

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Richard Weber interview

Conducted by James Newberry

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Transcribed by Mary Kate Keappler

Richard Weber was born outside of Buffalo, New York in 1926. He was raised in a small town with his brother and sister. Weber's father worked in construction and his mother stayed at home. In 1942, after his father suffered a medical episode, he went to work at Curtiss-Wright building airplanes for the American war effort. He was drafted after his eighteenth birthday and served the United States Air Force in the Pacific. He worked as a radio teletype operator. When Weber returned from service, he completed his schooling, got married and was the preacher for a number of various churches in New York and Florida. He started two churches during this time. He has three children. Weber and his wife now reside in Georgia.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Alright, this is James Newberry I'm here with Richard Weber on Monday, March 22nd, 2016 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. Mr. Weber, do you agree to this interview.

Weber: Yes sir.

Interviewer: Alright, well we'll start at the very beginning, could you please state your full name?

Weber: Richard H. Weber, H standing for Harold.

Interviewer: And, when and where were you born?

Weber: I was born outside of Buffalo, New York in 1926, April 17th.

Interviewer: So, you have a birthday coming up?

Weber: Coming up? Yes, a 90.

Interviewer: So, Mr. Weber, tell me a little bit about your childhood.

Weber: Well I was raised in a small town. My dad was a contractor, painter and construction, and I used to help paint and so forth and he was very meticulous in keeping his yard beautiful. The garden rows were straight and so forth. My mother was a wonderful mother and I had a sister and a brother. My sister is the oldest, she'll be 92 in April, and my brother, he's six years younger than I am. But we had a wonderful childhood. We were sort of like the "Dead End Kids"¹ if you know anything about those. We had our adventures; we did a lot of bicycle riding

¹ Referring to a 1935 play written by Sidney Kingsley called *Dead End*. The play was about young men growing up in New York during the Great Depression. The kids were involved in crime. It became a film in 1937.

and, you know, we had an old stone quarry next to us. We just had a wonderful time, good community.

Interviewer: And what were your parents' names?

Weber: Samuel Weber was my dad and my mother was Edna.

Interviewer: And you said your mother, was she working in the home?

Weber: In the home, she was a homemaker.

Interviewer: So, you, what are your memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December on 1941?

Weber: Alright, we went to church that Sunday morning and when we came home from church we always turn[ed] on the radio before we chang[ed] our clothes, our Sunday clothes. And we listened and Roosevelt announced that there was an attack on Pearl Harbor that morning. And that's the first time we heard of the attack. As soon as she heard it, my mother said "Oh my! I hope you don't have to go." [laughs] That was her first thought.

Interviewer: And what were the feelings going through your head at that point?

Weber: Mine, as a young person. I didn't think that much of it until I heard more news. It was sort of a frightening thing that it could happen on one of our shores there.

Interviewer: You were still in high school.

Weber: Yes.

Interviewer: And how old were you?

Weber: Actually, actually— let's see—'41. I was 16.

Interviewer: Okay, where did you attend school?

Weber: Depew High School in Depew, New York.

Interviewer: Okay and when did you quit high school?

Weber: My dad had a stroke, his blood pressure hit 280. He had— I was working with him at the time and we took him by ambulance. We didn't think he'd live and of course, he couldn't work. His spinal angitis set in, but he did live. So I quit high school and started to work at Curtiss-Wright² building P-40s.³ Working on P-40 airplanes and that was in '42.

² Founded in 1929 as Curtiss-Wright Corporation as a merger between Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corporation and the Wright Aeronautical Corporation (the Wright Brothers).

³ In 1940, Curtiss-Wright introduced the famous P-40 War Hawk, which through December, 1944 was to have a production run of 13,738 planes and serve with distinction in the Air Forces of 28 nations during World War II.

Interviewer: Tell me about going to apply for that job.

Weber: Mmm, I don't remember except I had a neighbor boy, buddy, that I worked, played with. He had a job there and I found out I could get a job through him, at least he introduced me to them over there at Curtiss-Wright. It was only 5 miles from our home.

Interviewer: Was it a factory?

Weber: Yes, Curtiss-Wright factory.

Interviewer: How large?

Weber: Oh my, they built, let's see P-40s and one of the other big planes,⁴ but it was a big factory.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea of how many employees there were.

Weber: No, there were thousands. It was a big place, right by the Buffalo Airport.

Interviewer: What was your position there?

Weber: I had to install the carburetor heater controls right on the right side of the pilot and then also the terminal boxes for the electrical in the tail end and the colored lights underneath. That was my job.

Interviewer: So, describe a typical working day. From getting there, to working there, to leaving.

Weber: Well I had a run in with the union. We're supposed to produce eight planes in a day and I was finished a noon and they said "you're going too fast." So, I had to slow down otherwise they were gonna release me probably. [laughs] We had to produce eight planes a day.

Interviewer: Did you have breaks during the day.

Weber: Yes, although I didn't need any smoke breaks 'cause I didn't smoke so I just kept working or took a break and talked with the fellas.

Interviewer: And describe your co-workers.

Weber: Well, we had one of the girls that worked and she knew that I was very particular with how I looked as far as my hair and I was working on the tail end of the plane and she came along and [makes a swooping motion over his head and laughs] I

During the war effort the company had been required to place its focus on the development and mass production of reciprocating engines and propellers. With the jet age dawning, the company withdrew from military airplane competition." Curtisswright.com/company/history

⁴ Likely referring to The Curtiss C-46 Commando which was a transport aircraft

still remember that and I was ready to throw a wrench at her but I didn't [laughs]. I still have my little socket set at home that I used back there in '41,'42.

Interviewer: You were able to keep it?

Weber: It was my own set.

Interviewer: I see. So how much money did you make?

Weber: Oh, I think it was 90-some dollars I don't know if it was a week, a mon— it wasn't much. It was less than a dollar an hour.

Interviewer: And what did you use the money for? Where did the money go?

Weber: To the home, I gave it into our family. And I had an allowance of course.

Interviewer: How much was that?

Weber: We had a nickel [for an] ice cream cone on Sunday afternoon and the nice vegetable garden, that was most of it.

Interviewer: So, tell me about wartime. This is '42, '43 that you're working this job. Do you remember rationing— do you remember buying war bonds—.

Weber: Yes, yes, rationing. We had an A ration, only 4 gallon a week and my dad had to be careful driving he had an old, old '36 Chevy and he drove that to work. But it was limited. And we had stamps that you could, you couldn't get certain kinds of meat and butter. A lot of things were rationed. And of course, tomato soup was only ten cans for a dollar, a loaf of bread was ten cents and I remember that. We were very frugal as far as spending. We were a poor family but my dad was a hard worker. We always had chickens and geese and a few rabbits and of course it was my job to take care of chickens. In the wintertime I hated to clean the chicken coop, it froze on the coop floor and I had to scrape it. I didn't like it very much. Had to take the coals out of the coal stove in our living room and had to pick out the coals that didn't burn 'cause we wouldn't waste those. So that's what we did as a boy. Very strict. My dad said, when he'd get home at night, he'd look over the work and he said, "Now, I want this done by tomorrow night, it'll take you an hour or all day- it's gotta be done when I get home."

