

Interview with John Wasmuth

Marquette, MI

August 5, 2015

Growing up in the U.P., World War II participation, post War life, and later return to Upper Peninsula.

Interviewed by Gabe Logan and Kathryn Johnson

Gabe Logan (GL): August 5, 2015. This interview recounts Mr. Wasmuth's, John Wasmuth's memories of growing up in the U.P. and participation in World War II and his return to the Upper Peninsula following the War. This is Dr. Gabe Logan, Center for Upper Peninsula Studies as well as...

Kathryn Johnson (KJ): Kathryn Johnson, NMU Department of History.

GL: And Mr. Wasmuth. So, if we can go ahead and start sir. Could you please identify yourself and give us a correct spelling of your name

John Wasmuth (JW): This is John Wasmuth. Common spelling John, not common spelling Wasmuth, W-A-S-M-U-T-H.

GL: Alright, and could you tell us when you were born, please? When and where? Not the time, but the date.

JW: [Inaudible]

KJ: Yeah, the date?

JW: March 30, 1926

GL: Okay

JW: That will be ninety years ago pretty soon.

KJ: Okay. And you mentioned you were born in?

JW: I was born in a mining company's dispensary. I was supposed to be born in the Ishpeming hospital, there was a humongous snow storm and my mother couldn't get from Negaunee to Ishpeming. And the mining company had a little building there where if their guys were hurt or sick, they'd go there. They had a doctor on time. And I wound up in a clothes basket there, they tell me.

GL & KJ: [Laugh]

GL: Which mining company was that?

JW: Cleveland Cliffs.

GL: Cleveland Cliffs, alright. What can you tell us about your childhood, and family, and the community you grew up in?

JW: Well until I was nine years old I lived in Negaunee. I went to the old Kaye Street School which is no longer there. And when I was nine years old, my dad was transferred to Marquette and so they moved here. And of course they brought me and my brother along.

KJ: What kind of work did your father do that he was transferred?

JW: He was an insurance inspector. The reason he used to go and live in Negaunee is that their train connections were good out of Negaunee, they went out of Marquette at the time. But then they started doing all their own driving, and at that point they didn't care where you were.

GL: Okay. So before World War II broke out, before Pearl Harbor. How did the communities as you remember regard what was going on in Europe and Asia prior to United States entry?

JW: They were sound asleep.

GL & KJ: [Laugh]

GL: Were you working at the time?

JW: Let's see, I was still going to school. I think when Pearl Harbor happened I was like a sophomore in high school, something like that.

GL: Do you recall when the news broke of Pearl Harbor, when you first heard about it?

JW: Yeah. I was [sic] bowling with a couple of my buddies and somebody came in and said, "The Japanese are bombing Pearl Harbor!" And I said, "What's that all about?" "It's a war!" And I was of course no more than fifteen, I didn't think I had any personal involvement, but I can remember how far out they were. They had a, the high school there was a three or four story building and they set up a deal on the roof where the people could watch and see if any airplanes came. And I got into that thing and for about a year, every night I'd go from two to six or something at night, and look for the Japanese planes here, but they never came.

KJ: Was that in the Graveraet building on Front Street?

JW: Yeah, yeah

KJ: Yeah, I've been up there. I've heard those stories from somebody who gave me a tour of up there. It was hard to believe that they had you all doing that as kids.

JW: Yeah. I don't really think they had anything that could get this far.

GL: Could you say that again, please?

JW: I don't think that the Japanese had anything that could have flown over Michigan.

GL: No.

JW: But they were worried about it anyway.

GL: Did you choose to enlist or were you drafted?

JW: No, when I was graduating, they had several offers they'd give you. A couple of them were college programs and I was in the Navy Department. I was a radio analyst with the highest level license. The Navy Department sent me a letter saying because I had a class-A license, if I wanted to enlist in the Navy, I could get a second class rating right out, or the Marine Corps would give you a Staff Sergeant's rating.

And the Army at that time couldn't do anything with you until you were eighteen, the Naval Department could enlist you at seventeen. So I weren't a dumb fool, well the Army had a program, their cadet program required you to get a certain amount of college and they could do, have you enlist in what they called the Reserve. And they could send you to get a year of your college on the way. And I got into that and spent a year at Michigan State and when that was all over I had two choices: either to go with some infantry outfit or stay with the aviation program, which of course I took. And that was a stupid thing cause I never learned to fly or anything!

