

Interview with Charles Wiley
Interviewer: Leigh Anne Howard
October 13, 2009

Transcriber Notes: Mr. Wiley visited a Communication Studies class at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville. He gave a talk to students and then answered their questions. This is a transcript of that event.

A: I take it they have background on me?

Q: They have a little bit; they are supposed to.

A: Let me go a little bit into my WWII background since it's what you want me to talk about. I had a kind of an interesting view of the war. I tried to join the marines on December 8th of 1941. To show the difference of how people reacted I want to set up for you a little bit of a view of what life was like in the United States then compared to now. On the morning after Pearl Harbor, I went down at about 4 am to the foot of Manhattan in New York to the marine recruiting office. By the time I got there at 4 am, there was already a line about two blocks long. I don't know how those guys got there that fast. They must've heard about the attack on the radio and gone directly down to the marine recruiting office and got in line. In other words, they had to be in line... some of them had to be in line all night on the night of Pearl Harbor to join in the United States Marines. I don't think you would get that kind of a reaction in the United States today for almost anything in the world. Fortunately, or unfortunately for me by the time I got to the front of the line, there was an old sergeant sitting there. He said, "Well, son you want to join the Marines?" I said, "Yes sir!" He said, "Well, how old are you?" Now I'm not a stupid kid, I was 15, but I wasn't about to say that. So, I said, "17." Which was legal. He tried to trick me, and he said, "What's your birthday?" Of course, I was ready for that and I moved it back two years. I said, "November 17, 1924." And he went, "Oh you just turned 17." I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Well that's fine just let me have your birth certificate." Of course, I didn't have a birth certificate. He said, "Well, that's not a problem you just go home, get your birth certificate, and come back." So that's why I didn't get in the marines on the day after Pearl Harbor. Anyway, he probably saved my life because a lot of marines and all recruiters for that matter were not paying that much attention. They needed bodies, and they needed them fast and so there were a lot of 15 and 16-year old's that got accepted without a birth certificate. And I might add your chances of making it... had I been taken on December the 8th I would've been rushed to boot camp and I would've been out of there in a couple months. They didn't have the troops so anybody that was trained at the beginning like that would be out in combat as soon as there was combat. If you didn't get killed at the first place, you'd hang out for a while, and then you go to the next one and the next one and the next one. Then you'd be either killed or wounded, and they'd send you home. So, that was my first big experience. I also got into the air warden business. We were worried... as it turned out pretty silly. But we were worried about air raids, so I went out, and I became a messenger. I used to have a little white WWI helmet. The old doughboy helmet painted white with the insignia. Hell, any air raids sired off I reported, and I was a messenger to take stuff around. So, I had that experience. But I guess I had another experience that you might want to know about for asking questions. I was in show business as a child actor so that when I was unable to get into the marines, I went to work for the USO. The USO... the outfit, if it still exists, you'll see at airports, they have USOs. There are two phases of USO. One is they have places for service men to go and stop and stations in airports like that. Then, they also had camp shows. They send entertainers out to entertain the troops. They go directly to bases and so on. Well, I spent the first year of WWII as a USO entertainer. During that first year of the war I was in over half the