Interviewer: So, you said that your family went to church. Can you describe the church you went to and what part your faith played in your life?

Weber: Alright. This was a Church of God. Anderson, Indiana headquarters and it was at Kermit and Olympic⁵ in Buffalo, New York. I was just outside of where we lived. We lived in the town of Cheektowaga, that's why I always say Buffalo, outside of

⁵ The corner of Kermit Avenue and Olympic Avenue

Buffalo. Cheektowaga is an Indian town. They used to have a lot of gypsies there. But uh, that's where we were raised.

Interviewer: So, you reached your eighteenth birthday in April of 1944. What happened after you turned eighteen?

Weber: Well, we were—my dad, we were putting in a cellar underneath his home. It didn't have a cellar. It was raised up on blocks and I was helping him take out the dirt in so forth, then I got a draft notice, report. And I weighed 118 pounds at the time, I could hide behind a telegraph pole and they said "they'll never take you, you're too skinny, you can't do anything over there—" and I said "I feel good." So I went in and I passed with flying colors, they just put down on my papers, "underweight" that's all. Maybe that's why I got in the Air Force.

Interviewer: You say you went in and you passed with flying colors, what did you have to do to pass?

Weber: Well they take a physical and it was a pretty heavy physical and that's all I remember as far as that physical because when I got in, I'll tell you about that physical, that was a little different. [laughs] But anyway, I got home and a week later, I got the notice that I was supposed to report to the Buffalo office and we were going to take a train to Trenton, New Jersey. The Fort Dix, New Jersey to be entered in.

Interviewer: So, I'll come to that, but I want to quickly ask, how did you receive these notices?

Weber: Through the mail.

Interviewer: And what would it say?

Weber: [laughing] "Uncle Sam welcomes you." Yeah, welcomes you and you were accepted.

Interviewer: So how did you feel about leaving your home then, at eighteen, to go to Fort Dix?

Weber: Well, our family never did travel, we never had a vacation that I remember and they never travelled and I never travelled. So this was gonna be the first time out of state. So it was new and our folks, they took it a little rough and I remember the day that they took me into the train station, my brother collected the eggs in the chicken coop and he had one left in his pocket and he broke it while we were going into the train station in his pocket. He had a lot of gooey egg in his pocket and I remember leaving, they dropped me off at the New York Central Station and as the train went by the viaduct they were waving goodbye and that's how we left.

Interviewer: So, you arrived at Ft. Dix. What did you do there?

Weber: We got there about two in the morning and we went into a large room where we were sworn in and we had to repeat what they told us to do. And then we had to

go into another room and get rid of all of our clothes and then go to the counter and they threw clothes at us, they were too big for us. They didn't care what size cause we would be sized later. And so that was that, that was that night and then we went to our barracks for that night afterwards.

Interviewer: How long did you stay there?

Weber: I'm not sure but I think it was several days because we went through the process of physical ed., a physical examination I should say and they, when we went in they said, they put needles. They were standing on both sides of us- a couple needles in this arm [gestures to left arm], couple needles in that one [gestures to right arm]. Someone yelled, "watch out for the one with the propeller on!" [laughs] And some of the guys fainted and it was quite a sight. And a bunch of nude guys in there and the things they had you do so that was our first experience for a wayward, a little boy away from home for the first time. It was a shock for an eighteen-year-old.

Interviewer: So, at what point did you head to boot camp at Shepard Field?

Weber: Well that was about probably a week later and we arrived at Shepard, it's always in the men of the morning and we arrived at Shepard Field and we were thirsty and when we went on the field there they said, "If you're thirsty there's the water bag." It was a Lister Bag, they called it, in the middle of the grass out in the sun all day and you could get water from that. So, it was hot water we drank at two or three in the morning and it was terrible. Texas was worse than overseas. Sorry Texas. [laughs]

Interviewer: Can you describe Shepard Field?

Weber: It was a nice, it was a two deck barracks that we stayed in and I was on the lower floor and I always had trouble with people snoring and to get into a barracks with thirty guys all playing their tune— I remember one night, the guy next to me was snoring so loud I got up and squeezed his nose and jumped back in bed. It stopped his snoring for a little while. But it was a new experience for me. But it was a double deck barracks. And the sergeant would come in every morning and when they blew the bugle in the morning we had to be out in line. Whether we were dressed or not- you'd be there. Some were dressed in their shorts and others were dressed but we stood at attention. Then we went in and had to make our beds up and then the sergeant would come in and flip a quarter on our bed. And if it didn't pop he'd pull it aside and we'd have to make it over so it was tight so it would bounce when he put the quarter on. So, I had my quarter bounce sometimes and sometimes not.

Interviewer: Tell me about the food.

Weber: Well, I can tell you the songs we sang while we marched. [sings]
"The chicken that they serve you they say serve you, they say is mighty fine"

*One hopped off the table and started marking time
I don't want no army life, oh mama I want to go home (and then—)
The coffee that they serve you, they say is mighty fine
It's good for cuts and bruises
It tastes like iodine."*

And so we'd sing those. So that's some of our food. The food was okay, but the Navy had better food when we had some Navy food.

Interviewer: What kind of training were you doing in boot camp?

Weber: Well, of course we always had to march and stand in line, and new recruits, we didn't know the language. And they said, "we need a truck driver today" and some would raise their hand and find out they had to push a wheel barrel. That was the truck driver or kitchen police, or KP. So, I never volunteered for those, I just marched and did what I was supposed to do, partially. Not all the time. We had to do, on the corner lot it was so hot in Texas, and it was an asphalt square that we were doing our exercises, push-ups and so forth and evidently, I wasn't doing it properly. And the sergeant said, "do a duck waddle around the field." So here, I'm down, I'm doing a duck waddle if you know what that is— And a lieutenant saw me and he said, "what happened?" and I told him and he said, "alright, get back in line" and I said "okay." I was thankful for that. So that was part of my training and then one time we had to jump, oh it must have been twenty, at least twenty feet, a big hole in the ground with water and a rope down the middle and we had to run and grab that rope, swing to the other side, hope you didn't fall into the water. Well I didn't like that idea so I tried sneaking around but they caught me. So, I had to do it and I made it. So that was okay. And then in the Air Force, the fellow in front of you went in the Army, and the one in the back went in the Navy and I went into the Air Force. Maybe because I was so lightweight maybe, I don't know. [laughs] But, anyway, I was, when we had gas mask drill, we had to crawl under 18" of barbed wire fence, well barbed wire top. And while I was under there they shot tear gas at us and we had to put our gas masks on under there but they didn't cut your hair as long as the Army did or the Navy and I had a little swirl of hair stuck out of my gas mask and I got gas in my throat and started choking and I got a real short haircut after that. [laughs]

Interviewer: Well, you were talking about the different branches— How were you selected or how did you go about choosing the Air Force?

