Dick Willhour

INTERVIEW_TITLE

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Richard “Dick” Willhour graduated from Will Rogers High School and enrolled in the University of Tulsa. When World War II began, he joined the Army and was attached to the 100th Infantry division as a machine gunner.

Upon his return from military service, Dick’s father told him to write about the experience, and so, at 99 years old, that script was helpful in telling his story. The chaos of the battlefield, the loss of comrades, and being wounded in service to his country, are all told in a humble way.

And even in his 99th year, Dick was of service to his church, handing out snack packs to those in need.

He owned Pennant Petroleum Company which was a DX Sunoco jobber.

Dick was 99 when he died November 1st, 2024, but you can hear his voice as he talks about the Oklahoma land run, his preparation for war, and the loss of four company commanders on the battlefield on the podcast and oral history website VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 10:48
The Land Run

John Erling (JE): My name is John Erling. Today's date is May 7, 2024. So Dick, would you state your full name, please?

Dick Willhour (DW): Richard William Willhour.

JE: Your date of birth, please?

DW: 12-10-24.

JE: That makes your present age...

DW: 99.

JE: And obviously you'll be 100 in December. Where are we recording this interview?

DW: In Trinity Woods.

JE: Here in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

DW: Right.

JE: I looked up what happened in 1924. On the day of your birth, Black Gold, Kentucky Derby winner—the 50th running of the Kentucky Derby—happened in your first year. Republican Calvin Coolidge was elected president November 4th of that year, and Jimmy Carter was born in October of the same year. And Jimmy Carter is still living. So those things happened the year you were born. Your mother's name and her maiden name?

DW: Her maiden name was Alla Ruth Wynn. W-Y-N-N.

JE: And where was she born and raised? Where did she grow up?

DW: She grew up in Texas as a youngster, and they moved to Oklahoma, to Tulsa. I don't remember what year—but they lived at 510 North Cheyenne for a good many years.

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

DW: Well, she was, I'd say, quiet. Of course, I don’t know how wild she was growing up because I wasn't here, but...

JE: Right. Quiet personality?

DW: Yes.

JE: Your father's name?

DW: Ralph Willhour.

JE: And where was he born and grew up?

DW: He was born, I believe, in the panhandle of Oklahoma, at Beaver City, I think.

JE: Did he grow up there then? Is that where he lived?

DW: Yeah, that's where he grew up, as far as I know.

JE: What was his personality like?

DW: Well, Dad was very quiet. He was a well-liked man, had lots of friends.

JE: What did he do for a living?

DW: He was a pharmacist by trade and was in the First World War as a medic. And with that background, he became the superintendent of first aid at the Mid-Continent Refinery. The refinery is still there. His job was to take care of all the injuries that occurred from the jillion workers that were in the refinery.

JE: Where is that refinery?

DW: You just go down 17th Street and cross and you're in the housing addition where I grew up. And it's right there by the refinery gate.

JE: Mid-Continent. Did you have brothers or sisters?

DW: Yes, I had one brother—younger.

JE: Is he still living?

DW: No, he passed away about a month ago.

JE: Oh. What was his name?

DW: Bob—Robert.

JE: So how old was he when he died?

DW: He was 93.

JE: So since you're 99, did your parents live for long?

DW: Mom died at 99. And Dad was, I'm pretty sure he was 83.

JE: I ask this question because sometimes nationalities come—what's your nationality?

DW: German.

JE: OK.

DW: The story is that two German brothers came over prior to the Revolutionary War. One of them was in the Revolutionary War and didn't survive. And as far as we know, there's all kinds of spellings of the name Willhour.

JE: So those two that came over from Germany, are they your bloodline? Is that where you trace your...

DW: Yes.

JE: Let's talk about your grandfather. What was his name?

DW: Well, I got two grandfathers, of course. One was Richard Watson Wynn. And the other was William Henry Willhour. And William Henry was a sort of an adventurist. He was in both the land runs in Oklahoma. During his lifetime, he owned a hotel in Kansas, he had an interest in land — a mine, he ran a drugstore—owned a drugstore in about every town they lived in. Because of that, my dad got his pharmacy certificate. When my grandfather died, then they moved to Tulsa. He went to work for the Tulsa Police Department and was a detective on the police force for several years.

JE: Your father...?

DW: My grandfather.

JE: Grandfather. OK, yes. So that would have been approximately when?

DW: I'd say in the early '30s or late '20s and early '30s.

JE: Did you know him? Did you meet him?

DW: Oh yeah, yeah. I remember him coming into the house, and when he came in, he would pull the biggest six-shooter I ever saw out and lay it on the table.

JE: And his name again was...

DW: William Henry Willhour.

JE: Did he tell you some stories about police work in Tulsa?

DW: I don't recall any.

JE: Your grandfather came in and was involved in a land run?

DW: Well, yeah. He came to Oklahoma in the land run.

JE: So he received land then that he...

DW: Well, the first run he was in, he came to the most beautiful quarter section he had ever seen. He got off his horse and was driving his stake in the ground when he turned around—and, as you say, you're looking down the barrel of the biggest six-shooter he ever saw. He didn't get that section of land. The one he did get was too close to the lake out there where the land had too much saltwater in it to be good farmland. So he traded that and went somewhere else. Then, when the next run came...

JE: Yes, the land run of 1889. That was the first land run. And then, yes, the second land run began in September of 1891 at high noon.