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states of the United States. I went from coast to coast and border to border. So, I watched America mobilize in WWII, ¹watched it up close. I watched it as they turned farm boys from Indiana and city boys from New York and everything and anything in between. They turned them into soldiers. When we started out, we had the 17th largest army in the world. We were right behind Romania, and within months and certainly within years we had the biggest army in the world. By the way, not the biggest... we were tied with the biggest; a lot of people don't realize that. Everybody thinks of how Russia has masses and masses of troops. Actually, the high point for Russian and the high point for the United States is almost identical. It's within a couple hundred thousand of each other. So, the United States put a lot of people... how many people in this room...how many of you have a relative in either Iraq or Afghanistan? Anybody? Okay, well normally if I ask that question in a room of say 50 students, I will get half a dozen or maybe 8, maybe in some cases you might even get 10 that would put up their hand. What I thought I would do is go over with you what we had in WWII. In WWII, I checked this out, the male population in the United States of America in 1941 was 66 million. There were 66 million males in America. Incidentally there were less females; now that's a phenomenon that you don't see very often where there are more males than females in a population. I don't know why but for some reasons we had more males than females when we got into the war. So, we had 66 million... now I haven't found a total breakdown, but you figure out you have 66 million. If you take the people who are under military age, all the children, and then you take the people that are too old for military age and that was I think 44 was the cutoff point. You can figure you have probably a third under, a third over, and a third that would've been military age. Now just think of what happened when I just asked you about having someone in Iraq or Afghanistan. During WWII, out of the 20 million males who were eligible to serve over 16 million served. Imagine, over 16 million. That means that 80% of all eligible males actually served in WWII. Now think of what the difference would be in the atmosphere when you think about war, How many people here in not this room, but in this college bother to look at the news or listen to the news or read about what's going on in Iraq or Afghanistan? They may skim it a little bit once in a while. During WWII everybody paid attention to what was going on in the war. When that radio came on at night you wanted to know what was going on in Europe or Asia or Africa or wherever the battles were going on. Because your father was there, your husband was there, your son was there. Everybody was involved in the war day and night. Take my family for example. I do not have any brothers. I had eight, well to start out with I had five cousins of military age, all five served. I eventually went into the navy; I served. I had five uncles that were military age, two of them were older... they were guys like 41, 42. They were married, they had children, and they did not serve, but not because they were too old or because they had a wife and kids. They didn't serve because one of them was a foreman at one of the biggest ammunitions' plants in the United States. They said, "Hey, we need you here a lot more than we need you over there." So, they said, "No we're not going to take you." And the other one was a fire captain, and they said, "Hey we need fire captains." So, of the five uncles two of them didn't serve because they were already doing something to help the war effort. The other three served so I had five cousins, five uncles, and me, that's eleven. Nine out of the eleven served in the armed forces and the two that didn't were working on war work. That's when you mobilize a country. That's what it's called to

¹ United Service Organization- a nonprofit organization that provides programs, services, and live entertainment to United States service members and their families.

go to war. Nobody can even think of that kind of thing today. By the way, my dad who was in his 50s, when I went to work for the USO and started entertaining troops, my old man got a job with the USO, and he went over to Europe and entertained troops. So, we had not only everyone who was of military age doing something, even my dad went over. He had already served in WWI. My point is, is that when you have a country mobilize like that it is just incredible in the difference in the attitude toward how things are. The war was every phase of your life. Everything you did had to do with the war. Example, Boy Scouts would go door to door and ask people if they had any extra pots or pans or something that had the right kind of metal in them, and they would gather them up and take them to some central place. I don't know how many of you have these today, but a lot of women will put bacon fat and that kind of thing into a can and put it in the refrigerator until it solidified and then they would discard it that way. Well, that started because during the war the same stuff that goes into the fat was glycerin, which is what you made ammunition out of, make explosives out of it. So, everybody was saving the fat. When you got tinfoil, or I guess you don't even call it tinfoil now. What do you call the foil that you have? The silverish type stuff?

Unknown: Tinfoil.

A: We all say tinfoil. You made big balls of that stuff and handed that in to be used in the war effort. Of course, that is what you did. You paid attention. If you went through the streets of this city and you went on any given block and there were ten houses on a block, the odds would be overwhelming that at least seven of the ten houses there'd be a little white flag in the window. They were white usually with blue trim and they'd be about that size and they'd have a blue star in the middle of the white flag. Sometimes it would have two blue stars, sometimes it would have three, and sometimes it would have four and whatever. That meant that there was a man from that household that was serving in the armed forces. And you didn't go anywhere... that's what you saw. House after house after house and sometimes, God help them, they had a gold star or maybe even more than one. That means that somebody in that house died. Just compare the attitude that people had and their feelings about the war compared to now. You're not at war. This is a joke as far as a war is concerned. Everything that you bought, when you went shopping. First of all, we were coming out of a depression, so you were tight with money. Hey, your generation is learning what it's like to be short of money. Wow, what a great experience for you! I've been watching two generations grow up without ever saving a dime, without worrying about where money was coming from. Never worried about getting a job and all that. And you almost can't help as an older person to feel a little smug about watching a generation having to learn that there are tough times in the world. Of course, we were coming out of a depression, but when you went shopping you not only had to think about how much money did you have before you bought something, you had to think about how many red stamps² you had. Because there were all kinds of things that were on ration. So, if you went to a grocery store and you wanted pork chops and butter and sugar, you'd go in and see how much it costs, and do you have the money? Yea. Now you have to see how many red stamps you have because you used to have to turn in stamps. Every family was given so many stamps for months, and once they were gone, they were gone. So, you'd have... okay, I need so many stamps for sugar, so many red stamps for pork chops, so many red stamps for coffee or whatever, the next thing, butter. So, you'd have to decide. Do want butter and pork chops and no sugar? Or do I

² Used to ration meat and butter during WWII.