Weber: When we were in line, when they were picking out where you were going to go, the, I didn't know what I was going in and they said to the guy in front of me, "you're going into the Army" and they told me, they said, "you're going into the Army Air Force," and the guy in back of me, "you're going in the Navy." So I don't know if they did every other one like that, or Coast Guard, but that's all I remember. That's how I got in.

Interviewer: How did you feel about going into the Air Force?

Weber: I was glad because I didn't want the infantry. Its a cinch. And I didn't know how to swim, I didn't want the Navy [laughs] so I was glad I went to the Air Force.

Interviewer: So, where did you go from Shepard Field?

Weber: Alright, Shepard Field, after our first basic training, we were supposed to go to Madison, Wisconsin for radio mechanic's school. But it was filled so they said we had to take a second basic training, which I didn't care about, but I went to it. And we took our 25 mile hikes at night cause it was so hot and we had out packs on and radio men were on one side and mechanics were on the other side—see who would drop out and the meat wagon would follow us, some dropped out and had to ride the meat wagon. And then after the second basic training, why they said, "well, the radio school is still filled, you'll have to take a third basic training." I said, "that's for the birds" so I went to the headquarters and I said, "do you need a typist?" "Yeah, Do you type?" I said, "Yes, I took it my first year in high school." And, so they gave me a job typing while the rest marched by, I was watching them. And I was glad. And after that, after the third basic training that they had, we shipped to Madison, Wisconsin. Well, they gave us a furlough. We went home for, I don't know, a ten-day furlough maybe and then we went to Madison, Wisconsin and enrolled.

Interviewer: Well tell me about working as a typist, what sort of office were you in?

Weber: It was just a open office, it was uh, it was not a booth or room, it was like an open office area and I was the only typist there and so I typed different things for them.

Interviewer: What sort of things?

Weber: Well probably reports—I don't remember exactly because that's quite a long time ago. That was 1944. So, I don't remember quite what I was typing. But then, when I was at the radio school we had to build superheterodyne radios and then at the testing time, it was time to plug in our radios to see if they work. And when did we saw smoke coming around different areas where they were shorting out the different radios and then we had to go to a B-24 bomber that had radio trouble and we had to find out what the trouble was. That was part of our test and that was radio school.

Interviewer: So, this radio school, it was in Madison, Wisconsin?

Weber: Madison, Wisconsin.

Interviewer: Ok. And, when you arrived there, how did they lay out what your training would be. I mean you said you built this type of radio. Could you go over that in a sort of more basic way for the—

Weber: Well, it was a super— we went into the radio building where they worked and where the school was. And they had, each one of us had a work bench and also a chair and we worked with, they had our resistors and our other things to put in, wires and so forth. And then we had to memorize the code for the resistors and, of course, I never forget the poem they gave us to remember it: “*Our bad boys rape our young women but Violet gave in willingly*”⁶I never forgot it, each one of those represents a color, so that was, I remember that.

Interviewer: Sort of a mnemonic device? I see. And was that your only task - to build that radio? What other things were you doing at radio school?

Weber: Well that was the main thing, working on the radios and then after that, if we passed, then we were shipped home for a 15-day furlough and then shipped over seas.

Interviewer: Okay, so how long was radio school?

Weber: Oh, I think it was eight, maybe six- eight weeks, maybe six weeks.

Interviewer: As someone who was working on a radio like that, what did you expect to come when you were shipped overseas if you were working on radios?

Weber: Well we were supposed to work on when they had difficulty in the various planes because when we shipped to Saipan, it was a 29 air base so we had to work on any troubles that they had in their radios, but I can tell you when we got over there, the change.

Interviewer: Did you expect to see combat?

Weber: Well, we didn't know for sure. Radio school and the work we would be doing over there would not be actual combat because the planes would come in and if there was trouble, we'd have to take care of the trouble shooting so we actually didn't see the combat. They did, but we didn't have to.

Interviewer: Tell me about your furlough home.

Weber: Well, the first furlough before we went overseas— it was tremendous. My sister was, let's see, she's two years older than me, my brother was six years younger. And they just thought I was the hero, you know? And of course, I didn't have any stripes on my shirt yet they didn't give you any stripes until you actually were doing something. And they were happy to see me but sad to see me go again.

Interviewer: Had you experienced homesickness?

⁶ A trick to remember the electronic code: black brown red orange yellow green blue violet gray white

Weber: Yes, I wrote home almost all, well not every day but my mother wrote just about every day and sent, I'll tell you more about that when I get overseas, but it was a scream really.

Interviewer: So, when did you ship out?

Weber: Alright, well I don't have the exact date but it was in, let's see, it must have been, it was in the winter time. Must have been in January because it was very cold in Madison, Wisconsin, it got below zero and I have pictures. The Red Cross furnished us a photo room so I took my own pictures with an old black and white and developed my own pictures and I have a picture of a sergeant saying; "If Weber would have shipped out, we'd have all frozen to death." Because I took care of the stove and it was very cold and, but— While I was there it was, it was a cold experience I'd say, you know, but we got through it.

Interviewer: And where was this?

Weber: Madison, Wisconsin.

Interviewer: I see. So, you were leaving from there—.

Weber: And then from home we went to Vancouver, Washington but we stopped at Hawaii, well no, we stopped at Salt Lake City for a few days and while I was there, why we put Kilroy, that was a fella that was in the service with us,⁷ they called him Kilroy and they say "well Kilroy was here and Kilroy was there" so we climbed the mountain behind the capital of Salt Lake City and we put Kilroy up there. And then we went to the Mormon Tabernacle, visited there. And we were there for just a couple days then we shipped on to Vancouver, Washington.

Interviewer: When you were making your way across the country, you stopped in Salt Lake City and you had been to the Mormon Tabernacle, and Kilroy was there—.

Weber: Kilroy we put him on a mountain back there and then we went to a studio and had pictures taken, this was when I was eighteen [holds up a portrait] eighteen years old.

Interviewer: Where did you have this taken?

Weber: I couldn't tell you. All I know is I think it was Salt Lake City.

Interviewer: And why did you have the photo taken?

Weber: Well, all the other guys were. [laughs] And I tell you what we did when we came back from overseas too—.

⁷ "Kilroy was here" was a popular graffiti tag used by the military in World War II. Essentially, Kilroy was an imaginary Army man who represented all Army men. Sometimes the enlisted men would write "Kilroy was here" and sometimes they would draw a simple man looking over a wall.

Interviewer: Okay, so then you made your way to Vancouver, Washington and you shipped out from there. And tell me about those days at sea. How did you adjust to being on the ocean?

