

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Centenarian Dr. Herb Lipe was born February 10th, 1924, in Claremore, Oklahoma, growing up during the Depression and Dust Bowl. His Father, Clark, and Mother, Virginia, owned a grocery store in Claremore and were proprietors of acreage near Oologah, where they had a pecan orchard.

Herb joined the Navy in 1943 during World War II, serving in the Pacific Theatre. Shortly before completing his military service, he read an advertisement for the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tennessee. After earning his Doctor of Optometry degree, he began his practice in Drumright, Oklahoma, before moving to Tulsa, where he treated thousands of patients for over 50 years.

Herb has voted in every election since he left the Navy. He said: “That is what we fought for, that is what America should believe in, but it is not free, you have to keep it up”.

More advice from 100-year-old Herb Lipe: “Respect and love your country, the flag, and the military for what it does”.

Listen to Herb talk about his life and his concerns for future generations on the oral history website and podcast VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 9:06 Why Me?

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling. Today's date is February 21st, 2024.
Would you state your full name, please?

Herb Lipe (HL): Herman Lipe.

JE: All right. I've got to ask you a few questions here. But you go by Herb. How do you get Herb out of Herman?

HL: Okay. When I was in high school, I didn't like the word Herman for my name, so I just started signing my name Herb.

JE: Herb.

HL: Doesn't it?

JE: But when the teacher called on you, did she call you Herb or Herman?

HL: She usually called Herman, but I would answer to either one, but my friends through the years have called me Herb.

JE: So what about a middle name?

HL: I have no middle name.

JE: No middle name?

HL: No. And when I was in the Navy, they put Herman, none in brackets, Lipe.

JE: All right. For sure. We'll call you Herman, none, Lipe.

HL: That would be okay.

JE: We're recording this interview here in the facilities of Voices of Oklahoma in Tulsa. So your birth date?

HL: February the 10th, 1924.

JE: So your present age is?

HL: 100. A little over 100 now.

JE: I can't imagine you ever thought you'd be saying that you're 100 years old. Would you? Did you?

HL: No, sir. I never dreamed. And sometimes, John, I would say, why me? But no, I didn't dream I'd be 100.

JE: You know, the fact that you're a male, you're beating the odds because in general, worldwide, more female centenarians than males, and it's due to three reasons. And we'll probably talk about that as we talk about your life. The biological differences. Lifestyle choices. And health care access.

Women are more likely to adopt healthier lifestyles and seek medical care than the men. So you've done the right thing. So then based on your family, did you have members of your family who've lived a long time?

HL: No. My brother lived to 88. And my dad lived to almost 80. But I think the reason I'm... Could reach 100. We have health care. I have excellent doctors and good health care around. So I think probably the medication that you take, I'm known for drugs, you know. And prostate and everything else, you know. So I think probably health care is one of the main reasons that I'm still here.

JE: In your long life, did you face any major... medical challenges?

HL: Not really. I've had kidney stones and the one that I had so far back is when they rip you from side to side. They don't do that anymore. They go with very tiny, two or three little holes here. But anyway, I've had kidney stones and gallbladder and cholesterol problems. And, you know, my vision, of course. And hearing. But basically, I've been pretty... Pretty good health.

JE: So you didn't have any heart issues either?

HL: Not really. You know, sometimes I get dehydrated, but that's probably my fault. It is my fault. But, you know, John, basically I think I've had pretty good health, and I don't watch it as good as I should, but I try to stay active. And so anyway, I'm just very fortunate and blessed to have the health that I do. I don't think that I did anything special, but anyway.

JE: What about lifestyle, like drinking or smoking?

HL: I smoked up to about 40 years ago. I pitched up in the Navy and smoked, and I was a moderate smoker, but I always like to say, well, I'll just leave it in the ashtray and it burns up because I'm so busy. That was just a way to excuse myself for smoking. And, of course, I finally gave it up about 40 years ago. And I drank modestly. We just don't keep it at home, but if we go out for dinner with friends, I'll have a glass of wine.

JE: So basically you didn't drink.

HL: No.

JE: Right. Were you conscious of healthy eating habits of what you ate?

HL: Yes. I was aware of it. But I didn't follow it so good, John. I'm kind of careless with that. And now that my wife cooked very good, she used to be a wonderful baker, and she could cook super good, but she's not able to do that anymore. So we snack a lot and we don't eat as healthy as we should or could maybe. But we don't drive. I haven't been able to drive because of my macular degeneration for probably seven years. And. And Deanna takes us everywhere to go to church. She just takes us everywhere. We'd be totally lost without her. Yeah. So we don't get to go to the store like we used to. I could just dash to the store and pick up anything for dinner.

JE: You mentioned Deanna, and she's with us here, Deanna Dura. You do a wonderful service to Herman, I know. Deanna tells me that your uncle would notarize birth certificates.

HL: He's worked at the courthouse in Rogers County, Cranmore, my hometown.

JE: And he notarized your birth certificate.

HL: Mm-hmm, he did.

JE: Pretty amazing. I want to get into that more. Your weight was ever an issue? You're a very slim person. Were you ever heavy at one time?

HL: After I quit smoking 40 years ago, the candy bars and food tasted so good. And so I picked up about 14 pounds. And I had to buy some new pants and so forth. But anyway, as time went on, I wore that down to where my normal weight was. And I haven't had a problem since.

JE: How tall are you?

HL: Five, three and a half.

JE: And how much do you weigh?

HL: 127.

JE: And I'm sure your doctor must be amazed when he sees you.

HL: I think they're happy to see that I make it.

JE: Right, right. And don't you exercise?

HL: I exercise at the Health Zone in St. Francis. And I haven't been able to go up there so much lately. Things have been so hectic. And the VA had a little party for me down there. And as you know, the church. And then I had two of my doctors put their staff on the telephone and sing happy birthday to me. So it's been pretty, really hectic. My kids come up. Nephews and nieces from Texas came up. But I haven't been able to work out like I usually like to do. So I'll be back starting Friday.

JE: Get everybody out of your way.

HL: Yeah.

JE: Harvard Avenue Christian Church did throw that party for you.

HL: Yes, sir.

JE: And they picked you up in a limousine and brought you in. And the big birthday cake with 100 candles. And they have a fire extinguisher nearby.

HL: And I needed it.

JE: And so your nephew came up from Mexico?

HL: Yes, sir.

JE: To see you at 9 o'clock in the morning or what?

HL: Well, he got his flights from Mexico very infrequent. So he had to fly in. Didn't get until 7:30. And then he had to leave the next morning at 5:30. So he came home and stayed for about, I would say, three hours, three and a half hours. Then he had to go back to the airport. He had to report three hours early, I understand, if you're going outside the United States.

So anyway.

JE: What's his name?

HL: Clark. Clark, he's a medical doctor. He's been retired a long time.

JE: So how old is he?

HL: 85.

JE: 85. Were you raised in the church?

HL: Not really. I went to Southern Baptist with my mom. But they were a little strict for me. You could go to a dim light dance, a rainbow dance, a school dance. And you go to church at Southern Baptist and you find out that you're a sinner. And it was totally innocent with, you know, no problem. But anyway, I kind of drifted away from Southern Baptist.

Chapter 3 – 13:10

Depression Dust Bowl

John Erling (JE): Where were you born?

Herb Lipe (HL): Claremore, Oklahoma.

JE: Let's talk about your mother and what was her name?

HL: Lucy Virginia. Lucy Virginia Sellers.

JE: And where did she grow up?

HL: She, up, it would be northeast of Claremore, and between Oologah and Claremore, got a little place called Sageeyah. And it was just a little country store and two churches and a school, grade school.

JE: What was her personality like? What was she like?

HL: She was kind of quiet and subdued. She wasn't really outgoing. But she's fine. She got along. She just wasn't a real, you know, person that was outgoing. She kind of hung back.