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want sugar and butter and no pork chops and whatever? By the way, they had the A coupons for gas. I think you got three gallons of gas for a month. Unless you worked in war work then sometimes, they would give you extra because you had to commute to help out the war effort of some kind. When you bought things like cigarettes if you'd go in... there were five major brands... you'd go into a place and ask for a pack of Lucky Strikes. They'd say, "Are you kidding? We don't have Lucky Strikes." "Alright, then give me Camel." "We don't have Camel." Unfortunately, we were doing a favor for the guys in service, so we'd give them all the cigarettes produced. Actually, we were killing them, but we thought we were doing them a favor, so they always got the cigarettes first. So, the people on the home front, they actually started to roll their own like they had done 25 to 50 years before that because you couldn't get enough cigarettes. In those days if you were on leave, you had to wear your uniform. You had to wear your uniform 24/7. So, you didn't go home on leave, take your uniform off, and put on civilian clothes. That was illegal actually; you could be put in jail for that. So, you could tell who was in the service from the fact of who was in civilian clothes and who was in military clothes. The biggest insult that you could come up with when you were cut off or you were really mad, and you had gone through the whole thing. You'd call them all kinds of things; you had given them the finger, and the whole bit. Well, when you finally wanted to give them the final shot, the ultimate insult was to say if he was war age and in civilian clothes the final insult was, "Why aren't you in the service?" As if, "My God, look at you, what kind of a creature are you that you're at home when there is a war on." That was the ultimate insult. "Why aren't you in the service?" The other great line is they used to have, when you'd walk in a place and say, you'd order a hamburger. They'd give you a hamburger, you'd look around, and say, "There's no catsup." Well, once you complained that there was shortage of whatever, the ultimate retort to that was always said with great sarcasm, "Don't you know there's a war on?" And that was it. You were sorry you ever asked. God help you. You asked for something that was being used in the war effort. God help you if you had both, "Don't you know there's a war on." And "Why aren't you in the service?" Those were the two, the two great lines. I think that probably makes my point about as well as I can and that is that when you have a situation like that, that's a war. I guess one other thing I might mention. The ultimate tax bracket, when you reached a certain income, and I don't remember what the figure was it may have been \$1 005000, I'm not sure. But it was much lower than it would be today obviously. At that point your taxable income was 90% so that at one point if you made over a certain amount... I think it actually reached like 92% at one point. So that meant if you made \$10 the government took out nine and you got one. So, it kind of killed the incentive to make a lot of money. So, that's pretty much what you have to know to know what the war was all about. We all were in it and because we all were in it, there was a comradeship that has never been matched and never will be matched. Very interesting thing even though a quarter million men died, another million were wounded. The United States during WWII was together like you cannot believe. We had shortages of everything, our loved ones were overseas fighting wars, or we were the guys overseas fighting the war, we were torn apart from our families, and yet... I loved it here. Everybody that lived in those days loved the feel of being an American because we were all in the same boat and suddenly the hardships didn't seem so bad. For example, you took a train... I guarantee you took a train from here to Chicago the odds were probably pretty good that you'd stand the whole way because there just weren't enough places for people to sit down. So, what you'd do is you'd get out of Evansville and you'd hope at the next stop there'd be somebody in a seat that was getting off, and you'd be able to beat everybody else in the rush to get the seat. Yet there was less