Weber: Well, that was a real eye opener. Like they say, it was a seventeen-day trip. The first five days, I was seasick. We were down in the second or third hull down below deck and I was on a bunk, second bunk up and the fellas were throwing up in their helmets and there got to be such a stench, I went and took my blanket and slept on the deck, now outside on the deck. But the ship was going so [gestures back and forth] [indecipherable]— and then when we'd go down to the chow line, you had to hang on your tray because if you didn't it would slide down to the other end and you'd have to chase it and bring it back and that would make you sicker. But, I kept my cookies, but I was sick. But another experience was the latrine. Now for those who don't know what the latrine was, that was the restroom, bathroom, and all it was consisted [of] was a big trough with two by fours across and you sat on those two by fours and I think that's why I learned to get up early. I always got up early before the rest of 'um because it— no sense in having this stuff all go past you while you're sitting there. But that was— and we'd wash some of our clothes, we'd put 'em on a line and throw them overboard and let the waves beat them clean and then we'd pull them up and that's how we washed our clothes. A little salty but they were okay.

Interviewer: So, where did you land first?

Weber: Saipan. We landed in the middle of the night, I don't what exact time was it but we had to avoid some mines that were still in the bay. So, we slept on the ship that night and then in the morning we had to take the landing craft onto the shore and we got ashore and they had some jeeps and trucks waiting for us and then they took us to our base where we were gonna be stationed.

Interviewer: What did the island look like? Because I assume this is after the Battle of Saipan.

Weber: Yes, Saipan was won, oh some, quite a few months before there was a lot of Japs still running around and they took us to the base. We just had, we had our carbine rifles⁸ our .45 pistols and they took us to our tents. We had four men on a tent and we got used to the monkeys that were there. They used to sneak in our tent if we had any gum or anything, they'd steal it or if we'd hang out our wash on a line on by the trees, they'd slide down it and get it all dirty and we'd have to rewash it. So, we didn't like those monkeys they got us aggravated. But they, I was sort of a rebel because our C-Rations and they'd serve us beer and cigarettes which I was against. I was raised up against that and fellas would get mad at me 'cause I'd dump my beer out and crush my cigarettes. They'd say "oh!" they were mad at me. I'd say, "if its poison for me, its poison for you." By the way, my dad died of lung cancer from smoking at fifty-three years old. So, you see, I— But I got along

⁸ A shorter rifle

pretty good and I made my own bed there out of two by six lumber. They had wood all around, we could use that and I put B-29 inter-tubes, we cut them in inch strips and made a cross like this [crosses fingers] and made our bed out of that with bottle caps to hold the nails in and that was for, we laid the mattress they gave us, laid a mattress on there and that was our bed. And then I made a lounge chair out of an Army cot and we did a lot of things on Saipan. And at Christmastime, that was my first Christmas away from home. I, we had an old pump organ I don't know where it came from and there was an old vacuum sweeper and I played the piano, organ. So, I didn't know how we could play that organ where the bellows were sort of, you couldn't work them too well so I put, we hooked up this vacuum sweeper and we hooked a hose up to the bellows and put the vacuum sweeper up beneath the wood floor of our tent and that would blow the air in and I'd play Christmas carols on the organ. That was our experience there on that tent. [laughs]

Interviewer: So you knew a lot of Christmas carols— other songs from memory?

Weber: Yes, I do other songs when I go to the PX⁹, they had a piano there and they said “Weber play some songs for us!” and I'd play the *Old Rugged Cross* and they'd say “Don't you know any—” and I'd say “No, I only know hymns!” So, they'd start singing the hymns, but I played by ear because I didn't have any piano lessons, but they enjoyed it and I did too.

Interviewer: Well, what was your assignment on Saipan?

Weber: On Saipan, they needed teletype operators. No mechanics. And 'cause the big base, the bigger base was Tinian, right next to us and that's where they took off with the atomic bomb. And they gutted a B-29 so it was light to put the bomb in. But they put me in the radio station which was a ten CW operators¹⁰ which was Morse code, and then I never did learn that. And then they had ten radio teletype operators and ten landline operators. The landline operators, you typed the message and it went directly to where you're going. The radio type, you type tapes and send them by tape and I know at Christmastime, and you could see what you're doing, so I would type a, make a Christmas tree and send it to Wake Island, some of the other islands- wish them Merry Christmas. And that's what we did for teletype.

Interviewer: When you say you sent them a Christmas tree, what do you mean?

Weber: On the teletype, it was yellow paper and they would receive it on yellow paper on the other island. That was called “radio teletype.” Landline was a little different. So, anyway, they received that and they'd answer me back and I'd do that to the

⁹ Or, Post Exchange. A sort-of department store exclusive to military personnel- not to be confused with the commissary, which is a grocery store.

¹⁰ Continuous Wave

various islands. And of course, I got my corporal stripes for private then corporal stripes then after I, well I'll tell you that later.

Interviewer: What did the office there, the teletype office, look like?

Weber: It was like a barracks, if you know what a barracks would be, and they had little booths where the CW operators were all along that wall, I could still see them—dee dot dee dot dot dot. And then over here, [gesturing behind him] was the landline and radio teletype operators and then there was a desk over here, [gestures to his right] that later on I used as a office type when I was promoted and I didn't do the teletype after that.

Interviewer: Well, I would imagine that you may have had more communication with the states back home in this position. Is that wrong or right?

Weber: No, mostly on the islands. Mostly on the islands. And then we had a cryptography machine which served as a decoding machine and we had a little incendiary thing that if the Japs would come near anything you had to put that on and disintegrate that machine and so, but I never had to use that. And then in my tent they captured thirty Japanese one morning before breakfast and then another time, we went, I met a friend there. Alza Milner, he was from Chicago and he was a good Christian fella and we had good Bible study and prayer together and we went up into the hills to have prayer one afternoon and we, while we were praying, we saw this sign that said "Stay Out- Beware of Japs" so we left then, after we prayed. But, of course, the war was over at that time. Just the work, it came to an end.

Interviewer: Okay, but tell me about those Japanese that were captured near your tent. Explain that situation.

Weber: We don't know what happened to them because we weren't even dressed. They took them away. But, when they were to surrender, a lot of the Japanese, they called "Bloody Hill." They called it Bloody Hill because thirty-some thousand Japanese committed suicide over that hill and dropped down to the rocks below. Whole families, children and all, and they called that Bloody Hill where we took off with the airplanes from that Bloody Hill, off that hill.

Interviewer: So that was on Saipan.

Weber: That was on Saipan, mm-hmm.

Interviewer: So, was that mass suicide during the war?

Weber: After, after the war. In fact, some Japanese just surrendered just a couple years ago. All those years, they were hidden in caves, they just wouldn't surrender.

Interviewer: So, you, your post was changed. You had been on Saipan and then you were next posted on Marcus Island?

