

Narrator
Wendell Phillip Cadarette

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New York State Military Museum
Interviewer

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WC: Would you please state your full name and your place and date of birth?

WPC: My name is Wendell Phillip Cadarette. I was born in Worcester, MA on August 3rd, 1925.

WC: Did you attend school there?

WPC: Yes.

WC: Did you graduate from high school?

WPC: No, but I got a GED after the war.

WC: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

WPC: Yes. I had gone to the movie on December 7th with my cousin. We were in Worcester and after the movie we went to an ice cream store. We heard some men talking and one said "they will be taking kids like these pretty soon". We were 16 at the time. We didn't know what he was talking about, but in those days you didn't speak to an adult unless you were spoken to. We left and went home to my cousin's house and my Uncle (unclear) said "have you heard the news?" and we said "what news?". He said the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and we said "what's Pearl Harbor?" because in those days nobody knew much about it. He said it's in Hawaii.

The next morning in high school they called us all down to the auditorium. They had a radio on a little table and the principal was there. Then they turned on President Roosevelt's speech declaring war on Japan.

You have to consider what a kid thought in those days, raised on cowboy movies, etc. We all wanted to go to war and be heroes. You found out later that you wished the war had ended.

The next night I was riding around with two of my friends and one of my buddies had his brother's '37 Chevy. We were riding around, moaning about how the war would be over in six weeks and we were all too young to get involved in the war. We were born too late, we said. We never realized it was going to last four years.

WC: So, you dropped out of school to go into the service?

WPC: No, I dropped out of school to make some money. I worked for Baldwin Chain and made a pretty good wage for that day. Then on August 2nd I went to Springfield, MA and volunteered.

WC: How old were you when you volunteered?

WPC: I was 17.

WC: You volunteered for the Army?

WPC: Yes.

WC: Why did you pick the Army?

WPC: I wanted to go into tanks.

WC: Had you any family members who were in the service or who had been in the service?

WPC: No, my dad had been in the Vermont National Guard years ago.

WC: Where did they send you for your basic training?

WPC: I went to Fort McClellan, Alabama for basic training, infantry. It was a 17-week course.

WC: Was that your first time away from home for an extended period of time?

WPC: Oh yes, definitely.

WC: What was that like for you?

WPC: I was looking forward to it. We left Fort Devens on a troop train and we were heading south.

I have to digress a bit. When I joined the Army I had taken my physical but they said we would be sworn in later. We were at Fort Devens waiting to be sworn in. I didn't realize that the same tests were given for the Army, Navy and Marine corps. I was approached by a Marine Sergeant who tried to talk me into joining the Marines. I then realized that the services were routinely trying to steal recruits from each other before they were sworn in. I told him "no sir" (not knowing better than to call a Sergeant "sir"), I want to join the Army and go into tanks.

When an Army officer swore me in he said since I was a volunteer I would have my pick of the services, which I knew, so I said "yes sir, I want to go into tanks". So, after a week at Fort Devens we were on our way south. We made one stop at Fort Knox, Kentucky. That's where the armored division is. The sergeant comes through the railroad cars calling out names. He didn't call my name. When he started to leave the car I called out to him "hey sergeant, you didn't call

my name". He said that if he didn't call my name I was not going there. I said that I volunteered and was supposed to get my pick of the services. Everybody in the car yelled out "you'll be sorry!". We took off again and the next stop was Fort McClellan for basic training, infantry. In the tenth week of the course they asked for volunteers for the paratroopers. There were 8 of us who volunteered. We took the physical and when we didn't hear anything more we figured we had failed. Then in the 17th week we had our train tickets home. They had what was called an enroute furlough. We could go anywhere we wanted as long as we arrived at Fort Mead, MD at the end of the 15 days. Fort Mead was the embarkation point for going to Europe. So I bought my ticket along with the others. Then a soldier came into the barracks and told me I was wanted up at the CO's office. So I went up to the CO's office and when I walked in there were the other seven guys sitting there. They said it looks like we are going after all. The sergeant said that the captain would be right out and wanted to talk to us. You would think that one would get a little praise for volunteering for something that involves jumping out of airplanes. We didn't get it. He called us cowards and deserters. He accused us of abandoning the other guys in our outfit to avoid combat. The Army asked for volunteers for the paratroopers. We were quite taken aback by that, as it was quite an insult to us.