JE: How about your father? What was his name?

HL: His name was Clarence Clark Charlesworth Lipe, and he was the second. And people called him Jake, and his dad's name they called Jake. And I never did find out when he was alive, "why did they call your dad Jake and you Jake?" But it was a nickname. Most people did call him Jake Lipe.

JE: And what did he do for a living?

HL: Well, he had a little small grocery store in Claremore, and it's about a mile from downtown. Just a little suburban store. Not very big. And then just kind of didn't have much of a living, but it was enough to get us fed, and that was about it.

His personality? Was it?

HL: Outgoing. My dad was friendly, would talk to anyone.

JE: That's kind of like you, isn't it?

HL: Well, maybe. My dad was, he was born on Lipe Ranch, which is between Oologah and Claremore there, and he was born and raised there. And so he believed that they raised all their food. And so he believed that you have to have meat in every meal, breakfast. And that was, had a big orchard, and so they had their own. They just lived.

And then when they had to go to Claremore, they had to do it by buggy, and they had to ford the Verges River. So it had to be kind of low, and on a real rock bed where they could drive their wagons across. But anyway, dad has a great personality and friendly talking.

JE: And so I suppose your mother worked in that store too then, right?

HL: Yes, she did. Uh-huh.

JE: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

HL: I had one brother, and he was eight years older than me, and one sister that was two years younger, and they're both deceased.

JE: What do you think is your earliest memory of anything? Were you three, four years old?

HL: You know, I really don't have much memory about that. We lived in the city of Claremore, but at that time you could have cows and chickens and guineas and all that. So we had two cows, and my brother went ahead and milked them. My mother would strain the milk and bottle it in quart bottles, and we'd carry that up to my dad's store and stuff. And we'd sell it.

There was, I guess, almost no rules or regulations. And dad had an old Chevrolet, I think it was. It had wooden spokes, and when you'd drive down the street, it would go, wonk, wonk, wonk, wonk, you know? But anyway, it was transportation. It had a running board, and my dad had to put a sideboard on the running board, which he had cables in there.

And when he would go out to his—he had some acreage out near Oologah and the Lipe range, and the roads were terrible, so he'd get stuck, and he'd

use pulleys to pull his car out of the mud, and he'd go on, but that was old-timey.

JE: So you remember riding with him and all of that?

HL: Uh-huh.

JL: So did you live in Claremore, and then you had some acreage outside of Claremore?

HL: My dad did. Yeah. But no, it was just raw acreage, and it had pecan trees on it, and a small branch, but it wasn't—we didn't—there was no house on it or a building. He had an old building to put stuff in, but it was not much.

JE: Okay. What about electricity and plumbing and all that?

HL: No, none of that out there. Uh-uh. It was a way out in the country.

JE: All right, but living in Claremore, you had electricity.

HL: Oh, absolutely.

JE: Right. And plumbing and all that.

HL: Oh, yes.

JE: And you had washing machines and—yes?

HL: After a fashion, uh-huh.

JE: What does that mean, after a fashion?

HL: Well, we had to load—I had to carry the water in buckets and put it in the washing machine, and then we had two tubs. One had bluing water in it, and one had rinsing water in it. So after they come out of the washer, I had to help Mom because she just couldn't do it by herself. And she had ringers on there, and we could plug it in and do the ringers and put the washing—from the washing tub through this into the tub that was the

rinsing then, and then from the tub you take it to the bluing, which you have with your whites, you know, and it gets—it keeps them whiter. And then, of course, we used to go out and hang them on the clothesline, so.

JE: They always smelled fresh, didn't they, when you brought them in as they hung out there? So then it must have been a big thing when more modern washing machines came along. Do you remember that?

HL: Yes, and we did this on the back porch, and I had to empty those two tubs by hand. I always—you know, throw it out in the yard and water the grass. But anyway, yeah, it was much better inside, and that way everything was inside, we didn't have to drill on the back porch.

JE: When you got the new washing machine.

HL: Yes, sir. Right. Mm-hmm.

JE: And then the cars..

HL: I remember that old car Dad had.

JE: Yeah. What was it? What brand was it?

HL: I think it was a Chevrolet. I remember mostly that there was an old used one, and my dad had to use a bailing wire to go ahead and—it didn't work the handle, so he had used bailing wire to go ahead and close the door after we got in, and so it was kind of tricky, and it was transportation.

Not good, but it was certainly transportation. This was during the Depression, John, so in the early 30s, so this was not unusual. Most people were poor, and it was during the Dust Bowl and Depression years, and it was not good.

JE: Did it affect you much? You had your acreage out there where you could pretty much grow what you wanted to eat.

HL: Yeah, but Dad had this little store, and he opened it early and stayed late, so he didn't really try to work that—early on, he had a garden at home, but

it got to be where he just couldn't do both of them.

It was a time of life when there wasn't any—grown men sometimes would do 10 hours of work for 50 cents, and for a dollar, you could buy a peck sack full of groceries, nearly, and it was not good. Of course, World War II. When they started your industry, and we had Lend-Lease with Great Britain, and they started up the plants making trucks and tanks and ammunition and so forth, so it kind of brought us out of the Depression totally, and so it was not probably anything we did. It was just happening.

JE: But during the Great Depression, of course, a lot of people lost their money. They lost their fortune. So then were they able to buy groceries from your father?

HL: Well, that's what I said, the grown men would be happy to work a lot for 50 cents a day, and yeah, they could come and buy groceries, but you could buy three cans of corn, green beans for 19 cents for three cans, or something special. Bread was nine cents a loaf, and things like that.

In 1929, of course, I just have to read about this. I didn't know it, but many people, that's what they call the Black Friday, they were jumping out of buildings and all because they'd lost their total fortune just overnight, gone. And then, of course, that was the beginning of the Great Depression, and then we had the Dust Bowl on top of that, like 30..35..

JE: Well, pretty much in the 30s, right. But you probably didn't feel the effects of the Dust Bowl in Claremore.

HL: Oh, I did.

JE: Oh, you did. Tell us about that.

HL: Well, we had many times you would have to go ahead and put wet towels or wet sheets up in front of the window because the dust was just coming. You couldn't even keep it out, because those houses weren't efficient like today's, and the windows leaked and so forth. And they'd get wet, I mean, they'd get dark just from the dust that was in the air. And the Dust Bowl

was so bad in places, and it was dark, you had to turn your lights on to see, it was that thick.

JE: Could you taste it, smell it in the air?

HL: Yeah, you could. It was like sand getting in your teeth and mouth.

JE: So largely it was in the West, but as that wind blew, it did blow over here.

HL: Oh, it was Eastern Oklahoma too.

JE: Right. As long as we're going through that, we have pandemics in the past, but we just recently experienced a pandemic, COVID-19, began in 2020. Did that affect you? Did you ever get sick from it?

HL: No, but I did take the first two shots. And I'm part Indian, I'm Cherokee, and so I went to Cherokee Hospital up at Claremore, and my oldest son had to drive me, of course. And so we got our shots up there. But I never, I did take any of the booster shots. I have a little problem with that. And me and my daughter both got it.

My wife was in the hospital, and my two sons, and my daughter was there in the hospital. And so she didn't get it, and my two sons didn't get it, but my daughter and I got it. But I didn't. I hardly noticed it, maybe a little bit tired, but very little. I just almost didn't suffer from it at all.

JE: Yeah.

HL: My daughter was kind of tired for three days.

JE: Yeah. You said you were Cherokee.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: How much Cherokee?

HL: One-eighth.

JE: So that comes from your mother or father?

HL: My dad, my dad's side.

