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Interviewee: Lewis Berg

Interviewer: Gregg Phifer

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Gregg Phifer: This is Gregg Phifer from the Department of Communication at Florida State University in Tallahassee doing the interview. And today I'm talking with—

Lewis Berg: Hello, my name is Lew Berg, and I currently am living in Parkville, Missouri, near Kansas City.

GP: A Midwesterner then.

LB: Pardon me?

GP: Midwesterner.

LB: Yes, yes indeed. I've been there since 1955, so, that's fairly well confirmed.

GP: I would think so. Well we're talking first about the Civilian Public Service [CPS] part, which means, of course, that we were certified pure and segregated by CPS, by the federal government. That is certified so far as religious objection is concerned. Now what's your own religious background Lew?

LB: I grew up in what was known as the Evangelical Church, which has since been absorbed by the Methodist Church.

GP: The EUB. You're now the United Methodist Church.

LB: That is correct. I took my religious training pretty seriously as the answer—particularly 'Thou shalt not kill' influenced me towards the concept of conscientious objection in wartime. So that by the time I was in high school, I was thinking fairly seriously along these lines. Then when the first draft came along, first the United States peacetime draft, I had finished college and my master's degree and had one year of teaching under my belt.

GP: Where have you taught?

LB: I taught high school at Adams Center, New York, just south of Watertown.

GP: Oh yes.

LB: Having taken my master's degree from Syracuse University, I had through their placement bureau wound up in that particular location. And that was the school year of 1940-41. When the Conscription Act was passed, by Congress of course, we had to start doing some thinking. Seriously.

GP: Oh, I should say so.

LB: I considered the possibility of non-combatant military service, and actually went far enough to consult the recruiters in Watertown, New York, to see what my chances of getting such a status would be.

GP: 1-A-O. [Conscientious objectors available for non-combat duty].

LB: And they said, "You can pretty well count on it, but we will not guarantee it."

GP: Oh.

LB: My response to that was, "Okay. Then I will not count on you." And therefore registered as a full conscientious objector.

GP: Did you have any trouble getting the classification? Generally speaking, those who belong to the historic peace churches, as neither of us do, that is the Mennonites, Quakers, Brethren, they generally didn't seem to have much trouble getting the 4-E [Conscientious objectors unavailable for any service] classification, but us poor Methodists and Evangelicals and so forth, that was not so easy.

LB: I had my teaching contract for that one year only, and this occurred about mid-year, that this registration was required, and that I was required to register. And when I registered as a CO [conscientious objector], the word got around, I'm not quite sure how, but my school board, while they allowed me to finish the year, did not offer me another contract, and that was specifically the reason. Consequently, I got a job in a grocery store that summer, and was simply waiting for my draft call. In the meantime, continuing in that particular position. But when it came to getting my classification along the way, the draft board apparently took the school board's word for it and I had no trouble whatsoever getting the CO classification.

GP: Your local board did the job of giving 4-E classification.

LB: Yes. Based, apparently on the school board's recognition of my status.

GP: And then you were sent to camp. Where did you go?

LB: February of 1942, I was instructed to report to Coshocton, Ohio, some conservation service project, CPS 23 was the camp number.

GP: Mine went to 19 at Marion, North Carolina, Buck Creek Camp. Now, what sort of a project was there at Coshocton, what were you doing?

LB: There was—

GP: Soil conservation—

LB: —essentially soil conservation research. It was a hydrologic research station. And it had some unique aspects, in that part of the project included some large blocks of soil, which had been left undisturbed while the space around them and under them had been cleared so that they could be encased in concrete and placed aboard a counterbalanced scale in such a manner that weight records could be continuously kept of this block of soil, with the focus of attention on moisture records and relationships. Most of the operation centered around research relating to erosion and soil-water relationships, effects of various types of cropping on erosion, and evaporation loss and related efforts to construct scientific instruments that could measure more effectively some of these things. Quite a bit of experimental work, and a number of us there did work on some things, which turned out to be fundamentally flawed, and were a part of the failures that go into our research normally. Some of the research resulted in some significant results—I'm speaking not just of my personal efforts, but the efforts of various people in the camp.

GP: Did you find a challenge there, at Coshocton?

LB: Well, yes. For those of us with scientific training and background, who could participate in the actual research. There were a number of people also in camp who lacked this training, and who therefore had the more mundane housekeeping chores associated with the larger operation. And they found it less rewarding than some of the rest of us.