Weber: Yes, we flew off to mic (?), we got onto, we got onto a Navy plane. That was the first airplane ride I had, by the way, being in the Air Force, I thought I'd have more rides than that. But, we got on this Navy plane, a little two engine plane. They had, all planes were prop¹¹ then, they didn't have jets then. So when we got on it was a smaller plane and the pilot, he forgot his watch and I had my watch on and he said, they had no copilot with him, so he said, "would you come up and sit in the copilot seat and then you have your watch?" And I said "okay" so I enjoyed that. And as we were about to take off the tail-end wouldn't lift, he said, "throw some of that baggage towards the front so the tail lifts!" and we were heading at the end of the Bloody Ridge, but we got up okay and we flew to Marcus Island and I didn't know where Marcus Island was from any place and he said, "well, we're arriving at Marcus Island," we looked down and I said "where is it?" It was east of Iwo Jima. And it was an island a mile long and three-quarters a mile wide without a tree on it. It was white coral rock with bushes and so we came and landed and there was a tower there where the Kamkowski twins from Buffalo I met on that island. And so they were from Buffalo and they were twins and I was just a short distance in the radio room when they were up in the tower and so I was given a— We lived in a tent there also and I was, I was there for only a couple of months.

Interviewer: And what were your duties in the radio room?

Weber: In the radio room? Of course, I did more teletype. More teletype that was my main, main job. And then I also was a clerk, sort of taking teletype messages and sorting them and putting them in different stalls where the lieutenant would come in and take some of them and read them and so forth and maybe give me an assignment to send something out over the teletype so they'd come in—.

Interviewer: Do you remember any particularly significant messages?

Weber: No, I don't remember that. Only those that I sent at Christmastime [laughs] and, but, mainly and then there was some weather reports we would see what was going on, we'd send those out.

Interviewer: So, you recovered a Japanese bayonet on Marcus Island?

Weber: Yes, on Marcus Island they had, on the island there was a— about one story deep, I think it was one story deep, they¹² had hollowed out into the white coral rock and down there was their radio room and their equipment was still down there. And I saw this bayonet and I picked it up and I said, "I'm gonna take that home with me." And nobody opposed me doing it so I took that into my tent. And but they had a radio room down there.

¹¹ Propeller

¹² The Japanese

And I remember on Marcus Island, I was lying on my bunk one night memorizing scripture verses and all of the sudden shots went over my tent. And I said “woo.” I rolled off onto the floor- I didn’t know what was coming off and at that time, even though the war was over at that time, they still had to obey the orders and our guard fella that was on guard, you had to, when you got near him, you’d say “advance and be recognized” and this fella didn’t say anything, he just kept coming. And he was shot by our guard and we watched them operate on him and they were running out of blood so they flew him out and I don’t know what happened to him from there. But we were only there a couple months and we flew to Guam.

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me, before we talk about Guam, can you tell me, where were you when the atomic bomb was dropped?

Weber: I was still on my way to Saipan.

Interviewer: Okay, so that was in that seventeen-day period?

Weber: Well, it was right almost when I got to Saipan.

Interviewer: And do you remember hearing the news of that?

Weber: Yes, I heard it from our officers they told us about it. We didn’t hear it otherwise.

Interviewer: Okay, and what about the end of the war? V-J day.

Weber: The end of the war? Um, I was on—let’s see, I was on Guam when they signed the, when MacArthur, signed it on the truce, that’s where I was. So, we didn’t think much of that. We were happy for it ‘cause we didn’t have to go to Japan.

Interviewer: So then, okay, and you were moved to Guam, tell me about what you did there, what you found on Guam.

Weber: There on Guam, they took us to the radio station again, of course we lived in, in well they were like barracks, they weren’t actually tents, but anyway, we lived there, four or five of us in a group, and we went to the radio school again, radio room and there I was in charge of the radio station. I got my sergeant’s stripes and so I was in charge of all the workers in there and I had a desk, well it was a thing with shelves that you put different messages in and I was called a message clerk for the whole room there. And so that was my job there, receiving messages and checking them and putting them in different slots.

Interviewer: How many men did you oversee?

Weber: I’d say there was around thirty on that room. Ten each of CW and landline and radio teletype, mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And how long did this posting last?

Weber: That lasted, let's see—[mumbling] I got out in August I got there—it lasted about three months. And then I was up for staff sergeant promotion but then we also got orders that same day that my group was gonna ship home and I said, “oh boy, I'm not gonna wait three weeks for weeks for staff sergeant status, I wanna go home with my fellas.” So, we shipped back to Saipan and then Saipan to Hawaii and Hawaii to San Francisco. So that was our journey on the USS Mendocino.

Interviewer: And can you describe the return into the San Francisco harbor?

Weber: When I, when we were coming in of course, all of us, I have pictures of it at home, I was on the gun tour with a bunch of fellas looking over the side of the ship. And as we were approaching San Francisco, we passed Alcatraz and then as we went under the Golden Gate Bridge, then we got to the harbor at San Francisco and it was crowded with people welcoming us home. And of course we didn't have anybody to welcome us home as far as family 'cause they're on the other coast, but anyway we took our bags over our shoulders and walked down the gang plank and all the hugs and the “hoo-ras,” it was exciting to be back in the good old USA. [laughs]

Interviewer: Well let me go back real quickly. So, you said on Guam you were the clerk in charge of Cryptography there as well?

Weber: No, not there.

Interviewer: Okay, so that was only back on Saipan. Okay, could you describe cryptography?

Weber: Cryptography was, they would send decoded messages and of course we would have to send those on to whoever it was posted to. But we never knew what the message was because that was taboo for us. My mother got several letters from me with holes punched out. I wish she woulda kept them. I want to find out what I said that I shouldn't have said. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, they had been censored.

Weber: Yeah, they censored all our mail.

Interviewer: Okay, and who did the censoring?

Weber: I don't know. It was— through the mailroom. They just called us to the mailroom and we'd be outside and they'd stand on the, like a uh, platform and yell out our names if we had mail. And that's as far as we got into the mail room so I don't know who did the censoring.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea how of long it took those letters to make it to your mom.

Weber: No, because I got letters quite frequently and [laughs] I got a package, several packages, my mother sent. She didn't know any better and I didn't either, on account of the heat. There was chocolates in it and it was all stuck together with, especially at Easter time, she had Easter stuff. Whenever I got a package, they

guys would all gather around my bed. It didn't last long, the package, we all delved into it. They had cookies with me and whatever she had in there and separate the chocolate from the straw she had in there. But that's what we received [in] our packages.

Interviewer: What sort of news did your mother report from home?

Weber: Oh, she'd just tell what they were doing. Talk about the garden, and church, and the family. And I just told her what I'd been doing. Maybe I shouldn't have told her, I don't know, but I never saw what she got! [laughs]

Interviewer: So, what sort of comradery developed between you and these other fellas? The guys working for you and—.