JE: So if you're an eighth, were you on the roll then, the Cherokee rolls? Well, my dad was, and of course he has a number. He was on the original Dollars Commission rolls, so he's a fourth. And my dad was on the roll, and of course I automatically get a number, and my brother and sister did too. Yeah, I don't know if I had to register or not. I think I just called Tahlequah and told them my dad's number. I knew my dad's number on the Dollars Commission rolls. And so then of course I got a number, and then I got my kids' numbers. And so I got my kids' numbers later in life, and so, yeah.

JE: So you were able to get the benefits that they provide because of that.

HL: Yes, sir. Well, I tried back in the eighties to get some benefits for my kids. Two of them went to OSU and one of them went to John Brown University in Arkansas. And there was not much benefits to be had then for students, you know. And I didn't ask, I said, "I haven't asked you nothing from me, but I have students in college, and would they be eligible for benefits?"

And so that didn't work for them, and I didn't ask for anything. But of course there was \$2,000 I think, two, three, four years ago, and they got it too, and so did I. But that's about it for me.

JE: Remind everybody as they listen that you are a hundred years old. Nobody would... Yeah. Nobody, just listening to you, could, would ever imagine that. But I'm here, and Deanna is here to verify it as well. It's been notarized.

Chapter 4 – 7:54

Ice Man

John Erling (JE): Growing up in Claremore, Will Rogers certainly had a meaning to you, and...

Herb Lipe (HL): And the Lipe Ranch, and the Dog Iron Ranch, which was Will Rogers' dad's range, they're probably ten miles apart, something like that. So Will Rogers is actually a second cousin of mine. My Uncle Clint, who was killed, a horse fell on him, herding cattle, and Will Rogers rode back to my ranch to tell my grandparents about it. And of course they had to go buy a buggy, and he was deceased when they got there.

That was Will Rogers, and of course I never knew him. And my dad used to tell us that we were related, but I don't think my dad knew that we were second cousins.

JE: So you're a second cousin. Of Will Rogers?

HL: Mm-hmm. Right. So then I understand they did the genealogy of you, and he's actually second cousin twice removed.

HL: I really don't know about that. I don't keep up with it, and it doesn't matter. He was killed in 1935, you know, in the plane crash with he and Willie Post in Point Peril, Alaska. So, you know, I was so young at 35, you know, I didn't really keep up with anything to do with Will Rogers or much of it.

JE: How did you keep things cold in your house? Did you have ice boxes, we call them?

HL: Oh, yeah. Well, yes. I need to tell you about that. Early on, we had ice boxes, and you had to have a tray in there to catch the water, because when the ice melts, you have to take and dump the water. But yeah, it worked okay, but not efficient. It just got you by, and you couldn't keep things like you do now. You had to use it up pretty fast.

JE: Well, how did you get your ice?

HL: Ice man. They used to have cards on that were about yea big, and it had 25, 50, 75, and 100. So, you put whatever you wanted at the top, like this, and you stuck it in your window, and the ice man comes by, and he'll just bring you—he had ice tongs. You pick it up like this. They were kind of big blocks of 100 pounds. You've probably never seen it, but—and they had a seam like this, so they could—and they could give you 25, 50, 75, or the

whole thing for 100.

But most households used 25 or 50 pounds, and they'd bring it in, set it in your ice box for you. They usually opened at the top and set the ice in like that, and then you had to have the pan underneath to catch the water as it melted, and then you had to be sure and dump it, or it would just run over the floor.

JE: Did you run out to the ice man's truck and hope to get pieces of ice?

HL: Yeah. See that finger right there?

JE: Yeah?

HL: Yeah. Well—

JE: You're showing me your finger, and it's curved. What happened?

HL: I twisted and turned, and it was put—this finger right here, I jumped up on it, and of course, here's the truck, and it had—for the ice man to get up in the truck—in the truck, he had a foot stool about this big that hung off some of the back of the truck, but it wasn't locked on real tight.

And so I jumped up there, and my finger got between the braces and the truck, pulled it out, and it was hanging like this, and the bone was just sticking out. And my dad had to come home from the grocery store. He had to take me to the drug—to the doctor's, and he said, that's got to come off.

And dad said, “why can't you just put it back on there and see if it'll work?” And they put all kind of medicine on it and put some kind of little rubber cover at that time on it, and sure enough, it's a stub, soda, but it works. It's pretty bad. That's what they did in those old days. They—you know, salt and soda and turpentine and—

JE: Turpentine?

HL: Wrap it up, yeah. Yeah, that's right, yeah.

JE: You talk about ice. So then when a refrigerator came to your house, that had to be a big deal then, right?

HL: Oh, yes. It was wonderful.

JE: Let's talk about your education then. You went to grade school in Claremore.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: Tell us the school and the—

HL: Well, it was—the best I remember, it seemed like the school, the grade school was Hiawatha. That was the name of it. And then they had a Claremont for junior high, and then, of course, high school. It was just plain old Claremore High School.

JE: Mm-hmm. You know, I recently interviewed Jerome Riley. Jerome Riley is a black man, and he talked about the segregation in Claremore. Your school then that you attended would have been all white. Is that true?

HL: Yes, sir. All white. Mm-hmm.

JE: Yeah.

HL: Well, John, at that time in Claremore, we—we crossed the tracks, and they had their own school. And they had a little store over there. And it wasn't a huge community, but there was, what, two or three hundred maybe? I'm not sure. But no, we were totally segregated. They didn't come to our school. They didn't come—we used to go up when—they would rent the American Legion hut there in Claremore. And, of course, they're excellent dancers, I guess. And so we'd go up, and, of course, they'd usually have the windows open, because they were just working like crazy, dancing so good and hard.

JE: Mm-hmm.

HL: And they'd look through the windows. And they were so good. But no, just—they were blacks, all blacks. And we had—when we had our school dances or things like that, it was—we were totally segregated.

JE: And then you weren't there when they were integrated, were you?

HL: No. I was already gone. Yeah.

JE: Came later. In high school, what kind of experience was that? Were you involved in functions and sports or anything?

HL: Well, I just weighed about 113 pounds, so I wasn't—and we didn't have wrestling. And, of course, too short for basketball, too small for football, and I wasn't any good in baseball. But I did work at J.C. Penney's after school. I started out at 18.5 cents an hour, which—that doesn't sound like much, but at that time you could buy a hamburger and a Coke for 15 cents.

So I always had some change in my pocket from working at Penney's. That was kind of neat, too. And the sports, I was kind of—I went to the Zip. I went to the games. I went to all the basketball games, football games, but I didn't participate. I was kind of small.

JE: Did that bother you, that you were small?

HL: At the time, I didn't really think it was a problem, but—and later, to dating girls and all, it was a problem, because the girls were all taller than me, for the most part.

JE: What about your parents and siblings? Were they the same height, or what?

HL: My sister was a little bit shorter than me. My brother was about two inches—two or three inches taller than me. Mom was probably five foot. My dad was probably five, six, seven, maybe. And yeah, I didn't have much height in my family.

JE: So would girls turn you down because you were shorter than them?

HL: Well, for the dances and stuff. Besides, they liked the handsome guys that were playing football, basketball, baseball. I could date, but I mean, my selection wasn't probably as good as the handsome football player.

Chapter 5 – 5:56

Navy

John Erling (JE): What year did you graduate from Claremore High School?

Herb Lipe (HL): '43.

JE: 1943. So then what do you do?

HL: Went directly in the Navy.

JE: Okay, because World War II was on.

HL: Yes, sir.

JE: And there was a draft.

HL: When you got to be 18, or before you were 18, you had to sign that you would be eligible for the draft. And so I knew that when I graduated from high school that I was going to be drafted like everybody else because we were really needing people bad, especially in the Pacific. And the Japanese had moved pretty much down the peninsulas, and I went from Singapore on down to, well, New Guinea is where my first ship was.