GL &KJ: [Laugh]

GL: Alright. So then you joined the Navy?

JW: No, the Air force, Army.

GL: The Air force, okay. So you were in the Army Air force, alright.

JW: Yeah.

GL: Where did you do Basic Training?

JW: At Shepard Field, Texas.

GL: Boy, that's, was probably quite a lot different than the Upper Peninsula?

JW: Yeah, that was, winters were falls in Texas up in the corner of the pan handle. Awfully hot, awful lot of bugs.

KJ: Was that the first time you'd been out of the U.P.? Other than to go to school at Michigan State?

JW: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

GL: What do you recall about meeting your other service men? Being from, were they also from different parts of the country or?

JW: Yeah. At Shepard's Field they were from all over. But I would say the majority were from Illinois or Michigan.

GL: Do you remember what a day-to-day routine was like in Basic Training?

JW: I'd rather not.

[Everyone laughs]

JW: They had a Southerner, a Southern boy was the Sergeant that ran our area. And this is kind of vulgar, but he would come in about four in the morning saying, "Alright you bastards! Drop your cocks and put on your socks!" I've always remembered that, but he was an ignorant bastard.

KJ: That's funny.

GL: After Basic Training, where did you go from there?

JW: Childress, Texas which is in the panhandle, and I was supposed to be learning to be a bombardier, but they closed the school long before I got very far into it. Then where the hell did they send me? They sent me to Lowry Field out in Denver to be a Fire Control Officer, you could get out of there. So I went to Denver and wasted six months waiting for the school to start and it never did. Then they sent me down

to Harlingen, Texas to become an aerial gunner. I got down there and they were closing it down. I sat there for a couple of months, wasting. Then they sent me over to a field at Ft. Meyers Florida, Buckingham Field it was called. It's not there anymore. Then I went through what they called B-29 Gunnery School. And incidentally B-29 Gunners, it was so stupid. They'd start you out, put you in the back of a truck, drive you all over and have the pigeons fly up and try to shoot them. Yet, in the B-29 you couldn't get anywhere near your guns, it was all remote controlled. You had a gun sight with a couple of wheels on it, and it could figure out by, as a plane's wings got bigger because they were getting closer, you'd turn this thing, and keep a bunch of dots around it, and then you'd hit the button and it'd fire automatically. The original B-29s had two, fifty-caliber guns and a twenty-millimeter cannon in the back. But that didn't work too well, so they went to four, fifty-caliber machine guns, which the same gun that's in the B.A.R., the Browning Automatic that the infantry uses.

GL: Where did you go overseas then?

JW: I was sent to Tinian Island over by China. They had a B-29 base there, and same old shit. I'd just get nicely settled in there, I made a couple of flights, and the war ended. So that was the end of my career in the military.

GL: What year was that?

JW: It had to be '46, I think.

GL: Okay, did you say...I'm sorry. Where did you get shipped to?

JW: T-I-N-T-I-A-N Tinian Island is a place between Japan and China, over in the China Sea.

GL: Oh, I see. Okay.

JW: There were hundreds of B-29s there, that was a great airplane, you know.

GL: Yeah. When you got over there, what were your living conditions like? It was obviously a base, but.

JW: Well it was kind of tough rolling _____ . We lived in tents over there. I used to say, "We're having in-tents training."

GL & KJ: [laugh]

GL: Did you have any interactions with the local populations?

JW: Not much.

GL: It was mostly military personnel then?

JW: No.

GL: What then would be, what was your military job overseas? And could you describe a typical day?

JW: Well if you were flying missions, they'd get you up early, and feed you, and then put you in the plane and off they'd go. They took quite a while even from Tinian to get to J-pan, and incidentally they always, the General Curtis LeMay, who was in charge of the 20th Air force over there. If there ever was a war-criminal, it was him. He decided that the bombs weren't doing enough good before they had the big one available. So we dropped tons of napalm on Japanese cities, and I'm sure we killed a lot of women and children. But what the hell? You got to...If they tell you to do it, you got to do it. Old LeMay, I think he's long gone now.

GL: Yeah, actually, I believe he was from Oklahoma. If I'm not mistaken.

JW: Who was?

GL: General LeMay

JW: I don't know where he was from, but I hope he's in hell now!

GL: Alright. Duly noted.

JW: When the B-29s first started bombing Japan, they were told to go in at 40,000 feet. And when LeMay took over, he changed that to 20,000 feet. And so going in at 20,000 feet, you were a lot easier to shoot down. Nobody liked that, but he was the boss.