The next morning the other fellas were boarding buses to go to the train station and the eight of us stayed there. A couple days later they shipped us to Fort Benning, GA for the paratroopers. We no sooner got there and they told us we had to take a physical. We said we had already done that. They said we had taken an Army physical, not a paratrooper physical. So they made us take a physical all over again and seven of us passed it. The guy that failed felt terrible. He was my age, 18, and was actually crying. They told him he would be placed in an infantry outfit there at Benning and not sent to Fort Mead to re-join the unit where he knew everybody. We had a guy there that was kind of a barracks lawyer who suggested he sneak out that night and take a train to Fort Mead and tell them he failed the paratrooper physical and was there to re-join his infantry outfit. I don't know if he did that. The rest of us went on through paratroop training.

WC: How was paratroop training?

WPC: It was 4 weeks. The weeks were referred to as A,B,C, and D. Week A was physical training. We did a lot of running, push-ups, everything under the sun. During B stage we jumped out of a 34-foot tower. You go up a tower that is 34 feet off the ground. You put on this harness, which is hooked up to a cable system that ends at a sand pit or sawdust pit. You assume the position that would be used when jumping out of an airplane and they watch you to make sure you are doing everything right. When he slaps you on your fanny that means you have to jump. Then you kick out your right leg and swing to your left. Then you duck your head and fold your arms across your chest. As you fall the cable connects with a second cable that carries you to the sand or sawdust pit.

Then the other half of the day you learn how to pack your parachute. The first five jumps must be made using your own parachute that you packed.

WC: Really? (chuckle)

WPC: Oh yeah. You use a buddy system. The parachute is laid out on a long table with one guy on the right and one on the left. Then you practice rolling and packing the chute according to the instructions. Don't ask me how because I forget after 50 or 60 years! Then, When you pack your chute you pack your reserve chute (your smaller one), then you set that aside. Now you pack his chute. Then they put the chutes in what they called the packing shed.

That second week you just learn how to pack.

The third week is C stage and you and you jump out of 250-foot towers. Again, you put on a harness and there is a parachute already open above you that is hooked to a big steel ring. There are three of these. They raise you up until you are 240 feet above the ground. We are all given a small piece of paper. And then, let's say you are number one. They will say "number one, drop your paper". You drop the paper and if it drifts toward the tower they don't release you because that would be a disaster. Otherwise, they lift you up another ten feet and you hear a click and you float down with the parachute. As you drop there is a sergeant on the ground yelling at you "swing to the right", "swing to the left", stuff like that. Then you assume the position for landing, and you've got to have your knees bent and legs together. then you slam into the ground. You don't really slam down like a regular parachutist but you can feel it. It was very pleasant, a lot of fun. I enjoyed it. Also during C stage you continue learning how to pack your parachute. When they feel you have accomplished that they have you put it aside in the packing shed. Then they give you a weekend off. On Saturday and Sunday you can go into town or something like that. Monday morning you start your jumps. You do that Monday through Thursday in the morning and then Friday night.

WC: So you had a night jump too?

WPC: Oh yes, the final one.

WC: And then you got your parachute wings?

WPC: Yes. On Saturday morning they pin your parachute wings on you. Then you inside and there is a jumper roster that you have to sign which says that you will jump when asked, and if you don't jump you are going to get a six-months and two thirds court martial.

WC: Once you completed your jump training, what happened next?

WPC: I went to radio school. I did three weeks of radio school and then they would follow with an advanced course of six weeks. But then (after the three week course) they told us we were qualified to go home on furlough. They said that if we did not take it then, we may not have another opportunity for furlough at the end of the six week course. I opted out of the radio course and took the furlough.

WC: After your furlough where did you go next?

WPC: I went back to Benning and we did a couple jumps. Some of us had to carry a small walkie-talkie radio, some had to carry a small cage of pigeons and others had to carry what they

called a 5-11 radio, which looked like a box on the end of a spear. Nobody wanted to get stuck with that thing. I had the walkie-talkie radio. Then we had a tactical jump, which was the last jump I did there.