That's where I went first. I went to... And signed to go into voluntary induction. And so every time they would check me for ears, eyes, nose, throat, whatever, I said, "man, I really like the Navy. I really want to..." So I got the Navy. And whether that had anything to do with it, I really don't know.

But then I went through boot camp and gunnery school in San Diego, and they shipped me to San Francisco for my home port, which was Treasure

Island. And that was my home port, and that's where I was shipped out of. And you get on a sea draft, and then you go on the first ship I was on. We set out from San Francisco after dark, and you had to put out blackout curtains. And also, thanks for the porthole, where light couldn't escape.

Because at sea, you can see a light match about 12 miles, almost to the horizon. I'd never been to sea before except that little bit out of San Diego. There was no gunboat from World War I. Just to give you a little... I had a little bit of experience there about the sea. So I was sick for three nights, and we had to put out after dark for three nights. In two days, I was sick as a dog until we got near the equator, and then it was just as flat as this table.

So I never got seasick again. Of course, you have to tend your watch, and I was on this awful 12 to 4. And so at 12 midnight to 4 in the morning, and then they wake you up again. You lay down for a few minutes. They wake you up for general quarters. Because that's when torpedoes are usually hit on ships, was at dusk and dawn. And so we'd have until we got permission to go ahead and secure our stations, and we could go back.

Then it's time to go eat breakfast. Stations that I had at that time, but everybody had the same problem, and they had different times to be serving. I was on the aft deck. And I was on the aft deck. And that's just where it was, and then we went to Brisbane, Australia. And we had to wait there a little bit for a convoy to form because the Japanese were real close to Guadalcanal and New Guinea.

We went to New Guinea, but it was probably 200 or 300 miles to Guadalcanal. So things were pretty tight and pretty hot at that time, so we had to be convoyed up. Destroyers took us to New Guinea. Just a sign of the times. That was 1943, late 1943, and then early 1944.

JE: So did your ship take any hits that was in—

HL: No. Fortunately, I was never in any war zone, or not war zone. I was never in any naval battles, and that didn't—that's fine with me.

JE: Right. So, of course, Pearl Harbor, the Japanese came into World War II, December 7, 1941. You would have been about 17 years old.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: Do you remember that day?

HL: Not really so much. I never heard of Pearl Harbor. I mean, I was just a kid. Like I said, go to all the football games and basketball games, and work a little bit of pennies. You know, it didn't mean much to me at that time, but as time went on, it certainly did. You know, of course, I had a lot of friends that went—in Climber, Oklahoma, we have a football field named Lantow Field. And Norman was—

Norman Lantow was one grade behind me, and his brother was about two or three grades behind me. So they were older than me, but both of them were lost in Normandy. They weren't in the Pacific. They were in the European theater. We have Lantow Field named after the two Lantow boys that were killed.

JE: Say that last name again.

HL: Lantow.

JE: Lantow.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: Right. So you were in for 43 and 44.

HL: Mm-hmm. Got out in—well, actually, it was at 46, because I was in Anuitoc, which is just short of Guam, in the far Pacific, Western Pacific. And at that time, as you probably know, you had to have points. And some of those guys had been in for 44 months, you know. So, of course, they had enough points to go for me.

So I had to wait, and I got a ride back to the States on the destroyer. They

were just taking Marines, Army, Navy, anyone that had the points system enough that could get back to the States. So I got back in December of 45.

JE: Of 45.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: Because the war actually—the VE Day, victory over Europe, was May 8, 1945.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: That victory, that's when the Germans surrendered.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: And then the Japanese surrendered later.

HL: In August.

JE: Yeah, in that same year. How many years? Two, three? Two and a half years?

HL: I was there 33 months.

Chapter 6 – 6:53

Glenn Miller

John Erling (JE): The music you may have remembered back in the 20s and 30s. Talk about that. Was that important to you? Did you like to listen to music?

Herb Lipe (HL): Not the 20s, but the 30s, late 30s, of course, I was getting into the big band sound. And then, of course, when I was in high school, it was all big band. Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and those big bands. And that was the thing at the time, the big band.

Now, before that, during my brother's time, they were sort of like Guy Lombardo. I think Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians, I think is what they called it. But it was a little bit different sound. And then they had the big band in my time, which I enjoyed.

JE: Did they have a dance pavilion in Claremore? Or did any big bands, famous ones, ever come and play in Claremore?

HL: No, no, too small.

JE: Did you ever make trips to Tulsa to see things?

HL: Yes, yes. That's what you had. I saw Glenn Miller in Tulsa. That's when they had a place out there in West Tulsa. It's Crystal City. But there used to be an amusement park with a big old bandstand. That's where Glenn Miller played. And it was just a one-night stand, and he was gone. But it was fabulous.

It was for a high school kid to get to go watch. You know, stand in front of the bandstand and watch them. And they'd just blow you away, because they had so many. About 16 in the band. And the big bands like Glenn Miller. It was just... And that's the only big band I saw.

JE: Yeah. How about radio? Did you listen to the radio a lot?

HL: Yeah, quite a bit. When Glenn Miller was on... When I worked at Penny's, they closed at 5:30. And I lived about a mile. And Glenn Miller came downtown to my house. And Glenn Miller came on at 5:45 for Chesterfield. And so he was on just for 15 minutes. So if I could cut through football fields to run home, I could almost get home in time to hear Glenn Miller and 15 minutes of his music. But, yeah, that was kind of dumb. But I really enjoyed Glenn Miller best of all. More than Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey and Jimmy Dorsey. I liked him best.

JE: Did you have a record player by his records?

HL: Somewhat. I didn't have a lot of pocket money. So I listened to mostly music on the radio. That's the reason I would run home to hear that sound. That Chesterfield program for 15 minutes.

JE: How about radio programs like Amos & Andy? Or Fred McGee & Molly? Did you listen?

HL: Sure. We used to listen to those at night. Yeah.

JE: Do you remember listening to Joe Lewis boxing matches?

HL: Joe Lewis and Jimmy Braddock. Jimmy Braddock was in there. Max Baer was in there. But Joe Lewis had the title for the longest period. And then he went in the Army too in 1942 or so.

JE: But you remember listening to his boxing matches?

HL: Yes, I do. Oh, big time. Everybody would gather together to listen to the prize fights, especially heavyweight.

JE: Franklin Delano Roosevelt. You've probably heard him and his fireside chats.

HL: Yes. And especially after Pearl Harbor. I had never heard the word before, at least it didn't register to me, when he got on the radio and talked about the dastardly attack, the sneak attack with the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. And of course I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was either. But, oh yeah, I remember that.

JE: He had such a great manner of speaking, didn't he, Franklin Roosevelt?

HL: He did. And he didn't like for people to know that he was handicapped, or he had polio, you know. And he had to be helped to the stand. And he would just stand up there like he was normal. But he had to use a wheelchair. And he's a little dog fella. It was the sign of the times.

And he was then, he was already elected, I think, for the fourth time. And

as you know, we can only be elected twice now. But he didn't get to serve any time because he died in Warren Springs, Georgia.

JE: Were your parents politically involved? So like FDR, did they like him? He was a Democrat or, you know, Republican?

HL: Well, my dad was Democrat. My mom was a Republican. He was like all presidents. He was if and, you know, a little bit pro, a little bit con. Looking back on it, I probably have some qualms with that, with him. But he served in a time that was a very difficult time. And he did some good things, like he did the Lend-Lease Program with Britain in 1939. They were being attacked by Hitler.

All of Europe was, and especially Great Britain. And Great Britain was, you know, across the Channel. So Hitler decided he was going to go ahead and attack. You know, Great Britain. So he was taking an awful beating in the air because they had the Spitfire, a most wonderful fighter plane. And they were shooting down a lot of the bombers that Hitler was sending over.

