in a hurry. So, I knew right where the first-
aid kit was, and I reached down and zipped it open and took
out one of those square gauze deals, and I put it right on
my face, and I had just taken all of the readings that I

needed for that time. We were flying at 25,000 feet, 40-
below zero, a few minutes before noon. That 40-below zero
weather -- when I put that on my face, it just froze right
on there; stopped the bleeding. I knew I had to get it
stopped or I'd be dead because it was really gushing out of
me. Anyway, once that was done and, of course, I felt my
face and I thought, I'm never going to see out of that eye
again because it just felt like pulverized material. But,
I could barely see out of this eye. I was seeing through a
red haze because some plexiglass had hit it and one of them
hit right smack in the middle of my eyeball. Every time I
blinked, I could feel it cutting my eye or something. So,
as much as I could, I kept my eye closed because I didn't
want to destroy it if I could keep from it, and I think it
did help because when I got -- of course, I was completely
out of it by the time I got to the hospital. Anyway, once
I got that stopped, then I thought, boy, I've got to get
the bombs away. So, I was right down over the bomb side
again, and working with it, and nothing had happened.

[01:30:00] I didn't realize, of course, with everything
going on, that quite a bit of time had passed; probably 5
or 10 minutes. In that interval, we had gone over the
target and my pilot -- of course, he sat through the
briefing in the morning with me so that he knew. Also,

they probably saw my head disappear from in here and thought, oh, boy, he's dead. So, he dropped the bombs. Well -- but as soon as I realized I hadn't dropped them, I got down on the bomb side and was working with it, trying to get something to happen. I had a -- I don't have those photos handy. In the compartment right up in front of me and a little above my head so I could look out underneath it was a big [01:31:00] board of little-bitty lights. Every one of those lights lit up when a bomb was dropped out of the bomb bay. When I finally -- when it dawned on me all I needed to do was look up there and it was all lit up, so I knew then that the bombs had been dropped. That gave me a real sigh of relief because that was my job to drop the bombs.

JUNGE: So, it got done.

BELL: It did get done.

JUNGE: How many bombs did you drop? I mean, how many did that plane hold?

BELL: What did I do with my little book?

JUNGE: This here?

BELL: Oh, yeah, here it is here.

JUNGE: The log book. Oh, you're [01:32:00] going to go right to the precise day?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: You know what day it was?

BELL: Yeah, the 10th of May. April seventh. Here's April 13th. On the 15th, a German saboteur blew up two of our planes; killed everybody on the plane. They caught him, and the next morning, they hung him, I guess. May sixth --

JUNGE: That's May 10th. Is that it?

BELL: Yeah. Darn, I don't -- time: 12:10 p.m. It was just afternoon; forty below zero, 25,000 feet. By golly, I didn't [01:33:00] -- so, what does this say, anyway? See if I can -- "Carrying 10, 500-pound general purpose bombs." Pretty big.

JUNGE: General purpose meaning they're just explosives?

BELL: Yeah. "Mission 39, May 10th, we headed in a different direction -- the aircraft factory in Wiener Neustadt, Austria, just south of Vienna. Thirty-nine B-24s carrying 10, 500-pound GV bombs attacked the target. Enemy fighters were there in great numbers, and the flack was very intense and accurate. Boy, was it that day! Ten of our [01:34:00] planes received heavy and 27 slight damage. One crewman was severely wounded and three others slightly." I was the crewman.

JUNGE: That was severely wounded?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK, and you're reading out of that same book that we looked at before -- *The 455th Bomb Group (H)*?

BELL: Yeah, I think I made a copy of this page for you.

JUNGE: Did you write anything in your journal about that?

BELL: What?

JUNGE: About the incident? Did you write down in your journal anything?

BELL: Yeah, afterwards. I wrote down what I read to you.

"May 10th: Thirty-third mission counting doubles, hit in the head by flak and plexiglass. Had right eye blown out and suffered damage to other. Was on bombing run to aircraft ball bearing factory between Vienna and Wiener Neustadt. Time: 12:10. [01:35:00] Temperature: 40 degrees. Altitude: 25,000 feet." See -- I had all that written down. So, all I had to do was read it.

JUNGE: Well, if you had flak coming through that plexi and a piece of the plexi knocked into your left eye, there was air rushing through there at 25,000 feet.

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: So, it was cold.

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, you bet. It was the same temperature inside the plane as it was outside; no pressure and --

JUNGE: No pressure?

BELL: The poor guys in the back -- the two side gunners were the ones who really caught it. They could kind of get some relief from the wind and the cold. Well, I don't know just how they did it. I never rode back there with them. But, all I knew was that I tried to get my bombs out so the bomb bay doors could close [01:36:00] because once they were closed, then all that wind going past those poor guys standing there -- it was gone.

JUNGE: Well, I see your picture here, taken with this compadre of yours. What's his name?

BELL: Ed Barksdale.

JUNGE: Yeah, and you're both in your sheepskin jackets. These are what they call flight jackets?

BELL: Right.

JUNGE: With zippers and sheepskin collars. Were those -- oh, that was just -- something went off; probably your refrigerator. Were those jackets enough to keep you warm?

BELL: Oh, yeah -- well, to a degree. Again, for those poor gunners in the back, boy, I really thought of them. I tried to get those bomb bay doors closed just as fast as I could because when they came up -- see, they came up on the inside of the plane, and all of this was space in here. I'll tell you an [01:37:00] experience I had. On two occasions, not all of my bombs dropped when I pulled the

trigger, and I had to get back there with a screwdriver and get out on that catwalk, which was only eight inches wide and stand there and reach out and turn this deal to drop that bomb. I did it. (laughter)

JUNGE: How did you do that? I don't see how you had the -- I guess you have to do it.

BELL: Yeah, oh, yeah. It was my responsibility to get those dropped bombs out.

JUNGE: If you hadn't dropped them, do they have detonators on them that were timed?

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: They did?

BELL: Yes. The bomb -- I wish I had some other photos here. There were two stanchions. [01:38:00] Doggone it. I don't have anything that tells how long the bomb bay was; 16 feet, I think. About four feet in was this stanchion, and then about four feet more was another stanchion. Then, you got to the back wall. So, you could walk along this catwalk out there to that stanchion, and then I could put my arms around it or put one arm around it and reach out with a screwdriver and turn that screw and it would drop the bomb.

JUNGE: They were timed. They had timers on them?

BELL: Yes, they had -- they had a little - like a little screw on them with a little windmill deal. When the men loaded the bombs, they put an arming wire [01:39:00] from the stanchion out to that bomb and the wire ran through this little wheel. There was a little hole in it. But, if that -- if, when you -- when he hits the trigger, if that wire didn't pull out, it wouldn't blow up. But, the minute you pulled that wire out, then it would blow up but only if it hit something, like the bomb bay doors. That happened on one occasion. One Bombardier -- he got mad for some reason and I've forgotten what it was he did but he dropped a whole damn load of bombs on the inside of the plane -- just blew it to pieces but not enough -- but what -- a lot of the guys were able to get out of it.

JUNGE: How could they?

BELL: I don't know. I never could figure that out.

JUNGE: [01:40:00] Did you ever have to parachute?

BELL: No -- always kept asking, "Can we just get in a parachute and see how it is?" You know, the real tragedy of my pilot, old Bill Beck -- that habit he had of unzipping this deal and then his shirt so that he could let the steam out was what killed him. The day that they had to abandon ship, he gave the signal, "Everybody out." Then, he jumped, but when he did and when he pulled the rip

cord, he flipped out of his harness and fell to his death. He'd forgotten to fasten this thing across his chest. Oh, gosh. Just the thought of it just makes me shutter [01:41:00] for old Bill; a heck of a nice guy.

JUNGE: How -- when you -- you talked about these events before, right?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, each time you talk about them, does it bring the memory back in fresh?

BELL: Yeah, it sure does.

JUNGE: I hope we aren't spoiling the way you sleep tonight.

BELL: No.

JUNGE: You'll be OK?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. Well, after you got hit, do you remember them -- anything more about that particular flight? Did the guys take you and lay you down and take you into the hospital -- what?

BELL: Dammit. I was going to copy that thing off for you. I tell about it. When I found out that the bombs were dropped, I just heaved a sigh of relief because that was -- that -- you know, as a Bombardier and you being responsible, you feel that responsibility. So - but, the bombs are now out. So, I thought, well, [01:42:00] I might

just as well sit down. So, I sat down on this canister. I don't know what the heck I did with those photographs. Anyway, I -- on either side, there was -- where I was sitting here, there were two canisters, one on either side, to hold the .50 caliber ammunition that ran up on these belts and then up into the turret. So, when you were firing those guns, you could hear those bullets just rattling as they went out. But, they were just the right height to sit on. So, I sat down on one; sat down on the one opposite where I knew my buddy would be coming to check on me. So, I just sat there for -- oh, I don't know -- [01:43:00] probably 10 or 15 minutes until Jay could come down and get to me. He came. There is a tunnel that goes through that you call through to get into the Bombardier and navigator's compartment. It's on the right-hand side of the ship and down at the very bottom because you come through the channel and up into the compartment. Well, he had to come through there. This chunk of flak that took the thing off the side of my head and blew the flak into my -- blew plastic into my face -- as it came through, it came from somewhere up in here because I -- all I can remember of it is what a terrible, bright flash of light it was and a hell of a bang. [01:44:00] That's about all I remember of it. But, when it came through, like up from here, it came

right in over my right shoulder, went right behind me, and it cut eight hydraulic lines. They were all like this, and it just cut right through all of them. Of course, that puts the hydraulic fluid out into the plane and down into that crawlspace. So, when Jay came up to check on me, he was crawling through that stuff, and he thought he was crawling through my blood. It's kind of dark back in there in that corridor, you know. So, when I first saw his face over here -

JUNGE: To the right --

BELL: -- I'm sitting here and looking across at him. His face looked like [01:45:00] two holes in a white sheet. He was so white. He was scared. He thought he'd been crawling through my blood -- (laughter) poor guy.

JUNGE: Well, you couldn't see. Your eye was obviously gone on the right.

BELL: Oh, yeah, nothing happened here. But, I could just barely see through a red haze -- the blood in this eye -- and I could see that little black dot right in the middle. I could notice that.

JUNGE: Which one?

BELL: I could still see around it, you know.

JUNGE: Peripherally, yeah.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, it wasn't painful?

BELL: No, not that much.

JUNGE: I guess there are no nerves in there.

BELL: No.

JUNGE: So, here you are, sitting with barely -- you're barely able to see. How long did it take you to get back to the ground?

BELL: Four or five hours.

JUNGE: You sat like that for four or five hours?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: [01:46:00] What were you thinking?

BELL: (laughter) All kinds of things, of course. See -- we were clear up here in Vienna, and we had to get back to Cerignola down here.

JUNGE: Near Naples?

BELL: Yes -- well, not really; near Foggia.

JUNGE: Foggia.

BELL: Foggia was about 45 miles from Naples, I think. But, at any rate, we had to get back from up here, back down to there. Jay said, "Come on. Let's go back to the pilot's compartment," which meant crawling back through that tunnel and coming up to a little square hole. Then, when I got there, I had to climb up onto the deck and Jay, of course, helped me. He got me up on -- there was kind of a bench --

a low bench [01:47:00] right in behind the pilot where I could lay down. So, he had me get up on it, and then he zipped my pants open and took his big knife and cut my clothing and gave me a shot of morphine in my thigh. Of course, I didn't really feel any of that. So, right away, the morphine kicked in and so from then until we got clear back to our field, I just kind of passes in and out of consciousness. I just don't remember much of anything of that.

JUNGE: Do you remember actually going into the hospital?

BELL: No. When we got back down on the ground, of course, here there is no hydraulic fluid, so there are no brakes and no flaps. My pilot, who was a darned good pilot -- [01:48:00] I don't know whether he thought of it or whether he knew of somebody else who had experienced it. He pulled -- all four engines are still running. He pulled the throttles back on all four of them just as he touched down, down at the end of the runway. So, here we come along, probably the plane going 180 mph when it touched down, and he's got to get it stopped. So, when he gets about two-thirds of the way -- two-thirds to three-fourths of the way down -- he pushes the two throttles on one side all the way down, and those two engines jump into life and they swing the plane around in an arc and off the runway. It came to

a stop. Boy, was that a relief [01:49:00] because, just about 10 days before all of this happened, I had watched a plane come in, and the way our -- oh, wait a minute. What the heck did I do with all those photos?

JUNGE: Oh, this -- these here? Let's see.

BELL: Oh, these are all my medals. My medals -- the actual medals are over here at the museum, but there are --

JUNGE: Is that the Lander Museum?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. Well, anyway, you were talking about -- I can't remember what you were talking about. You were talking about the hospital and going in and out of consciousness and -- oh, the plane landing. The plane landing, yeah --

BELL: Yes. [01:50:00] Just 10 days or so before that, I had watched a plane come in. Oh, hell. What did I do with those photographs?

JUNGE: Yeah, you watched them come in --

BELL: I wanted to show you what our field looked like.

JUNGE: Well, OK, just give me a verbal description, to begin with.

BELL: Well, two parallel runways. The 455th had this runway, and the 454th had this runway.