GL: Did that improve the accuracy from the?

JW: It did, it also improved the accuracy of the Japanese aircraft.

GL: Wow

KJ: Yeah, sure. That works both ways, right?

JW: Yep.

KJ: You mentioned dropping napalm, so were the bombing missions...

JW: Yeah?

KJ: Dropping different kinds of bombs?

JW: Yeah, they had the regular explosive bombs, they had what they called incendiaries that were, I forget what metal was but it was some powdered metal and then they would burn. And if you dropped one on a wood building it would take'er down. But that wasn't good enough for Curtis, he went to napalm, which I thought was terrible shit to use. But we apparently won the war, so he did something right.

GL: Do you recall interactions with any other commanders, other than, you know, LeMay of course was at the top of the chain but?

JW: I didn't have any personal contact with that son of a bitch. But, I'm trying to think who our squadron...the levels were Squadron and then Wing, and then Air something. So LeMay was about four levels above anything I had anything to do with. And kind of interesting, just before you came in a friend of mine who was a B-52 pilot during the Vietnam War, flying out of Guam, he stopped in to see me because we've been friends forever. He got to be a full Colonel but, and he was their top man at Sawyer for a while, until he retired. But he liked the U.P. so he bought a house out in the woods and is staying right here. His name is Dave Vanderberg.

GL: Vandenberg? Vandanberg?

KJ: Vanderberg?

JW: Vanderberg, like, remember there was a senator from Grand Rapids with the same name, they're no relation but.

GL: Oh, Okay, sure. How did, so your comrades in arms and the other soldiers on the base, as the war was going on, was there any sense of the direction of the war, and how it was progressing and how you?

JW: Well now, I had a cousin who has since passed away who was a, what did they call them? A Marine Raider. And his immediate boss was Jim Roosevelt, the President' kid. He said, "It didn't do us any good." He said, "I thought with Roosevelt's kid running our group, why, we'd have the best of everything." He said, "I think we didn't get anything special." Yeah, he had a tough job. The Japanese had a lot of little islands all over in the Pacific where they'd have an observer or two and a radio, so they could report anything they saw of our shipping and that. Their job was to go in there and unfortunately kill all of the Japs there were and destroy their radio stuff. But those Raiders were really tough dudes.

KJ: Yeah.

GL: On a lighter note, did you ever have any recreations on the island, sports, or movies or?

JW: Not much, no.

GL: It was pretty much daily work, hey?

JW: Yeah. I'll tell you one thing that was funny. They used to serve breakfast kind of an oatmeal, and they were always full of little worms and you could tell how long a guy had been there. If he was a new man, he'd pick through the worms out, if he'd been there a while he wouldn't bother. If he'd been there too long, if the worm crawled out, he'd throw it back in.

KJ: Oh my gosh!

[All laugh]

KJ: Did you get to the point where you were eating the worms too?

JW: No, I never, I was a pick-em-out type of guy. I was always a fussy eater as a kid, I didn't want to get my protein from worms.

GL: How did you regard the other branches of the military, the Army and the Navy and the Marines?

JW: We never had any trouble with them, I thought they were doing a good job. And a lot of my friends were in other branches, Navy and so forth. They were smarter than me.

KJ: Were there other service members from other branches on your base where they...

JW: Oh, yeah. The Navy had some B-24s off of Tinian and it wasn't as big a deal as the B-29s that the Air force had, but they were pretty active. I worked with a guy in Detroit who had been a pilot on one of those 24s, had thousands of hours, when the war was over he was offered a pilot job for the airlines, and he said, "I'm never getting in a god-damned airplane again!"

GJ: When you were serving, how did you and the base consider the Allies, such as, well the United States Allies during World War II?

JW: The only objection we had, the Australians used to sell mutton which is a goat or a sheep, something. Terrible tasting crap, that's all we were getting was mutton. One of the guys used to sing, "I've had plenty of mutton! And mutton is terrible for me!"

GL: Where were you when you heard about Victory in Europe Day and Victory in Japan Day?

JW: When the Victory in Europe, I had a brother that was deeply involved in that. He was an infantry man, a First Sergeant with the 197th Division, which pretty much cleaned up Czechoslovakia, but I was

glad to hear that the Germans had finally decided to quit, because I always worried about my brother. But he was fine.