So Hitler couldn't really, finally though, he caught up the invasion of Great Britain. And it was a good thing because the Brits had been making Spitfire planes as fast as they could. They were losing too, as well as the Germans. But they were shooting down the German planes like crazy. And so they called it the Battle of Britain, I believe.

Hitler called it off then, and they did try to invade across the Channel. And it's probably good they didn't. But the Brits were running out of Spitfire planes too to fight them. Also part of history, yeah.

JE: Yes, and you've got such a great memory to remember all that. Do you remember when television came to your home or into your community?

HL: Well, the first time I remember, I was in Memphis, Tennessee, say, in 1947, in Southern College of Optometry. And the first time I ever saw one, it was in a drugstore window, and there was a whole bunch of us standing, probably about that big.

We were all looking through the window thinking, "I can't believe that."

And it was a program, maybe a radio program we'd heard on the radio. There was life. And, of course, they just get bigger and bigger and bigger.

JE: Do you remember what year that was about?

HL: 47, 48. I'm not sure.

JE: So after high school, then you went into the military that you talked about, into the Navy.

Chapter 7 – 8:08 Mathematics

John Erling (JE): When you came out of the Navy, what did you do then?

Herb Lipe (HL): When I came out of the Navy, they had a program where all the veterans could go ahead.

JE: The GI Bill?

HL: Well, yeah, a little bit before that, you could get paid for doing nothing. And so I think you had to go to the courthouse and register. But for a few weeks or months, you got a check. And so I partied a lot, drank a lot. We had a big dance place over at Pryor, which is 18 miles away from Claremore. And, oh, yeah, and finally, after about three months, I said, "this is not for me."

You know, I drank all I want to. And I partied as much as I want to. And my brother was working over at Spartan Aircraft, which at this time, they were making trailers after the war was over. No need to do war stuff. They were making trailers, house trailers. My brother worked over there, and he said they were hiring. I said, okay. So I went over and hired until I could get in high school. I'll tell you about that in a minute.

So I worked over there for about three months or so at Spartan Aircraft. And then when school started, high school, I meant to tell you, when I

went and got registered down to Southern College of Optometry, I got a letter from the dean and said, "after looking at your transcripts," and they were terrible, "we suggest you go to a junior college before you ever get here." And so I didn't think I had the money to do that.

I had used up all the money I had in there to partying and playing, even though I got to save some of the money from working at Spartan. So anyway, I go down to high school, and that's where I graduated, of course. And I asked them, I said, "would you allow me to come in and sit in Algebra II and Physics II and Geometry II?"

And they allowed me to do that. And so I got to go down to high school and sit through those classes.

JE: Because you hadn't taken them in high school.

HL: No, I hadn't taken them. And also, I needed the extra math. I needed the heavy physics, geometry, and algebra. I needed all that. So they let me do it. And thank God they did, because I had to sit down and learn how to study. I'd been too much playing and working after school at Penny's. And I was really a poor student. I was very ill-prepared.

So that three months gave me enough time to go ahead and learn how to study and also to learn, "if I put enough time in on this, I can get this. But it doesn't come easy." And so when I got in college, so many of the guys had been pilots and stuff like that in college. And they were much more advanced than me. And so I had to put in a lot more time studying and being prepared. I never flunked a course in college.

I never made the honor roll either.

JE: Okay. What college did you go to?

HL: Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tennessee.

JE: Okay. But I just want to, again, once you came out of the military, they actually gave you checks to live on for— How long would they allow that to go on?

HL: Just several months.

JE: Because they knew that you'd be grounded, be on the ground. You had nothing going for you yet. They just wanted to help you out with those checks.

HL: Yeah, pretty much. Unless you could get transposed. So it was from military to civilian life and then kind of get yourself prepared a little bit. And then most of the GIs at this time, John, that come by, regardless of the service you were in, Navy, Army, Marines, whatever, they'd come back and all they really wanted to do is get a good job or go to college for the most part.

And some of them wanted to get married and have families. But it was a totally different time. And the veterans, they were so totally different at this time because they weren't interested in really politics much, but they always believed in their country and the flag and the military. And so it was a different time, different thinking than today.

You kind of wonder sometimes about the young people today if they're even concerned about their country, if they can lose it. And here we are in a position where we're not well thought of around the world. And locally we've got the border situation. We've got inflation like crazy. We're not drilling and using. I don't know if you remember this. I bet you do. You were in the radio, Freeza Yankee.

JE: Yes, I played that on the radio.

HL: I bet you did.

JE: Yes.

HL: Anyway, but here we have to have fuel. And to do that, up north is even worse. Because they have their severe winters. But they need coal. They need fuel, whether it's natural gas, compressed natural gas or natural gas, or just go ahead and any kind of fossil fuels. But the fact that this administration is trying to make the green effect, and I'm for a green effect

as we can afford to do it because to produce electricity with fuel, I mean with the sun and wind, it's too expensive.

And they're subsidizing all these big wind farms and they're subsidizing also these big old farms where they're capturing the sun. Those all have to be made in China too, by the way. We've got problems and I hope my young people, including my own children, they're in their late 30s, I mean late 50s. I don't think they quite understand that they're going to have to get involved to save America.

Anyway, I'm sorry to kick that out there, but that's just me thinking.

JE: I'm so in awe at the fact that you keep up with what's going on in the world today. But patriotism, did you think it was different today than it was back then?

HL: Oh, absolutely.

JE: In the 40s and 50s, patriotism?

HL: Yes. John, during World War II, when I graduated in 43, I mean, I had a friend, and his name was Ig Boone in Cranmore. He must have had some kind of a foul problem with his heart. He tried to volunteer for everything, and of course they wouldn't take him, until the very end of the war. But everybody wanted to be involved, the people that worked in the factories and the people at home.

That's where so many of the women started working, in factories. It was totally different. Everybody wanted to help. We wanted to beat, and we did beat. We beat the Japanese.

JE: There was rationing.

HL: Oh, absolutely. Sugar, shoes, the things that were real short and hard, like sugar and stuff like that. We had so many. We wound up, I think, with about 14 million. People in uniform by the end of the war. And so we needed a lot of production just to go to the military. So yeah, they had shoes that were rationed. You could buy maybe one pair a year. And sugar,

I don't remember how they rationed that. Coffee and things like that. I didn't write coffee then, but...

JE: Nylons, I think, women's nylons?

HL: That went out. Yeah. They couldn't have them anymore.

Chapter 8 – 7:00

Newspaper Ad

John Erling (JE): The technology of today, when computers came along, did you start using computers?

Herb Lipe (HL): I really didn't. I had them for the office. But I always regret that I didn't have them sit down with me for maybe 20 or 30 minutes every week or two and teach me more about this. Because in college, I didn't have a typewriter. I couldn't afford one or couldn't get one. So I never kept up with my typing just one year in high school.

I didn't keep up with it. But in my office, I always had computers. But the girls were so fast and so good, they could do it twice as good. And I felt like I'm more capable of doing what I was trained to do. And that's checking eyes and things of that nature. So I didn't... I didn't really keep up with it. And I'm sorry I didn't.

JE: You wanted to go to optometry school. Where does that come from? Why?

HL: Well, okay. Actually, the war was over. And we were in Anahui Chalk, which, like I said, is short of Guam, in the Philippines, way out in the Western Pacific. And it's past the international date line. You could... They had these LCIs that would come out in the bay. We were anchored out in the bay.

We had already secured all the guns and put cosmoline grease. That's heavy grease. Cosmoline grease on them. And made tarpaulins out of canvas to cover them, to keep them from getting rusty. Took all the ammunition and took it out and dropped it in the middle of the bay. And so

we were secured.

So we didn't have much to do except gangplank watch every other day for four hours. And so we could go ahead and wait for these LCIs to pick us out once a day and then take us into the shore. And we could go through a constant hunt there. There was a Red Cross. And we could pick up an... I could. I guess other people did too. I'd pick up an armload of newspapers and take them back to ship with me because we had so little to do.