JUNGE: The right runway, yeah.

BELL: So, when we took off and landed, we didn't interfere with each other. When Bill King landed the plane and it came to a stop, they immediately called the ambulance or somebody did because when -- after we had [01:51:00] landed, I could hear the guys talking. Well, actually, I came to until I was almost completely conscious as we were coming in to land because I had remembered that other ship going clear down to the end of the runway and then over. It dropped down a ways, and where it did was where they parked the gasoline trucks. That plane had come in and hit that gasoline truck and just a huge explosion. By golly, everybody got out of it alive. I was watching carefully because we were right behind them, you know, and I was watching. Those guys got out of it, but I had -- I remembered what it looked like, and I thought, oh, I'm doomed. I can't go anywhere or do anything because, by that time, I had lost enough blood that I was pretty much out of it. [01:52:00] There wasn't any way I could help myself, and there wasn't any way that the guys in the plane could help, either; well, except, maybe, throw me out on the runway. I don't know what they would have done. I kind of thought of that, but, at any rate, the plane was stopped. So, then, all my guys on the inside grabbed me and pulled me over to this opening and put me down through

it and then out into the bomb bays. The, they were able to lay me down and pick me up and carry me off to the side of the plane and lay me on the ground. I can remember feeling that. I remember hearing them talking about, "Yeah, the ambulance is coming." Then, about that time, yeah, I could hear it. So, that was a relief because [01:53:00] this man here -- Captain Blackman -- was our squadron doctor; hell of a nice guy. Of course, I had gotten to know him. So, then, when the ambulance pulled up, I heard his voice.

Boy, I just relaxed from that. I knew I was in good hands.

JUNGE: How long were you in the hospital?

BELL: Well, the 10th of May --

JUNGE: Is when it happened. Maybe, a week or two?

BELL: Oh, no. It was more like a month.

JUNGE: Then, you got out of the service at that point?

BELL: No -- oh, no. I recovered enough that I could -- and I've got, I think -- no, I don't either. Dammit! That's the one that I didn't make for you. I'll make you a copy and get it to you about the whole thing -- [01:54:00] how it went. I remember just slightly the ambulance coming up to where I was and hearing Dr. Blackman tell them how to load me in. Then, it drove off, and I don't remember much of anything except for the fact that the ambulance stopped and they had evidently outfitted a B-24 as kind of a

hospital ship because I could feel them moving me and then being laid inside. I don't know how that was. I don't know how it went. I've kind of tried to picture it in my mind. You see, the [01:55:00] bomb bays were such that they were like -- when they were down, they were like this; kind of rounded. Evidently, they had built some racks on the inside where they could lay folks -- people like me -- and then, when they got -- had everybody in, they would take off. I barely remember just hearing the engines, and then I was gone, however, I do remember that, when we were in the air, I came to, just feeling so cold. I was just shivering, just shaking, you know, and one of the nurses saw me and [01:56:00] I heard her then say, "Quick -- this man is in shock. He needs blood." So, then, I could feel them working with my arm and all of a sudden, I just felt so relaxed and so peaceful, and I was warm again. Then, I became unconscious and didn't get back to any kind of consciousness for -- I don't know how long; three or four days.

JUNGE: Where did they fly you to?

BELL: To Bari, Italy. There was a big hospital there, and that was the 15th Air Force Hospital. It was a big hospital. It had been an Italian Army hospital, I guess, because it was all outfitted for that.

JUNGE: That's where you recuperated?

BELL: Yeah, yeah. All I remember is that -- about that experience was the fact that [01:57:00] after -- I don't know how long -- I woke up. I started feeling things. I put my hands to my eyes and they were covered with two great big blobs of something. Then, I started feeling around and felt the sheets. We didn't have sheets on our bunks, (laughter) you know, and to feel sheets was quite a deal. But, as I felt the sheets, then I heard a nurse say, "You're in the hospital, Lieutenant. You've been badly injured. The doctor is on rounds, but he'll be here soon." But, I don't know how long from that time until I finally heard a doctor's voice -- a man's voice. [01:58:00] He came up to the bed and he said -- how did it go? Oh, he said, "I'm Dr. [Sant?]. I'm the one who took care of you and tried to patch you back together." I don't think it was right then. Anyway, he said something to the effect that, "I tried to do the best job I could for you but you were very seriously injured, and I'm not sure you'll ever be able to see again." He said something about there is probably a 50/50 chance of you [01:59:00] ever seeing again. So, I just piped right up and said, "Doc, I'm going to take the better of that 50% because I'm going to see again." By golly, I did. (laughter)

JUNGE: They pulled that piece of plexi out of your eye?

BELL: Yeah. But, let's see. Well, I could still see that black dot, though, and so about the next time that the doctor came in, I said, "Doc, you know, I can't see. There's a little black spot right in the middle of my eye." He said, "Yes, I know. I removed a piece of plexiglass, but if it doesn't get better, we'll fix it." It got better. I still can see a little dot if light conditions are right.

JUNGE: What kind of vision do you have in that left eye?

BELL: [02:00:00] You know, it recovered to 20/20, actually. It's just miraculous.

JUNGE: You've got 20/20 now?

BELL: No, no. (laughter) no.

JUNGE: Not at 90?

BELL: I don't know what it is. I haven't had it checked lately, but --

JUNGE: You can see me, right?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. But, I don't see you nice and clear, like I want to see it.

JUNGE: Well, good. That takes out all the wrinkles.

BELL: (laughter) No, I can even see your wrinkles.

JUNGE: (laughter) I've got pretty big wrinkles. Look -- let me go get us some lunch, OK? I'll shut this off. Is that all right?

BELL: Yeah, OK. [02:00:39]

END OF AUDIO FILE

OH-3028, part 4, Thomas Bell, 4-5-2014 WY in Flight

JUNGE: [00:00:00] We're back at it after lunch. It's now about five minutes of two, and I'm looking at the *National Geographic* that Tom just gave me here. It's April, 2014, and it looks like there are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 15, 20 -- there must be 40 railroad lines in that picture.

BELL: Yeah. There weren't anywhere near that number in Campina here, that day, but there were quite a few. I mean, that's a Bombardier's dream come true. Anywhere you drop your bombs, you're going to do some damage. Anyway, the gal that wrote that used to work for *High Country News*.

JUNGE: Really?

BELL: Yeah. She made this special trip up here one time just to meet me and visit -- Michelle Nijhuis. That's one of the great, young writers -- she is -- [00:01:00] and that is a very good article if you haven't had a chance to

read it yet. Now, wait a minute. Yeah, there it is -- Wright, Wyoming. I once went to Wright; not a sign of anything around except it's where the highway split. Then, I went from here up to Gillette, and I made the prediction that there'd be a hell of a coal mine there someday and a town.

JUNGE: There is.

BELL: There it is, yeah.

JUNGE: Oh, this article - this one was written by your friend?

BELL: Yeah, Michelle Nijhuis.

JUNGE: Michelle Nijhuis. It's -- let's see. This is --

BELL: I think she --

JUNGE: It's called -- Michelle Ni -- is that how you pronounce it? N-I-J [00:02:00]-- Nijhuis, N-I-J-H-U-I-S.

BELL: Wonderful young woman.

JUNGE: *Coal. Part one: the Invisible Carbon.*

BELL: She went with Geoff O'Gara over there to China, and this is the story she wrote for *National Geographic* on it.

JUNGE: On why coal is going over there to make pollution, right?

BELL: Lots of it.

JUNGE: Yeah, my wife and I were over there this fall.

BELL: Were you?

JUNGE: Yeah, and here -- sit down. Take a load off.
BELL: Hey, you know something you could do for me --
JUNGE: Sure.
BELL: -- before I sit down. Over there in that cupboard,
second drawer down, there are some straws -- [00:02:46]

END OF AUDIO FILE

OH-3028, part 5, Thomas Bell, 4-5-2014 WY in Flight

BELL: [00:00:00]...appreciate this. Thank you.
JUNGE: Oh, you're welcome.
BELL: I was going to show you this, too. This was our
identification. I made copies of that and you've got one
in there.
JUNGE: I do. This is your --
BELL: Carried it with you all the time.
JUNGE: What do you call this? Your officer's --
BELL: Army Officer I.D.
JUNGE: Officer's Identification Card, Number 971673, War
Department, Washington, D.C.
BELL: If you got shot down and taken prisoner, that's what
they look for or what you gave them.

JUNGE: But they -- you didn't want to be known as an officer if you got captured, right?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Officers were treated better than enlisted men; that is, by other soldiers. If you fell into civilian hands, then it was a toss-up. [00:01:00]

JUNGE: You got that back in --

BELL: Forty-three.

JUNGE: Forty -- yeah, December 2, 1943.

BELL: Just before we went overseas.

JUNGE: That's when I was about six months old.

BELL: (laughter) How about that? Now, I was going to show you this so you could get a better idea. Here's the astrodome. That's where I had my head stuck. Here's the front turret, and the guns -- here they are, sticking out here. The ammunition for the guns came from these canisters; one along this side and one along the other side. Here's -- see - here's the pilot and the co-pilot, and I'm standing right there. I drop out of sight and they wonder. Then, here's the top turret.

JUNGE: The top turret is [00:02:00] behind the pilot and co-pilot and the one you were standing in was right in front of the pilot and co-pilot. So, they could see in that plexi that there was no head in there anymore.

BELL: No. This one -- I just -- it just happened to be out.

I think that's -- oh, here's this --

JUNGE: Two B-24s --

BELL: I was going to show you this. These are the actual photos. I -- you know, it's plumb crazy. It seems like I wrote most everything down, but I didn't write down the date of when that happened.

JUNGE: You mean, the pictures here are snapshot pictures of a B24 with some holes in it.

BELL: After we returned from a mission.

JUNGE: Was that the mission that you got your eye knocked out in?

BELL: No.

JUNGE: You got hit more than once, then?

BELL: No, no. No, I was not hit. See -- here's the tail turret, and the shell came up right behind him, see?

JUNGE: No, I mean when your plane was hit more than once when you were --

BELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Your plane was -- [00:03:00] here's good old Martin [Sif?] -- the radio operator. He was killed that day.

JUNGE: Well, Tom, how do you account for the fact that you're still alive?

BELL: By the grace of God. That's all you're going to attribute it to. See -- here I am working with the crew, cleaning our guns. We came off a mission and we shot our guns, which was about every time. We'd go down after the mission and work together to clean the guns and everything. Here I am standing on -- by the side of the plane. Now, this is the plane that we actually flew, I think. I've forgotten what the heck that is supposed to be and what it was called.

JUNGE: The emblem on the side of the plane says -- it's [00:04:00] something about -- it's "Get Going."

BELL: Yeah, I've forgotten what it is. I've got an explanation somewhere on the thing.

JUNGE: These were all taken what year? Do you remember? Forty-four?

BELL: Yeah. Probably, April or May of '44.

JUNGE: So, let me get this straight. Where we left off before, you had been shot down, were in the hospital, recovered. How long was it before you went back into flying?

BELL: I've got it written down somewhere, but I can't remember.

JUNGE: Well, you don't have to be exact. I mean, was it a week, a month, two months?

BELL: I think it was the latter part of June or early part of July. I got a call from my commanding officer or somebody in his office and said -- they said, [00:05:00] "You want to fly one more mission?" I said, "Well, tell me about it." (laughter) They said, "Well, we want to have you fly over here and we'll kind of have a get-together. Then, we'll fly you back with all of your stuff." See -- all my clothing and everything was still back here at the camp. It was all packed up. They do that, you know, whenever you're killed or you're hurt or something, whatever. So, I said, "Sure." So, they flew -- and I've got to get that thing -- a copy made for you. They flew from our field here at Cerignola. See -- here's Cerignola. We were just -- we were two miles from Cerignola, I think it was. Anyway, we were going to go on this mission. [00:06:00] You always held your breath when you went to a briefing. How far is it going to be and how bad is it going to be? This one was no push-over.

JUNGE: The Ploesti one -- the Ploesti Oil Fields?

BELL: Campina.

JUNGE: Oh, Campina?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Yeah, tell me.

BELL: Yeah, we had bombed Ploesti a week or so before that, and we had bombed Bucharest a month or so before.

JUNGE: Why was Ploesti so important?

BELL: It was an oil complex. It was a big oil field. It was really important to the Germans.

JUNGE: This is in Romania?

BELL: Romania, right.

JUNGE: OK, right above, just north of Bucharest?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Do you remember any explosions on - I mean tanks. Did you hit the tanks -- gas -- I mean, the storage tanks?

BELL: You don't -- you didn't really know. [00:07:00] I mean, you concentrated on your target and you dropped the bombs on that. Then, unless there was some special reason, you got away from there as far as you could. You could look back and see these towering clouds of smoke and knew you'd done some damage. So, that's about all you had. Now -- but, the next day or just after your mission there, the reconnaissance -- our reconnaissance planes would fly in there and take photos. That's how they come these photos are shown in here. They came in and took those photos afterwards to show the damage; in some cases, pretty expensive. In other cases, they'd go, oh, boy, that was a waste of time. But, it really wasn't.