GP: I should have asked you what your major was in college.

LB: I was a math major with a physics and education double minor.

GP: So then Coshocton presented something of a challenge for you. Did you stay at Coshocton until you went to the smokejumpers?

LB: I stayed there two years, and that was, yes, until I entered the smokejumpers. But I spent the last, oh about two thirds of my last year in camp administration, rather than in the actual project operations.

GP: You were assistant director, or what?

LB: Well, I was assistant director for several months, and active director in the absence of our previous director.

GP: Coshocton, was that a Friends camp?

LB: It was.

GP: So was mine at Buck Creek. All right, then you were working, you had been in some little bit of administration there, how come you applied for the smokejumpers? Apparently at first, you found the Coshocton program somewhat rewarding, in terms of your own educational background, and then you had a chance to do some administration, which must have presented some interesting problems and questions to you. Why did you apply for the smokejumpers?

LB: Well, I watched people going off to a mental hospital, and various similar social service activities, and developed a feeling of, oh, I suppose, somewhat guilt, somewhat just dissatisfaction that what I was doing was not people-related enough to suit me.

GP: And you thought smokejumping people-related?

LB: No. But I felt also that I needed some conditioning before I undertook a mental hospital assignment, so I made a commitment that, if I could get there, I would go one year as smokejumping, which surely would provide that. And then that I would move on from there. And that's exactly what I did. When I finished my year of smokejumping, then I went on to Williamsburg, Virginia, mental hospital work. And from there I was discharged eventually. That's where I was when the end of—nearly four years.

GP: So the smokejumper was, in a sense for you, a transition then, a bridge between the administration at Coshocton and the mental hospital.

LB: That is correct.

GP: That seems sort of a strange kind of connection there. Did you feel that the physical training of the smokejumpers would be good preparation for the mental hospital of Williamsburg?

LB: Well, both physical and the mental discipline that would be involved in that particular project.

GP: Well that is something all right. You, then, were accepted for the smokejumpers, this is a 1944 unit.

LB: That is correct.

GP: 1944 unit, which was not the big year. '45 was a big year for smokejumping.

LB: Well as it turned out, I only had two fire jumps.

GP: And you had seven training jumps. You get a refresher in the way?

LB: Yes. I had a total of 12 jumps.

GP: 12 jumps.

LB: There were three refreshers.

GP: Oh, yeah, 12 jumps. That's pretty good for one year, '44. I had 10 in that year, that's all. And looking back at the training now, is there one part of it that stands out, or that you remember particularly, either with pleasure or with disdain, rather would have passed it up?

LB: Nothing really outstanding. Of course, one remembers the jumps off the tower.

GP: I remember it very well.

LB: God, those were pretty rugged. But nothing really outstanding.

GP: Did you feel you were well prepared, from your Coshocton experience? Of course, part of your time was in the office there at Coshocton, I suppose. Were you prepared physically for the smokejumper experience?

LB: No, it was that physical preparation that I wanted particularly from the smokejumpers.

GP: I see. And you got it through the training here.

LB: That's true.

GP: The training was at Ninemile, I presume?

LB: That's right.

GP: Well, the training period, then, gave you no particular shock, except for the shock of jumping off that tower. And it did give you some of the physical conditioning, I'll bet, for the mental hospital experience, are you right there?

LB: That was the purpose, and I felt that it was fulfilled. I had a farm background prior to my academic career, so I had pretty good foundation to build on.

GP: Right, right. All right, turning now to the jumping part of it, do you remember your first jump?

LB: Not in great detail. I remember more vividly, perhaps, about the fourth jump, when I began to question—

GP: Everybody's talking about the fourth jump! I don't remember the fourth jump particularly! But you began to, "what am I doing here? What am I doing jumping out of this plane?" Is that it?

LB: That's it. The first three were so routine and I was so keyed up and prepared for it that it was almost mechanical, but by the time we made a couple of them, then you began to think. [laughs] 'Hey, what am I doing?'

GP: [laughs] Yeah. Did you have any luck in hitting the spot, or coming close to the spot at the center of the field which we were supposed to aim for?

LB: Well I don't remember that I had any drastic misses, nor any remarkable accurate successes. Pretty average.

GP: On one of my jumps, I remember draping the chute across the spot, and that was really something. I don't know how I did it, but somehow I did. In one of these early training jumps, we were instructed to hang up. Did you succeed in doing so?

LB: I did. I don't remember whether it was by instruction or not, but... [laughs]

GP: [laughs] You hung up anyway.