And I'd read these newspapers. And I ran across an optometric college in Chicago, I think it was, Illinois. And I thought, that would be nice. So I wrote a letter to my mother. And I said, "call Dr. Bishop and ask him if he might help me see about getting into college." I didn't even know where they were. And Southern College Optometry in Memphis was the only one in the whole South. There wasn't any in Birmingham, like there is now, Houston, two in Florida. They're all over the place.

He didn't respond. He didn't help me. I still kept the thought in mind that... By the way, my mom wrote me a letter and said, "what are you going to do after the war is over?" And in effect, she said, "you don't know nothing." I said, "what are you going to do with your life?" That's what I did. It was that old newspaper I got a hold of that gave me a thought. And I thought, I think that's what I'd like to do.

JE: You saw the ad?

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: And it just thought...

HL: It had something to do with optometric college.

JE: Right. Because you had never thought about what you were going to do before that. But that turned on, the brain turned on to that.

HL: Yes, uh-huh.

JE: But you needed to go to college before optometry school?

HL: No.

JE: Oh, okay. All right.

HL: Yes. And the students today can't believe it. And they said, "what?" And at the time, you could just... You could just go for four years of optometric college. But now you have to have a bachelor's, then you go to Memphis. Or you can go to Houston. You can go to Tahlequah. And you go for three years. So it's seven years now.

JE: So then you went to... The name of that school again? Optometry school?

HL: Southern College of Optometry in Memphis.

JE: You went there?

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: And did you take to it right away? You thought, this is really what I want to do?

HL: No. No, I was desperate. I thought, I don't want my dad at that little store. I wouldn't want to support him and mom. And I darn sure didn't want to go back to Penny's, even though I worked there. And it was fine. I had cop, you know, pocket change all the time and didn't have to ask my dad for much money for help. And then in 1942, between my junior and senior year, we had the Oklahoma ordinance worked over at Choteau, Oklahoma, Choteau-Pryor. And so they were hiring. And I had a chance to go to work, and I did work for the summer of '42. And I was making 60 cents an hour, and I thought I was rich.

JE: Working what? Doing what?

HL: I was in the shoe department. Everybody had to wear safety shoes if you worked there in the powder plant or if you worked in... There were two different sections, powder plant and another section of the huge operation over at Choteau.

JE: Tell me what the huge operation was. What was it?

HL: Mostly making powder. DuPont. They were probably making other emanations too, but black powder for one of them.

JE: And what was that used for?

HL: For shells. I worked there until school started, and I had to quit.

JE: Right. So then back to when you were actually doing the studying for optometry, you said you felt desperate because you didn't want to go back. And you thought, "no, I've got to study this. I've got to learn this if I want to come out of not working for J.C. Penney."

HL: Right.

JE: And so did the study come easy for you? Did you enjoy it?

HL: Well, it wasn't easy, but the thing that was nice about it with John was I knew also that I wasn't dumb, but you had to put your time in. So if you study hard enough on whatever subject, and certainly some of the subjects were more difficult than others, but I had to put my time in.

And every student has to do that probably, but some people are more adept at studies and retention than me. So I had to put my time in. But I had put enough time in to always pass. I never made the honor roll, like I said, but I never flunked. And so I just had to work harder than a lot of students that were more gifted than me.

It worked out okay, but yeah, it was my fault that I was so far behind. I had no one to thank but myself. My mom and dad used to tell me, "you need to study now. You need to study. And you'll be sorry." And I was, but I didn't listen very well.

Chapter 9 – 2:33
Optometrist

John Erling (JE): But you overcame that, and you studied. And then when did you graduate?

Herb Lipe (HL): I graduated in 1950.

JE: So that's after four years. All right. Well, then you're thinking, "what am I going to do with this knowledge? Where am I going to go?"

HL: Well, I come back to Oklahoma, and then before I graduated down there, I had to go ahead and take a comprehensive exam and to qualify me to graduate from Optometry college. And then I had to come back to Oklahoma.

And then study for a state board and to be able to take the state board and pass it. And then I went to Drumline. I did pass it. I went to Drumline for a few years. And Drumline was an old drying up oil production town. They had huge production there back through the years, but they lost their refinery. Tidewater. And they lost their refinery.

And so things were going downhill a bit. So I moved to Tulsa and been here since 19, about seven years. 1975, I've been in Tulsa.

JE: Did you start your practice here? Your own practice you started?

HL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, solo.

JE: Where was your office?

HL: Well, it was in the west side. And my office was for several years in Crystal City. And then I bought a place up on South 33rd and was there for several years. And then I moved to the shopping center, Chevy Chase, I guess it is. And then I was there for about a couple of years, a year or two. Then I moved down to London South, which is just at 5909 South Lewis.

JE: In calling you an eye doctor, what type are we talking about?

HL: John, there's two types. And of course, the ophthalmologist is the surgeon. He does surgery and all kinds of treatments and so forth. The optometrist. The optometrist does most everything else. And then many times, they will go ahead and pick up something and refer it to an ophthalmologist who has to do that if it's surgery, like glaucoma and like, you know, get your cataracts.

There's other type of blepharitis and things that has to be done by an ophthalmologist. Yeah, ophthalmology and optometric.

JE: So you then were...

HL: I was an optometric.

JE: Or optometrist.

HL: Yes, sir. Right.

JE: Right, right.

Chapter 10 – 9:30 Morality

John Erling (JE): Then we need to go back and talk to you about, you met somebody special along the way, somebody very special to you that lives with you today, and what is her name?

Herb Lipe (HL): Donna. Donna. Mary Donna.

JE: Mary Donna?

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: You have a nickname for her?

HL: Dewana.

JE: Dewana.

HL: Yeah.

JE: Dewana.

JE: So tell me how you two met.

HL: Well, I had this tall friend. I was single, and I used what they called the Hangover Square. It was a big complex like this. And one of the girls that lived there, a young lady that lived there, was named Joanne, and so she had a friend named Joanne. We had a pool out in the middle of the complex, and so I had met both of them out there. And so Joanne and Donna worked together, and she was about six.

She wasn't quite six, but she was maybe 5'10", a lot taller than me. But we'd go to have coffee together, and she said, "I have a friend I want you to meet." So she told Donna, she said, "I've got this friend, and he's about, you're big, and he's about as honored as you are, and I want you to meet him." And so that's how I met Donna.

We dated for about two years and then got married.

JE: In what year did you get married?

HL: 1964, I believe it was.

JE: And so now, as you said earlier, you've been 60 years married. How many children did you have?

HL: We have two boys and one daughter.

JE: And what are their names?

HL: Alan is the oldest, and then Laurie is my daughter. She's in the middle there. And then Jeff, my youngest son.

JE: And how many grandchildren do you have?

HL: I have three. Two sons. Two grandsons and one granddaughter.

JE: And what do they do?

HL: Well, my oldest grandson is in Columbia University in New York, and my other son is in Dallas, Texas. And so he's with a big company down there. And then my daughter, of course, is married to Rob Glass. He's the head strength and conditioning coach at Oklahoma State University. And so my daughter and him are just very involved with everything, certainly the university.

And then she sells cabbie clothes, and she's just busy. They're all busy. All my kids are busy.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Grateful for that, I'm sure.

HL: Oh, you bet.

JE: Family gatherings. What was your favorite holiday?

HL: Well, Thanksgiving is the one that seems to be the most productive for me. All my kids and all my grandkids, except one, got there. And so Thanksgiving is a beautiful time of the year. And also, I could get nearly all of my family, my children, grandchildren, there. And certainly my wife, Donna, or Dewana.

JE: Dewana. Yeah. Did you and Dewana do much traveling in your life?