JUNGE: So, you took the next job that they offered -- flying job? [00:08:00] I mean, you were asked if you wanted to go back up on another mission.

BELL: Well, now, this mission, though, was just to fly from Bari, where I was in the hospital --

JUNGE: In Italy.

BELL: In Italy. Bari is down along here somewhere. There it is, right there. See -- it wasn't very far from our field. They wanted to fly down to get me and they said, "You'll get flight pay for it, and you'll get credit for a mission." (laughter) So, I said, "Yeah, I'll go for that." So, they did. You know, the more I thought about it -- I've got it explained in this write-up I've done and I'll send you a copy of it. Boy, it -- it just made you feel pretty good that they would take off [00:09:00] in a big, old B-24, fly it about 50 miles and pick you up with your stuff and fly you back.

JUNGE: Made you feel sort of special.

BELL: Yes. I left this out because, in a way, you see, here is March 30, '44, and we were flying all over this area during that time. This mission this day was on -- when I say April -- it's here somewhere -- in April, anyway. So, this had a lot of direct connection to what we did here. One of the things that used to really gripe us was the fact

that the old Germans -- well, actually, the Russians did it more -- the complaining. [00:10:00] We didn't do anything for them, you know. What crud! We gave them \$11 Billion worth of war goods, 'B' with a big 'B' because, back at that time, you hardly ever saw a billionaire. There weren't any, I don't think. But, we sent them \$11 Billion. When Joe Venoto was released from the prison camp -- Bulgaria is down here. Well, Bulgaria is here, see? Here we are up here, so Bulgaria was down south here. When they were shot down, they were shot down right in this area.

JUNGE: Between -- right on the line between Bulgaria and Romania.

BELL: Yeah, we were just flying over the Danube River, [00:11:00] which is kind of a landmark. They turned back and they went down right here in -- I think it was that town right there -- Vidin. Then, they were taken prisoner and brought clear over here somewhere, and this is where they were released. That's where this man went also when he was shot down.

JUNGE: The guy who wrote the report --

BELL: Yeah, Colonel Asch, I think. Then, he did some finagling and with his rank, boy, they really looked up to him. He talked them into letting them go down -- come back down this way somewhere. He wanted to get to -- was it

Turkey or Greece? I've forgotten. As it turned out, they flew a plane right into where they were from over here and picked them up and took them back. (laughter)

JUNGE: So, [00:12:00] whereabouts was it where you took the flak in the eye? What -- was that over Romania?

BELL: No, that was -- that was here in Austria.

JUNGE: Oh, over Vienna?

BELL: Yeah. I can't orient.

JUNGE: I don't think we're that far.

BELL: Here it is. See -- clear up here somewhere.

JUNGE: Vienna -- right here.

BELL: There's Vienna -- right there. All right. So, instead of going this way, we went that way. But, it's just about as far.

JUNGE: Instead of going east, you went north.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Have you -- did you ever go back to any of those countries after the war?

BELL: I always wished I could but I never did.

JUNGE: Why did you bomb -- you've got these little yellow slips or tags put on certain places on this big Hammond or US -- US map -- I mean, Europe map.

BELL: I gave away my great, big atlas, so [00:13:00] Geoff O'Gara loaned me his. So, that's why I'm using it.

JUNGE: OK. You got --

BELL: But, the reason that I wanted to show all this was, first of all, losing my old crew, right here.

JUNGE: Where at?

BELL: Just as we crossed over the Danube River. They were shot down here somewhere in Bulgaria. Well, that was a real blow. I knew there were fighter planes overhead. They were going to get it bad and they did, which I will explain as I write up this stuff. So, then, we went on to our east target at Campina -- all of the railroads. Well, as I recollect, we made a right-hand, sweeping turn, and as we came around, see where it says there, "Moldavia?" Just beyond Moldavia [00:14:00] is Ukraine here. When we made that sweeping turn, I could look right across over here -- actually, it was probably somewhere up in here -- and see a huge, huge cloud of dust and smoke. It just filled in the horizon over there. I thought, boy, that has to be a big land battle, and that's what it was. Ninety days later, the Russians had moved from here to Ploesti and had taken this whole area.

JUNGE: From the Ukraine?

BELL: Well, from the Germans holding it.

JUNGE: What do you think about that Ukrainian situation now?

BELL: Bad deal. Bad deal. I have always had a lot of sympathy for the Ukrainians. Did you ever read much about them and what happened to them? [00:15:00] I'll tell you. That Roosevelt -- he should never have run for that last term. He was old and he was sick. I'm a lot older than he was when he died, and I think I'm in far better shape. He gave away all of this.

JUNGE: All the --

BELL: To Stalin.

JUNGE: Southeast Europe.

BELL: We'd had our asses shot off all over this whole area. When we got back from that mission that day, I'm sure we sat in our tents back over here --

JUNGE: In Italy.

BELL: -- and talked about how long it would take to face down the Russians so that these people would be freed, freed, freed; not under the thumb of a damned dictator. [00:16:00] But, Roosevelt didn't play it that way. He gave away this whole thing. He died the day I turned 21 and it was on a Sunday, as I remember. The next day, I went down and registered as a Republican just to -- I can't think of the word I want to use.

JUNGE: In disgust?

BELL: Disgust -- yes. It took me a few years to get wise enough to go back and register as a Democrat. But, it was just sad. Those 50 years of the Iron Curtain or 40 or whatever it turned out to be was never necessary. When Joe Venoto was freed somewhere over in this part of Bulgaria -- and I've got the account somewhere so I'd know where it was -- he told me -- he said, "You know, Tom. It's like we used to talk about when we sat [00:17:00] in our tents." When the Russians finally got down into this country and freed these guys from these prisoner -- from this prisoner of war camp, he said, "You know, Tom, I was standing on a street corner." They had turned him loose. They said, "Get out of here. We don't want anything to do with you," because it meant the Russians would really come down hard on him if they -- well, I'm all screwed up here. Joe has been released from prisoner of war camp. The Russians come through. He said, "You know, every vehicle was American -- every one; the jeeps, the trucks, the tanks, the big trucks -- [00:18:00] all American. We used to sit in our tents and say that. What would they fight us with? We've sent them \$11 Billion worth of war goods so that they could fight the war over here, and then they turn around and kick us in the teeth.

JUNGE: What do you suppose that Roosevelt was thinking?

BELL: He probably wasn't thinking much of anything. He might have been thinking this, because I'm sure there were good Republicans back then, just like there are now, who are saying, "No, no, no. No, don't do that." But, the guys of us that were fighting the war said, "We don't want Russia here. We want these people freed." You know, as we [00:19:00] flew over a lot of this country, you could look down on these little villages as you flew over them and so on. I'd talk to them down there and say, "Yeah, you folks, you don't know why we're up here, but we're up here to set you free." But, that wasn't to be the case. If Roosevelt had sat down right there at that Yalta, which is --

JUNGE: Oh, that's in the Crimea.

BELL: It's clear over here, yeah, clear up here. If he had said, "You know, Joe, when this war is over, we don't want any more trouble. But, we want you to withdraw your troops to within your boundaries and leave these other people alone." [00:20:00] That's about all he had to say. If Stalin had spoken up, he'd say -- Roosevelt would say, "Now, wait a minute. What are you going to fight us with? You don't have anything." We would put 700 planes in the air, like right there. The Russians didn't have a plane they could bomb like that, and they had very few fighters. They couldn't have withstood our Air Force, our ground

troops. They had been fighting this war for what -- two years before we ever got into it. Their people were damn sick of war, just like we were getting. But, we -- like I say, we would sit there in the tents and say, "By golly, you know, count me in on this because I don't want my sons, if we get out of this and we have sons -- we don't want them over here doing what we're [00:21:00] doing. We'll do it while we're here." It didn't work out that way. I was just sick when that Iron Curtain came down. I didn't think I'd ever see the day.

JUNGE: The Iron Curtain, Churchill said, went from Trieste here in the Adriatic to north -- in northwest Yugoslavia; from Trieste in the Adriatic to Stettin in the Baltic. So, yes, it looks like, you know, Stalin took this whole part -
-

BELL: Oh, hell, he did.

JUNGE: South central Europe.

BELL: No, I think this is a story about him taking - is it Romania? No, Hungary -- there. See -- he hadn't really taken over. He just let it be known that's going to be my territory. Keep your hands off. If Roosevelt had turned around and said, "Now, wait a minute, Joe. We've sent you all these goods and now we're winning, and we don't want

you messing [00:22:00] with any more of Europe," that's all he had to say. He was holding the prime poker hand.

JUNGE: Does it make you feel like or wonder what you were fighting for after that happened?

BELL: Oh, hell, yes, yeah. You know, I'd just seen my buddy shot down and killed here and all the others I make mention of getting killed. Why did we do that? Why didn't Roosevelt ask some of us who were doing the fighting, "What would you think?" We'd have told him. "Tell that Stalin to get his ass out of here and back to his own country, and we'll let these people decide their own fate."

JUNGE: Yeah, it would make me feel, as a -- just an enlisted man, if I was in that period of time -- it would make me feel like I was just cannon fodder, you know, after all the [00:23:00] work and all the sacrifice. So, you went back after they flew you out of the hospital. You went back to flying with the crew. Was it the same crew?

BELL: No. No, they just sent a B-24 over to pick me up and then get me back.

JUNGE: Then, you started making missions again?

BELL: No, no, no. No, my eye is blown out. They don't --

JUNGE: Oh, so this -- you said you made 32 missions. Some of them were double, so you really had only 22 or 25.

BELL: Twenty-two.

JUNGE: So, that last one was your last mission -- that 22nd?

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: OK. So, then --

BELL: I don't think it was ever counted as a mission. I don't ever see anything in my records, but I do have the deal where they paid me flight pay for that flight that day.

JUNGE: You remember that?

BELL: Yeah. Well, I kind of remembered it, but [00:24:00] I didn't really realize until I was going through all my papers and there it is.

JUNGE: Did you get the Purple Heart?

BELL: Oh, sure. You bet.

JUNGE: What other --

BELL: Silver Star. Didn't I lay it out here somewhere?

JUNGE: Yeah, you did.

BELL: We can take this back now.

JUNGE: Here -- I'll take this off you here.

BELL: All right. Just lay it over there on the counter and I'll return it to Geoff. Woops. Thanks, Sir.

JUNGE: Sure. So, you got the Silver Star, the Purple Heart. What else?

BELL: The air medal with two -- three clusters.

JUNGE: What does that mean?

BELL: Well, I guess it did. It meant a hell of a lot because there were -- you got -- every mission, somebody would get killed.

JUNGE: Oh, the cluster meant somebody got killed?

BELL: No. It just [00:25:00] means you were on that mission and you had your ass hanging out there to get shot off. That's about all it meant.

JUNGE: What did you do, then, Tom, after they put you back to work, since you only had one eye?

BELL: They never put me back to work. I went through the hospital, went to Fitzsimons in Denver, and I got retired.

JUNGE: That was it for you, for World War II?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Was that the end of '44, pretty much? The war with the Germans wasn't -- had it been over? The war with the Germans had been over in August of '40 or let's see -- sometime in '44.

BELL: Forty-five, I thought.

JUNGE: Was it '45?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: I thought that's when the Japanese gave up. OK, well, anyway, there's no sense in arguing about that. That's all fact. What do -- when you look back on your war years --

your service -- for the US [00:26:00] Armed Services, what are your feelings?

BELL: Pretty proud of it. I think I just ran across this and decided to give you a copy. Yeah, here it is.

JUNGE: Letter of Recommendation for Second Lieutenant Thomas A. Bell. Well, this summarizes everything. "To whom it may concern: Because of injuries received in combat, Lieutenant Thomas A. Bell, formerly a Bombardier with the 742nd Bombardment Squadron, 455th Bombardment Group (H) has been permanently grounded despite [00:27:00] the fact that his contribution and sacrifices are already great. Lieutenant Bell has expressed a desire to continue in the service for the duration. In the period during which Lieutenant Bell completed 30 combat sorties with this group, I became very well-acquainted with him and with his work. He was one crew member who was always vitally interested in all that Intelligence had to offer, both with respect to his particular job and with respect to the general, military situation. Lieutenant Bell has expressed a desire to continue his military service in Combat Intelligence. Considering his natural interest in the field, coupled with his combat experience, it is my opinion that Lieutenant Bell would make an excellent Combat Intelligence officer. As a group Intelligence officer, I

would regard him as a valuable addition to my section. Last, coupled with his other abilities, Lieutenant Bell possesses an attractive personality and is highly regarded by both officers and men." [00:28:00] It's signed, "Alvin E. Coons, C-O-O-N-S, Major, Air Corps Intelligence Officer." So, you went to work for him?

BELL: Then, turn it over on the other side. You know, I'd go in and --

JUNGE: Why don't you read that? I read one. You read one.

BELL: "Here's a letter I promised to write for you."

JUNGE: Oh, wait a minute. Start with the date and this.

BELL: "Second of June, 1944, somewhere in Italy." So, by the second of June, see -- that was a little over two weeks after I was hit. So, I would just go in and visit with him because I was interested --

JUNGE: Coons?

BELL: Yeah, Major Coons; a great guy.