KJ: Which brother was that? What was his name?

JW: Who?

KJ: What was your brother's name?

JW: Rodney.

KJ: Okay.

GL: And then when Victory in Japan Day took place?

JW: Yeah, oh, they went crazy where I was.

KJ: Where were you at that point?

JW: It was back in the States, I had a field, I think it was out in North Dakota. And when they announced that the Japs had given up, why they had a party like you wouldn't believe.

KJ: Were you on a military base or were you working as a civilian?

JW: No, I was still in the military at V-J Day.

GL: How did...I'm sorry, go ahead. Please.

JW: After V-J Day they didn't give a damn what you did, they wouldn't send you home yet, but you had no duties at all. I had been a pretty fair trombone player when I was younger, and I had gotten in the Air force band after the war. So I was waiting for my name to come up to go home. Anyway, I was out in Brentwood, Long Island, if you ever heard of that. It was a mental hospital, it had been taken over from the state for the G.I.s that had gone off the deep end. And I was in a little Jazz group that used to try to entertain them. And that's when it ended, and that's when I got home.

GL: Do you remember some of the music that you used to play, or some of the tunes?

JW: Oh yeah. I think one of the favorites was, what the hell... This old head doesn't work anymore. But that was in the Glen Miller area, we played a lot of Miller songs like "Pardon Me Boy", and all that crap.

GL: How did you get back to the United States from Japan when your military date or how did you return back to the States?

JW: Yeah, we flew over there but I had to take a boat ride home. I didn't care for that but what the hell.

GL: After the war was over, what was, how did the local communities regard the U.S. troops in returning back home?

JW: Well we was on the lip-service we were heroes, every other way they'd say, "Get lost, you asshole."

GL: When did you come back to the Upper Peninsula?

JW: Well I worked for Underwriter's Laboratory after I got my education, which was at the University of Maryland. I don't know what the hell I was doing out there. They had a curricular for fire protection engineers, and I was working for a bunch of fire insurance companies in Michigan that hired those guys

to investigate arson and a lot of other things. It was an interesting job, and I always say it sure beats working!

GL: Was that mostly downstate, or in the U.P. or both?

JW: They covered the whole state, but for me, I was out of Detroit for about twenty years. And finally, they had a resident engineer in Marquette who'd retired. They came to me, "You're an old Yooper, aren't you?" I said, "Hell yes!" "Do you want to go back up there?" I said, "Hell yes!" So I wound up in Marquette again.

GL: What was Detroit like after the war?

JW: It was a mess. There was racial problems and everything. Even though the blacks had done a lot to help with the war, they were still treated like something from another planet. And they were, after, I wasn't in there the day they had that big riot down there. Funny, actually I was taking a ride to Detroit to our office, out of meeting on that day. And the fellow that I worked with in the U.P., he and I were riding down there in his car and we got to the Detroit area, we were heading downtown and all these stores were getting busted into and everything, the alarm's going off. And I said, "What the hell are we doing here?" And he said, "It must be sidewalk sales." So I says, "Sure, it definitely isn't." Anyway, we finally got downtown, checked into the what's the name of that ice cream outfit they had in the hotel down, right across from our office. Howard Johnson, that's who, isn't it?

GL: Okay.

JW: Yeah, they had a _____. We checked in there and didn't leave for about four days because it was too dangerous to put your nose outside. That was an interesting experience.

KJ: That would be. So with that similar question. With the racial discrimination, did you witness any of that in the military?

JW: No, there were a couple of blacks in our outfit that were real nice guys. We got along great, but on the other hand, there was a lot going on in the cities. A lot of discrimination. And in fact, it was...that race war was terrible, but it was about time the guys asserted themselves maybe.

GL: Do you think World War II had something to do with that?

JW: Well it had something to do with, there were blacks who couldn't find any job. They would give them a job in a war plant and if they weren't in the service, they were working, making good money someplace which they couldn't do before. And when the war was over some of these crackers thought they should go back to the good old days and the blacks didn't believe in it. I didn't either.

GL: Let me change subjects again here to. In the 1950s, Senator Joe McCarthy was kind of the U.P.'s neighbor.

JW: Yeah. [chuckles]

GL: What do you remember about Joe McCarthy and his coming into power and the anti-Communist campaigns in the area?

JW: He was a god-damned fool!

GL: Okay. What made him so foolish, to in your...