LB: I did manage to get a practice tree landing before the real thing occurred, and then my only real fire jump did turn out that way.

GP: You land in a tree in the only fire jump.

LB: That's right. I had, supposedly, two fire jumps, but the one turned out to be a false alarm.

GP: In other words, you rode around in the plane, ready to jump, but they never jumped you because—

LB: No, we jumped—

GP: You jumped!

LB: —but we couldn't find any fire.

GP: You had two fire jumps, one without any fire.

LB: That's right.

GP: Well, you did succeed in hanging up. How about your let down procedure? Did you follow it carefully, and did you succeed in getting down that way, by the book?

LB: Far as I can recall, I followed it to the letter and it worked.

GP: [laughs]

LB: Both times.

GP: I'm glad to hear that.

LB: My most memorable jump, really was—I don't know which one it was anymore, by number—but the one in which my chute fouled up somewhat, and I was not successful in freeing it, so that I had to use my, or I was instructed by bullhorn from the ground to use my reserve chute. And I did that quite successfully.

GP: Successfully!

LB: When I used it, it freed the other one, and I had the privilege of riding down with two chutes.

GP: You couldn't very well steer the two chutes though.

LB: No, I didn't, don't remember that I had any major success or trouble with it.

GP: Boy, you're one of the relatively few people who were successful in actually inflating that emergency chute. Most of the people I know about had the emergency chute simply flapping around their faces.

LB: No, it worked very well, and it was the softest landing I had.

GP: You should try it some more! Do you have any idea how you fouled up that chute, first chute?

LB: I don't recall whether it came out that way or whether it was in the process of trying to manipulate it, but it got that way. To the best of my recollection it was that way from the beginning when it opened, and I just couldn't straighten it.

GP: Line over it, or what?

LB: I guess that was the problem. Again, I can't remember, but it came off so easily when the other one came out that I think that must have been it.

GP: Well, you were lucky then, I guess. Well, only two fire jumps, one of which turned out to be a fake, not a fire at all. How about the other one? What was that like?

LB: That was quite an experience, because it was a major fire.

GP: Which one was that?

LB: What they seem to be calling the Bell Lake fire.

GP: Bell Lake fire. 29 jumpers.

LB: We went in there with one load of seven or eight jumpers, whichever it was, in the twilight, and before we actually got out of the plane it was pretty well dark, so we were jumping in near dark conditions. Although we had a pretty good look at the landing area before it got that bad. But we got on the fire that night, and were unable to contain it, with the result that a couple more crews jumped in with us the next day. In the meantime, a complete fire camp setup was dropped in, including stove, rations, and a variety of equipment. We had radio problems that—seemed that the drop was a little rough on some of the equipment.

GP: The radio tinkle a little bit 'til you pick it up?

LB: There were some communication problems. But we did eventually, well, there was a marine pump...Because it was by a lake, there was a marine pump, a mile or so of hose provided to us.

GP: Dropped in?

LB: Dropped in. We managed to lose some of that hose, when the fire kind of chased us, made us run a bit. But eventually the thing was subdued, and it took, I think, about five days of work before that was assured. Then we had a nice 17-mile hike out from that location before we could get to a road where the bus was sent to pick us up.

GP: Think, axel decker size, getting ready for that mental hospital, 17-mile hike—

LB: Great stuff.

GP: Yes, great stuff. You never were sent out, or never had the experience of having injured yourself?

LB: Well, not as a result of jumping. I had a somewhat touchy back, and some of the work projects between jumps got to me. At one point I was almost incapacitated with a back problem that straightened itself out in due time. Actually was a recurrence of something that I had experienced before. But, it was not obvious enough to disqualify me from eligibility in the first place.

GP: At what time had you applied for the mental hospital? When did you apply for the mental hospital in Williamsburg?

LB: I cannot recall, just when that—

GP: You had made up your mind you were going to apply for some mental hospital unit, was Williamsburg on your mind at that time?

LB: Not specifically, no.

GP: Just a hospital, mental hospital.

LB: Yeah. I think Williamsburg was the one that was available when I got around to it, but I don't remember what, precisely—

GP: You remember how long you spent in the smokejumper unit after the fire season was pretty well over—

LB: Yes, I do, because my father was in his final illness when I left camp, and I had some transportation problems, and he died on February 5th, 1945.

GP: You have the day, don't you?