JUNGE: OK. You started here. "Dear Tom --"

BELL: I'd go in and visit with him, and that's when I told him, "If anything ever [00:29:00] happens to me, I'd like to carry on as an Intelligence officer." So, that's what this is. "Here's the letter I promised to write for you. If, when you make your decision as to what you want to do this letter proves of any value, I shall be more than

happy. Personally, I wouldn't be in any hurry to make the decision. Go home, rest up, and get fully recovered first. Your contribution is already greater than that of the vast majority. It might be just as well to get started on whatever you plan to do after the war. You will have a certain adjustment to make, which I believe you will make; have, in fact, already made. Probably, you will want to get additional training. It might be well to get started on that. On the other hand, if you want to continue in the service, I believe you would find Intelligence an [00:30:00] interesting field in which you could make a contribution. In any event, I would like to hear from you when you get back to the States and size the situation up. The best of everything. If I can ever be of any assistance, I hope you'll get in touch with me." I've always regretted that I did not. Got back in school and got busy and never wrote to him.

JUNGE: How did you -- how was your adjustment coming out of the service?

BELL: Oh, fine. I never had any problems, you know, like they're having now.

JUNGE: You didn't have, in those days, what they call shell shock, which is, in those days --

BELL: PTSD?

JUNGE: PTSD -- thank you.

BELL: Like probably someone like that. No, I never had any problems -- never had any. I just put it all behind me. That's why I'm not [00:31:00] doing anything about it or didn't do anything about it until 50 years later -- too darn late. I should have got busy at this before-hand.

JUNGE: But, Tom, you had a whole other career.

BELL: Yeah. (laughter)

JUNGE: What did you do when you got home?

BELL: Tell me about it.

JUNGE: Where did you get mustered out, did you say?

BELL: Fitzsimons Hospital in Denver.

JUNGE: OK, and then what?

BELL: Went to my folks' place to visit with them a week or so. Then, I just came back up here to Lander. I don't know. I don't remember how in the devil I got here, but I just wanted to get out in the hills and bum around and recover, which I did. Went out in the desert, went up in the mountains, went out hunting with friends and so on. Let's see. I got out in October -- no, actually, I was released just back into civilian [00:32:00] life in September. So, October, November, December, I came up here and just goofed off; went hunting, went out in the hills, and so on. But, then, I knew I wanted to go back to

college. So, in January -- well, maybe, before that -- I made arrangements to get back in. So, I just went back to the university and started going to school again.

JUNGE: What were your -- what was your major?

BELL: Wildlife conservation and game management.

JUNGE: Is that because of your background in the outdoors?

BELL: Right. They had a professional degree and, you know, I went through all the hoops and so on to decide that's what I wanted to do.

JUNGE: You mean be a game warden?

BELL: Yeah, to start with, if I had to. I actually took the game warden's exam and got tops on it for that particular time.

JUNGE: Why weren't you then [00:33:00] a lifetime game warden?

BELL: You know, after I went to work for the Game and Fish and other duties, I got to see what a racket that game warden was, and I decided I did not want to do that.

JUNGE: What do you mean -- racket?

BELL: You had to go buddy up to all the stock growers and any of the politicians and so on. There was just too damn much politics. I'm not a politician. I just come out and tell it like it is and they say, "What?"

JUNGE: But, you have had to deal -- your reputation is that of an environmentalist.

BELL: Right.

JUNGE: You have had to deal in political situations.

BELL: Yeah. I just told it like it was and they didn't like it.

JUNGE: (laughter) How did you put up with all the guff you've put up with all these years?

BELL: Well, [00:34:00] a lot of it I just looked at as something that you just had to get by. You had to do it to put your ideas forward.

JUNGE: Looking at things in perspective, was it ever as hard working as an environmentalist in this state as it was serving in World War II?

BELL: Well, no, because in World War II, you knew you might be your ass shot off. Out here, I was never even ever threatened, which was amazing to me; never, ever threatened by anybody. I'd just tell them flat-out to their face what I thought, and I guess they accepted it.

JUNGE: What was your biggest confrontation?

BELL: Well, it's kind of a long story. In one of the jobs that I had, I was a fishery biologist. [00:35:00] The boss had put me in charge of a crew of four people to go out and do all of this work that they had fallen behind on during

the war years; checking on ponds, checking on rivers, checking on the kinds of fish here, and all that sort of thing. When I was -- and my boss was Pete Green. Did you ever get to know Pete? Hell of a nice guy -- great guy. Politics got to him, too; got him canned and he just left the state. What a loss. At any rate, Pete had hired me on and put me in charge of a crew at Sheridan to cover that whole northeast corner of Wyoming. So, in doing that, we would be working near Sheridan on certain -- in certain [00:36:00] circumstances. There was a Game and Fish-appointed, political commissioner. He didn't have anything to do with people who worked for the department, supposedly. He was always out telling us what to do and how to do it. I just got my fill of it. At any rate, I moved on and didn't pay much attention, but four years later, I think it was, this job came up out at Ocean Lake to be the manager of the Ocean Lake Game Management Unit; water fowl and other game birds in the lake itself. Heck of a nice job -- a great job -- dream job, you know. It was so great. I had been on the job a little over two years and there had been an election [00:37:00] and Milward Simpson had been defeated for governor by this guy named Joe Hickey; supposedly, a good Democrat. He was, but he was a goddamn politician, too. They just don't mix. I

mean, game management and game (inaudible) and been in politics. Anyway, this Doc Docekal had gotten off of the commission in the interim, but once Milward Simpson was elected -- I don't know how it worked out. Anyway, Doc Docekal, who was a dentist from Sheridan --

JUNGE: How do you spell that?

BELL: D-O-C-E-K-A-L, Docekal. I don't know what his ethnicity was, but he was a pain in the butt. He knew everything. He knew anything. Besides being a dentist, he knew [00:38:00] everything about fishery biology. He knew everything about game management. He got reappointed to the commission and, you know, I thought, well, he probably won't bother me. I was working. I was there at the place, at Ocean Lake, by myself that particular afternoon. Tommy had taken the boys and gone somewhere, I guess. Anyway, I was there alone. Here comes this car, drives down into the yard and into my office -- near my office. So, I looked out and saw it was old Doc Docekal. So, I went out and greeted him warmly. We talked for just a few minutes and he said, "You know, I don't know what you're doing managing these pheasants, Tom. But, whatever it is, I want you to drop it, [00:39:00] and I want you to go out and start pulling out all of the magpie nests you can find. Just pull them out and destroy them." He went on for another,

maybe, half a minute, or minute, or so, and I said - I just looked directly at him and I said, "You know, Doc, you can go to hell. I have two bosses -- one in Cheyenne," and I've forgotten what the deal was, but I said, "Now, if they came and gave me the same kind of orders that you just did, I would listen to them but I'm not sure I would tell them, OK, that I would accept it." He just kind of looked at me with a stare for about a minute, turned on his heel, got into his car, took off up the road, and that's the last I ever saw of him. But, I knew that I had burned my bridges -- [00:40:00] politician that he was. I went into my office, sat down, and wrote a letter of resignation and sent it off to my boss in Cheyenne; didn't give any explanation or anything. Of course, he and all the others wanted to know, but I did find out that there were a lot of people that felt like I did and thought Doc Docekal was a pain in the ass. He had no right, no reason. There is nothing in law that says he can do that -- come out into the field and tell somebody to do something.

JUNGE: Well, then, why were you - why did you resign?

BELL: Because with his political pull, he would have gotten me fired anyway.

JUNGE: You wanted to resign before you were fired?

BELL: Well, I hadn't even had time to think about it. I just thought, boy, have I burned my bridges. I've spent five years of college [00:41:00] to get to this place. I've spent five years at the Game and Fish and now I'm out. So long!

JUNGE: So, then, what were you -- what did you have in mind?

BELL: You know, the good Lord really watches over you. The editor of the newspaper here in Lander, Roger Budrow, had come out to do a story -- come out from here to do a story for the Lander Journal on what we were doing at Ocean Lake. So, I spent a whole day going around with him. Some of it was work that I had to do. Anyway, so, I took him around, and he did a real good story. Then, he told me. He said, "You know, Tom, if you ever want a job, let me know." This was in July or August. [00:42:00] Old Doc Docekal came down in November, after the election. So, I just got on the phone and called Roger Budrow and I said, "You know, Roger, I may be able to take you up on this thing of a job before you know it." He said, "Well, you know, I've been scratching my head, wondering what I'm going to do when my --" I think it was his brother-in-law had been working for him, but the brother-in-law was leaving. So, I just stepped right in. Two weeks later, I went to work for the journal.

JUNGE: As what?

BELL: As a reporter. I learned journalism.

JUNGE: Meanwhile, what happened to Doc Docekal?

BELL: He went sailing along. Rather ironically, it would be about three or four years later, I had started the Wyoming Outdoor Council. It was just really going great.

[00:43:00]

JUNGE: What year was that that you started it?

BELL: Nineteen sixty-nine.

JUNGE: Sixty-nine?

BELL: Yeah. Out of the blue one day, I get a call from Doc Docekal. I've forgotten, you know, just what the particulars were, but anyway, he explained to me that he was having this problem and he thought I could help him. I said, "Well, tell me, Doc." He told me and I said, "Sure, I can help you." So, I helped him.

JUNGE: With what?

BELL: I've even forgotten now.

JUNGE: So, he was reconciled to your forthrightness?

BELL: (laughter) Yeah.

JUNGE: Well, now, here's something I don't understand. You get out of the military. You've been blasted out of the air, in effect. You go to work for the Game and Fish, which is what you wanted to do. You find it's not all

cracked up to be what it's supposed to be. So, you go to work for the paper. Where does your whole [00:44:00] history of environmentalist -- environmental -- then come out of that?

BELL: See -- I went to work for Roger Budrow. I must have quit the journal at about 1955. Here it shows I'm teaching school in Lander, '53 to '57. Then, I go back for my Master's. Oh, no -- that's right. I went back to work for Game and Fish in 1957, and old Doc Docekal [00:45:00] was appointed to the commission in '59. That's when I told him to go to hell. Then, I began the journalism career with *Wyoming State Journal* in '59. But, because of the things that were going on between Roger and his wife, I just couldn't take it and I told him. I said, "I just can't continue on, Roger. I'm going to quit you." I went back to teaching junior high science in 1960. In 1965, I got involved with the Lander Rod and Gun Club here, which was one of the -- boy, it's hell to get old --

JUNGE: Conservation groups or --

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- environmentalist groups?

BELL: Well, [00:46:00] rod and gun club. But, it was about that time -- about '65 -- when all this stuff started happening in Wyoming; idea of great, big power plants

coming in. Clearcutting had been going on -- all those things -- and I'd been seeing some of that. But, I went to the Wyoming Wildlife Federation state meeting in Rock Springs the spring of 1965. Damned if they didn't elect me the president.

JUNGE: The president of which organization?

BELL: Lander Rod and Gun Club. But, I became president of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, which is connected with the National Wildlife Federation. Anyway, this happened at the latter part of the school year, and then -- which would have been [00:47:00] like April or May of '65. I had hardly got elected to that position and my old friend from Game and Fish days, Bill [Crompton?] -- did you ever meet Bill or get to know him? Heck of a guy. He was -- he had stayed on as a biologist in the Game and Fish, and that's what he was appointed as -- a game biologist in this whole area. Well, the game warden at Casper had pointed out to him and told him about what was going on out there in the Horse Heaven area, which is kind of this side of Casper -- the Rattlesnake Mountains in there. Anyway, he told Bill about this and Bill had gone and looked. Then, Bill came to me and he said, "Tom, I want to show you something. Can you take some time off?" I said, "Well, sure." So, I [00:48:00] went and drove to Casper. They had an extra

horse for me to ride, and we rode out into the Horse Heaven Hills and found all that illegal fencing. So, I took a lot of photos, documented it. They had even had the nerve to build these fences and then put signs on it, "No Trespassing." Our land -- public land! These are your good stock growers, you know. So, I just got all my photos together and went back to Washington, went to the National Wildlife Federation, presented all my information, and they went -- they said, "Well, come on. We're going to go down to the House of Representatives." They had connections there with a congressman from Wisconsin named Henry Reuss, R-E-U-S-S; hell of a guy. He was [00:49:00] really onto that -- about the fencing. So, here it blew up -- a national deal. Hit all the headlines -- illegal fences on the public land. Oh, boy!

JUNGE: So, did -- go ahead.

BELL: So, that was kind of the start of it. I got my foot in the door at the National Wildlife Federation. I was always welcome back there. They would make trips out here. I would point out something and they would come out to see it.

JUNGE: Well, how could you make a living, though, just being an advocate in those days?

BELL: Well, you really couldn't. Shit! That's where it really puzzles people. How -- well, how did you do all this? Well, there are several things that entered in. My wife and I -- I don't think I have it in here.

JUNGE: What was her name?

BELL: Her name was Muriel but she was [00:50:00] nicknamed "Tommy." We were Tom and Tommy Bell. Really, an [eagle?] -- did you look at that photo of her up there on the wall?

JUNGE: Oh, I see it, yeah.

BELL: Yeah. She went with me back to Washington to get the National Department of the Interior Award of the Year. Mardie Murie and I both went back and got it. But, Tommy got to go with me.