JW: Well he was paranoid about, I guess you could call him a super-conservative, but also happened to be an asshole. I met him one time and I told him, I says, "Why don't you back off?" And he says, "I'm just doing what the country needs." And I said, "Shit, they do! They need you like they need another war." He caused lots of problems.

GL: Um-hmm

KJ: Did you have the chance to meet him?

JW: Yeah.

KJ: Where was that at?

JW: It was in Milwaukee and I was down there for a little session with Underwriters Lab and we were staying there at a hotel where he happened to be staying. And that's how I ran into him one day. I don't think he enjoyed our meeting

GL & KJ [Laugh]

GL: When you returned to the Upper Peninsula then, it must have been the 60s, mid-60s or so?

JW: I'd say it 1962 so I would have been about 60.

GL: How, had the Upper Peninsula changed noticeably in your opinion or?

JW: Well it was a tough situation for kids who were getting out of school and couldn't find jobs unless they wanted to be an underground miner. Which was a dangerous way to live. I remember one time this one mine, a guy that ran it was trying to save money and he didn't shore it up enough with timber, and they would have cave-ins all the time there. And then somebody asked him, "Why don't you put more timber in your mines?" He said, "Finlanders are cheaper than timber!"

KJ: Wow.

GL: Oh.

JW: What an attitude, eh?

KJ: Geezsh

JW: One of the dirty jobs, the Finns were coming in here by the thousands and getting all the dirty jobs. And every town has their one race that they ridicule all the time; Milwaukee has the Germans and Detroit had the Polocks, they caught hell, and Marquette had Finns. And most of the Finns are very good people. They're usually interested in education, I think Northern turns out more Finnish graduates than anything else.

GL: I think you're probably right on that, yep.

KJ: Yeah. And that's still the case, there's still a lot of descendants from those Finnish immigrants who are students at NMU.

JW: I went to NMU for a little while when I first got home. About one semester, I guess. And then I had a chance to go to...what's the, I just mentioned it?

KJ: Maryland?

JW: Maryland, yeah. It was called College Park, it was practically in downtown Washington. That was a good school, they had a doctorate there teaching the fire protection who had a lot of interesting ideas. One day he says, "I'm going to talk about fire extinguishers," and he was talking, he says, "I'll tell you one thing, don't have one in your house." I said, "Why not, Doc?" And he said, "Because too often we hear about there's smoke coming up from the basement, so Daddy grabs the fire extinguisher and heads down the basement and they never see him alive again.

KJ: Oh jeeze.

JW: It's stupid, they go down there and get asphyxiated from the fumes.

KJ: Right

JW: He said, "If you have a house fire, get the hell out and call the fire department, somehow." He was quite a nice guy. I still hear from him once in a while.

KJ: Oh? That's great.

GL: When you moved back, did you start a family then in Marquette and?

JW: I had started a family in Detroit. My dear ex-wife, who has now gone to her reward was unable to have kids for some reason, I forget which. We adopted two kids and they turned out to be wonderful kids. We adopted them from the Catholic Sara Fischer Home, they called it. One of the rich Fischers wanted to do something for the girls that were getting knocked-up and had no money. So she established a home out there, if a girl was pregnant she could go out there and they'd take care of her and everything. And when the baby was born, they'd put it up for adoption, so they could get a clean start again. But my daughter is about fifty-five now. She's been a flight attendant for thirty years, I guess. She was mainly with Northwest and they had a bunch of crooks running it and the employees had a big fund for pensions, and so old Northwest took all that, all the employee's pension money and bought Delta Airlines out of Atlanta. Now it's all called Delta because Northwest didn't have a very good reputation. So my daughter is a flight attendant with Delta who has no pension to look forward to. In fact, this whole country I think has been over-pensioned. And it's going to be tough on the young people now, they'll get to be old, want to retire and they won't have any money. But of course you're not interested in my rambling, I'm sorry.

GL & KJ: No, no

GL: Actually...

KJ: It's especially relevant for our students who are graduating from the university and going into this economic climate and they're facing that obstacle that's....

JW: I think they're still okay. Most of the Northern graduates seem to find a teaching job or something. But I think that day is going to end one of these days. I had a visit yesterday from the son of one of my best buddies and he's a Northern graduate, he's been teaching down in Engadine for twenty years, I guess. And the odd thing about his mother was the granddaughter of Jan Longyear.

KJ: Oh? How about that.

JW: So, his folks have both died now. But his dad was a life-long invitee. But anyway, he inherited around nine million bucks.

