

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DONALD MCMILLAN
Hospital Supply, Army, World War II.

1999

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McMillan, Donald, (1918-2001). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 35 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 35 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 35 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

McMillan, a Madison, Wisconsin veteran, discusses his World War II service as a member of the Medical Corps' 348th Station Hospital serving in Europe. He states he tried to volunteer, was turned down due to an eye problem, and eventually was drafted. He touches on basic training at Camp White (Oregon) and hospital training at Beale Air Force Base (California), where he served as a supply sergeant in the 78th General Hospital. Stationed in Cardiff (Wales) and later in Bath (England) with the 348th Station Hospital, he comments on duty in unit supply, an air raid warning, and living conditions. Moved to Grantham (England), he comments on the increase in patients after the D-Day landing, moving into France and Germany following combat, and moving into a hospital in Bremerhaven, where he himself spent some time recovering from an eye infection. He touches on working with German civilians and employing German prisoners of war to unload supply trucks. He portrays issuing new footwear to frostbite casualties from the Battle of the Bulge. He talks about USO-sponsored dances in Cardiff, fraternization with English girls, and selling cigarettes on the black market while on R&R in Denmark. He talks about attending station hospital reunions, taking guns home from the war as souvenirs, and using the GI Bill for a house loan. He describes his homecoming and having some of his souvenirs confiscated at the railway station.

Biographical Sketch:

McMillan (1918-2001) served in the Army from 1942 to 1946 in unit supply with the Medical Corps. Born on a farm near Beaver Dam, (Wisconsin), he worked as a milkman after the war and settled in Madison (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000

Transcribed by Michael Kerins, 2010

Checked and corrected by Channing Welch, 2010

Corrections typed in by Katheryn Mente, 2011

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Interview Transcript:

Don: What do they use these for?

Jim: Well, they're compiling a record of all the veterans from Wisconsin who had overseas experience of something, you know, more than just one situation.

Don: Well, we never were in actual battle—in the hospital unit.

Jim: Right. But you took care of people who were.

Don: Well, we were under the London stuff when they were bombing—

Jim: We'll start at the beginning, though.

Don: Oh [laughs].

Jim: You were born where?

Don: I was born just outside of Beaver Dam [Wisconsin] on a farm.

Jim: And you entered the service in 1942?

Don: '42, in August.

Jim: Did you volunteer, or you were—

Don: No, we were drafted. I tried to volunteer just out of high school, but with that eye, they wouldn't even look at you.

Jim: You had a chronic eye problem there?

Don: Always.

Jim: Poor vision in that one eye?

Don: The one eye, yeah.

Jim: So, they sent you where? Down at Camp Grant [Illinois]?

Don: Sheridan [Fort Sheridan, Illinois].

Jim: Sheridan. And from there?

Don: From there we shipped out to Camp White, Oregon for our basics training. In all the mud and the rain and everything. But then when they finished us there,

they started getting the bunch together—they moved us down to Camp Beale, which is now Beale Air Force Base.

Jim: In Oregon?

Don: No, just over the border into California.

Jim: I see.

Don: And there we were supposed to get our hospital training, and we were then the 78th General Hospital. Well, then we got our training through that, but when it came time to use us, then they made us into three hospitals.

Jim: What was your specific duty?

Don: I was supply sergeant.

Jim: Supply sergeant for the unit?

Don: Yeah, so I didn't see the worst parts of it.

Jim: For a battalion, or for a company, or for a—?

Don: For the unit. I was. Then they had a medical supply which—my buddy was in that one.

Jim: How big was your unit?

Don: Well, we had—with officers and nurses and all—it was about 525.

Jim: And that was a battalion?

Don: That was a general hospital at that time.

Jim: General hospital, they called it.

Don: But then when they busted us to three units, then we had approximately 240 [personnel], somewhere like that. But we went overseas as the 348th Station Hospital.

Jim: Where did you leave to go overseas?

Don: From Camp Kilmer.

Jim: In? Where is that?