LB: So it was prior to that...I had booked air flight, and because of foggy ground conditions, the airplane didn't land, and I wound up taking the train, which took considerably longer period. It was back to Indiana. And that was very specific.

GP: Yep, it certainly was.

LB: I did carry with me, because it involved my transfer to Williamsburg at the same time—that had come through in the meantime—and I was able to carry some smokejumper movies—I think they belonged to Louis Goosen, if I remember correctly—and got a number of opportunities to present the CPS smokejumper story en route.

GP: Really. On route where?

LB: To Williamsburg.

GP: Williamsburg.

LB: Around my home area, which borders on Mennonite Brethren concentration. So while I was there I had the opportunity to make a couple of presentations in various churches. And then a very good friend of mine, Grover Hartman, who was in the CPS detached service, located in New York at the time, got me a scheduled meeting with a group in Foundry Methodist Church, in New York. And I was able to make the presentation there also.

GP: Is Foundry Methodist Church the one that Ortega (?) spoke to?

LB: I couldn't tell you.

GP: I'm not sure either, I just remember Ortega speaking to a Methodist church, and I thought it was New York area...in fact I'm sure it was, because he was here for the United Nations meeting, so I found it kind of sticks in my mind, but I'm not sure it's true. If so, they were very receptive to ideas that at that time were not the most popular.

LB: I don't remember what kind of a turnout we had, but it was significant.

GP: Those are black and white movies?

LB: I can't remember.

GP: I showed a couple of Forest Service movies and they were black and white. Showed them to groups in Nashville. Let's see, this must have been after my discharge, I guess, from CPS. Okay, well let's leave the smokejumper experience then. You had the 12 jumps altogether?

LB: Correct.

GP: Twelve jumps, but only two of those were fire jumps, and one of those was a fake fire jump. And the other one was a most sensational fire jump of 1944, the Bell Lake fire, which is written up, and which we all heard about, even those of us who were not on that particular fire. So you went home, your father died, of course, in February, and you went to Williamsburg. Mental hospital of Williamsburg. Who was the sponsor the mental hospital? Is this a state hospital?

LB: State hospital, but a Friends project.

GP: I see. A Friends project, Williamsburg, Virginia, a mental hospital. Well, having gone through all these [unintelligible], in CPS, kind of crazy boys like us, it must have been very much coming home, to go to Williamsburg.

LB: Well, I didn't feel that I belonged in the hospital, but—

GP: [laughs]

LB: At least, I was able to carry the keys rather than depend on somebody else. Williamsburg, of course, being the historical place that it is, carried a little extra fascination, and we were able to take advantage of quite a few special things that are unique to that location.

GP: Did you go out to the College of William and Mary at all?

LB: Certainly did, and the local Episcopal church, which is quite a historical place for worship. The James River was a place for swimming, and the unit had a little makeshift sailboat, homemade rowboat with a sail attached, and I had my first acquaintance with tidewaters in the James River there. Never came any closer to drowning in my life than I did there, caught by the tide one day while swimming. So that was a rather indelible memory there.

GP: I suspect it was. Now how about the patients themselves, and your relationships with the patients?

LB: I was working on the so-called violent ward, and we had quite a variety of patients there, ranging from a 12-year-old psychopathic youngster to an 80-year-old man who didn't belong there, but there was no place else that he could go, apparently.

GP: You say a so-called violent ward. Why?

LB: Well, because that's the description that people used, in those days, for disturbed cases, where there was unpredictable violent episodes occurring. We had an ex-shipper, fishing boat owner and captain that was our most celebrated case. A man who had apparently gone over the edge as a result of financial problems associated with his business. He was given to fits of very violent activity and rage, and very threatening behavior. He was periodically administered electroshock treatment, and that seemed to at least calm him down, if not really straighten him out, for periods lasting from, oh, four to six to eight weeks. After which he would relapse again into his more violent state. But shaving him with a straight razor was quite a challenge.

GP: Wow!

LB: And in retrospect, a very foolish procedure. But that was the hospital's routine. The technique was to take one attendant and equipment of the patient, lock them in shower room, and let the procedure go ahead. No bad incidents ever came of it but there was always considerable tension during the operation.

GP: I would think so. And you were locked in there with him and a straight razor?

LB: Well, one or another of us. It was my lot several times. I wasn't the only one.

GP: I think I would not have liked that.

LB: I can't say that I did, particularly, but—

GP: In fact I'd much rather take on a couple jobs [unintelligible].

LB: Oh, definitely.

GP: And how long did you work at Williamsburg?