I also assisted at a jump. We were put on a detail to go out and pick up gear from a jump by a later class. So we're standing around shooting the breeze and we could see the C-47's coming. The sergeant told everybody to get out of there because we wouldn't want to be out there when they jump because everything is going to come flying down at you. So we went over by the edge of the woods there and it was amazing. You could see helmets coming down and rifles came loose from a couple of the guys. One rifle stuck half way into the ground. If we'd been standing out there it would have been bad.

We had about 200 men and they told us we were going to Europe again. I and four other guys were on light guard duty guarding Army guys that had gone AWOL, etc. There was a stockade there and we just had to guard that. You were on that duty for four days. It was on the first or second night when one of the guys' buddies came running over and said we were moving out the next morning for Fort Meade, MD and we were leaving for Europe. We asked "what about us?" and he said "I don't think you're going". So this fella asks him to hold his rifle so he could go talk to the captain. He goes and pleads our case to the captain and the captain said we were going to go later. He said he wanted to go now, so the captain told him ok, but go tell the other three guys they will join up with us later at Fort Meade.

So we three go back to the barracks and they stuck us with another group of men. There were about a hundred of us. They put us through an obstacle course. Then they put us on a troop train that headed west. I think we got to Arkansas, or somewhere like that, and the troop train headed north to Chicago. Well, we thought we were going to Europe. When we got to Chicago they let us out to go to a USO. We went to that and back to the train and the train moved out that night. We woke up in the morning and somebody says "where the heck are we?" About that time, or later that day, somebody saw a sign for St. Louis and said "hell, we aren't going to Europe, we're going to the Pacific!" There were one or two sergeants and an officer and they started laughing. They knew all along that we were going to the Pacific to join the 503rd parachute regiment. We kept on going across the country until we got to Fort Ord, California. We were there one week and then went by bus to Camp Stoneman, which was the POE for the Pacific. We were there about three weeks. One afternoon in come two MP's with a guy and he wasn't a paratrooper. He was regular infantry. Of course you didn't question what those guys did so they left him with us. This guy had an been given an overnight furlough but went home to Minnesota where they picked him up and brought him back. A buddy of mine had an aunt in san Francisco and took a weekend furlough to go visit her. When I was offered a furlough I had nowhere to go so I let him use it to see his aunt again. This deserter guy was given a 3-day furlough and took off again. We never saw him again. Then they put us on a ship, the General J.R.Brooks, a passenger ship. We were on that for 21 days and we got to New Guinea. The 503rd wasn't there. They just put us there. We were there a couple months and had small duties to do.

WC: What month and year was that?

WPC: I went overseas in April, 1944. There they took us to a wild river to swim in. We didn't know it at the time but it was full of crocodiles. Thank god I didn't know it or I'd have been scared. Then they put us on a detail unloading coffins. We saw a body brought in that they did an autopsy on. That was the most horrible thing I had ever seen in my life. I watched that and he had died of Strep typhus.

WC: Was he an American?

WPC: Oh yes, he was a soldier. He was not from my outfit. He was just a guy they brought in. Strep typhus came from a tick. It was like Rocky Mountain fever, only more deadly. The tick are in the high grass. They eat their way inside your leg and you don't feel them. If you see them you burn them with a cigarette and they fall off. If it gets inside you build up a tremendous fever. I knew a guy Keller from Chicago who had it. He went from 180 pounds to 140 pounds. In the Pacific we had all kinds of diseases, as you know. You hear a lot about malaria. We didn't fear malaria. We feared strep typhus and others. They were all jungle related. There was no civilization. You couldn't go to the PX to buy anything. Everything was issued. You were issued cigarettes, candy, etc.

WC: What about things like snakes and scorpions?

WPC: Oh yes, they were there, all over the place. I saw a few. Later, on the island of Numfor, there was a stump in the middle of our tent and the guys decided to dig it out. They started digging and out came this snake and it was poisonous. They hit it with an entrenching tool and cut its head off.