JUNGE: So, you were talking about how you make a living.

BELL: Yeah. It just so happened that her dad had started this oil company in Sheridan. He had just died and so she had gotten some money. She always wanted to buy a ranch, so that's what we did -- bought a 120-acre ranch back out here; darn, roughest thing, anyway, but we both loved it. (laughter) [00:51:00] I think we kept it for seven years. I've got that written down somewhere because I remember that seven. At any rate, between her money coming from her dad and, of course, just having my -- lost my eye, I have gotten a check from the government every month down through

the years since the day it happened. I'm not getting something like \$1100 or \$1200 a month --

JUNGE: Which is enough to live on for you?

BELL: Well, from that and the other things. I stayed on teaching for another year or so. I think it was 1966 when I quit teaching. So, I had the teaching job, and with her money, we bought the ranch. Then, I've forgotten what came up. I sold some [00:52:00] uranium stock, I think, and bought some Shorthorn cows. So, we had a little herd of registered Shorthorns. I would sell the calves; made good money selling the little bulls. So, between all of those things, I just kept going, limping along. Then, '69, I think it was, we had gotten -- in the meantime, her mother had died also and left her some money. So, we were a little slack in there. We were given a little slack. When it came up with the guys working at *High Country News*, I saw them going down the street [00:53:00] one day and I asked them, "What are you doing?" They said, "Well, we just ran out of money so we're quitting." So, I went to see the guy that owned the paper, Ray Savage, and I said, "Hey, I don't want this to go kaput." I had just started putting the *Wyoming Outdoor Council Newsletter* in this little newspaper he was putting out.

JUNGE: Was it called the *High Country News* at the time?

BELL: No. It was called *Camping News Weekly*. The guy had a great idea -- still a good idea. You know, with all the people who were travelling and they had their travel trailers and so on, I thought it was a pretty darn, good idea. But, it also gave me the vehicle to put the news out about what was going on in the state through the Wyoming Outdoor Council. [00:54:00] So, it wound up I -- it wound up with me owning the paper.

JUNGE: Who actually started the Wyoming Outdoor Council?

BELL: I did.

JUNGE: You're the one that began it?

BELL: Well, I had the idea. So, then, I went around to ask all these people -- different ones; Mardie Murie, and Bill Isaacs, and Carrol Noble, and Bruce Ward of Casper, and Ann Lindahl in Laramie. Did you ever get to know Ann?

JUNGE: No.

BELL: Wonderful lady. She was the head of the League of Women Voters, I think. So, she was involved in politics.
(telephone rings)

JUNGE: Do you want me to get that?

BELL: Yeah, can you see who it is?

JUNGE: Yeah. Hang on. Survey -- you don't need to answer that.

BELL: [00:55:00] No.

JUNGE: Just a survey.

BELL: Yeah. No.

JUNGE: I mean, I'm not telling you what to do but --

BELL: Oh. I get so damn many of those things.

JUNGE: Well, so, you started the Outdoor Council. What was your objective in starting that council?

BELL: If you'd have been around then, you would have been horrified, like all the rest of us. The damned smokestacks were going in. There were no laws -- none -- for clean air, clean water, taking care of the land, taking care of the forest and so on. You had to start from scratch and build it all up. That's what we did.

JUNGE: So, you knew when you established it what you wanted to do?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Take care of this part of the planet and the air --

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: -- and the water?

BELL: Yeah, exactly. You read. I've written quite a lot about it. You read in there. So, at any rate, once we got [00:56:00] the Wyoming Outdoor Council up and running and then this opportunity came for me to buy into *Camping News Weekly*, which I did, within two or three months, I had kind

of changed it all from being a travel recreation one to giving them hell on the environment.

JUNGE: Were you doing all the writing?

BELL: Oh, yeah, to start with.

JUNGE: What about the photography?

BELL: Yeah, doing that, too.

JUNGE: You were a one-man show?

BELL: Well, I guess, you could say that, yeah.

JUNGE: Where did you have it printed?

BELL: The paper?

JUNGE: Yeah.

BELL: Right here in Lander -- the *Lander Journal*. Remember, I went to work for Roger Budrow as a reporter? He and I became very good friends. He thought that was such a great idea. He just helped us immeasurably. He'd do some of the printing for nothing just to do it.

JUNGE: Well, [00:57:00] when did you hire your first person?

BELL: Well --

JUNGE: Your first helper -- let's put it that way.

BELL: We hired Keith Becker to take my place when the workload got so heavy that I couldn't do both.

JUNGE: Both the writing and the what?

BELL: Getting out in the state and seeing what was going on.

JUNGE: Researching the issues, in other words? Did you have advertising in that paper?

BELL: No.

JUNGE: This was all paid for by you?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Well, man, how much did it cost you to put out that paper every day -- I mean, every week --

BELL: Well, it really wasn't very much. Between my Army [00:58:00] retirement and what I was getting in from selling the uranium claims --

JUNGE: Oh, you were selling uranium claims?

BELL: Yeah. Well, what I did was trade the claims for stock and then sold the stock.

JUNGE: Wait a minute. You were going out and establishing claims of your own?

BELL: Or with others. We had what was called a school group. My boss, at the time, when I was teaching -- it was only about the second year I was teaching or third -- we were going to a teachers' meeting in Casper. I've forgotten the name of the guy that discovered -- made a million-dollar discovery of uranium [00:59:00] down in Colorado.

JUNGE: Not Charlie Jeffrey?

BELL: Charlie something --

JUNGE: Jeffrey -- Jeffrey City?

BELL: No. That's not in Colorado.

JUNGE: Oh, I don't know.

BELL: Charlie something. Anyway, we were driving along and talking about this, and Stan Starrett looked out the window. He said, "I wonder if there is any uranium over there in those hills," never dreaming that it was being discovered right then.

JUNGE: Where? Where was this?

BELL: Gas Hills.

JUNGE: Oh, the Gas Hills?

BELL: Yeah. We got back from our meeting and the news blew out. They discovered uranium right down there, where Stan had pointed across and said, "I wonder if there's any uranium over there." So, we decided -- and we -- myself and this other teacher -- [01:00:00] I think we were making the grand sum of \$200 a month teaching. But, I liked to do it and it was a way of making a living. So, anyway, we got to talking about it up here at school. Stan said, "Why don't we go out and get some claims?"

JUNGE: What was his last name?

BELL: Stan Starrett.

JUNGE: How do you spell it?

BELL: S-T-A-R-R-E-T-T. One of the schools up here is named for him. He was a heck of a nice guy; really pretty lenient, too. (laughter) At any rate, we did. We went out and looked around. We thought, well, heck, if that's all there is to it, we can do that. So, we did.

JUNGE: Staked claims?

BELL: Yeah -- a heck of a lot of work -- a lot more work than you think.

JUNGE: [01:01:00] Why?

BELL: Carrying those damn, heavy posts for half a mile on your shoulders.

JUNGE: But, didn't -- were you one of those guys that went out with a Geiger counter?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: You did that?

BELL: Yeah. My father-in-law -- as soon as we got interested in it and everything, they'd come over to visit and, of course, I'd be out mining or --

JUNGE: Staking claims?

BELL: Staking claims. My wife would tell her dad, "Yeah, he's out there staking claims." Well, Al got interested. He got so interested he bought me a Geiger counter. We had a heck of a lot of fun and made quite a little money.

JUNGE: So, how did that Geiger counter work? I'm curious.

BELL: You never, ever saw one?

JUNGE: Well, I've seen pictures of them.

BELL: Well, it's just a little, old metal box about so long and so wide and about so high with a switch up here. You carried it out there and, [01:02:00] if you thought there might be uranium, you turned the switch on and if there was, it would go *boing* -- the needle on it -- and you knew you were close to uranium.

JUNGE: This -- the ones I always pictured were sort of like vacuum cleaners only they had a little, flat disk at the end of a pole and people would run that over -- or maybe, I'm thinking of a metal detector.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. So, did this have a microphone attached to it?

BELL: No.

JUNGE: So, whatever came within -- you know, whatever came to that box registered if it was uranium?

BELL: Yes. The closer you got to it -- now, it had a needle on it just like this thing here, and if you were close to uranium, that needle would go almost all the way around. But, it also kind of had a buzzer on it, and so you could hear it or I could then. I'm losing my hearing. I couldn't now, I don't think. [01:03:00] Anyway, if you got close to uranium, it would start really buzzing. You'd

just keep walking in a shorter circle until you were on the spot where the needle was clear over here.

JUNGE: Well, how do you file a claim? Do you just -- I mean, why couldn't you just say, "I want all of Fremont County?"

BELL: I think some of them tried that. (laughter)

JUNGE: But, how -- can you take 100 acres or 160 acres -- a quarter-section --

BELL: Twenty -- twenty acres.

JUNGE: OK, and you can have as many 20-acre claims as you wanted?

BELL: Yeah, except you had to pay \$100 a month.

JUNGE: That's what kept people back.

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: OK. So, as soon as you --

BELL: It wasn't all free.

JUNGE: As soon as you found these claims, then were there speculators that would come in and buy?

BELL: Oh, yeah. Of course, there were these bigger companies who really wanted to [01:04:00] get their hands on as much uranium as they could. So, if you had a block of 40 claims out there, they would trade you their stock for the whole 40 acres -- for the whole 40 claims; 160 acres it would be -- 20 x 40.

JUNGE: Eighty -- that would be eighty -- 800 acres. Well, OK.

BELL: Well, my math's not too good anymore.

JUNGE: No, that's OK. That doesn't matter. So, what happens if the company doesn't do anything and the stock turns out to be worthless?

BELL: You just write it off. That happened to some of our claims. But, they're out there working some of our old claims right now. They just came back around and decided they were good enough. They were going to develop them.

JUNGE: So, you still have an interest in those companies?

BELL: No. I traded all my -- all the claims for the stock.

JUNGE: Well, that's what I mean. You've got stock in these companies.

BELL: I don't think so. I haven't checked into that.

[01:05:00] No -- I think all of the stock that I had that was of any use I had already sold. I know I did, in fact, because I really ran pretty low with these two -- Outdoor Council and the *High Country News*.

JUNGE: Well, it kind of shows where your heart is because, if you don't even know if you have interest in these uranium claims anymore or stock, rather, you're not too concerned about it.

BELL: No. I never was concerned about a lot of money except that I knew that I had to have enough money to support my family.

JUNGE: How many kids did you guys have?

BELL: Well, we just had three then. We adopted the kids -- well, 30 years ago or so. I never got [01:06:00] really all upset about a lot of money. If I had enough money to put beans in my belly and have a roof over my head, that's all I need. These guys who go for a billion dollars, I cannot -- just cannot conceive of thinking that you need more money if you've got \$62 Billion. What the hell are you going to do with it all?

JUNGE: Like Mick McMurry?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: I think, at that point in time, it's not a matter of collecting the geld -- collecting the money. I think it's a matter of the game itself and what -- you know, he's done some things for this state and for the community, so, you know, maybe -- maybe, he's not worried about buying another Corvette.

BELL: Oh, I'm sure he's not. He could buy a whole fleet of them.

JUNGE: Well, OK. Let's talk [01:07:00] about the Outdoor Council. You established the Outdoor Council, and then

afterwards, did the *High Country News* become its official organ?

BELL: Yes. It's too involved to go through. I was just going to show you the first news release I put out. It hit the front page of the *Journal*.

JUNGE: What?

BELL: The Outdoor Council. "Wyoming Outdoor Council to be formed."

JUNGE: Who were your main interested parties at that time?

BELL: Mardie Murie, Carrol Noble, Ann Lindahl, Charlie Piersal, Bruce Ward. I'm trying to think of --

JUNGE: I've got some other names here. Let me try to refresh your memory. Dr. Oliver Scott?

BELL: Yeah, from Casper.

JUNGE: Clayton Trosper.

BELL: From Cheyenne.

JUNGE: Dr. Harold [01:08:00] McCracken.

BELL: From Cody. He --

JUNGE: Am I pronouncing it right?

BELL: Yeah, the Harold McCracken.

JUNGE: OK. Burton Marston?

BELL: Laramie. He was the one I was trying to think of from Laramie.

JUNGE: Charles Piersal.

BELL: Casper.

JUNGE: Roger Budrow.

BELL: From Lander.

JUNGE: Bruce Ward.

BELL: From Casper.

JUNGE: L.W. Bill Isaacs.

BELL: From Pinedale.

JUNGE: Ralph Hallock.

BELL: From Casper.

JUNGE: Les Shoemaker.

BELL: From Dubois.

JUNGE: Olin Atwood.

BELL: Olin Atwood was a rock hunter from here, but I just talked to him and told him what it was all about. He said, "Yeah, I'll help."

JUNGE: Who was the key person in all that besides yourself?

BELL: Oh, probably, Bruce Ward and Clayton Trosper and Les Shoemaker, Mardie Murie. They were all really involved.

JUNGE: [01:09:00] Did you know Alice Shoemaker?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: I did an interview with her about 20, 25 years ago -- feisty.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Tough woman.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: What was your memory of her?

BELL: Well, just a very good person who just jumped right in with Les. They'd take me out on trips up around Dubois; one thing and another.