- Don: In New Jersey. Then we went—we landed in [laughs] Liverpool. But I never even saw Liverpool. I mean they landed us at 2 o'clock in the morning, put us right on a train, and by that night we were in Cardiff, Wales. So that's where we set up a bunch of Nissen [prefabricated, half-cylindrical] huts as a hospital there. And we got that running. Then they hauled us out, and they split us up into three units again, and put us in houses for about a month and a half, just billeted. And then they shipped one batch up to northern England, one batch went to Scotland, and my bunch went to Bath, England. And we really didn't do much there, but more or less training as like a MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] outfit.
- Jim: What was your specific duty?
- Don: Getting supplies, and keeping 'em outfitted. Laundry, dry cleaning: everything to take care of the unit.
- Jim: You were in charge of making all this work?
- Don: Yeah, but there was only three of us in the unit supply. Hospital supply had probably eight or nine supply people in there.
- Jim: Did you have trouble getting your supplies?
- Don: Not really. But I did a lot of travelling. I saw a lot of England that way.
- Jim: Why did you travel?
- Don: To Army bases to pick up.
- Jim: Ah, you picked up the supplies you wanted? Rather than have them sent to you.
- Don: Picked up what we needed for our unit—what we were authorized.
- Jim: I see. Like what, for instance, would you get?
- Don: Oh, clothing, shoes, everything like that. But then, after we were there—I would say maybe three months—then they shipped us up to Grantham, England. It's up in Nottingham. And there they had a bunch of cement plots out in a field, and there we set up like a MASH hospital. Then that lasted right straight through 'til almost into—
- Jim: You stayed at that one place?
- Don: We stayed there. Well, we got the hospital tents all up—twenty-six wards—and then D-Day, and the next day we were full. They brought 'em in by train, plane. 8th Air Force was over near Nottingham, so a lot of 'em came in that

way. And we were there—I would guess—better than a year. And then when Patton moved on, where he stayed down there—his headquarters—they shipped us down there to set that up as a hospital. And we were there maybe six weeks.

Jim: That was in east of London?

Don: No, that one was in France—after D-Day.

Jim: Oh, you mean down there?

Don: Yeah, we didn't go over 'til after D-Day. But, I would guess almost two months after D-Day before we went over.

Jim: Where in France did you go?

Don: Well, I think it was Verdun. I can't even remember. We didn't stay there long enough, and all we did was work. But then we moved on up to Bremerhaven [Germany] and took over a great big hospital that had been a German pregnancy hospital. And there we stayed right through 'til we came home.

Jim: Was that hospital different than American hospitals?

Don: Oh, this one was damn near new.

Jim: Oh, it was?

Don: Yeah, beautiful hospital. In fact, in the summertime I had infection in my good eye, and they put me in our own hospital for three weeks. And there, when the weather was nice, the windows were the whole wall over there. You could raise the whole windows up, and they'd wheel your bed right out on the terrace, and you could lay out there in the sun. It was really nice [laughs]! But I only stayed in—I would guess maybe ten days—I was in the hospital.

Jim: Did you get into Bremerhaven, the town?

Don: Oh, yeah. Well, it was very close because that's where the big German ship was sunk in the harbor. What the hell was the name of that? Anyway, we went out to that ship and salvaged everything like sheets, and because it hadn't gone – I mean it didn't go way down, but you could get on the ship. You couldn't go down below decks much, but we salvaged all the sheets and pillowcases and everything that we could use. Even silverware. German. Nicest silverware— [laughs] I brought home eighteen pieces of each. Somewhere down the line it all disappeared. I've got a gravy ladle now that's got a swastika on it. That's all I [laughs] got left of it.

Jim: Your kids got the rest?

Don: Some kids. My kids had parties and strangers in. I don't know. One girl stayed with us for three months, and whether—I don't know, she looked a little shifty to me [laughs]. I didn't accuse anybody because I didn't know. In fact, all my emblems didn't mean anything, but they were all off on my jacket. I had it in a chest upstairs while this girl stayed upstairs with one of my daughters for about six months. So I don't know, my own daughters did it, or one of them must have tried to sell 'em or something.

Jim: Oh, they're gone?