HL: Oh, yeah. And when you're in optometry, and it is, I'm sure this was in all the, the, the fields, dentistry. And we had to have seminars. And of course, we had seminars in Mexico. We had seminars on, on ships going to Alaska on cruises. And in the Caribbean, we had, and then of course, you go to Atlanta, and you go to New York City.

And they tried to make it real interesting to keep up with your education. You had to get 25 hours of education a year. And you had to get certified in a CPR. It's a Red Cross. Yeah, we stayed busy.

JE: This is about morality. Do you think it's different today than it was back 40s, 50s, do you think, as a nation? Talk to me about that.

HL: Yes. Well, you know, it was, you were very cautious with your language. And they don't do that anymore. You can see, you can hear anything and everything on TV. And the radio sometimes, too. But nevertheless, it didn't used to be that way. You didn't talk like that around women.

And ladies have a special place. And you didn't use foul language like that unless you wanted to join the Navy. And you could hear it all the time. But basically, it was a little different. And they just forgive a lot of things that weren't allowed then. It just wouldn't be. Yeah, the morality is totally different, I think, in my opinion.

JE: It's good for you to say that because we've gotten so used to drifting to where we are that we have to stop and think of the way it was. So I'm glad I asked you that question. Do you have concerns about our country as we are moving on? We, democracy, we're talking a lot about democracy these days because of the elections and all. What are your thoughts about that?

HL: Well, John, if you just, and I know you probably study this better than me, but our forefathers said that, you know, the Bill of Rights up and all the other stuff that would be so good for us to live by and go by, whether you're Republican, Democrat, Independent, and it wouldn't matter. But you didn't just try to do your best to hurt America.

And you didn't try to keep feeding the, the, the difference between the blacks and the whites and the Latinos and the Latins. You just, you didn't, they didn't mean for that to happen. They didn't mean for that to be a problem. In other words, sure, you can be a little bit biased, we all are. And even in my altimetric field, I had bias. There was a lot of guys that I'd say, "oh, yeah, hi, how you doing?" But I didn't want to hang around them. And so that means I'm prejudiced to some degree. That's that.

But they've just, they're fanning the breeze or fanning the flames all the time, it seems like, to make it worse, a division between the races in America. And our forefathers wouldn't have liked that. And it wasn't meant to set up the way they set it up, the Bill of Rights. And the other things that we have on paper that, you know, shouldn't be, isn't meant to be. And I think that's what we're trying to do.

JE: Some of your, some of your proudest accomplishments, what would you say?

HL: Well, I'm very proud of my family, my three children. And my wife is not Indian, and of course, I'm, like I told you, an eighth Cherokee. And she said, "I wish I was Indian," and I said, well, you had three little Indians, so anyway.

Yeah. And the fact that I have my wife and my children and my grandchildren, that's, you know, I'm that's probably my greatest accomplishment, but it was nice to be serving in my country. It was nice to go to college and graduate, it was nice to be in practice for so many years without a problem with, you know, my health and everything.

Nothing kept me from going to work. And so I've just been so fortunate in, I believe in my country, I believe in the flag, I believe in the military. And I would wish for America to be more like it was when I was growing up than it is today. And I'm so concerned that my young people aren't sincere enough to think that they could lose their country and to go into maybe socialism first, and then socialism to me is a gateway to communism.

And you're losing a little bit of your freedom as time wears away, and it seems so slight at the time, but when you add it up through the years, there's a lot.

JE: Yeah. I think you've already alluded to this, things you wish you had done differently in your life and was probably studying back then. Anything else that you had any regrets?

HL: That's the main thing. I regret that I wasn't a better student. I love history, I just love it. But I didn't care much for it in school, and I think that

sometimes your instructors and your teachers sometimes tell more about dates and dates and dates and dates if they just tell you a bit more about the geography and maybe what the people were thinking at the time this happened or this happened. History can be so interesting.

Wish I could've have been a better student and things like that. And there's other things. I can't... I can't pull up anything right now, but...

Chapter 11 – 14:00

Teamwork

John Erling (JE): How do you think you have changed? Here you are 100. Since even you were 60 years old or 70, that you have changed maybe the way you think, maybe sensitivities and all. Did that change for you over the years?

Herb Lipe (HL): Maybe not much. I've got a hard head, John. So I haven't changed much. I would like to believe that I think that you need to do right, and you hope that people will treat you right, and you should treat them right. And I just think basically it's kind of like that. You should be kind and considerate of your fellow man, and you hope that they'll be the same to you.

JE: Okay. Did you think you... Did you always think that way, even when you were 30 years old?

HL: Probably I didn't give it that much thought at the time. No. I probably didn't think that way. I mean, not that I didn't think that way, I just... I was busy. I was single in my early 30s, and so I wasn't really that...

JE: And see, that's the advantage of being able to live a longer life, is that you got to be more sensitive.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: And maybe more willing to help people as you grew older.

HL: Yes. And you're more aware of it, too. Yeah. But you're also more aware, whereas you used to think you're busy running here and there doing different things, so you didn't really spend that much time thinking about it. And yeah, I think that's probably true.

JE: So how do you occupy your time these days?

HL: Well, of course, my wife, Duana, that is. And I also call her Donna Marie. Yeah. But she has to use the walker, and she's not able to do so many things. I kind of keep the house going, you know, and help her.

JE: How old is Duana?

HL: She's 10 years younger than me, so she's 90. She will be 90 next month.

JE: Just think how fortunate that the two of you... Yeah. ...are still alive at this age.

HL: Mm-hmm.

JE: And she's 90. She's a young chick.

HL: Yeah. I like to tell this, too. When people ask me, you know, I say, well, we make it work. We're sort of like "teamwork." I said, "I can't see the TV." And I said "okay, what does that say?" And she'll read it to me, what's on TV, the screen, you know, even though I got a big one. And she'll read it to me, and then so then I can just jump up since I'm still, you know, mobile.

I can still jump up and go get her a glass of tea. So I said, we have a teamwork. We make it work.

JE: Okay. You've made references to your eyes right now. What is it you have with your eyes?

HL: Macular degeneration.

JE: Right. And how much can you see?

HL: Oh, I'm probably down to big letters like this. I have to... I have an electronic magnifier at home. It's got a screen about this big. And so I can put this thing under there, and I can dial it up big enough to read it. But if it wasn't for that, I can't see anything. I couldn't see any of that stuff. None. Absolutely none.

JE: You have... We're sitting across the table here. You can see me full.

HL: Uh-huh. I can see you full. Right. But I can't see facial features and things. And I can see this mic here, and I can see this bottle of water. This is a beautiful thing. I don't know what it is. It's pretty. But anyway, but I don't see details, and I just can't read.

JE: Yeah. Isn't it interesting that you, an eye doctor, would come with this?

HL: There's two kinds, John, in macular degeneration. They have the dry kind and the wet kind. And the wet kind, sometimes they can go ahead and give you shots of Avastin into the globe itself. And I've taken many, many shots like that. But you have 10 retinal layers, histological layers in the retina back here.

And so when you have leakage back there, whether it might be blood or just body fluid, it shouldn't be there. Because it makes your retina pucker. And then, of course, you have distorted vision. So they have two kinds. The dry kind can do nothing, absolutely nothing. And if they can get this fluid leakage back into the retinal layers early enough, they can give you a shot of Avastin into your globe there and keep it dried up.

But anyway, I hope to heck someday they will come out with an answer. I don't know. I'm not sure for it. But they don't have it yet, not for the dry kind.

JE: In your practice, you must have been dealing with people who were going blind, maybe. And then they eventually went blind. It had to be tough to be with somebody who was gradually losing their eyesight.

HL: And usually with optometric field, if we're not surgeons, so usually if you pick it up, you would go ahead and refer those people out to an ophthalmologist, and then they got under their care. It was heartbreaking to see those people like that.