JUNGE: Did you stay at their dude ranch?

BELL: No, I never did stay there. It was always so close to Lander here. I'd just drive up to see him.

JUNGE: Yeah. Well, tell me - how about just giving me a little vignette. Are you getting tired?

BELL: No.

JUNGE: OK. You look fresh as a daisy. I don't know how you do it. Anyway, give me a little vignette on each of these people. Mardie Murie --

BELL: Mardie Murie? You know her, don't you?

JUNGE: I didn't meet her. Now, I know who she -- I know of her, yes.

BELL: [01:10:00] Well, she and her husband, Olaus Murie, were some of the real go-getters in protecting the open lands and wilderness areas. Olaus had a doctorate degree in biology, I think it was. Anyway, that's what he kind of worked in. Mardie was just one of those extraordinary persons. Well, I've done it. I'm hooked up. I can't get loose. Anyway, it's immaterial. She's gone now. She

lived to be -- I think it was 103 -- tough old gal; oh, a wonderful person. I used to drive up to Jackson and pick her up and take her to the -- wherever the Outdoor Council was meeting. We had just adopted this boy that you met here. [01:11:00] He was just a little baby then. I know that he got on her nerves on some of those trips, but she never said anything.

JUNGE: Do you remember -- now, this person's not on the list -- do you remember Paul [Petsall]?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: What do you remember about him?

BELL: Well, he's pretty much of a stuffed shirt and thought a lot of himself.

JUNGE: Really?

BELL: Oh, yeah. He and I used to butt heads over the wilderness areas up here. He used them for his business. I once asked him, "What's the deal with you, anyway, Paul, that you're not for the wilderness?" Oh, he had some big explanation. No, he was pretty much of a stuffed shirt, as far as I was concerned.

JUNGE: Did -- he's the one that started the National Outdoor Leadership School?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: But, [01:12:00] I always got the impression, reading about him, that he was concerned about wilderness and how you should leave it; how you should live in it, how you should leave it.

BELL: Yes, and he used to throw that back at me. "Oh, I do more up in the wilderness than you'll ever do;" that sort of thing, you know. But, other than that -- well, you talk to some of the people who will give you the real story on it, and they'll tell you the NOLS people have just trashed that forest up there. It's not a very good deal.

JUNGE: So, you guys used to butt heads?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: He's tough. He climbed the Tetons every year -- the Grand Teton, or at least tried to.

BELL: I think I could have done if I'd have tried, if I'd wanted to. (laughter)

JUNGE: You know, somebody told me he was tough physically, too, and that he [01:13:00] got into a fight with a lot younger guys and he kind of cleaned their brick.

BELL: Well, he's a pretty big guy. I don't know.

JUNGE: You never had a confrontation with him, then, that way? How was it that you avoided -- did you ever have any fistfights or did you ever have any confrontations?

BELL: Never any.

JUNGE: How is it you got by without them?

BELL: Darned if I know. I just knew how to smooth feathers,
I guess.

JUNGE: (laughter) Well, yeah, but you're working with guys
that are making their living drilling oil, scraping the
ground for coal, and looking for uranium, and --

BELL: Well, you'd just go after them and you tell them the
truth.

JUNGE: The truth hurts.

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: But, they can't back down from the truth.

BELL: No.

JUNGE: That's the key.

BELL: If you knew what you were talking about and I always
did because I'd always prepare myself -- [01:14:00] but, if
you knew what you were talking about and had the facts, you
could just back them right off the map, aside from the fact
that money is something that everybody fought for except
me. I don't know. It's a -- well, we're down to one hell
of a fix because of that American feeling of wanting more.
If you read some of the stuff that I've written there, it's
just -- it's a crime to me to think that a person who has a
good brain, supposedly, up here between his ears can't

figure out that you're committing suicide with what you're doing.

JUNGE: How so?

BELL: [01:15:00] I don't have that right handy to me but about three days ago, I took this story off the internet. Seven million people died of air pollution last year. It kills.

JUNGE: Ardath and I went to China last fall.

BELL: I'll bet that was quite an experience.

JUNGE: It was an education. It was a seminar. It was supposed to be a tour -- Grand Circle Tour. We had a group of people who wanted to go to China and see the historic sites, and the scenic vistas, and whatever else China had to offer -- the soldiers of Xian, the Three Gorges Dam -- and we did. But, to me, it was much, much more than that. It was a look at some people -- at a country -- that's growing and growing and, in the process, there's pollution. Those people aren't oblivious to it; you know, it's not like --

BELL: No.

JUNGE: It's not like [01:16:00] they're walking around in the clouds, saying, "What's all this?" They know what it is.

BELL: Exactly, and they know that it's killing them, too.

JUNGE: They know it's killing them, and they know that --
well, if the glaciers in the Himalayas melt and --

BELL: No water.

JUNGE: -- there's no water, the farmers can't --

BELL: That will really curb their food production.

JUNGE: Exactly, exactly. So, they're aware of it, but I
don't know how they're going about it. You know, I just --
I saw the other day where Paris had outlawed traffic in the
city for certain car numbers; you know, even-numbered car
numbers couldn't drive in the city that particular day
because it was getting so bad in Paris. But --

BELL: We're just picking around the edges of things like
that. What we've got to do is put one hell of a big
capital tax on all carbon -- period. You put one ounce of
carbon [01:17:00] out in that atmosphere and you get
thwacked 1000 bucks; something that's really tough and
brings it home. They will never do that. We don't have a
ghost of a chance of getting that thing -- whole thing
stopped.

JUNGE: So, are you saying then, Tom, at age 90, you have --
you're not an optimist about the human race?

BELL: No, I'm not. You will read -- I think I put one or
two of them in there -- columns that I wrote back in the
early '70s saying just what we're seeing now. How come

we're not smart enough to be able to figure those things out?

JUNGE: I think we're smart enough. I think we're smart enough. I don't think there's the will to do it when the short run is --

BELL: Money.

JUNGE: You've got it.

BELL: Money, money, and that's it. [01:18:00] It's too bad. You know, some fine day, the whole kit and caboodle here in the United States will wake up to the fact that they're killing their grandchildren. What the hell are we doing? What are we doing? Come on, lady and man! If you'd been watching the news and listening to those damned environmentalists, you'd know about it. No.

JUNGE: Did it ever bother you that you got to be labeled as an environmentalist?

BELL: No. I was always damn proud of it because I knew what I was doing. I knew that I was on the right side of history. It's too bad that I had to be. But, I knew way back when. I wrote my first editorial on climate change, [01:19:00] I think, in 1989, which was quite a while after I knew what the heck was going on.

JUNGE: Yeah, that's 25 years ago -- no, 15 years -- 99, 09 -- yeah, 25 years ago. Why were you so much in the know? Why did you know these things and other people didn't seem to?

BELL: Well, it's because of the studies that I took. I guided myself into these different studies so that I would know about it. Everything that I -- well, no, darn it, I can't get up again. I've got four books over there right now -- some that I've already read, some that I'm reading on which are telling about all of this. One of them -- you would probably be shocked, but I know it would shock a lot of people. [01:20:00] I am now advocating that our financial system be based on socialism.

JUNGE: I am shocked -- truly shocked.

BELL: You shouldn't be. (laughter)

JUNGE: I was going to ask you this question. I got to thinking about this on the way over here this morning. You know, aren't you talking -- aren't you leaning in that direction? Aren't you headed in that direction -- socialism?

BELL: You know, what got the American people off on that was that goddamn Joseph Stalin. They connected him with socialism.

JUNGE: I don't think they knew the difference between socialism and communism --

BELL: No.

JUNGE: -- or dictatorship or autocracy.

BELL: Yeah, [01:21:00] that's what it was. It was a raw dictatorship. He didn't really follow socialism. I'm going to have to disconnect because I want to show you this book.

JUNGE: All right. Go ahead. I'm going to put this on 'pause,' OK?

BELL: Oh, I know where (inaudible). This is the book I'm reading now.

JUNGE: You're reading --

BELL: It's great.

JUNGE: Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. [01:22:00]

BELL: What he writes in there is enough to make you cry.

JUNGE: "A searing read," by Nicholas Kristof, and I have a lot of respect for Nicholas Kristof.

BELL: Yes, I do, too.

JUNGE: *New York Times* writer.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK, here we go.

BELL: All right?

JUNGE: Yeah. So, what does -- all right. If you're headed towards socialism and some people, like I say, wouldn't

understand what socialism has to do with this, what -- how will socialism help our situation?

BELL: Well, it would mean we would have to change -- completely change, top to bottom, our financial system. Capitalism would have to go out. There would be a little flavoring of [01:23:00] capitalism with this. Some place that I've got marked here where it tells --

JUNGE: The book is called, *Imagine Living in a Socialist USA*. I'm going to have to read this book by Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality*.

BELL: It will just blow your socks off. What those rich people -- mostly goddamn Republicans -- they have robbed us. That's everybody -- anybody who doesn't have a ton of money.

JUNGE: They keep pouring money into it, like the Koch brothers.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: You've got to fight the money, and now I see where the Supreme Court just yesterday was it or the day before ruled that [01:24:00] there would not be the same limitations that there were before on contributions -- political contributions. It seems to me like we're making it easier and easier for people to take -- a small minority to take control.

BELL: Yes, and make it more tough -- tougher and tougher for us who are on the outside of all this to do anything about it. I haven't gotten that far yet. He has some recommendations and I haven't gotten that far.

JUNGE: Stiglitz --

BELL: But, I'm kind of itching.

JUNGE: I'm surprised at you, Tom. You're still learning. You're still learning, reading --

BELL: Yeah. I will until the day I cash all my chips in. I just wish I could stick around because I'd be fighting like hell against those Koch brothers and some of these other brutes. [01:25:00]

JUNGE: I have a feeling if you were 30 or 40 years younger, you would be fighting.

BELL: I sure would, tooth and toenail

JUNGE: Well, let's see. We've been talking now for, oh, three and a half hours total. Haven't I worn you out yet?

BELL: Well, I'm kind of getting to the point where I'd like to (laughter) take a break.

JUNGE: What I'm thinking --

BELL: You could come back another time or --

JUNGE: How about -- what are you doing tomorrow morning?

BELL: I have another appointment with this -- do you know Julie Stuble? She works for the Wyoming Outdoor Council.

She also writes for WyoFile, and that's what she's going to be doing this story on -- a story on me for WyoFile.

JUNGE: Good. I read Wyofile. I don't read as much as I should, but Dustin Bleizeffer and some of those guys there --

BELL: Dustin is so great. He and I have become pretty good friends. He stops to [01:26:00] see me when he comes through and --

JUNGE: He has high regard for you.

BELL: Well, I have high regard for him and anybody that works with him because they're the only ones who are really putting out news -- straight news. You know, people are afraid of talking about socialism. If they really knew what socialism really is about, they'd be for it, I think, unless you've got a -- unless you're a billionaire.

JUNGE: I don't understand why people don't know what's best for them.

BELL: Oh, boy, me, too. I just cannot understand.

JUNGE: Is it because people are afraid of change and they're ignorant of what's going on?

BELL: You know, I don't really know. I just know we're on the wrong track, and I saw it when I started -- when I [01:27:00] started writing for *High Country News*, I was seeing it then. I'm thinking, boy, people, don't -- don't

you look at things and try to figure it out or realize?
I'm trying to think. Well, this whole thing with medicine.
I tell you -- that Barrasso and Enzi -- gosh. I read some
pretty insulting things to them and about them and never
get a raise.

JUNGE: Never get a rise. Yeah, I wrote Barrasso and
basically said, "Remember your Hippocratic Oath not to harm
people." Well, by accepting money from pharmaceutical
companies to promote his campaign for whatever he's running
for, what does that have to do with helping people?

BELL: He's the biggest damn hypocrite in the world! Well,
no, there's -- he's got really good [01:28:00] company back
there in Congress. They're not all Republican. That Max
Baucus, I think, is the most corrupt individual back there,
and he gets appointed as ambassador! Oh, gee.

JUNGE: Yeah. You know what amazes me and I know this is just
for -- this is going to go down in history. Somebody will
listen to this someday, but what amazes me is that you've
got a guy like John Boehner, the head of the Majority Party
in the House and Mitch McConnell, who's the head of the
Minority Party in the Senate. Every time Obama does
something where he tries to help somebody -- help somebody
as president -- they get up and --

BELL: The answer is no -- no.

JUNGE: Everything is gainsaid. Everything is negative. Why don't -- are people so dumb that they don't see that that's what they're doing? I mean -- [01:29:00] or do they just say, "Yeah, I'm pessimistic and I agree with him because he's pessimistic."

BELL: You know what really amazes me is for Barrasso and Enzi and the two senators from Oklahoma and all the others who do not believe in science.

JUNGE: Isn't that shocking?

BELL: Shocks the hell out of me. You're a medical scientist, Dr. Barrasso, and you don't believe a word of it.

JUNGE: Yes, they do, but they don't get votes that way. Don't you think? Don't you think that they're smart enough to understand this?

BELL: Oh, sure they are. They couldn't be that dumb. But, on the other hand, when you think about what the consequences are of going down that route, it makes you wonder.