Don: Well, they're just disappeared. I was gonna put it on to see if it still fit after a few years. Nothin'! Even the lapel things were gone. All of the badges that didn't mean anything, they were gone.

Jim: What was your rank when you were in—?

Don: I was a buck sergeant.

Jim: Did you much -- any fraternization with the Germans?

Don: Oh, yeah. Well, when we were in Bremerhaven all the help were—I had a secretary, a girl, and then I had one fella, older man and he was our janitor. They were make-jobs for them 'cause there was no jobs for them at that time. But then every time we had to unload a truck we had to call the prisoners in. They had a bunch of 'em there. Even if it was just the littlest thing—I'd come back with supplies, I couldn't unload it. Colonel would have raised hell if he saw ya out there doin' it 'cause he had to keep these prisoners busy.

Jim: Did you get along with all those people?

Don: Oh, yeah, pretty good.

Jim: No problems?

Don: Unh unh. Not really. No, I thought it was—it was an experience.

Jim: Your food was good all the time?

Don: Oh, we had wonderful cooking. Even the baked goods was exceptionally good. And my trouble was, my supply room—unit supply—always ended up as half of the morgue. So, nine times out of ten I was right across from the mess hall. And so we treated those boys good, and they treated us pretty good. They baked, and they'd bring it over. Bucket of coffee, and when they needed something extra they got it, too. So, we had a good time.

Jim: No trouble getting mail?

Don: Oh, just in the worst times it came a little slow. In fact, I got a letter one day, and it was—a note written on the outside of my letter. Turns out the guy that was the postman in Waterloo, Wisconsin was sorting mail [laughs] that day, and he saw my name, so he wrote me a note. And then my brother, he was in the medics too, but he was in a half-track ambulance. He was up closer to the front. But he came to see me over in England.

In my first year over in England, on the day that we went in to service, I got a call from my wife's sister. She was a telephone operator with 8th Air Force. And they were takin' a holiday in London, so a buddy of mine and I got a pass, and we went on in, too. And that very day, one of the girls in their billet had gone out while an air raid warning was on. And she's standing in front of the USO [United Services Organization] or whatever it is there, and a piece of shrapnel clipped the brim off in her hat. She was standing out in front. She was so shook up that I don't think she went out again. But, otherwise we didn't really have much—

Our first night in Cardiff, we had an air raid warning. And they shipped us out into the woods to scatter, but it was for Bristol, and that was a shipping town, and that was twenty miles away. So really all we heard was the shells that were fired at the planes. The pieces were comin' down, they were whistling as they come to the ground. But that's the closest we came to ever having any problem.

Jim: In London, where'd you stay in London?

Don: We stayed right in the YMCA, or YWCA, whatever it was. But we didn't—the few days we were there, it was just that night we got there that this happened to this girl, but otherwise they didn't hit London the nights otherwise that we were there.

Jim: Did you find a good place to eat there in London?

Don: [laughs] Not really. If you like their greasy french fries and that stuff. You had to take your own newspaper along to wrap 'em in. But I didn't care for that stuff. I'll tell you the truth, I didn't go into town very much. London was nice because we went to the Kew Gardens [Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew] and that kind of stuff, and it was really beautiful, but as far as going into the towns where we were, I went in to pick up supplies during the day, and we stopped at a pub and have a few drinks, the driver and I. Otherwise, I didn't care to go.

Jim: Did you get used to the English beer?

Don: I don't like my beer ice cold, so that part of it was fine by me.

Jim: So it was okay with you?

Don: But the English dark beer—that's—

Jim: It's pretty bitter.

Don: Just like mustard -- I mean molasses. It's so darn thick and black. I didn't care for that. Now, they've got it in this country here, and I don't care for it at all. But we were quite lucky.

But I got guys coming to the reunion now. One guy called me from New Orleans. The other one the other night called from Texas. One of my buddies, a sergeant in medical supply, he and his wife are comin' from Charlotte, North Carolina. And we got two comin' from California. They come every year.

Jim: For what is this a reunion of? Of your—

Don: Of the station hospital.

Jim: What was the station hospital number?

Don: 348.

Jim: 348. Station Hospital. There was quite a few then?