Weber: Well, being a Christian at the time, I got a lot of razzing and I remember one day they were, I had my Bible on my bed and some of the guys were jazzing me. And there was a big fellow from Texas, I forget his name but he came to my rescue, he said, "Did you read that book he's reading?" they said "no," "well what are you razzing him about? Let him alone." Big, big fellow. And they knew I didn't like gambling and one night they got on the bunk and, I was on my upper bunk and we had florescent lights, I remember that. And they were shooting dice and gambling on the lower bunk and it was bedtime. I wanted to go to sleep, I got mad. I took one of those tubes out and I said "Guys, get outta here!" and that was a poor witness as a Christian [laughs]. And I put the bulb back in and I said, "I'm sorry" and I went to bed. And they dispersed. But some of those things happened while I was there and then another time on Marcus Island, I was memorizing scripture verses and some of the guys said "Weber, you're going to go to the theater with us whether you like it or not!" And the four of them picked me up bodily and carried me out. And while they were doing it, I had my scripture verse and I said; "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."¹³ And they dropped me like a hot potato. I wasn't any fun because I didn't resist see? They thought I'd resist.

Interviewer: So, this, this calling that you experienced, was that drive from high school or did it happen suddenly?

Weber: Oh, okay, I should have told you that when I was in Shepard Field, Texas. Of course, we were taught to witness to people about the Lord but I was fresh, only three years a Christian so I read my Bible when no one was around and prayed when no one saw me. Real, real witness, you know. But, the barracks was empty one day so I went upstairs into an upper room that had old mattresses and springs and I was up there with the Lord for three hours. And while I was praying and

¹³ 1 Corinthians 10:13

having my due with the Lord and my condemnation for not witnessing, the Lord said, "I want you to go into the ministry." I said, "Lord, I've only had two years of high school, I quit high school, when will I do my schooling?" I was talking to Him just like He was there. And He said, "don't worry about that I'll take care of that." So that's where I got my calling to go to preach. While I was in that upper room. And from that time, I was singing going down the stairs, I didn't care who heard me and from there I was a witness.

Interviewer: And that continued all through your time overseas?

Weber: Right, in fact when I was overseas in Saipan, I think I told you I was whistling that song and I met this sergeant and he knew, he was a Christian too so we had Bible studies together from then on while he was there.

Interviewer: So, tell me about the chaplains that were there. What was their religion generally?

Weber: Well, one chaplain I had was a Presbyterian and at first I was gonna be assistant chaplain but I didn't want to do that. And I couldn't officially yet anyway because my lack of education for that. But we had nice services, they were formal and even on the ship we had, I've got pictures of us all gathered on top of the deck with the chaplain. And they had one for the Jewish and one for the Catholic and one for the Protestants. Of course, they had on our dog tags, "P" for protestant and then our blood tag, blood type "O" that was on our dog tags too. But, we had good relationships with our chaplains. They had it where we were— they held a lot of the places on Saipan now, they held our services in the open-air theater. Nice and warm, so we had them there, a lot of our services.

Interviewer: Okay, so you were talking about the entertainment like going to watch the movie, what were some of the other types of entertainment that were available to servicemen?

Weber: Well, most of the guys were shooting dice and betting on one another. And some for cigarettes and some for this and some for that. Which I wasn't interested— and then of course when we were in The States we'd go to town and I went to the Victory Center always, which was a Christian place, while the other guys lived it up in town and I didn't. So, I was the odd ball, but I didn't care, I was a bull headed German.

Interviewer: So, you were, when were you discharged?

Weber: Alright then, this was in August, I don't know the exact date, but it was the latter part of August in 1946. And I got, they took me to, back to New Jersey, Trenton, New Jersey for our discharge we— when we first hit shore in San Francisco, we were sort of cruddy. And so we went to the barbershop and told them "give us the works!" so they gave us a manicure and washed our hair and everything. We said, "give us the works!" And then we— I think we took a train back to Trenton, New Jersey, and there we got our honorable discharge, and then I took a train back to

Buffalo and we arrived at the New York Central Station at three in the morning. And it was too early to go home so I laid on the bench and slept a little bit and at about five o' clock I woke up, called a taxi and headed for Cheektowaga, to our home. And I got off the taxi, out of the taxi on that morning, I forget what day it was, but it was a nice day. And I saw, I looked over at the garden, it was beautifully kept, my dad was particular - nice garden there. And a sign in the window: "Welcome Home, Dick." They knew I was coming home. So I walked in the driveway and as I got - looking in the garden, the door flew open, my mother came out in her robe and [celebratory shouts] "welcome home!" and then the rest of the family and my dad, brother and sister. And that was my welcome home. Wonderful. [laughs]

Interviewer: Yes, so tell me about completing high school in New York.

Weber: Okay, what I had—I knew I had to do something about my high school. So, I went to the Depew High School afterwards and I said, "what can I do to finish my last two years?" and they said, "well, we have a special, the New York State Regents Board, has a special program for veterans returning." And it's a four-month period and you go to Buffalo to this school and they give you, they give you credit for your Phys. Ed. credit, three credits, for your basic training and so forth. And then for your travels, they had a Regents program, *World History and American Background*, and that, when you took that, if you passed that, they gave you three credits for that because of your travels and so forth and passing the test. And then they had English, third and fourth English tests that if you passed that, you got that. You had to have nineteen credits to graduate - I had twenty. So, I graduated but, when I was gonna to go to Moody Bible Institute¹⁴ because of my friend that was there, so I went there, took my folks with me, and I enrolled, I was gonna enroll— five bucks to enroll. Well, I got home and a preacher friend of mine said, "well, why don't you go to Roberts Wesleyan College¹⁵ its only fifty miles instead of five hundred miles and you get a degree instead of a Bible Certificate," I said, "oh, that sounds good!" So I went to Roberts Junior College it was. So, I went there and they said "well, we'll accept you BUT, you gotta take English and you've earned— no math and you gotta take Language, more of that, not enough of it with your college. So my first year at college was rough, I had it rough because I travelled with a quartet. I was in the school quartet called "the Evangels" so I was gone every weekend and hit thirty camp meetings one summer and tried to do my homework at the same time, so my first year wasn't good, it wasn't an A year and it wasn't a full B year either. [laughs] But I got through it. And, then the second year was better and then at school, I got involved with the ministerial, I got involved with the radio program, I was a disk jockey for a while and then I, I did lots of things at the college and then the second year was better, I

¹⁴ A Christian higher education institution in Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁵ A Christian liberal arts school in Rochester, New York.

was president of ministerial. And then we preached outside of Roberts, the missions and so forth. And then the second year, I graduated from Roberts Junior College. Well I didn't know what I was gonna do BUT New York State allowed Roberts to put on their third year, so I went the third year at Roberts and then they added the fourth year. So it was able to go four years BUT at graduation, Roberts was not able to give us a degree unless it was a four year college for five years. So I got my degree from the University of New York, which was better really. So, then from there I went home and continued a little church that we had started in my aunt's basement. And then of course, during the course of my ministry, I got two honorary Doctor's degrees; one from World Wide Accrediting from West Virginia or Richmond Virginia and another one from the Atlantic Bible Seminary.