You know, when we got back home most of the guys had fought in Europe and we envied them because they had fought in civilization and had fought a civilized enemy, more or less. We had fought the Japanese and they were not civilized. We did have one advantage that I didn't realize at the time, but when we were overseas there wasn't a day when you couldn't swim. You were always somewhere near the equator and that was an advantage. I wouldn't have wanted to be in Europe like the 101st airborne. They were in the Battle of the Bulge in two-foot snows, losing their toes and stuff like that.

WC: Did your unit jump at all?

WPC: Yes, we joined them (503rd) in August 1944 and I was put in Company B. They put some of us in each company. The old timers had jumped on New Guinea before I joined them. You have to remember that there were not many fields to jump into over there. It was mostly jungle. Then we were on Numfor and they told us we had to do a practice jump. They were going to jump the regiment in a series of so many days. They took it right down to the squad level and half the guys would jump one day and the other half the next day. So one day we made our jump and it was a little dinky field. We landed ok and when I got back to our tent the sergeant said one of the guys went on sick leave and they needed one volunteer and I was it. Because I was the newest guy they volunteered me to jump two days in a row.

WC: You guys had to jump to get your jump pay, right?

WPC: Oh yes. On that particular jump we loaded up with our full combat gear. They took us to the airfield. It was at noontime and they had been jumping all day long. We got to the field, all loaded down with our stuff, so we all laid down. It's uncomfortable to stand around with your chute and rifle and everything. We're waiting for the airplane, but what we didn't know was that the first guys to jump had missed the field because there was quite a wind blowing. It was a passable jump but they jumped to the side. So from then on the planes went to the right of the field so the wind would drift the guys onto the field. So they did that all the way to noontime. When it came our turn we're lying there and the crew came out to the C-47 and they loaded us aboard. What we didn't know (because we didn't know about the

wind to begin with) was that the wind had stopped. So we took off and the pilot was probably not told about that. So we approach the field and we do the stand-up, hook-up and all that and they slap the first guy ion the fanny and you jump in a stick of twelve people. The first thing you do is look up at your canopy to make sure your chute is ok. Then I looked down and heard somebody shout "Where the hell's the field?". I looked down below me and it was jungle. I started looking around and all there was was jungle and you don't want to land in that stuff. So I look way out there and see this postage stamp and that's the field. As soon as I saw it I went into a forward slip. You grab your two front lines and climb them. You can only climb so far and that collapses the chute. You can't collapse the whole chute.. It collapses the front part of the chute. That makes you go in that direction. Unfortunately it makes you go faster. I heard a couple guys say they weren't going to go for it as we would never make it. They ended up in the jungle. We came down and I thought how lucky I was doing. When you get about one hundred off the ground you have to release your chute slip because you can't land at that speed. So I look and here's another piece of bad luck. Here's the jungle below me and I'm about twenty feet away from the field. I'm drifting that way and there's a dead tree sticking up right in front of me and I'm going right into the tree. Now you run into another problem. You land with your feet together and your knees slightly bent to act like a shock absorber. But if you hit a tree you don't want to land like that. If you hit straddling a tree like that, bingo! You'll be singing soprano for the rest of your life. So what you do is you cross your legs. But now there's another problem If you miss the tree and land like that, there go your legs because they will snap on impact. Also, to protect your neck and eyes you cross your arms under your chin and tuck your face into your arms. So I did that because I knew I was going to hit that tree. As I passed over the top of the tree I could feel these small limbs busting off my butt. I came to a stop a couple feet off the ground. I looked up and my chute was pierced by limbs all over the place. So I bounced up and down until I could touch the ground. Then I unhooked my chute and walked about ten feet into the field. The other two guys didn't get in until the next day so they had to sleep with the mosquitoes.

WC: Did you have any direct contact with the Japanese?