Don: Oh, yeah. We had—well, even with all of 'em dying, two of 'em died right after the last reunion we had. And we still had twenty-eight guys and then their wives, and some of them their kids with.

Jim: Oh, that's nice.

Don: That's how I got stuck in the first place. My wife passed away two years ago. And this guy from Chicago that was too sick to go, he was the one that we went with all the time, to all the reunions. And he couldn't go. I ended up—I'd registered, and I said, "The hell with it, I'll go by myself." So about two days later my three daughters come over and said, "We all took off. We're goin' with ya." [both laugh] So they went with me, and then while I was with the bus that went over into Minnesota to the gambling shop, they had the meeting, and my girls volunteered to take it this year.

Jim: [both laugh] They volunteered you?

Don: They volunteered me. But they've done damn near all the work, so—

Jim: Oh, well, that's nice. Well, that gives you something to do.

- Don: Yeah, right. It's interesting now that I got into it. It was kind of fun. I still work two hours a day.
- Jim: Well, at least you keep track of the people you were with over there.
- Don: Yeah, well—most of 'em—we got one guy from Chicago that's comin' that has never come to one. And he was in the same in the barracks as I was. I don't know what—of course, he's got a daughter living in Waunakee, and I think that's the real reason he's coming.
- Jim: That's nice. Did you ever see any of the USO troops over there?
- Don: Very little.
- Jim: Any Red Cross people?
- Don: Red Cross we saw occasionally, but not a lot because—I guess they went where most of the troops were.
- Jim: A little closer to the action than you.
- Don: Yeah. You'd have some come into the hospital, but they were ones that had gone to doings, big—
- Jim: Okay, now let's take a typical day. If they brought casualties in, into the hospital you were attached to—once they got over whatever it was and were ready to go back to duty, was it your job to supply them with uniforms that they didn't have?
- Don: Oh, yeah, we had to make it up. On the Bulge [Battle of the Bulge] there, when so many of 'em came down with frozen feet, we must have had three wards of 'em that they brought to us. And I had to get their shoes about four sizes too big when they first started to get onto their feet. And then about a week or ten days, I'd have to haul 'em all in again, issue 'em—
- Jim: Other shoes?
- Don: A size or two smaller, whatever fit. And then I had to take those others to town. Get 'em de—
- Jim: Loused? [laughs]
- Don: Deloused or whatever, yeah. And—
- Jim: So you did reuse 'em, though.

- Don: Oh, yeah! We used 'em over—
- Jim: But you've had 'em cleaned, though.
- Don: But they had to take 'em in. Actually, they really didn't get 'em dirty. It's just—fumigate 'em to put 'em on somebody else.
- Jim: So no bacteria were transferred.
- Don: But then we had to polish all them shoes up again. Make 'em look like new to give 'em to the new guys.
- Jim: Was that mainly shoes, or other clothing too?
- Don: Well, we had a—fill 'em out with clothing. But you see we had what we called, “a supply for so many people.” And as soon as we shipped some out and my supply was down I had to reorder those same sizes just to keep that full thing goin' all the way through.
- Jim: You only dealt with clothing with these soldiers?
- Don: No. If mess kits and any of that kind of stuff, we'd have to fit 'em with it if they went back to their outfit. Whatever they were missing going back to their outfit, that's what we had to.
- Jim: But not a weapon.
- Don: No. No weapons. We had nothin'. They dumped a bunch of rifles out in our dump there after the war. And we brought about six or eight of 'em in, cleaned 'em all up nice. We thought we had 'em hidden. I'll be a son of a gun, an inspector came around—took 'em all [laughs].
- Jim: You were gonna nip those and take 'em home?
- Don: He took 'em!
- Jim: He took 'em?
- Don: One guy shipped his home. Tore it down and shipped it home, and it got through!
- Jim: Oh, he tore it down in small pieces, sent it home in pieces?
- Don: Yeah. [laughs]
- Jim: I've heard of fellas doin' that.