And now, for me, and of course this has been getting worse and worse, and probably I'm stable now, probably won't get any worse. I'm as bad as I need to be. But I still get around the house. I know where all the plugs are and all the light switches. I know where they are. I know where the carpet ends and the tile begins.

So I'm not stumbling around, that I don't know where things are. But when I'm out Deanna, we're giving her new places to go, and I don't see the curbs and the rough places. I have to sometimes be really careful that I don't fall, because I know that at my age, I wouldn't heal well with bone structure being broken.

JE: Right. And so, I hear from people much younger than you who have knee replacements, they have hip problems. You never had any of that?

HL: No. No hip problems and no replacement for knees. All original parts.

JE: Yeah. You have all original parts.

HL: Uh-huh. Isn't that fortunate? My gosh.

JE: Oh my.

HL: Because, John, I do say this sometimes to myself, why me? God. I mean, you know. I haven't lost my brother at 88, my sister, she had a cerebral hemorrhage that was probably caused by her husband. That's a totally different story. But nevertheless, she died at 48. But anyway, it's not in my family line to live like this long. And I do attribute a lot to the good healthcare you get today that they didn't used to have.

JE: So, when you were 75 and somebody said you're going to live to be 100, I mean, you probably say, I don't feel 100. Do you feel 100 years old?

HL: To a degree, but not so much. I'm still pretty mobile and I can get around almost everything and I can reach and stoop and bend and all that. But I know that I'm limited and I have to make room to be that. And there's things that I don't dare do. And sometimes I have to back up against the wall to be sure and just be steady myself.

And I also catch a hold of the desk and walk with it sometimes. And I didn't used to ever have to do that. I could stand for an hour by myself. I had to... I sat down more than I used to. But yeah, I'm limited to some degree. But basically, I do most everything. Yeah.

JE: So you've accepted all this.

HL: Yes.

JE: You're not fighting it. You're just accepting it. This is the way it is.

HL: No. I'm just living with it. And thank you, God, I can still do what I can do and I can still manage for me and Donna. So anyway, yeah.

JE: You know, I think another thing is attitude. You seem, as I talked to you here for an hour and a half or so, that you have such a positive attitude and that has to go a long way as well. And so people will say that you don't say anything negative about anybody. Have you worked on that? Is that natural for you to be a positive outlook person?

HL: Well, not so much, John. I just feel like that most people are nice. And I think with most people, if you're nice to them, they'll be nice to you. That isn't always true, but it's mostly true. I think, that most people are good and some are more giving than others and some are more kind than others.

But basically, I think if you treat people okay, they'll treat you okay. So I guess that's kind of forever with me.

JE: You said earlier that you were hard-headed. Are you bull-headed, hard-headed? What are you?

HL: Well... My wife is so much sweeter than me and she's nice and soft-spoken and she puts up with me. And so anyway, yeah. I... I just got a hard head. You've got to prove it to me and maybe that's kind of a bad point, but I accused my daughter. I said, "well, you've got some of my, a lot of my traits, some good, some bad. You need to get rid of the bad and try to use the good, you know."

JE: So would you say you're opinionated?

HL: Yes.

JE: Does that ever get you into trouble?

HL: Well, you try not to get too involved with politics because I think I'm right and of course they think they're right. So we don't... I don't want to pound on it because I don't think you can change them. They're probably not going to change me. And I can listen and there are some times I have to alter the way I might think. But basically I pretty much stick with what I think, but I can certainly change a degree and if people can show me. And I think that's... And sometimes they do and that's fine.

JE: And we don't need to get into this, but as background because people will listen back to this years from now, we are in 2024 and we have a major presidential election coming up in November, which is driving the thoughts of a lot of people and probably what you just alluded to there, opinions about politics and so forth.

HL: Uh-huh.

JE: Which we don't need to get into, unless you want to, but it is a major pivotal point probably in our country, this election.

HL: Well, John, here's the way I feel about it. Like I said, I'm a registered Democrat, my wife is a registered Republican, and I just think that we just need to be kind of aware of our nation and where we are today. I have a problem with people that might want to harm our country or do things that's bad for America because I grew up in a wonderful time when America was still as it was meant to be, I think, by the original Congress.

I think it's changed a bit and I have a problem with that. I can't do anything about it, but I wish even my own children were more aware of the problems that we have today. And that we need to be aware to try to save America.

JE: I'll bet you voted in every election you could ever vote in.

HL: Ever since I got out of the Navy.

JE: Yeah.

HL: Uh-huh.

JE: Because you thought the right to vote was so important.

HL: That's what we fought for and that's what America should believe in. They have a right to vote too, but it's not free. You got to keep it up. You got to keep going with it. Yeah.

JE: You have shared many interesting details today, so your memory at 100, how would you describe your memory?

HL: Well, I don't really have an answer for that, John. This is something you might or might not know. At the time, Coca-Cola had about a 6.7 or 6.9 ounce Coca-Cola. Well, here comes Pepsi-Cola and they had 12 ounces. So they had this little ditty on the radio and that Pepsi-Cola hits the spot and 12 full ounces, that's a lot.

Twice as much for a nickel too. Pepsi-Cola is the drink for you.

JE: That's great. That's so cute.

HL: Yeah. And of course, it was twice as big as a Coca-Cola and a little bit different taste, but and then they had another brand, Royal Crown-Cola, they called it RC-Cola. It was also big. It was never on the market. So some probably Coke or Dr. Pepper or Pepsi or someone bought them out

probably you never see them anymore. Yeah, there was a little ditty that was, I always remembered it.

Chapter 12 – 3:00

Will Keep on Going

John Erling (JE): So the oldest person known living in Oklahoma is Fannie Jones, 110 years old, and the oldest known male in Oklahoma, Albert Lum, 105 years old. So, Herb, what are your thoughts about challenging those ages?

Herb Lipe (HL): I don't know about challenging, but I have no intention of throwing a towel in, John. I'm going to keep right on going. And my wife says, "you know, you matter." She has a walker. She said, "you got to keep healthy and keep going. Take care of me." And so I have no intention. I'm just going to keep on doing what I've been doing. And so I don't know what lies ahead for me. I feel okay. I feel fine.

I'm still mobile enough to get around in our own home and know where everything is. And I can pretty much take care of everything myself. Sometimes I have to call my oldest son who lives in Tulsa and have him come over by and do something for me that I can't do anymore. I don't do letters.

There's things that I can't do. Because my fingers are not nimble anymore. I don't have much. I can't even button my cuff on this side. But I can do these. I can do this one. I'm limited to some degree. But I'm not handicapped. I'm okay.

JE: Well, you are not for sure. You know, many of us wonder if we would like to live to be 100. And I can tell you we would if we can be like you. You are setting a great example.

HL: Well, thank you, John. That's very kind.

JE: Well, I just want you to know how much I've enjoyed talking with you and how much respect I have for you. To be able to talk to you at 100, to be as clear-headed as you are. You're very articulate. But to have you and add this to us is a great honor to list you. And so that many people listening to you will say, "I need to learn something from him."

This website is used a lot by students. And educators and all. And when I put this up there, learn from a centenarian. What can you learn? They're going to learn from you, Herman.

HL: Thank you, sir.

JE: You're certainly welcome. So thank you. I enjoyed this very much.

HL: Thank you, John. You've been very kind. And I appreciate you. And I listened to you for years on KRMG. I knew you were from North Dakota.

JE: Yes.

HL: And you come down to Tulsa.

JE: Yes.

HL: And we still get to keep you here in Tulsa. Have you enjoyed living in Oklahoma?

JE: Oh, yes. This is, you talk about God and directing your life. I was directed here. There's no question about that. Yes, this is home. And I feel very fortunate. We both feel fortunate, don't we?

HL: Yes, absolutely.

JE: Thank you, Herb.

HL: You bet.

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