friction in this country. There was a wonderful overall feeling, we'd enjoy life up to the max because we knew... I guess the one thing you learn was that you may not be around tomorrow and so you'd better go out and do the things that you want to do, You didn't spend all kinds of time hanging around. You didn't spend your time in front of a computer playing games until 4 O'clock in the morning. You went out and you did stuff because you didn't know when you'd have to leave and when was the last time. Now, service. When you served overseas in WWII, you were out of here. I think that very few people understand that. Today if you are overseas... and I'm not putting down what guys are doing overseas don't misunderstand. I've been Afghanistan, I covered the war over there. I was on the other side actually. I was with Mujahideen³ when they were the guys on the ground and the bad guys were up in the air with the airplanes and the helicopters and I was ducking them because they were Russian. I was with the Mujahideen when they were fighting the Soviet occupation. Now we're the guys with the airplanes and the helicopters and the guys are still down there, and they are still talking, and they are still making life miserable for us. So, I've been on both sides of that equation. But I understand it's tough, Afghanistan is tough. I covered the war in Vietnam four times during a ten-year period that was tough, too. But there was a difference that made ours different. Overall tougher? I don't know, but I can tell you what the problem was. When you went overseas in WWII you were out of there. Your life was totally, completely over. If you graduated from high school... and that was tough in 1942, then you went in the service, then you were unlucky to go overseas, you didn't have any touch with your wife for three years, maybe four because you didn't have the transportation. You couldn't bring anybody back. When you finished off on an island out there somewhere, you didn't come back here. You hung around on that island until you went to the next island, and then the next island, and then the next island. There was no going home unless you were really, seriously wounded. So, you went out there and there was no communication. None. I mean these guys today; they get phones all the time. They have cellphones. They get on the internet. If somebody has a child, they have a picture of the kid in three hours. You're in constant touch with home. We had no touch with home. So that when you left high school and you went overseas you didn't know maybe for months that your best friend that lived next door got killed in Europe. You knew nothing. You didn't know what your high school team was doing. You didn't know what your friends were doing. You were out there in another world cut off. We used to get our mail... sometimes it would be three months before you'd get letters. The mail was always chasing us all over because don't forget every movement was secret in those days. You had special people that worked for the post office that would try to keep track of units and then try to time it so that they could send mail to the place where the unit would be. Well, what if you were on a ship like mine? We're going from place to place so if somebody mails a letter in the United States and it takes weeks and weeks to get out to the Pacific when they find the transportation for it. Now it ends up on some island that we were at three weeks ago. Now they try to figure out how they're going to chase our ship with those letters. So, we would sometimes get piles of letters like this. Stack them up. Beautiful day for a service man was the day the mail came, My God! You would sit there, and you would read those letters over and over and over and the saddest thing in the world was the guy that didn't get letters. That was horrible because finally we are going to get a little glimpse of home, and it's gone. There were guys that served four years

³ Term for one engaged in Jihad, referring to the religious duty of Muslims to maintain and spread the religion. It is mostly referred to the guerrilla type military outfits led by Muslim Afghan warriors.

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totally, completely cut off from the world that they had known. The only thing that they used to be able to get to you fairly quickly was something pretty terrible. If your mother died, if your father died, if you were married and your wife died. The Red Cross would go to the military and say, "Hey, we got a guy in Evansville and his father died. Or wife died. Can we get word to him?" Then the military would cut through as much red tape... they had special units who would be able to track you down as quickly as possible, and then they would send radio messages across. So, if you had a loved one die that was the one piece of information about your former world that you found out about usually in a couple of days. By the way, that's all; you found out about it. You didn't get emergency leave to go home for the funeral or anything. But at least you knew about it and that's about it. So, what that means is when you think of the war and you think of the things, we did that hurt or were painful you can't show it in a movie, you can't write about it and really describe it. What was deadly was being lonely. God you were lonely. I lived on a ship that was... well you know what an LST looks like. You're among the few people in the country that know that. Go down and take a look at... that was my home for over a year. Some guys that were there all three years. That was it. That's where I lived. I had one bunk that you could fold up during the day. That was it. That was my furniture, one bunk. I had one locker about that high off the ground and about that wide and everything I owned was in that locker. The only people I knew that I could talk to were the other guys on the ship and that was it. That was my home, that was lily life, that was everything I had. Here in the middle of the Pacific someplace. Cut off completely from your friends, family, and everything else. So, when you hear about WWII and when you talk to these veterans keep in mind that those were the things that the war was all about. You just don't see much of that, and I guess it doesn't make interesting entertainment. How do you put that in a movie? It's kind of hard to get it across. I can't obviously talk for other units, but I have a feeling that they are all the same. In every unit in the military, whether it's a ship, a company, or a squad whatever. There was always a class clown. You had one in every class I'm sure everybody had somebody in every class they'd ever been in that was... I notice a few people looking at other people in the room so I can tell who the class clowns are in this room. But, there's always somebody, you know. There is always somebody that was the class clown. They'd always be doing something that would get everybody laughing with them or at them, whatever. Well, that was the one thing in the service that kept life interesting. When we get together for reunions today, I would say that more time is spent talking about a guy that was on our ship... more time is spent talking about him than talking about anything else that we did during the war. Just to give you some idea of the type of entertainment that he gave all of us. The ship was about to get into the greatest invasion of all time. The Battle of Okinawa, The Invasion of Okinawa, and the night before the invasion this guy went up to the captain of the ship and said, "Captain, I got to talk to you." The captain, you can imagine, was a little busy getting ready to bring his ship into the biggest invasion of all time, and said, "I'm busy now. Come and talk to me some other time." He said, "I got to talk to you now." The captain said, "I don't have time to talk to you now." "You got to talk to me!" "Alright. What do you want?" He said, "Well, my name isn't"...Joe, I don't know what the name was but, anyhow, "My name isn't Joe Smith." And the skipper said, "Huh?" He said, "My real name is Louis Espisito, and "Joe Smith" is a next-door neighbor. I needed a birth certificate because I wasn't old enough to join. I got his birth certificate, and I joined under his name. What I'm really worried about is I'm going to get killed in the invasion and my insurance money is going to go to his mother. You got to change the records so that if I get killed... Imagine the captain, suddenly has this kid on the ship right before he is about to go into the invasion.