- Don: He got that. But we were allowed to bring a weapon home. I brought two of 'em, actually. But I sold one of 'em.
- Jim: What were they?
- Don: Mauser, semi-automatic pistol. That one I kept for a good number of years. I sold that about five years ago 'cause the grandchildren were gettin' to the point where they're nosy about it, and I thought, "To the hell with it." I never sold used it, so I had to show it to the guys up at the tavern, and this one guy wanted it bad, so I got two hundred bucks for it.
- Jim: Sure. That was one of 'em. What's about the other one?
- Don: That was a Springfield. I don't know where the hell how that got in there.
- Jim: 1903? The rifle?
- Don: No, no. That was a revolver, too. Not a revolver, but a clip.
- Jim: Oh, I see.
- Don: Actually, I've never cared for guns. I never worried about it. A lot of the guys went huntin'. When we were in England, they even went deer hunting. And the deer over there were about that high. Big puppy dog is what it amounts to [Jim laughs]. And the cooks cooked 'em up for us. But I never went. I've never been a hunter.
- Jim: Did you get along with the English?
- Don: Real good, yeah. Actually, there wasn't many of them around either [laughs], except the old people.
- Jim: That's the truth. Yeah, that's true. Well, I thought there'd be a lot of girls hangin' around.
- Don: Oh, there was a lot of girls. Nobody had any trouble. All you had to go was to one of the dances there—
- Jim: Did they have dances on at the hospital every night, or every once a week, or—
- Don: Well, not at the hospital, but you had to go into town, and then they--
- Jim: Which town?
- Don: Well, Cardiff to start with, yeah.

Jim: Is Cardiff a pretty big town?

Don: It's a big town, yeah. Real big.

Jim: These are USO sponsored dances?

Don: Most of 'em. When we were billeted it was up at Llandudno. It was northern Wales, and they had dances every night up there for—but there was quite a few units billeted in all the houses in that town until they got 'em reassigned somewhere else.

Jim: Did you have a curfew?

Don: Yeah. Up there they stuck me on guard duty. I had to roam around to the bars and the dances and that to find guys that didn't belong there. One of my own guys, he was dancing with a girl there, and a guy from another outfit came in [laughs] and hauled him out. I had to go down to their headquarters and get him. 'Cause they weren't allowed to fraternize at night with 'em when while you were on duty.

Jim: Oh, I see.

Don: But he loved to dance. And he didn't do any drinking or anything, there was no harm in it at all, but—

Jim: Did those girls invite boys home?

Don: We had three or four house parties, yeah. And the mothers and the fathers—or mothers mostly—would call and say how many they wanted in the party. I think six from our outfit went.

Jim: If the mothers were around they couldn't get in too much trouble.

Don: No, you couldn't. You didn't know whether they were watching you or not, so you didn't [both laugh] get in too much trouble. But we had I think five or six guys that married English girls.

Jim: Would you generally bring chocolates and cigarettes and things for them? For these English girls?

Don: If you could get 'em, yeah. Usually at the PX [Post Exchange] you could get chocolates, but—and cigarettes. Cigarettes they were—

Jim: You could trade that for favors from these English girls.

- Don: Yeah, yeah, you bet. When we got over to Bremerhaven my supply room was empty. I thought. But when I was restocking it, up in one of the cupboards up above, found a whole case of limey [slang for British] cigarettes in there. Well, three of us went to Denmark with that on a furlough. And we came back with more money than we went with. Because if you broke 'em down you could get up to forty-eight dollars a carton. But we just sold all of ours for twenty-four.
- Jim: Twenty-four dollars?
- Don: Twenty-four cartons.
- Jim: Twenty-four, excuse me.
- Don: Twenty-four dollars a carton for twenty-four cartons in a case. So we spent money on—
- Jim: I see. You sold 'em to who? Denmark?
- Don: A guy standing underneath a stairway—
- Jim: In Denmark?
- Don: Lookin' to buy 'em on the black market. And then he went out and made three times as much on it.
- Jim: Right, but in Denmark, though?
- Don: Yeah, but they paid us in marks. But the last morning, everybody says you can't take anything bigger than the fifty kroner or hundred kroner or something like that. Well, one of our guys—
- Jim: That's Danish money then?
- Don: Yeah. One of our guys was running the first aid thing. And we asked him, he says, "Don't worry about." He says, "Bring 'em down when you're ready to go." And we did. We got—I think it was ten dollars a pack for 'em. But we went home with money in our pockets.
- Jim: Where did you stay in Denmark?
- Don: At the capital of Denmark.
- Jim: Copenhagen?
- Don: Copenhagen, yeah.