LB: Until my discharge, which occurred in January, then, of '46. So I was there slightly less than a full year.

GP: All right, now, you looked forward to this, felt this was one way of serving people who needed that pretty desperately, who otherwise might not have the kind of care you felt you could give them. After you got through, did you feel a sense of satisfaction that you have been doing what you expected to do?

LB: Both a sense of satisfaction in that respect, and a sense of discovery and concern about the quality of care that was apparently available to people in these circumstances. That particular hospital was almost 100 percent staffed, male-wise, by COs at that time, including the doctors, the medical doctors. It wasn't quite 100 percent. We had one medical doctor who himself wound up as an alcoholic patient before we left. But the care was minimal custodial and very little opportunity for therapeutic treatment. The presumption, in many cases, was of course that there was no point in trying to do anything. But mostly, it was a matter of staffing. There just wasn't the staff to do any kind of serious therapeutic work except, perhaps, with a few promising cases.

GP: Did you feel that your presence there made a difference?

LB: Well, it certainly had to make a difference in respect to the kind of treatment the patients received. They had gotten some pretty rough treatment before our arrival on the scene, which was a phase-in; it wasn't cut off all others and immediately replaced them with Cos. It was a gradual process over significant period of time. We had the chance to observe the attitudes of some of the holdover attendants, and also to hear the stories of the type of thing that had gone on.

GP: Where did you come in in the life of the unit? You came in after, during that process of shift, when it was shifting from—

LB: The shift had pretty well occurred by the time I was—

GP: So it was mostly CO units by the time you got there.

LB: Yes.

GP: And then you were finally discharged from that unit, and then after that time you went back to teaching?

LB: Not directly.

GP: Okay. Then what?

LB: I had, during my days at Coshocton, applied for the so-called China unit, and had been accepted, and was packed up, ready to leave camp the day the word came through that Congress negated the whole project. So I did not get out of camp, like some of the fellows did. But I had my eyes on overseas work by that time, for quite a long time, and so when I was discharged I checked in to the Service Committee, the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC] offices in Philadelphia, and found that they were interested in services of people for relief, post-war relief work, in Europe. And so I got associated with what was to be called the Quaker Transport Unit, dealing with transportation facilities, particularly for distributing relief supplies, but for whatever other needs might accrue from the various projects undertaken. I was discharged in January, and reported to Philadelphia immediately, and I went home for a short vacation and came back to Philadelphia in February, and was there until June of that year.

GP: What were you doing?

LB: Working, essentially, in the office with this transport unit, and other trainees, arranging for some of their truck-driving instruction and tool-equipping, and transportation across to the unit headquarters in Paris. In July, then, I was ready to go myself, and sailed, together with Dell Barley, another ex-smokejumper, to report to Paris for whatever disposition the people on the spot were ready to make of us. And that consisted, actually, of some rather routine acclimatization, and in a few weeks, found myself touring Belgium and army depots, surplus depots, looking for transport equipment, both tools and motor vehicles, to purchase for our needs.

GP: This was 1946? '47?

LB: '46.

GP: Hadn't been over very long.

LB: The fall, late summer and fall of '46. December 20th, I believe, was the date that Richmond Miller and I departed from Paris for Germany, actual service. We were waiting that long to get

admitted. And we loaded up an army 6-by-6 GMC truckload of supplies and headed for Germany.

GP: The military, then, apparently was cooperating with the AFSC [American Friends Service Committee].

LB: To some extent. The channel was the United Nations refugees organization, UNRA [United Nations Refugee Agency]—

GP: UNRA.

LB: —was the designation of it, as the channel of cooperation. So Miller and I were the first two that were allowed to go in, other than the ones who were already on the scene as UNRA staff members, but also AFSC contacts. When we got in there, then, we went to work on projects. The first project was in Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, and that project turned out to be a construction of a community center, as kind of a refuge place. It was not a direct relief supply distribution project like many of the others were, but rather an effort to facilitate self-help activities, providing the equipment for a sewing room, and the equipment for a shoe repair shop, and a library for people, in particular young people could come and find reading material. This was unavailable to them otherwise. And we got involved incidentally in some food transportation.