Interviewer: Go back to starting that church in your aunt's basement. Tell me that from its beginning.

Weber: Well a preacher friend who got me to go to Roberts, he helped my aunt start a school in my aunt's basement. And her basement, when she built her house, it wasn't high enough for the floor, so they had to fill in, causing the basement to be real short so when I preached, I had to preach between the rafters. And if I got excited, I'd bump the rafters. And I played a Hawaiian guitar, my mother liked Hawaiian music so I played Hawaiian guitar. And to play it in that damned basement, I had to put rubbers on, otherwise I'd get a shock. [laughs] And we had a couple other orchestra fellows in there and we had an old pump organ we used, somebody played the pump organ and we stayed in her basement 'til we reached about eighty. And then we found out about this United Brethren Church in, called Blossom, New York. Not too far from us. And they wanted to sell their church so we asked how much they wanted for it— well, the Lutheran Church across the street across the street wanted to buy it for another purpose, they offered them four thousand. It was an old church with a high steeple. Seated about one hundred and fifty people and we offered them two or three thousand dollars. And they wanted to keep it open for the gospel so they sold it to us. So we moved there with our little group and we were there for five years and we did a lot of crazy things as a first time pastor. And we dropped leaflets from an airplane. One of our members was a pilot and he had his own plane so I went up after service and we dropped leaflets. We held a parade to advertise our Sunday School contest. And so we had a police escort with an open truck with our orchestra in it and we marched behind it and I drove the school bus behind it. We did that and then we released homing pigeons one Sunday with messages on them to advertise the church. We did a lot of crazy things as a first-time pastor. But we grew and then we got a first page, a full page spread in the Christian Life Magazine, it was a national magazine, with a picture of our contest, we got interest from that. So that was our first church.

Interviewer: Tell me about meeting your wife.

Weber: Alright, while I was at Roberts, of course I, in the parlors, they called it “the parlors,” it was in the girls’ dorm but it was the parlors for everybody— and there was a piano in there and we’d gather around, singing around the piano. So Faith’s sister was at the school and her brother was in my class, Paul. So Paul and I stayed— ooo, my leg, anyway, pardon me—. [motions to his leg which is pained]

Interviewer: You’re okay.

Weber: Anyway, he stayed in the, in the barracks with me and his sister was in school. And May Day, and Faith came to visit. And I was playing the piano, and Joy and her were watching me play and asked, “well, where’d he take lessons” and I said “Oh, Eastmen School of Music,” just passed it off. I never took lessons. And her sister said, “why, that weebee, he never took any lessons!” That’s how I met Faith. And then we wrote letters and our letters crossed and then she sent me a picture which her brother used to take away from me all the time and I’d have to get it from his room but how I met Faith. And she had a sister, Joy, Grace, Hope and her’s was Faith, one brother Paul. Who they showed charity to. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, when did you marry?

Weber: Alright, let’s see, I graduated in ’51 and then I pastored for a year before we met and so we married in ’52. June 14th, 1952, and every year, the nation puts flags on us for our anniversary,¹⁶ cause—.

Interviewer: So, was she involved with the church you bought?

Weber: Yes, yes, she was the pianist for a while, and then she taught class and worked with the young people and the juniors and so forth, she was very busy.

Interviewer: Now, tell me about moving to Florida.

Weber: Okay, after our second church, it was in the, outside of Dunkirk,¹⁷ it was so cold, our phone number was Yukon. That was the number before the letters. It got so bad, the snow, you couldn’t even see the school bus come by and I drove a school bus and we’d have to duck underneath the telegraph wires to get milk. It was a farm church and we got raw milk from the farmers. And I got pictures of it where a speaker was coming to our church one Sunday and he got to our church on Saturday morning and parked the car in the front of our parsonage. And next Sunday morning all you could see was six inches of his car. It was covered. Of course, we had no church that Sunday, but we were there for three years and I had bad sinus in that region so we left there. Then I taught school for several years in Buffalo. And we had friends, relatives who lived in Florida, New Port Richey, Florida. Well, that was actually Holly Springs where he was. And they say,

¹⁶ Flag Day is June 14th

¹⁷ In New York State by Lake Erie

“Come on down to Florida then!” I thought, well I’ll try to teach at the Bible School at Dunedin, Florida. So I flew down there and met with the president, picked me up at the airport and he said, “We’d like to have you teach at our Bible school BUT you have three children and you’d have to have another job, we couldn’t pay you enough.” So that was out, so I took up, rented a car and went to New Port Richey and looked it over and went to the school. They had no vacancy there, I was gonna teach there. So, then I flew home without the promise of a job so I kept teaching in Buffalo and Faith was doing nursing in Buffalo for those two years and I was preaching on the side. So then we decided we were gonna go to Florida anyways. We built, we were gonna built a home so I saved my tithe money, bought some Psalm books and was gonna start a church down in New Port Richey. So we drove down there, we left in June and we had no paycheck from June until October and so we lived by faith. And I took Genesis 15 when Abraham was told by the Lord to “leave your family and friends and go to another country and I’ll be a blessing to you, but you have to be a blessing to others.” So I took that verse and Genesis 12:1,2, and 3. So we went to Florida and our house wasn’t finished that we were building so we stayed in with the builder’s shack. It was so filled with bugs, it wasn’t funny but we stayed there for a few, for a month or so and then went into our house. Then we started to go to this Boulevard Bible Church that had a split— they didn’t have a church, but they had a Sunday School building that seated about a hundred and something so we started there with our children and then started prayer meeting at our home and then we needed a place to have our church so we looked and we found a place at the police station. It had a room in there that seated one hundred and twenty-five people with a piano in it and they gave it to us for free. So, the first Sunday I put a sign, we had a sign made up and put it on the sidewalk and a lady came in and was converted to the Lord that first Sunday. After, that was in November, then just before Christmas, the trustees from Boulevard Bible Church came to our house, he said, “Brother Weber, we need a preacher, you need your church. How much calling would you do for \$30.00 a week?” I said, “well, last week I made sixty some calls without any pay” so I said, “we’ll pray about it.” So, we did, so then they had me preach and I’d preached several times for them before. So, January, they took me in as their pastor.

Interviewer: What church was that?

Weber: Boulevard Bible Church. So, then I became their pastor. They only had nineteen members and thirty-five in Sunday school. But then I was assistant teaching at the high school but then one day while I was teaching in September, the teacher was out and I had to go to get his lesson plans, and when I went to his house he was shooting drugs up his arm. So, I had to report that to the principal and they said, “Mr. Weber, would you take his job permanently for this year?” So, then I taught ninth and tenth grade English at Gulf High School so that supplemented my thirty dollars a week from the—.

Interviewer: So, you're saying you had to teach school to make ends meet?