KJ: He got the Longyear fortune?

JW: He's not teaching anymore!

[everyone laughs]

JW: He's a great kid, he takes time to stop and see this old fart. I don't know why he does, but I always appreciate his visits.

GL: Getting back to the War and coming back to the U.P. What did the war, well it's kind of a difficult question but: What did the War mean to you and your generation?

JW: Oh. We didn't know it would ever end. So you'd try to adjust your job, how could you get a good commission with the military. I had a, at one time I was living on Front Street in Marquette and the guy next door, the family next door had a son who was maybe three or four years older than me, but he got to be quite a guy in the Navy. He went to Annapolis instead of Northern, and he incidentally he dabbled on the staff at Northern, but he still went to Annapolis. And when the war ended he had the rank of Captain, which is about as high as you can go without being a General or an Admiral. And he came back to Marquette and he worked for Northern for a while, until he passed away about ten years ago. His name was Dave McClintock.

GL: Oh? Okay. I believe we have a building named after him there on campus.

KJ: Yeah.

JW: I'm not surprised.

KJ: There is a McClintock building on campus.

JW: That could be after his dad maybe, who was there forever. Northern, when they got Harden in as the president, he started rebuilding the whole campus. Just about every building they rebuilt or repaired was named after somebody that worked on the faculty or something. There was a couple lived across the street from me when I was growing up, his name was Spooner. I think they named a building after him now.

KJ: They sure did, it's a residence hall now, yep.

GL: Spooner Hall.

JW: He had a crazy wife. If a mailman or anybody else would come up on the porch and put something in their mailbox, she'd have him out there washing everything down. She was one of these germ-nuts, you know? And we weren't allowed to go over there because she was so crazy.

GL: Do you recall, did you ever visit K.I. Sawyer while it was in it's?

JW: Oh sure. When I got back to Marquette, one of my friends had gotten to be a kind of a big wheel in the Civil Air Patrol. He got me involved in that and I'd have to go out to Sawyer to do stuff for a month.

KJ: What was the Civil Air Patrol? Was that a volunteer position?

JW: Yeah. It's sort of like the Coast Guard's got a Coast Guard Auxiliary which is basically civilians. And Civil Air Patrol is basically civilians, and that was kind of funny because they were all trying to play soldier out there, the Civil Air Patrol people. When I had joined it, I did figure to my friend he said, "What rank would you like to have?" I said, "How about General?" "No! We only have one of those in the country." I said, "How about Colonel?" "There's only one of those in Michigan." I said, "What do

you want me to do? I wish I had acquired the Warrant Officer rating.” And so they made me Chief Warrant Officer, which is total bullshit, you know. It was a bunch of adults playing soldiers.

KJ: Were there airplanes involved?

JW: Oh sure.

KJ: I mean you say it’s the Air Patrol, were you flying?

JW: Yeah. Marquette Squadron had four old, World War II, what do they call them? J-13 Piper Cubs. And they had one guy who had been a pilot in the war. Jules LaVarser his name was, he wrecked all of them! He was a nutcase. He pert-near put the Civil Air Patrol in Marquette out of business completely. He was in here, you know, a year or two ago I was talking to him and he did one stupid thing. He was always doing stunts and that you know, and he was flying upside down on Shag Lake, and like a jerk he pulled back on the stick to go up and went [makes noise “zhoop”].

KJ: Oh no.

JW: Almost killed him, took his head off, his hair off. And anyway he was that kind of guy. I said, “I’ll never fly with you Jules.” He said, “I don’t care.”

KJ: So did he ruin the airplane then?

JW: What?

KJ: Was the airplane ruined, did he crash?

JW: Oh sure. He ruined either three or four Air Patrol airplanes. He would do something stupid every time, but they were so hard up for anybody that could fly that they didn’t get rid of him.

GL: Sounds like they’d let anybody in.

JW: Yeah, right. Anybody that, and especially if you had your own airplane they’d really want you to join.

KJ: Was the purpose of the Civil Air Patrol to protect the Marquette area, to do, like keep an eye on the skies?

JW: Well there wasn’t any enemies to worry about, but if a plane disappeared and they’d go on a search.

KJ: Okay.

JW: They’d get maybe a dozen people looking for a crashed airplane.

KJ: Okay, did that ever happen?