JUNGE: Short-term gains -- no foresight.

BELL: [01:30:00] That has a lot to do with it, I think, because if you're really looking down the road into the future, it would scare the hell out of you; not for me individually or you individually, but what about our kids

and grandkids and great-grandkids? They'll be dying of starvation.

JUNGE: You know, I thought about this the other day. I thought about -- do I really care that much about my great-grandchildren? I know some people have great-grandchildren. Maybe, you do.

BELL: Oh, yeah. I've got about 30 of them.

JUNGE: Great-grandkids?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: OK. I'd better shut up. No -- but I mean, I'm thinking, is that what you and I are thinking about at our age? I'm 70. You're 90. Is that what we're really thinking about is the grandkids? That's the first time -- the first thing I think of when I think of the future is I think of the grandkids. But, I also think about the human race.

BELL: About what?

JUNGE: The human race.

BELL: Oh, yeah, absolutely. That's the thing that just astounds me. To think that [01:31:00] we've been around on this earth for as long as we have and still don't think about the people that come after us. I don't get it.

JUNGE: I asked you this before. You're a pessimist at heart.

BELL: Yeah, I guess.

JUNGE: But, how could you be a pessimist and do all the things you've done in your life for the sake of other people and this environment?

BELL: I don't know.

JUNGE: Love -- wouldn't you say -- love in your heart?

BELL: Oh, yeah. It all comes back to that -- to love. If we can't love our neighbor, if we can't love the people around us, even though some of them are pretty damned crummy, there's something wrong with us.

JUNGE: I think loving life is part of that, you know.

BELL: Oh, yes.

JUNGE: [01:32:00] You're living.

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: You're alive. Don't you want to make that available for others?

BELL: Darn it. I still haven't found the thing I was going to read to you.

JUNGE: What are you looking for?

BELL: The definition of socialism.

JUNGE: Tom, what do you -- where do you think Wyoming stands vis-à-vis the rest of the world? I mean, there are people here who, maybe, haven't travelled around like you have, seen a piece of the world, been in a world war, seen the

things you've seen. Are we going to remain forever ignorant? I don't mean stupid but ignorant.

BELL: Yeah. I don't know how to explain it. I just [01:33:00] don't know how -- but, yes, because every once in a while, I read something and I think, how in the hell can they believe that? Here's the definition. "Socialism could be defined as economic democracy. It means rule by the people over the economic structures and resources that we need to keep ourselves alive and healthy to engage in creative activity to maintain good relationships with one another and to have good and meaningful lives." How can you argue with that?

JUNGE: You can't. You can't, I don't think.

BELL: No money involved, though.

JUNGE: Do we have a chance of waking up at all in this state?

BELL: No. No. I know I've run across [01:34:00] that so often in arguing with the stock growers, for instance, about putting their animals out on the range too early in the spring. "What do you know about it?"

JUNGE: Then, do you tell them what you know about it?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: What's their reaction?

BELL: "You don't have to run your cows out there."

JUNGE: That seems pretty lame because you did run cows,
didn't you?

BELL: Yeah, but not out there.

JUNGE: Out where?

BELL: Out in the public lands. I just had 120 acres, just
outside of town.

JUNGE: Of deeded acreage?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: You didn't run you cattle on public ground?

BELL: No, but my dad did when I was a kid. That's where I
got to seeing some of this. Dad didn't have a clue.

[01:35:00] He was self-educated, but on things like that --
but he would soon come up to speed if you'd point it out to
him, you know. But, it just escapes people of how simple
it is to live just a simple, frugal life and quit trying to
keep up with the Joneses. Now, he -- this one keeps
talking a lot about that -- keeping up with the Joneses,
which is a lot of it, you know.

JUNGE: Competition.

BELL: She buys a Cadillac over there and I think, man, it's
a beautiful car. I've got to have one of those right now.

JUNGE: How do you argue with the capitalists who say, "Look,
you're never going to have anything from the federal
government? All you're going to have is [01:36:00] hand-

outs, and what you're going to need to stimulate the economy and, thus, make a better life for people is to stimulate the private sector and help them --"

BELL: But, what are you doing about that?

JUNGE: Well, I --

BELL: Not a damn thing! They've got their money parked overseas -- billions sitting there, doing nothing. It just doesn't add up to me.

JUNGE: What do you -- let's quit here. But, what do you see, Tom, as your legacy? You're giving these papers to the American Heritage Center. You're going through all this stuff. You're thinking about writing your memoirs or you're doing it -- excuse me. What do you think is going to be your legacy?

BELL: I don't know. It's going to be kind of hard to believe. I will have those people who will be my detractors, and I will have those who will be my --

JUNGE: [01:37:00] Supporters.

BELL: -- supporters. I'd rather be on the side of the supporters than the detractors because they're on the wrong side of history.

JUNGE: I agree with that. I agree with that. I keep saying that to myself. That person's on the wrong side of history --

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: -- whether it comes down to gay rights, equality of pay for women --

BELL: Whether your skin is black or white.

JUNGE: Whether your skin is black or white, whether you're a Latino who's come here to this country, perhaps illegally but is making contributions every day. I see it every day. I went across this country on a bicycle on oxygen.

BELL: Did you?

JUNGE: Yeah, and I --

BELL: Good for you!

JUNGE: Who's making the beds? Who's emptying the trash cans? Who's doing the concrete work in this country? Who's doing the skinning of the animals in the packing houses? Who's doing all that work? [01:38:00] You know, they say that the way demographics are going, the way the populations are going, Mexico is slowing down. It's starting to turn a little bit gray. We're going to wish we had more people from Mexico to work for us because they're doing the work, and their population is graying.

BELL: They're doing the work for practically nothing, you know.

JUNGE: Isn't that where we make money -- on the backs of these --

BELL: Yeah, now, this guy has a term for that. I've forgotten what it is. Boy, he's a smart guy.

JUNGE: By the way, I'm going to catch -- I'm just saying this now, but I'm going to catch hell from anybody that listens to this tape. They're going to say, "Here's two goddamn environmentalists --"

BELL: Yeah. (laughter)

JUNGE: -- yacking with each other about how the world's going to hell in a hand basket. Why don't they get out and get a job? (laughter)

BELL: Yeah. [01:39:00] Why don't they get out and -- I've had people ask me, "How in the hell do you support yourself, just going out there and giving us hell?" (laughter)

JUNGE: You tell them --

BELL: That's my business. (laughter)

JUNGE: Oh, boy. OK.

BELL: Let me see. What the heck does he call them?

JUNGE: Are you going to keep -- let me keep all this stuff here?

BELL: Yes, everything that's in there.

JUNGE: Everything that's in this box but not that.

BELL: No.

JUNGE: That's something else. What about this stuff here?
What's that?

BELL: I was going to show you that. This, I think, is yours. I was going to show you. These are some pretty neat maps. For instance, this one here -- it shows this -- I got to see Carthage. Never in God's world did I ever think I would get to see Carthage -- white [01:40:00] pillars laying in the sand. This huge city-state, rich as can be -- there it is; laying there -- nothing.

JUNGE: When did you see that?

BELL: Well, in the spring of 19 -- yeah, or early winter -- January or February, 1944.

JUNGE: Let me ask you this. Would you trade all your World War II experiences for another eye?

BELL: No. Sometimes, there are advantages to having this one eye, (laughter) crazy as that sounds.

JUNGE: Yeah. What's the advantage of having only one eye?

BELL: Well, you know, it's like I told you. I got back my vision [01:41:00] 20/20 when I was a young fellow. That's the main thing. What was important to me was to be able to see that beautiful earth and see the beautiful things about it; the little birds, the flowers, the green grass, the trees. Everything about it is beautiful. You want to destroy that? I can't understand it. Anyway, I had

circled on here I was in the hospital in Naples. Here was -- no -- Cassino. Cassino is -- that was a turning point in my life. Here's Foggia. Here's Cerignola. Here's Bari. So, I was in the hospital in two of those places.

JUNGE: Why was Cassino a turning point in your life?

BELL: Well, it was one of those things just like we were just talking about. How come you would sit through an intelligence [01:42:00] briefing and not have gotten something from it, like, "Do not drop your bombs short. If you do, you're going to kill somebody -- a lot of people, in fact." I think I gave you a copy of the Cassino thing I wrote, and I brought that out -- of how many people there were.

JUNGE: I don't understand how that was a turning point in your life at Cassino.

BELL: Well, it's just the fact that I couldn't believe that I would be promoted and recognized for doing something that I was trained to do.

JUNGE: Well, not everybody lost an eye. Not everybody had shrapnel put into their head, either. [01:43:00] You know how people feel about that. You give a part of yourself for other people and that's extra-special, you know.

BELL: But, you know, you went into it with your eyes open; to be following behind two planes right up just ahead of

you and to see, all of a sudden, one of them come up and up right on top of you and both of them go down. They're gone -- just gone. But, you knew that when you went out and got in that plane every morning. Let's see. What else?

JUNGE: Well, I'm going to read this, *The Price of Inequality*.

BELL: It's worth it. It really is worth it. I'll tell you -- another book, one of those books in there, is by a fellow named [01:44:00] Gus Speth. He's just brilliant. But, he does not get right down to the bottom of things like this one right here, and like that one here, people are afraid to just get right out and say, "Goddammit! I'm a socialist."

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah. I thought one time that I would just run for the Democratic ticket, and one of my campaign platform promises would be to raise everybody's taxes. You know, I think that the coal industry could afford to pay more. I don't think they pay as much here as they do in Montana, do they?

BELL: No.

JUNGE: So, we could afford to raise it -- what -- a nickel a ton or something?

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: You think?

BELL: He really gets into this -- this whole idea in this book.

JUNGE: *The Price of Inequality*. [01:45:00] So, what I'm -- but if anybody came to -- at me -- and said, "OK. You're going to raise the taxes on the coal industry, the [petroleum?] industry, the oil industry, the gas industry, the bentonite industry, and all these other industries -- gas. What about taxing yourself? I'd say, "I'd do that, too, because --"

BELL: But, you know what? If you would take away from them all of their subsidies, they wouldn't have to pay more taxes. The subsidies are worse than the taxes. But, they've got both -- low taxes and high subsidies.

JUNGE: Yeah. Well, I would run on that platform if I was crazy, I suppose, but I'm not totally crazy and, yet, what you say makes so much sense. If people knew what socialism was --

BELL: Oh, absolutely.

JUNGE: -- and they knew that it was in their best interest, they'd say, "Yeah, I'm a [01:46:00] socialist."

BELL: Yeah, absolutely. That's the way -- you know, I didn't really -- I thought that for a lot of years, and I was thinking, well, I don't know. But, then, I get to

reading some of these books, like this one and this one, and I think, why didn't I see that sooner?

JUNGE: You know, one way -- if you read these dour -- you know, Jeremiahs, I guess, you could call them -- pretty soon, you're going to get so down that you're not going to be able to get yourself back up. Sometime, you should read Michio Kaku, the guy that has done some specials on TV on -- maybe, it's for *Nova* or *National Geographic*. Anyway, it's on public television. He did one. He wrote a book called, *The World 100 Years From Now* [sic], and it's pretty interesting because, if you take the optimistic point of view that we're still going to be around, this is what we're going to look like. It's fantastic. [01:47:00] You'd enjoy it. You might say it's a bunch of hooey but, on the other hand, Tom, you might enjoy it.

BELL: Well, it's a bunch of hooey because, on the track that we are now on, we're going to run out to the end of the tracks here in about another 15, 20 years. It's that close.

JUNGE: There's talk -- this is a new item now. Florida is having problems with flooding of their streets in Miami because the sea is rising. What are they going to do -- build a 30-foot high or whatever it takes -- 10-foot high, maybe, sea wall around New York, Miami, Washington, DC?

What are they going to do? The process, as I understand it -- they're breaking off icebergs in Greenland the size of Manhattan. If the water does go up and it goes up exponentially [01:48:00] instead of arithmetically, which it is, we're in trouble.

BELL: Big trouble. Big trouble. People just don't want to admit it.

JUNGE: No. They make fun of Al Gore, and they say, "Oh, yeah, the guy that invented the internet." You know, they always gainsay these things.

BELL: You know, I just read something recently and it just made me madder than hell again of how close that Al Gore came to being our president. He should have been! It was stolen from him.

JUNGE: It was stolen from him. It happened down in -- what was it -- 1876 or 1880 -- something like that? Rutherford B. Hayes got to be president -- same deal. Louisiana and Florida were the states involved prior to their involvement in recent history, and they sold their heritage for a mess of pottage, basically. [01:49:00] OK. Well, anyway, here we go. We're preaching. Nobody's going to listen to this, anyway.

BELL: Yeah, right. Who's going to listen --

JUNGE: All right. I want to thank you.

BELL: Hey -- yes.

JUNGE: It's been great. Can I come by again sometime and talk with you?

BELL: Oh, sure. Just give me a little call before-hand. I'm just not really sure I'm going to last that long. I'm feeling real good right now.

JUNGE: You look good.

BELL: Amazing.

JUNGE: You look good. You're moving a little slow, but you're looking good.

BELL: Yeah, that's deceiving. (laughter)

JUNGE: You're moving faster than I think you are, you mean?