- Jim: So that was a good black market spot?
- Don: Oh, any place over there. Even Germany if you got away from the—
- Jim: Yeah, but Germans, you said, paid you in marks for these cigarettes. But marks weren't worth anything.
- Don: They weren't to us. I mean, but you could use 'em there for spending. We went to the baths and got the rubdowns and everything there. We didn't—
- Jim: In Copenhagen?
- Don: Yeah.
- Jim: Yeah, I've been there. That's a charming city.
- Don: Yeah. When they rub you down with that hay or straw or whatever they use, boy your skin gets red. Then you stand in that room, and then they turn on that cold water. Holy cripes [laughs], there must be a thousand outlets coming. And it shocked you so. Then you could go and lay down for an hour or two, whatever you wanted. It was fun.
- Jim: Did they serve you any aquavit [a Scandinavian liquor; "water of life;" other spelling: akvavit] while you were there in Denmark?
- Don: No. Well, we didn't get around too much, I don't know. We weren't there real long. We only had a week, and it took—well, we had to stop someplace on the way. They billeted us in Germany. And then same way on the way back so I would say we probably had four days there tops. So—but it was enjoyable just to get away from the outfit for a while.
- Jim: So did you deal with any German prisoners?
- Don: Just—after the war. The ones that we had to do all our heavy work.
- Jim: What's heavy work?
- Don: Well, loading and unloading trucks and whatever. Just to keep 'em busy.
- Jim: Oh, I see. You used 'em there.
- Don: Yeah, had to use 'em. But you didn't really want to mingle too much because our own soldiers—there's such a hatred built up there that when they were governing these guys—and these guys were probably ones that barely got into the service, and—

Jim: They were young?

Don: Yeah. But some of those guys from the infantry, Jesus, they were miserable to 'em. And you couldn't blame 'em. Christ, they were trained to kill 'em. So here and now, they felt almost like doin' it yet, I guess, out of all the atrocities that went on. And when we started gettin' some of the prisoners out of those German camps, shortly before we moved us out, why, they – you really felt sorry, even for the Germans.

Jim: Did you see any of the concentration camps?

Don: Just the pictures. The ones that the Army took. They showed 'em to you right away to get us acclimated to it, too. But it had to be horrible for the guys that went in and opened up those camps.

Jim: So, when did you leave the European Theater?

Don: Well, a month before we came home. 'Cause we came back to the States, and I think we were—well, first they got a new outfit to take over the hospital. They recruited as many of our people as we would stay, and then they brought in a whole new contingent to take over the hospital, and they put us out at a camp to send back to the States. Which we sat there for damn near a week I guess before they got enough of 'em to fill the ship, and then we got shipped back.

Jim: You came back directly to the Midwest? **[End of Tape One, Side A]**

Don: Came back to Kilmer, and they loaded us on a train right away for Chicago. [laughs] Some of the guys got a chance to go into New York that night, and they took along their -- some of the boxes they wanted to send home. And the rest of us stupid ones, didn't. We got to Chicago, and right on the gol' damn rail station, they shook us down and took everything that we weren't allowed.

Jim: Oh, my!

Don: Clothing and everything.

Jim: Clothing? What was not allowed?

Don: Well, anything you weren't issued. I had a flight jacket that I had gotten from one of the guys that was with the Air Force. He just gave it to me. I didn't get it home. Even coveralls—our unit wasn't allowed coveralls. Well, I picked them up at—

Jim: Who were the people that took this away? People in your unit?

Don: No, the ones that were stationed at Camp Sheridan.

Jim: Well, they probably had a real racket going.

Don: Well, unless they were controlled, I don't know. That's where we were issued stuff, so how much of it went back to supply I don't know. [laughs]

Jim: Not much.