One good thing I remember particularly, when the Rhine river was frozen over—allegedly the first time in 50 years—and there were some sugar supplies available at some distance from the city, if transportation could be arranged, and our trucks proved to be the transportation that could get those to the local distributors. Then we had a second, similar project brewing in Darmstadt, Germany, just about 40 or 50 kilometers south of Frankfurt. Together with Bill Stanton and Lois Plum, at that time, we went down there and made some local contacts to organize a similar project. We tried to use these as vehicles for giving the Germans a part in operation of the projects, and so we set up boards of directors made up of German people, mostly people who were known to local Friends and had been in contact with Quakers prior to the war, so that the control was vested in them, but the facilitation of the operation, the supplies necessary and so on, were provided by the AFSC. One of my assignments from Darmstadt was to make truck trips down to Switzerland to get building material, which were located there in the ruins of Prince Emil's garden, and the project of reconstruction of the Schloss in that estate to make it useful for the purposes that I have described, that were also in Frankfurt. And in fact, we had to construct the quarters for both projects. And it took two trips to Switzerland to haul the building supplies back that just weren't available in Germany. So that was the operation that I got into over there. The end of my service term came January of '48, so I returned to the states then and, after a couple months here got married to the girl I had met in Philadelphia during the training period.

GP: Congratulations.

LB: And the sequel to that, of course, in the middle of the school year, was not immediately a teaching job, but did some temporary jobs in Indianapolis, and then wound up with a teaching job in Georgia in September, beginning of the school year.

GP: Georgia?

LB: Georgia.

GP: Whereabouts?

LB: Dahlonega, Georgia.

GP: Oh, the mining area.

LB: Exactly. The scene of the pre-California gold rush.

GP: Yep, I've been there, just in the last few months.

LB: Have you indeed. Well, last summer we made a trip down to that area, in connection with the church congress in North Carolina, decided to go back and visit the place, so we spent what was undoubtedly our final night in that town in the same hotel where we spent our first night there, where I went down to accept that job at North Georgia State College.

GP: North Georgia State, that's sort of a military operation too.

LB: That was a military college, and a very unique one, because it was co-educational.

GP: A co-educational military school, that's—

LB: Only the fellows were in uniform, the girls were, presumably, non-militarized—

GP: The men used to come to our debate tournaments, debate in uniform.

LB: Well, I got into that in kind of a fluke. I was applying for teaching jobs through a teachers' employment agency, and this contact was brought to my attention. I didn't know anything about the place, but the president of the college gave me a telephone call when he got my vita from the agency. Turned out that he had Quaker background, and my service with the Friends Service Committee fascinated him, and on the strength of that, why he was eager for me to come down there. I guess he needed [GP laughs, making interviewee's words unintelligible] and I decided, since it was the best offer on the horizon, that I'd just get a close up look at this military life and see what I'd been missing. So I went down there, stayed there three years. Meanwhile, a fellow who I was describing was offered the presidency of the University of

Georgia, at Athens, and he skipped out on us while we were there, leaving us with an ex-Naval man for our new president. He wasn't quite as open-minded as the previous man had been.

GP: From there you went?

LB: Back to high school in Indiana for four years. After incurring the displeasure of the American Legion there, through letters to the editor in various newspapers around the state, I found an opening, an opening came to me from Park College, in Parkville, Missouri, through the auspices of the same Lois and Bill Stanton, who I had known in Germany, and who was business manager at the college. Who took a vacation trip to Colorado and stopped off to visit them en route home, and they said, "Hey, there's an opening in math here; how would you like to teach math for us?" And being under fire at home, and not knowing it before we left on our vacation but having found out in the middle of our trip that there was a problem there, we put that opportunity on reserve 'til we could get back home and check the situation. We accepted it eventually. And therefore came to Missouri in 1955, and have been there ever since. Not at that same school, but same location.

GP: In the general location. Well, I'll bet that the unit at Williamsburg, Virginia, has not had a reunion. Am I wrong?

LB: No, you are absolutely...Well, you're right as far as I know. I've never received any indication that there was any such plan.

GP: And yet the smokejumpers have had several. Is this your first reunion for the smokejumpers?

LB: This is my third of the four.

GP: Well this kind of indicates that maybe this experience was one you remember with some interest.

LB: Oh, it was very difficult to leave when the time came. I was most reluctant to leave, but I did want to fulfill my commitment. So, yes, there was a great deal of pleasure associated with this project, and memories there too. We find the group at these reunions so congenial and stimulating that that gives two reasons that it's an inherently worthwhile, time well spent, plus it gives us a great excuse for travelling in an area that we're very fond of.

GP: Excellent. Well, I would say that's excellent reasoning all the way around. Lew, thanks very much for the interview.

[End of Interview]