WPC: Not there, no. The Japanese were all dead on the island. Oh, we saw the USO troop, Bob Hope, Dorothy LaMore and Jerry Colona. They loaded us on a ship and took us to the Philippines. We arrived on the island of Leyte. I don't recall the date but it was after the invasion. They put us on duty on the beach in case of a counter landing. We didn't know it then but we were getting more ammunition and equipment for the invasion of Mindoro. The Japanese did land two planes of paratroopers. By the way, they were C-47's that they had gotten before the war. Their mission was to land and go to the airfield and wreck as many planes as they could. I don't think they wrecked any planes. They headed west across the island to join the rest of the Japanese there. The Japanese were over there almost every day with their aircraft. They were making Kamikaze attacks on the ships at sea. The ships were just off shore, supply ships and war ships. Almost every day there were dog fights between our Navy planes and the Japanese. One time we had gone down to the beach to go swimming and we heard firing up above us . Tacloban was the capital and that's where the action was. We were in a town called Dulag which was ten miles south of there. Somebody says "look, here comes an airplane!" He came over and it was Japanese. He was up about a thousand feet. You could see the red meatballs on it. He went around and came back again and about that time we saw two P-38's come down at him. The lead P-38 fired at him and then had to veer off. The Japanese plane started smoking and he dove on a ship. He hit the ship with his left wing and

there was a huge fire and explosion. The ship was damaged badly but it was ok. They did that about every day. A lot of times they weren't successful.

Then we prepared for the invasion of Mindoro. Even though we were paratroopers they had us make a water landing. I don't know why. Maybe it was because it was about 400 miles up there and back or something. We made our water landing and ran into no opposition. The few Japanese on the island took off. We found out later that we were a diversionary force. The main purpose of us landing on Mindoro was to have the Japanese make a counter landing on us. Then we would have gone into the hills and fought from there. Meanwhile, general MacCarther's plan was to invade Luzon which was only 25 miles away from us. They figured any Japanese that landed on Mindoro would be that less they would have to deal with on Luzon. We had landed on Mindoro on September 15th. Our fleet was attacked by kamikaze's one time. We were first battalion and were on the beach in case of a counter landing. Second battalion was five miles inland at the town of San Jose which was the capital, and third battalion was further inland. We were there from September 15th until January 1st. one night the sergeant came by and said we were to pass the word that there could be a landing by the Japanese, as there were Japanese ships coming. We were spread very thin so I had to run all the way down through the Companies and report that they should be prepared, as there may be a bombardment. Then I came back. We were all wondering what was going on. We thought it was more just story than anything else. Then we saw the flash of a gun out to sea. A Japanese heavy cruiser and destroyer were firing. Then we could hear the shells going overhead. They were not firing at us. They were trying to hit the air field behind us. They put all of their shells into the San Jose river which was lit up at night and must have thrown them off. When those shells passed overhead it sounded like a freight train. Then our P-38's and P-47's took off after them. We couldn't see them but we could see their shots coming down and ricocheting off the Japanese cruiser. They would each take turns at it and finally the Japanese left. They never did make a landing. As we found out later, they never intended to land. They just wanted to harass us.

On January 1st, 1945 we were washing our clothes in the San Jose River (I don't even know if that was the name but it's what we called it). A sergeant comes by and tells us to pack up all of our gear. We're moving out. We said our clothes are all wet and he tells us not to worry about it. All we needed were the clothes we had on and our rifles and ammunition. He said we could leave our clothes there on the river bank and pick them up when we got back. Of course he didn't say where we were going. This was just Company B and we marched down to the beach and there were two LCI's there. they loaded us aboard there two LCI's. After we pulled away from shore they told us what we were going to do. They said about 80 miles up the coast there was a Japanese radio shack and CP (command post). Our job was to knock out the CP. So we went up 60 miles by water and landed by a burning tree that the Philippine guerrillas had lit for us. We formed a line and were unloading our ammo, food, etc. from the LCI's. We noticed that the water at the LCI ramp was getting deeper. The LCI was drifting and we asked the sailors what was the story. They said they had heard a plane overhead. It was night so I doubt they could see us and it might have been American anyway. But they said the skipper was nervous about it and they were going to pull away and make another run at the beach. So we waited for a while and we heard this command from one of the Navy guys telling us we were going to have to swim for it. We had our paratrooper boots on and our fatigues on. We jumped in t swim to shore and we were laughing about how we were going to drown because our boots were full of water when we were trying to swim. Before we left the ramp we heard a couple guys say they couldn't swim. They said they were going to give them life preservers. They gave

them belt preservers. Those have a CO2 thing that you squeeze to inflate the preserver and then you float by that. We got to shore and we are sitting there puffing and laughing. We hear out in the darkness “I can’t hold him any longer! I gotta let go of him.” We turn around and try to swim but we still have our boots on. One of the guys had his boots off and he came sailing past us and swam out there. The other guy told him the guy was down there so he dove down and got him and pulled him to shore. They did CPR on him and a medical officer declared him dead. He didn’t make it. So they buried him in the tree line and said he would be moved later on.