Don: I'm sure that jacket didn't [laughs].

Jim: No. Oh, that was a shame.

Don: Yeah. And a beautiful thing. But then you were so damn glad to get home you didn't much care what happened 'til you got home.

Jim: So then you were quickly discharged and you got back home and—

Don: Yeah. We were discharged the next morning. And then when we left, one of the guys was from Sparta, one was from Friendship. Stan Dahnert[??] and I -- was from Lake Mills, and I was from Madison then, but from Waterloo up 'til I went in. And so this guy from Sparta says he was gonna rent a car and he says, "I'll drive you guys all home on the way." So he did.

Jim: That was nice. So after the war was over, did you partake of the GI bill?

Don: Not much.

Jim: Did you get a loan or anything?

Don: Oh, I did get a loan.

Jim: FHA loan? Five percent?

Don: Yeah. I got a house on that. But I only drew three of the checks that they were payin' out, and I got home the 24th of January. I went to work the 27th of February.

Jim: Doing what?

Don: Milkman. I worked for—

Jim: Was that a job you had before you went?

Don: Well, I was in creamery, and even in high school I helped out the delivery people there, so—

Jim: They were glad to have you back I'll bet.

Don: Well, it wasn't the same place [laughs]. But I went to work for Bowman out here. But my wife's uncle worked for Bowman, and he asked if I wanted a job, and I said, "Well, I got to have one pretty soon." And he says, "Well, come on out." He says, "We got six routes open right now." So I went out there and they gave me my choice. Well, it was three routes—one east side and one west side. So, I got my choice of them, and I got a damn good route. I had Nakoma and Maple Bluff. At that time—

Jim: Nakoma and Maple Bluff? Those aren't connected.

Don: No, but you went west side one day, east side the next day.

Jim: I see [laughs].

Don: And that was steady. You didn't have days off or anything for quite a long time. Then they finally—

Jim: But not every day, seven days a week?

Don: We did for the first three months. I worked seven days a week.

Jim: I don't recall them delivering seven days a week, but I guess—

Don: Then they started hiring relief men and called 'em foremen, but they got the crappy job or taken over from. And then I ended up a different day each week. If you had Sunday off this week you had Monday off next week. So actually they were gettin' an extra day outta ya—all the way through, too. Well, then when I guess I was there ten or eleven years -- and the union was pushing so hard that old Bowman he financed us and sold us all our own areas. So we didn't even have a relief man again, but by then we were down to three days a week so we always had Sunday off.

Jim: I knew Duane [Bowman].

Don: Yeah.

Jim: He was a nice guy.

Don: Young Duane, too?

Jim: Oh, yeah, I knew him too.

Don: He wasn't a nice man.

Jim: He wasn't.

Don: No [laughs].

Jim: No, no.

Don: No.

Jim: He was a typical second generation.

Don: Yeah. He was a workin' fool, but he had the worst temper of anybody I ever saw.

Jim: Yeah, he was a bad act[??].

Don: Yeah. Bowman took over the dairy down in Janesville. And so they took a bunch of guys down to inventory everything in the place, and I went with them that time. Well, young Duane got so mad before that day was over that he passed out.

Jim: I'm not surprised.

Don: We had to bring him back. Well, they got him to [conscious] there, and then we brought him back with us, but we didn't know whether he was gonna make it or not. He just went crazy. And his sister and his mother, who were a couple of the nicest people—they were my last stop when I came in off Nakoma always. I'd go up to the house.

Jim: Our milkman that I had when I was a kid was Wally somebody. I can't remember Wally's last name.

Don: From Bowman?

Jim: Yeah.

Don: Well, Wally Sabaroff.

Jim: No, that doesn't sound right.

Don: And we had—

Jim: He originally was with Kennedy. Around Kennedy.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Jim: On West Wash [West Washington Avenue], ya know.

Don: Yeah. Well, I didn't know a heck of a lot of those guys because they were all union, so we were downgraded. Well, Bancroft [Bancroft Dairy], when they put through that they were gonna only sell on 7 o'clock in the morning— couldn't start before that—

[End of Interview]