BELL: No -- that I'm doing so well but I have no complaints. I have no aches or pains anywhere. Once in a while, I'll get a little ache and I'll think, oh, boy, that's my heart telling me something. So what?

JUNGE: Have you ever had heart problems?

BELL: I'm 90 years old. You're old enough to die, you darned old fool! (laughter)

JUNGE: Have you had your heart checked?

BELL: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: How is [01:50:00] it?

BELL: Great.

JUNGE: Do you get out and exercise at all?

BELL: I haven't recently, and that's bad because I just really used -- I used to just walk, and walk, and walk but it got to the point where I -- I don't know. I guess I couldn't or something. But, anyway, there's my high blood pressure deal. I took it this morning. It's perfect.

JUNGE: You're going to be around for a while. Get those memoirs done.

BELL: Yes. Oh, yeah, I've got to get this stuff to Cheyenne -- get it out of my way.

JUNGE: What -- this stuff on the porch?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: That goes to Laramie.

BELL: Laramie, I meant. I said, "Cheyenne," and --

JUNGE: Yeah, I wanted to -- because I was going to say I'll go -- I'm going back to Cheyenne. I'll load it in my truck. But, how are you going to get it there?

BELL: I have this young lady who has been here to get one load already. She took 20 or [01:51:00] 30 boxes. Then, I've got this much more.

JUNGE: What -- about 20 more boxes on the front porch?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: Plus, you've got -- it looks like you've got about 10 boxes of stuff in this living room.

BELL: Well, a lot of that is just empty boxes sitting there, but I have to consolidate. When I get that done, there may be 10 or 15 boxes. I am not going to send the two boxes of my service records because I wanted to finish up writing that part of my memoirs, anyway.

JUNGE: How far have you gotten in your memoirs?

BELL: Oh, not very far, when you think about it and put it all together. But, I've done bits and pieces here and there. If I put them all together, I'd probably have a pretty good start.

JUNGE: You don't -- you can't use the stuff that you're sending down to Laramie? Isn't that important?

BELL: I probably could but, on the other hand --

JUNGE: This is not going to be assigned -- go ahead. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to put [01:52:00] words in your mouth.

BELL: A lot of it, of course, is right up here, going back to the day when I can remember my dad giving me instructions the first that I ever knew that I remembered afterwards. I think I may have a photo right here. No, I don't. But, my dad took me and my little two-year old sister out and sat us on the -- that's the trouble. You forget things -- where you store food.

JUNGE: Oh, in the pantry or a back porch or --

BELL: Before that. Cellar -- root cellar.

JUNGE: The root cellar.

BELL: Yeah, root cellar. [01:53:00] It was just right outside our back door. It was the same for everybody. People often wondered, "How did you get by without refrigeration?" With a lot of creativity and a root cellar, you know. That was really the case. Anyway, of course, my little sister, being just two years old -- she didn't have a clue, and I didn't, either. I didn't know what the story was. But, my dad took us out and sat -- stood us on the root cellar where we had a little chair and so on, too. He said, "Now, I want you to wait here and look -- watch for the stork, because the stork is going to bring us a baby today." Boy, did that stick in my brain. I can't remember a thing before that. Afterward, it was great because I'm still looking for that stork. (laughter) But, we did get that [01:54:00] little brother.

JUNGE: Did you?

BELL: Yeah.

JUNGE: So, the stork did come. You just didn't see him.

BELL: No. Well, Dad came out. Well, the thing about it -- it seemed to me like there was something kind of fishy but I didn't know what the deal was. He said, "Now, you stay here and the stork is going to bring that little brother --

or bring that baby." He didn't know whether it was going to be a brother or a sister, either. Anyway, while we were there and we hadn't been there very long, maybe, 10 or 15 minutes, and here came this car off the county road, turned in on our road, came up to our house, parked right out in front. The man got out with a black bag and went in the house. It didn't mean anything to me. He just said, "Hi," as he walked by. Pretty soon, he came back out again and got in his car and drove off. Dad came out and said, [01:55:00] "Well, you've got a baby brother." I said, "But, where's the stork? I never saw the stork." (laughter) But, that's the first that I remember, you know, and it's kind of amazing when you try to think back on things like that.

JUNGE: Well, for one thing, doctors don't make house calls anymore.

BELL: No, and the other was that this -- let's see -- 24, 26, 28 -- 1928; right in the beginning of the worst of the Depression. Of course, that didn't make any difference to me one way or the other, either, until afterwards. I found out how poor we were, and I got to thinking, gee, how did Dad afford to get the doctor out here because my mother -- my grandparents died [01:56:00] in my folks' house; first, my grandmother and two years later, my grandfather.

Because my mother was the oldest one of the family, it kind of fell to her and she took care of them. So, I remember those things just very well.

JUNGE: You remember the funeral, you mean?

BELL: Well, the sickness and the dying part. My granddad died of either prostate cancer or prostatitis, and it was a horrible death. My folks had this ranch house that had two floors. The main part of the big building had a stairwell and then a room at the top and then a bigger room off to one side. My granddad was in the [01:57:00] first room. So -- and there's no electricity, no running water. My mother happened to take care of my granddad, and he was just crying out in such terrible pain one day that she went up to see him and to help him, what she could. I came around and sat on the bottom of the stairs. This room is just right up there, so I can hear things. I hear him say, "Hilda, will you just get a gun and kill me?" That just really shocked me. Then, of course, I heard her, in her soft voice, say, "No, Dad. I can't do that." Anyway, I heard him say, "But, it hurts too much, Hilda." Then, there was a little pause and then [01:58:00] quiet -- very quiet. It stayed that way for quite a while, and I knew then that he had died. So, I got up from the stairwell and walked around and went into the kitchen and sat down to

think about it all. Pretty soon, I heard my mom come down the stairs, and she went into the dining room and pulled out a chair and was just sitting there like this. But, you know, the photo of the woman that has her head in her hand like this and just looking stricken? That's the way my mother looked; not unlike her and not much difference in age. Anyway, years later, my mother and I were reminiscing a little, and I told her about sitting on the bottom of the stairs and hearing my granddad wanting her to kill him.

[01:59:00] She just teared up again and said, "You know, if I had it to do over, I'd just go to the telephone and call the doctor. We could have found the money somewhere." But, he died because they didn't have any money. It was 1934 by then, and that was right in the dips of the Depression.

JUNGE: No money for medical help?

BELL: No. That's the way things were back then, you know. If you didn't have the money, you couldn't -- you just couldn't do things.

JUNGE: Did they have morphine in those days or did that come in World War II?

BELL: Well -- oh, I'm sure they had morphine, but Mom didn't have any and no way of getting any.

JUNGE: I hope she didn't have to go in a similar way.

BELL: Pardon?

JUNGE: I hope she didn't have to go - you grandmother - have to do or --

BELL: [02:00:00] No. My mom lived to be 92, I think it was. So, she was older than me; tough old gal -- really tough but so loving.

JUNGE: Your dad -- do you take after your dad?

BELL: Pardon?

JUNGE: Do you take after your dad?

BELL: Oh, I think, pretty much after both of them. Dad was very sympathetic, too, but, you know, if you just didn't have the money, you didn't.

JUNGE: You couldn't even die decently.

BELL: No -- no social safety net. That's one of the things, of course, that they bring out in here and that I hear about the Republicans. It's just like they were saying to people who don't have any [02:01:00] money and no food, "Well, starve to death. What the hell?"

JUNGE: Yeah, that's right. That's what I hear them saying. They don't have to say it, but you can read between the lines.

BELL: Oh, absolutely. Oh, I know something that I was going to tell you. The thing that really gripes me is this whole business of racial bias. My oldest daughter is half-black,

and she's black. I just love and cherish her as much as if I'd conceived her.

JUNGE: You adopted her?

BELL: Yes.

JUNGE: Why did you do that, Tom?

BELL: Well, when my wife and I were still just going together, you know, we'd sit around talking about when we got married. I don't know how it came up. What if we can't have any kids? [02:02:00] So, I don't know whether it was her or me that said, "Well, we could adopt kids." Boy, we had no sooner got married and *bam*, the first son; another year, *bam*, the second son; another year, *bam*, the third son. I told her, "Boy, I'm going to end this." So, I went and had a vasectomy, and she agreed. So, then, the doctor asked me, "Are you really sure you want to do this?" I said, "Doc, I've got three kids. How many more do I need?" Anyway, we -- our youngest biological son was 16, I think. My wife had started to go -- going to a get-together of the neighborhood ladies. They got to talking about adopting kids, and this one young woman there said, "Yeah, we're going to adopt a boy." [02:03:00] So, my wife came home and told me about this, and she said, "Tom, do you think we could adopt a baby?" I said, "Well, we used to talk about it." Then, I never thought any more about

it. The next thing I know, she's back the next week and she said, "You know what? That girl that was going to adopt that boy -- they adopted a boy. They already have one. So, what about that baby that's going to be born? Can we adopt it?" (laughter) I said, "What if it's a girl?" "Well, that's all right." So, I said, "Well, that's OK with me. Let's do it." (laughter) So, we got this little boy. We thought he was a little Mexican because of the color of his skin.

JUNGE: Vic -- you're talking about Vic?

BELL: Yeah. Did you look at him? He's got the bluest eyes, [02:04:00] and he's half Shoshoni Indian.

JUNGE: Oh, is he?

BELL: Oh, yeah. It turned out -- you know, we didn't care. He was our little baby, but the little wrist-thing that they left on him said, "Hernandez," if I remember correctly. So, we thought he was Mexican. Well, then we adopted the girls, and they were younger than Vic. We told them all, you know, "We aren't your real parents. We adopted you. But, we love you." Anyway, we had told them, "If you, someday, want to find out who your real parents are, we'll help you." So, the two girls, when they got to be about 16 and 17, I think it was -- they decided they did want to [02:05:00] find out who their parents were. So, we

got to looking into it and we found out that the story on it was we were trying to adopt through the county and, boy, that sure was a no-go. You'd have to be God himself before they'd allow anything. All I had to do was mention that I'd gotten a vasectomy and the woman just went, "You did? You can't adopt." It -- that was it.

JUNGE: Why can't you adopt if you have a vasectomy?

BELL: Her idea of things, I think -- the gal.

JUNGE: You had made a mistake. You shouldn't have had that vasectomy, and your punishment is you're not going to have more kids. Is that right? Am I saying -- am I evaluating that correctly?

BELL: (laughter) Yeah. [02:06:00] Anyway, a couple of weeks went by and the word must have gotten around in their office down there because one of the other young women called us and said, "You know, there are two girls who do not seem -- we can't find the parents, and they're in a foster home. Would you be interested in seeing if you wanted to adopt them?" So, we went home and talked about it and said, "Yeah." So, the next day, I think it was, we went down to Rollins and here are these two little girls like scared rabbits behind this chair. They'd peek out at us. But, we just thought we'd take them home. We did.
(laughter)

JUNGE: Do you love those kids as much as you do your own that your wife bore?

BELL: Yeah. I [02:07:00] do, and I think my wife did. We just took them in like they were our own and, you know, you love them, you feed them, you put them to bed, send them to school, and so on.

JUNGE: Well, I'm surprised -- how old is Vic?

BELL: He's 46 or 47 now.

JUNGE: The girls?

BELL: Well, they're two years and four years younger than him.

JUNGE: You're not going to have any more kids?

BELL: No, I know I'm not. (laughter) The string has run out on me! (laughter)

JUNGE: But, vasectomies are reversible, Tom.

BELL: Well, they're supposedly so, yeah. (laughter) I wasn't going to have it reversed!

JUNGE: You know, I've got to tell you a story. I was in New York and I was doing my bicycle ride from New York to San -
- from San Francisco to New York.

BELL: Oh, wow! [02:08:00]

JUNGE: No, I'm sorry -- this was the -- two years later, I went from New York to Newfoundland.

BELL: Oh, wow, that, too!

JUNGE: I went from Times Square, across the Brooklyn Bridge into Brooklyn and Queens, and I got to a corner and I didn't know exactly where I was. So, I saw this black man standing on the corner -- elderly man with a little hat on -- standing on the corner. So, I rode my bike up to him and I said, "Pardon me, Sir. Can you give me some instructions." "Where do you want to go?" Well, I told him which way I wanted to go and he gave me very explicit instructions and repeated them once, twice, maybe. I got the point finally, and I said, "Do you mind if I take your picture?" He said what -- you know -- what they always say. "What for?" I said, "Because I'm doing a slide show after this trip." "Sure." There was a beautiful -- it looked like what you would call a mulatto girl -- very, you know, beautiful; red hair, shapely, [02:09:00] beautiful skin. I thought this would make a good picture -- him standing with her. I asked her. I said, "Do you mind taking a picture with this man?" She goes, "No, of course not." She comes over. I said to this guy after I took the picture -- I said, "You know," whatever his name was, "You know, you two make a good couple." He said, "Those days are over."

BELL: (laughter) Yeah, he knew.

JUNGE: Those days are over.

BELL: (laughter) Yeah, you know.

JUNGE: Yeah. OK. Well, we're done here. [02:09:38]

END OF AUDIO FILE PART 5