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Well, there is not much he can do about it is there? I mean you're sure as hell not going to turn the ship around and so that's how the captain got to know who he is, Louis Espisito. But Louis was doing all kinds of things, all the time to keep people interested. Just two quick examples. We were anchored somewhere, at midnight, and suddenly there was this huge explosion under the ship. And it felt... it didn't happen I'm sure, but it felt like the damn thing came out of the water. It was that huge of an explosion. Everybody went running to their guns. They didn't wait for any GQ or anything. They thought, "This is it. My God we've been torpedoed. Who knows what's going on?" Well, they found out. Eventually everybody on the ship and the captain found out what happened. Louis Espisito was on watch at midnight, and he got lonely. Well, when you get lonely what do you do? You go get a hand grenade, you pull the pin, you throw the sucker as far as you can, and then if you're Louis Espisito you throw it into the tide. Which means that it lands and then the tide carries it back so by the time that it explodes it's under the ship, and it adds all the water pressure to the explosion so that it feels like you're being picked up out of the water. He did that kind of stuff endlessly. I mean he never stopped. He did things that were beyond the pale. The other thing that he did, that I always thought was great, was he used to drive one of the small boats, you know the little Higgins boats, the ones that go up on the beach and the front drops out and the guys come running out with their guns. Well, his job was to drive one. You have two holes in the back of the boat: one is for the person that drives it, that was Espisito. And then there was another place where you had a gun, a machine gun, and somebody manned the machine gun, and the other guy steered it. Then you went up on the beach and you'd dump all these soldiers or marines, and they'd go charging in. Well, we got back to the States after the war and the skipper call Espisito in one night, and he said, "I want you to take the small boat into the navy yard. I've arranged for them to do an overhaul on the engine." He said, "Go in. Take it in. They'll overhaul it and you'll come back." So that night about 3 o'clock in the morning Espisito came back and the guy on watch said, "Report to the captain immediately." He said, "Are you crazy? Wake up the captain at three?" He said, "The captain said he doesn't care when you get in. Report to him immediately." He knew he was in big trouble. Well, what had happened was they were having a regatta at the Oakland Yacht Club, and at this regatta they had set up a whole bunch of grandstands that overlooked the bay. They had sailing boats come in, and they had this and that and they had the crème de la crème of society of Oakland plus a bunch from San Francisco and all kinds of dignitaries. Then, they got to the motorboat race and here came the motorboats roaring down alongside the shore. Right in the middle of the race was a LCVP Higgins boat, and there in the back was Louis Espisito driving the sucker, and he's picked up some chick someplace and she is sitting in the gunner. In those days you didn't have women in the navy like that. The side of the small boat has the name of the mother ship painted on the side in huge white letters. It says "LST-950," and there was an admiral sitting in the grandstand, and he did not like that at all. He reamed out the captain; the captain reamed out our young friend. I don't know how long he spent in the brig for that one. But anyhow those are the kind of things that people in the service remember. I guess that's as good as fun. Oh, by the way. I guess I should mention since someone will probably ask me, "What (lid you do in the war?" Well, I like to sum up my war record. It's very simple, I deal in facts not opinion. I would not give you an opinion about my role in the war. That's for others to do, for history to do, for you to do. But I'll give you three facts, and you can make them what you want. During WWII there were thousands of battles. Thousands of battles they were everywhere across the whole world. For years there were battles. I only fought in one battle. The Battle of Okinawa is the only battle I fought