JW: Oh yeah, in fact I felt kind of stupid. The fellow was with his family was heading for Escanaba, I think, and they said he never went over Iron Mountain. So we had planes all over and didn’t see a damned thing. And I had put a ground crew out there, about ten young guys, like to do that. Looking for it, and they found the damned thing in the woods down there, and everybody was dead, of course. And the other thing about that...I’m boring the shit out of you, I know.

KJ: No, no, this is great! I had no idea there was a Civil Air Patrol going around Marquette.

JW: During the War, over on the East Coast the Civil Air Patrol citizens who would go on submarine searches, looking for submarines off the coast. And they did some pretty good work.

KJ: Really?

GL: Is there anything else? Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview? Or thoughts about the war, or the present or? Any other points you'd care to elaborate on?

JW: Hmm? No. Just to say I wasn't a war hero or anything else just a poor slob trying to survive.

KJ: I think a lot of people were in that same position. Right? Just trying to make ends meet, and get by and get from one day to the next, and that's part of the human experience, right?

JW: Yeah, that's about it. Everyone would get drafted if they didn't join something. The guys, anytime they were past eighteen, you were subject to getting drafted. And a lot of the guys enlisted to avoid their draft, which was kind of stupid. It's like killing yourself so you won't get sick.

GL: Do you recall ever hearing about any of the prisoner of war camps in the U.P. during the war?

JW: They had one over at Sidnaw, S-I-D-N-A-W. And they had a bunch of Germans working over there and they were working in the woods cutting trees down and that. Just kind of doing, they were loggers. And they were kind of happy to be out of the war, you know, but they wasn't too worried about them. Most of them aren't going to try to escape, where the hell would you go for one thing? Anyway I happened to be inspecting that place ten or fifteen years later and a car pulled up. A guy got out with his family, he said, "I'm just hoping to show them where I was during the war." And I said, "Fine, make yourself at home." And he had been a German prisoner over there for a couple of years. And he was showing his family where he was.

KJ: Wow

JW: I don't know if there were any other very extensive prisoner of war camps.

GL: Do you have any other questions, babe?

KJ: Mmm-mm.

GL: Well alright sir. We certainly appreciate your time and this has been a fascinating interview

JW: I enjoyed it, visiting with people. Anyway, what the hell? I'm eighty-nine, still going, that's a miracle there! I'll be ninety come March, if I get through the winter. I used to say when I was younger, "I want to live to ninety and get shot by a jealous husband."

GL & KJ [laughing]

JW: I'll tell you that, I'm eighty nine and that ain't gonna happen.

KJ: That's probably a good thing, sir.

GL: Alright then I'm going to go ahead and sign off. And this was with John Wasmuth, and Gabe Logan, and Kathryn Johnson.

KJ: Thank you for your time, sir

GL: Thank you for your time.

JW: Yeah, I enjoyed it. I hope I didn't tell'em any bullshit. I tried to stick to the, what really happened.

KJ: Yeah, yeah. Honesty is the best way.

GL: Yeah. My father was in the Pacific, he served in the Pacific as well.

JW: Oh? Was he in the Navy or the Air force or what?

GL: No, he was in the Army, island-hopping.

JW: Oh yeah? They did a lot of that too.

GL: Yeah. He started out in Panama and he was with the Bush-masters.

JW: Oh yeah.

GL: And kind of hopped all up, all the way up to Japan, and was scheduled for Operation Olympus when the bomb dropped.

JW: That ended a lot of that foolishness.

GL: Yeah. Yeah, he was all for that. [Chuckles]

JW: I suppose.

KJ: He was ready to go home, right?

JW: Yeah. Don't blame him. Is he still around or?

GL: He is. Yep. My mom and him are both ninety-five.

JW: Oh that's beautiful!

GL & KJ: Yeah

GL: Yeah, they're...

JW: I don't know if it's good to be that old, in my case everything either hurts or doesn't work.

GL & KJ [Both laugh]

GL: You seem to be doing just fine.

KJ: Yeah, I really think your mind is very well alive.

JW: I, unfortunately, I know what's going on all the time. And when I think I'm going to croak, I get a little upset, but I suppose I'm looking forward to it too. And the last thing that Bach composed was something he called "Komm, süßer Tod" which means "come sweet death." And it did for him. Anyway, that Benny Hill joke I always liked was where this Reverend _____ said the world was going to come to an end on Friday. And Benny said, "And for him, it did!"

GL & KJ: [laugh]

GL: Okay.

END OF AUDIO INTERVIEW