Weber: Yes, I was substituting before that. You know, filling in different schools but then they asked me to take it permanently when we found this and then I got his lesson plans. So, I taught there for a year and then of course we, after the first year, we packed that building out, there was no room for anybody. So, I told them we're gonna have to build. Some didn't want to so I said, "well if you don't want to build, you've got the wrong preacher." So, but they were willing to build so we built a nice church, seats four hundred and we left after five years, well almost six years, we were running between oh, two to four hundred.

Interviewer: So, when did you start working for the Oriental Mission Society?

Weber: While we were passing at the Boulevard Bible Church, we had mission conferences. And so we had the OMS come in for our missionary conference and different missionaries. And one of them was Ernest Kilbourne whose grandfather was co-founder of OMS back in 1904. And so he came, he called one night and he said, "do you have a place for a little old missionary to lay his head tonight?" This was on a Sunday night. "Come on in Ernie," he was there before, so he came in and we sat around the table having refreshments. And he said "now Dick, I want you to take the regional office in Atlanta, Georgia. It involves eight southern states, we want you to be in charge of." And I said "No, I like to preach, I'm called to preach, not to be a regional man." He said "Oh, you can preach all you want but you're gonna hold missionary conferences" and I said, "No, I don't think so." So, we went to bed and next day, he left he said well, I'm gonna send you an application anyway. So sure enough and application came from headquarters, Greenwood, Indiana. So, we looked at that. We hadn't prayed about it for one thing. So, we got the application, we read about it, we prayed over it and we said, "well, we'll fill it out and send it in." Well, they accepted us. So that was in May of '68. And then I preached the rest of the year and I gave my last sermon December of '68 and we joined OMS January '69.

Interviewer: So that brought you to Georgia?

Weber: That brought us to Georgia, that's was where the office was.

Interviewer: Where did you settle in Georgia?

Weber: In Greenbriar, down in South Georgia near Greenbriar Mall, down in that section. So, we were there, let's see, '69, '70, and then '71, it got bad down there. The police were there and we had cars come in and hit our car port, and purses that were stolen from the mall, police were in the parking lots shooting it out with—. And so we moved. They moved us to Marietta then. And that's where, we were there for a couple of years then we moved to Canton in '76 I think it was, yeah, 1976.

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

Weber: We have three children, Daniels the oldest, he's sixty-two gonna be sixty-three in July, thirtieth. Then Daryl was our second one, he's in Vermont, he'll be sixty-two and then Dawn, six, seven years later, she's fifty-four. She lives in Kennesaw. Dan went to Asbury College and then he got his Master's at Cincinnati Conservatory of music. He taught two years in Iowa, got a full scholarship at Cincinnati Conservatory. And he said if you want to major in music for a living, make sure you have food stamps. So, [laughs] so he got a job with Warner Brothers at a radio station and he was a, he interviewed intellectuals on TV. But then he heard of this job at, what was it Faith [asking wife]? Anyway, he got a job doing, yeah, at uh, yeah, he was, oh, I can't think of it now, but I blame that on my age, I forget too much. But he was a financial advisor.

Interviewer: I see.

Weber: Yeah, and so he's been there ever since, he's the first vice president now. In Cincinnati, Ohio. And he took his son in this year as co-partner. So that's his job and our Daryl, in Vermont, he's in finances also through overseas. He does a lot of computer work and our daughter's in Kennesaw teaching in school.

Interviewer: So, are you still preaching?

Weber: Yes, not steady but wherever I get called. I preach at our church in Marietta, Canton, Cartersville. Then I teach Sunday school class when I get a chance so, wherever I can, I fill in.

Interviewer: So, I want to refer to something we talked about earlier in the interview. You said that at boot camp you were there with two fellows from New York. Guys that you knew. Can you tell me about this?

Weber: Alright, when I flew to Marcus Island, I met these two fellas on Marcus Island, they were tower operators. And one was Walter and Walter and, uh, well anyway— two of the fellas and they were from Buffalo and twins and we got to a nice relationship. In fact, we had such a good relationship, while they worked at the tower at night, we had access to the food hall, that dining hall and I'd go over and go up into the tower and we had nice juicy steaks fried in butter up there in the tower. We'd do that during the night while we were together.

Interviewer: Well, what about the two guys at boot camp? There was one that went into the Navy—.

Weber: Well they went to separate camps. They didn't go to the same camp as I did 'cause I went into the Air Force.

Interviewer: Right, so tell me about them. You were in line with them and what happened to them later in the war.

Weber: Well, all I know is they didn't come back. One was in the Army and one was in the Navy. Never heard anything from them from the time we left. So that's the last I heard of them.

Interviewer: And they were from your hometown?

Weber: They were right from my hometown. Cheektowaga. Mm-hmm. In fact, it was his pond that we used to skate on. Bronee's (?) Pond.

Interviewer: So, Mr. Weber, what does your military service mean to you today?

Weber: Well, for me, it's an honor. It was an honor. Its so different than the other, well when the Vietnam War was breaking out, there was such, such a war, that it wasn't there to win. And our war, everybody was together. There was real unity. Everybody was for us and they treated us like heroes. You know they just, it was just wonderful. We actually felt we didn't deserve all the blessings that they bestowed upon us and even to this day, they're so good to us. And then when they see a World War II veteran, they're especially, well there's a few of us left, you know? But, I'll just give you an example. I was at Costco one day and I had this hat on [he's wearing a black World War II Veteran hat] and I only had two items in my hand and I said, well they were about forty dollars and there was a big line and I went in front and I said "would you mind if I got ahead of you with these two items?" And, "go right ahead" and I got waited on and the lady who let me ahead said "Now, put that on my bill." She paid for it! People are, they were so gracious and we find that that's true wherever we go. They're very, very cordial to us. So I, I feel it was a real honor. Now my brother, he was supposed to go in, but he had a heart problem and so he was classified as 4-F¹⁸ so he never went in. But he's had a heart problem ever since.

Interviewer: So you're a member of VFW?

Weber: VFW¹⁹ and the American Legion.²⁰

Interviewer: And tell me about those organizations.

Weber: Well the American Legion, of course you have to be in the service and have served so much time but with the VFW I had to serve overseas. They won't accept anybody who wasn't overseas or was in, they want you to be in, that you've been in during the war if possible but they've, they've changed somewhat. But I went to the AEFW or VFW because I didn't like the VFW in Akron, Georgia because they, I don't like it when they have a bar in it. It smells terrible. I didn't like the smell of the booze in it. And the one where I go in Marietta don't have it so that's why I'm there. And I have friends from the American Legion,

¹⁸ A term used by the military to disqualify people from service due to medical problems.

¹⁹ Veterans of Foreign Wars

²⁰ A wartime veterans service organization. Encourages US patriotism.

members there, that got us in there. So that's why I go there. We go the first Thursday of every month.

Interviewer: So, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Weber: No, but I appreciate your kindness and appreciate your asking us. This is the first interview I've done in such an extreme manner [laughs] but you've been very gracious and so has everybody else. We thank you for it.

Interviewer: Well thank you so much Richard Weber. We'll end there.

Weber: Thank you.