in. Oh, and fact number three after the Battle of Okinawa, the enemy surrendered. Those are the facts of my military career. You can make of them what you want. You can say, "Well, it's just coincidence that the only battle you fought in was the one that made the enemy surrender." But that happens to be the fact. I fought in one battle, and the enemy quit like that. You people are looking dead serious at me and saying, "Is he claiming he won the war?"

Q: Should we open up the questions now?

A: Sure.

Q: Alright. Question?

A: Yea? By the way I don't hear worth a damn because I'm old, because I live on airplanes, because I get sinus infections, you know.

Student: I was wondering with your personal reaction to Pearl Harbor, what your reaction to 9/11 was and other major events like that.

A: Okay, that's a good question. 9/11 like Pearl Harbor and the assassination of JFK are the three events in my lifetime where anybody can tell you where they were that day. I mean, everybody can tell you where they were when they heard that JFK was assassinated. Everybody can tell you where they were during Pearl Harbor. And everybody can tell you where they were on 9/11 think that for many, many Americans it was similar in that it came as a huge shock. It brought out a certain amount of patriotism that didn't last. I guess the similarity that after the first day starts to disappear rather quickly. But there was a similarity. Yea, a pretty big similarity. By the way, surprise, you know, the public has such a short memory; it's unbelievable. Up to Pearl Harbor everybody in the world knew that we were on the edge of a war. On December the 7th when they attacked Pearl Harbor to this day everybody's surprised at that. We were surprised. We were stunned that they had attacked. When you went to your kitchen and you looked where you piled the newspapers under your garbage to be picked up, if you looked at that morning ss paper the headlines for a week before Pearl Harbor were like, "War or Peace Hangs in the Balance as They Meet in Washington." Every day for three months virtually we were getting endless reports that we were on the verge of war. Yet, when we actually had the war everybody said, "Wow. What a surprise!" Come on. I mean it was a surprise because people try to discount that kind of bad news, so they talk about world war, but you don't expect it to happen, so you are surprised, but you are only surprised because you didn't believe what you already knew. Everybody knew there was a war coming. Every man, woman, and child knew there was a war coming. But, we all thought, "Oh wow." 9/11 was more of a surprise, really a surprise than Pearl Harbor, Because you didn't have papers for three months in advance telling you they were going to knock a couple of buildings down somewhere. So actually, it was more of a surprise in reality, but psychologically probably about the same. Now you got all these questions that you've been preparing for months, months! You didn't take any trips anyplace or use your holiday.

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Student: Well, mine didn't really have to do with WWII. (Inaudible) I was researching you on the internet, and I wanted to know what the worst experience you had was.

A: You know it's amazing with the net out there. You can go and find anything about you want about anybody right?

Student: Every biography I saw mentioned it.