WC: Did he have one of those life belts on?

WPC: He did, but it failed. The other guy’s worked. Then we got with the Filipino guerrillas in the town of Mamburao. The next morning we had c-rations, but there was a water buffalo there and they milked it. They had it in a pitcher and offered it to us, so we held out our canteens. It tasted quite a bit like regular cow’s milk. They had a little bit left and asked who wanted it. Everyone yelled out “give it to the Boston boy!”. They called me “the Boston boy” though I wasn’t from Boston. To them anybody from Massachusetts was from Boston.

We left that morning and it took us two days of traveling. It was about a 20-mile hike. We had a scout squad that was about an hour ahead of us and we found out later what took place. They were going along and they heard some running coming towards them, so they peeled off into the jungle on either side of the path. Down the path came two Filipino boys. So our guys jumped up and stopped them and asked them if they knew what was going on. They said they were carrying equipment for a Japanese patrol and took off when they got to the river. when asked about how far behind them the patrol was they said about half an hour. So they sat off the path and waited. There were 12 of them. They got 9 of them and said that 3 got away. We came along later and saw the dead ones on both sides there. Then we crossed the river, which by the way had crocodiles in it. We had guys on point shooting into the river. The next day we got near the town and came in at night time. The Filipino guerrillas had gone into the village and told the people to get out. As we came toward the village we could see these people walking along. They were mostly children and older people. They were staring at us and we were staring at them. We got into position around the village and the sergeant said to take a nap here, that we were going to wait until dawn. I’m wondering how I’m going to sleep when we’re that close to the Japanese and the next thing I know he’s waking me up. Then we moved in on the village and that’s when the firefight took place. It lasted from dawn until about three o’clock in the afternoon. They were in two block houses in the middle of a clearing, with about 75 yards of open ground around them.

WC: Did your unit suffer any casualties?

WPC: We lost 3 killed and 13 wounded, of which I was one of them.

WC: You were one of them? Were you hit with shrapnel or...?

WPC: No, I was shot.

WC: Where were you hit?

WPC: Through the left hip.

WC: How long were you there before you were medevaced out?

WPC: It was about 1:30 in the afternoon that I got shot. I made a big mistake that could have cost me my life instead of just damage. After I was wounded they moved us back to another part of the village. The Filipino women had killed a pig and a bunch of chickens and they were feeding us. We hadn't had any hot meals in a long time. I was in no mood to eat nor were the other wounded. My sergeant came by to see how I was doing and I told him I wanted a cigarette but didn't have any. He took out a pack of four that came in our c-rations and gave me one and put the other three in my pocket. I bet they were his last ones, though he said they weren't. Then they moved us to the beach and sent us two PT boats. The PT boats took us 80 miles down the coast.

WC: Was it like a field hospital or something?

WPC: Yes, the 2nd Field Hospital at San Jose.

WC: How long were you there for?

WPC: They operated on me right away and I was there one week. Then they flew us by C-47 to Leyte, 400 miles south. I was put in the 44th General Hospital and was there about a week or two. Then I was put on board the U.S. hospital ship Marigold. They took us to Hollandia and I was put in the 27th General Hospital. I was there about three months and then they put us on light duty, not in the hospital but in the hospital area. We were in tents and I was there the fifth day before they put us on light duty. We were to help tear down a mess hall. They had us go up on the roof and poke holes in it. Anyway, another fella and I were up on the roof and the roof collapsed. Down we came and I broke my ankle and wrist. They stuck me back in the hospital for two more weeks.

WC: Were you in the hospital when the war ended?