A: I was arrested a number of times as a reporter. I never was arrested by the Indiana State Police. I was arrested by secret police. Six of the arrests were not a very big deal. In other words, I was arrested, and held in a local station house for hours then turned loose; no big deal. Two of the arrests were of some validity. I mean they were interesting. I was arrested at midnight in the Soviet Union on orders from Moscow. I was at Leningrad. I know the details a lot better now than I did at one time obviously. I was arrested at midnight at orders from the center... as I found out later on orders from the head of the KGB personally. They told me I was an enemy of the state, and I can tell you the speech because... not that my memory is that good, but that I've pulled it so many times so all I have to do is remember the last time I told it. They picked me up in the hotel at midnight, this guy, ill-fitting suit with a white shirt with no tie. In those days that was their...they were the only ones that didn't wear ties. He had a bald head, steel caps on his teeth, and he looked like he was sent by central casting to be a KGB guy. He had younger counterpart doing the translation for him. The speech went like this: "Mister Wiley. In (inaudible? Maybe name of newspaper?) You have criticized Soviet Union. And as that you have said bad things about communist party. In Tbilisi you have been arrested for taking illegal pictures. We do not think you are friend of Soviet Union. We think you are enemy of Soviet Union. Tomorrow morning at 9:30 there is train leaving for Helsinki. You will be on that train." And I was on that train. When he got the part where the train was going to Helsinki, inside I breathed a little sigh of relief because he could've said, "Tomorrow at 9:30 there is a train leaving for the Gulag and you'll be there for the next 50 years." So that one was kind of serious. To show you how the world changes, I spent my whole adult life basically trying to destroy the Soviet Union. I was a working reporter, but my avocation was doing anything I could to destroy the Soviet Union because I saw it as the greatest threat in history. I was reasonably successful along with a whole bunch of other folks. And we did; we destroyed it. But, after that arrest I was out of the Soviet Union for 25 years. Twenty-five years later, by accident it was to the day I was back in the Soviet Union. Well, Helsinki, it was the same starting point. I went from Helsinki to Taldom and I was back in the Soviet Union 25 years later. A few years after that I was lecturing at Leningrad University just before the fall of the Soviet Union. I was living in a Communist Party complex where my wife and I were the only non-communists in a building with a couple thousand people staying there. We used to spend a lot of our time with KGB guys. I don't mean secret; I'm talking about guys that were open members of the KGB. One night one of them asked me... remember I had been declared an enemy of the state. One of them said, "Have you been to the Kirov Ballet?" And we said, "No but they are trying to get tickets for us at the university." Because they were hard to get. The next night there was a knock on our door, and there was a guy in a KGB uniform because they had uniformed people. And he clicked his heels together, then he bowed, and he held out an envelope and said, "We want you to be our guests." They gave us two box seats to the Kirov Ballet. Twenty-five years and then four more makes a difference huh? And because I made a number of friends while I was teaching at Leningrad, many of whom had connections with the KGB, I was invited to come back to Russia right after the fall a

year later. Now, the Soviet Union's gone and now the new Russia has started. So, we went over there again, and one of the Russians that I knew said, "What can we do? Anything we can do to help you. We appreciate your advice so much anything you need just ask." So, I said to him, "If I could have anything what I would like to do is to see my record at Lubyanka." Which was the headquarters of the KGB. He turned white, and he said, "Oh my God. What a thing to have? How do you think I'm going to get that?" I said, "No, no Edward no problem. You just said what would you like? And yea if I could have anything, I'd love to see my record." So, a few days later we were meeting in front of the Bolshoi Theatre in a little park, and he was sitting on a bench waiting for us on a beautiful day. As we were walking across the square, he saw us coming and jumped to his feet, and he came walking fast as he could, spread his arms, big smile. He said, "Oh my God. I didn't know I had such an important friend." I said, "What are you talking about, Edward?" Said, "You were a VIP in the Soviet Union!" I said, "Ah." He said, "You must promise you must not tell anybody in Russia what I tell you." I said, "Of course." He said, "I was allowed to look at your file at the KGB headquarters. I could not take notes, I could not take a picture, but I was just given a couple of minutes to just skim through your file. The first thing that you see on the file... it's not chronological or alphabetical. The first thing on your file is the order" ...and he gave me the date... "the order for your arrest and your expulsion from the Soviet Union. It was signed Vladimir Semichastny." The head of the KGB had personally signed the order, and he said, "In the margin" someday I'm going to get this, and put in on my wall, "In the same handwriting in the margin it said, "A very dangerous man!" And someday I'm going to get that. One way or another. The final chapter in that story or two chapters. One of them is my son is married to a Russian girl. My grandson speaks fluent Russian, and I have a second grandson on the way who'll hopefully we will also teach fluent Russian. My daughter-in-law's father used to keep me from destroying the Soviet Union. So, the world moves in very strange ways. The other thing is I went to teach at Moscow State University a few years ago, and one day one of my contacts said, "Would you like to meet Vladimir Semichastny the former head of the KGB?" The guy that ordered my expulsion. So, I said, "Yeah! I'd love to." So, Vladimir Semichastny and I sat down in allegedly an apartment owned by a friend of his. Probably a safe house for KGB. He sat on one side of the table; I sat here. His friend who owned the apartment theoretically sat next to him. My wife sat here, and our interpreter, the guy that had arranged it, sat at the end. And Vladimir Semichastny and I spent five and a half hours one on one discussing the Cold War and my arrest. If you want to see it when we're finished, I have a photograph of Semichastny, and I sitting together talking about the Cold War. So, the world really moves in strange ways. You never know what's going to happen. The other arrest was when I was thrown in a dungeon down in Cuba.

Q: I'm going to interrupt you here so we can get back on track.

A: Okay. Yea she wants to get to WWII.

Q: No, no. It's not a problem.

Student: Did you ever get injured badly in the war?

A: Did I ever get injured badly? was never in any danger. They were over around us, but I never personally. You know, it's funny. Everybody... in one sense you'd say...we were all veterans, and we all stood the same chance of getting into a problem. But some people do, and some people don't. I got a battle star, but I never felt I was in any particular [danger]. First of all, I was on an LST, and the kamikaze

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were going for bigger stuff. If they were going to kill themselves, they were going to try to take out an aircraft carrier or a battleship or something. An LST was small so by being little we were just not considered that important. Now that's... by the way, a very sad thing, I was a replacement. The guy I replaced had his leg shot off, and it happens.

Q: You didn't get any injuries?

A: I had nothing. No that's what I meant. Not only not any injuries, I mean I did my job. They were there, but they didn't shoot directly at me. It may be that my reputation was such that they didn't want to mess with me. No, they were flying around up there.

Student: While living in the LST were there any unspoken rules?

A: You know what? For whatever reason this has always been an item. Oh, maybe that will help, it's from the airplane. Say it again.

Student: Where there any unspoken rules while living on the LST? Unspoken rules?

A: Unspoken? You mean?

Student: Yea, like how to behave or how to act around each other?

A: Oh, I know what you're saying now. I just didn't pick it up. You know what I have to think. When you say "unspoken rules" I know what you're asking. They were so unspoken that you didn't think about them. In other words, there were certain things you didn't do... not because anybody ever told you. Everybody tried not to smell too bad because you were in unbelievable close quarters. Yea there were people who broke those rules, and people who really get reamed for it. I mean people can be very insulting, and that would be obviously the kind of thing you are talking about. There were other things probably. I would assume that there is a lot more now that you've coed than we had. Huh, that's a good question.

Student: It's a lot different now?

A: Yea. I understand that they are now talking about letting women serve on submarines. That's going to be interesting to see how that's going to work out if they do. I don't know if they are going to do it. But, yea, there'd probably be a heck of a lot more rules today than there was. I'm sure there was a lot; I just don't remember anything. You know people that didn't wash often enough that became kind of a crummy thing. Don't forget, we were really close together. You would have three men sleeping one, two, three right one over the other one. Then, the next one's over would be a foot and half away.

Q: What every day? Able to bathe every day on an LST?

A: Bathe every day? No, no. You couldn't bathe that normal. First of all, we didn't have fresh water. You took saltwater showers. We used to use saltwater up on deck, and then you would get a certain amount of fresh water to wash the saltwater off after you took a saltwater shower because you were short of water. We didn't have that much. So, you tried to keep yourself as clean as you could with saltwater if you wanted to do it.

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Q: Other questions?

Student: How did you mentally, physically, and emotionally prepare yourself for the Battle of Okinawa?

A: How did I prepare myself? I think probably every man that serves... I don't forget I've covered two wars as a correspondent, so I have a little wider view of that kind of thing. By the way I've been shot at a whole bunch of times. When I've been covering wars as opposed to when I fight in them. I think that I probably the overwhelming majority of men that go into battle are more afraid of failing the test than they are of being killed. I've talked to number of people about this, and they all agree on that. So, my biggest fear was that I wouldn't make it. That I would turn and run. That I would not do my job. That I would let down the guys that serve with. That was my biggest fear, and I think that most people who have been in combat find that the same way. The one thing that you don't want to do. You don't want to be a coward; you don't want to turn around and run. You know, you are going to have things happen that make you feel like running and that's the truth. By the way, an interesting thing, you dream about disasters but always you survive. In other words, you dream that the ship is hit and sunk and there is a handful of survivors that is out on a raft. You're always one of the survivors. I guess that is a basic thing in human nature. That will to survive. So, no matter how many times that you dream about things like that you're always one of the survivors. Other guys said the same thing.

Q: Actually, we're out of time. Some of you may need to go. But if you still have questions, we can probably hang around here and talk for a little bit. Couple things check your email because I'm going to put an extra credit opportunity. So, I'm going to put it up on Blackboard so check that for this Thursday night. So, see you in class on Thursday.