WPC: No. I was put on a LST after five months and we were taken back to Leyte. We were watching a movie and during the movie the lights came on and they said that the rumors that the war was over were 99% true. That was it for the movie. We all went screaming back to the tent. The ships out in the harbor were all shooting off their anti-aircraft guns in jubilation.

Then they told me I was going to drive a truck (you could either push a pencil or drive a truck). We went back to Luzon. Then on New Year's Day, 1946 we were put on EPA and I was shipped back to the States.

WC: Then you were discharged?

WPC: No. I was flown from San Francisco to Richmond, VA, then by train to New York City. Then I went by train to Worcester, MA.

WC: Were you still under medical care at that point?

WPC: No, I was alright.

WC: Once you were discharged and back home did you make use of the GI Bill at all?

WPC: Oh yes. First I took advantage of that "52-20" clause. There was a waiting list to get jobs even though they were doing a lot of hiring. Everybody wanted cars and refrigerators and everything after the war. Then one day I got a call and they said they didn't realize that I had been wounded in the war and that I would get preference on jobs. I didn't know that. They said they were going to get me a job at the Pullman Standard Car Company in Worcester, MA. So I went to work for them. Then after three years they kind of collapsed.

Then I went to California with my wife and another couple. I went to an aircraft school under the GI Bill to become an aircraft mechanic. It was a one-year school. The GI Bill gave a single man \$75 per month, a married man \$105, and a married man with children \$150. I had one child.

WC: So you completed the aviation course?

WPC: I got my A&E (?) license and I went to work right away because the Korean War was starting up and they needed guys. I went right to a top grade mechanic because of my license. I worked for Douglas while going to school but I had to quit because it was too tough to do that and go to school. I went to work for North American for about nine months. Then I quit them and went to work for Northrup Aircraft, working on F-89 jets. That was a great outfit. I liked working for Northrup. I worked for them for 2 or 3 years.

Then I heard they were testing applicants for the U.S. Border Patrol. So I took the test for that in Los Angeles in April, 1953 and passed it. I was ordered to report to McAllen, TX and that was my career after that.

WC: How did you end up in Whitehall?

WPC: I was stationed there. It all started on the southern border. I did Mission, TX, McAllen, TX, Rio Grande City, TX.

WC: Did you have to speak Spanish?

WPC: Oh yes, I took Spanish along with a course in immigration law. After five months you had to take an exam in both Spanish and immigration law. You had three officers there and they questioned you in that language. The first year you were on probation. After ten months there was a final exam. Three higher-ranking officers test you. One of them has a questionnaire in English but asks the questions in Spanish. You have the answers in English but have to answer in Spanish. So everything orally is in Spanish and everything written is in English. The other two officers watch you and then they rate you on how well you did. I was there about three years and then I transferred to North Dakota. I was there about four years. Then I asked to come east to be closer to home which was Massachusetts. My brother was here and my wife's family was here in Massachusetts. They told me I was going to Whitehall, NY. I was told it was a backup unit. It wasn't on the border as you can obviously tell. We were in a position here that if anything got by grouses Point or Beecher Falls we could get over there and cut off the road. Plus we had to check busses and trains on occasion.

WC: When did you retire?

WPC: At the end of 1977.

WC: What have you been doing since then? Enjoying life?

WPC: Enjoying life. I did drive school bus for a while, about eight years. They needed drivers at the time so I volunteered. It helped me put our daughter through college. Eight years was enough.

WC: How do you think your time in the service affected your life?

WPC: Well, you become an adult really fast.

WC: Do you think you would have gone on to school if no for the GI Bill?

WPC: I doubt it. The GI Bill was quite helpful.

WC: OK, thank you very much for your interview. Oh yes, please hold up your awards.

WPC: Here is my Bronze Star award. And here are my paratrooper wings and my Bronze Star medal, which has my name on the back. Here is my Purple Heart, which is pinned on you are in the hospital. They just pin it on you, congratulate you, and then take it back and mail it home. So my mother had it when I came home. Then here are my Philippine Liberation medal and Good Conduct Medal. And here is a clipping about my being wounded that my Mother had cut from the local paper.