DW: He got a good piece out close to Beaver City. His wife—my grandmother—was a schoolteacher out there. We've got a picture of them in a sod schoolhouse that he built. My dad's in it, and several sisters, and about 20 other kids.

JE: And where was that location again?

DW: Out of Beaver City, Oklahoma.

JE: So that first run, when that barrel of the six-shooter was looking at him, he left—gave it up?

DW: Yeah, they had run him off.

JE: They were brave people, weren't they?

DW: Yeah. I can't imagine doing what they did.

JE: No. And then when they got the land, there wasn't anything on it, and they had to either dig a hole in the ground—a cave or something to stay in. They had to build on it.

DW: They had to build some kind of a house. I guess it was customary to build out of sod.

JE: A sod house?

DW: Yeah. I don't really know that they lived in one, but I know the schoolhouse was a sod house.

JE: Yeah. Well, more than likely they lived in that. So was your dad born there?

DW: I'm not sure where they lived when he was born. But in the picture we've got of his mother—my grandmother—in front of the schoolhouse, he's about three years old. So he was born out there somewhere.

JE: We really respect those people and the strength they had. It's amazing. Your parents met then in Tulsa, is that true?

DW: Yes. My dad had a buddy he hunted with—Pete Wynn. He introduced him to my mother, and they eventually got married.

Chapter 3 – 11:35
Preparing for War

John Erling (JE): Let's talk about school. You went to grade school in Tulsa?

Dick Willhour (DW): Yes. I went to... grade school, I went to Riverview, for the first four years, and then the family moved. I went to school there and then Woodrow Wilson. And then at that time, Will Rogers was opened up, and I was in the first graduating class from Will Rogers.

JE: What year was that?

DW: '42.

JE: You graduated in 1942. The Depression from 1929 to 1939—do you remember, have any memories of the Depression and how it affected your family?

DW: No, I don't know. I didn't know we were. I hadn't been born long enough to know what it was not to be in the Depression, I guess.

JE: Right. And then we had the Dust Bowl days about that same period of time. I don't know if you have any stories.

DW: Oh, I remember reading about it, hearing about it, talking about it.

JE: OK, what I'm going to do right now is refer to—you wrote out your story, and it's called My War. Why did you write this out?

DW: Well, when I got home from service and was telling my dad all about it, he said, "You better make notes of everything that you want to remember, because you think you'll remember it for years, but you won't." So I made notes. And then later, wrote them—put them together into a story.

JE: Yeah, and I have it here. I mean, there are 10–12 pages here, single-spaced. It's enormous writing of what you've done, so I'm going to use this as we go along. You start out here talking about December 7th, 1941. That was a Sunday. Can you remember what was going on? What were you doing then?

DW: I don't remember what we were doing. I remember we had just gotten home from church and were having lunch in a little breakfast room in our house, listening to a little radio, when we heard them declare war on Japan.

JE: And you wrote here it was a Sunday, and the next day at school they had us all go into the gym to listen to President Roosevelt declare war. And that was at Will Rogers High School. When you listened to the president and his declaration of war, do you remember what kids were talking about? Was that a pretty frightening moment?

DW: No, I don't think we were old enough to know what was going to take place.

JE: And as you wrote here, you said, "I was only 16, about to become 17. Some of the older guys went down the next day to enlist. One was named Richard Schindler. He was a senior, and in three months he was dead—killed even before he would have graduated." You still weren't old enough to really grasp it all, could you?

DW: No, I'm sure I didn't understand exactly what was going to happen to us.

JE: So you were so young then, of course you couldn't enlist. But then after your graduation from Will Rogers, what happened to you next?

DW: I went to TU. Studied in the engineering school. It was there when I was drafted.

JE: But you say then at TU there were only about 600 to 700 students on the campus. You also wrote here you went to engineering school, and then you wrote, "Big mistake."

DW: I had all the mathematics I could stand.

JE: An Air Corps training unit took over the only dormitory on the campus. Gym class required during the war years was military calisthenics. Played a little touch football. There were always recruiters on the campus, and you didn't apply. You took a mini physical for the Army Reserve. They turned you down. So talk to us about how you eventually got into the military.

DW: Well, I was—technically, I guess, I was drafted. But they came up with a program called ASTP—Army Specialized Training Program—and you could enlist in that. They'd send you to college, disperse you into basic training. Then you went to college, and you studied either medicine or engineering. When they called me, I went in, and I believe it was January 3rd of 1944. Then I went in.

JE: But you had a bad eye?

DW: I got one eye that—when I was born, it wasn't as strong as it should have been, and it still isn't. Because of that, I couldn't get into any officer's candidate school. But I did get in the ASTP program, and was called up. Went to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas for basic training. I didn't really want to stay in engineering school, so I asked to take the test for medical school. And I was accepted and was going to go to medical school—until our Army decided they needed replacements in infantry more than they needed schoolboys. So they closed down the ASTP program and sent all the kids to infantry somewhere. I was sent to the 100th Division in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and ended up in the heavy weapons company of the 3rd Battalion of the 397th Infantry, part of the 100th Division.

JE: A little side note here: About the last week of March, you were loaded on a train and headed toward Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to join the 100th Infantry Division. On the way, someone on the train came down with mumps, and so the whole train was quarantined. For how long?

DW: Well, I don't really remember, but it wasn't very long.

JE: Oh, it looks like it says “for the first 30 days you were there, we were put in empty barracks and had to stay by ourselves.” And you have written here that you took turns cutting each other's hair. You were put in the first squad of the first platoon of Company M of the 397th Infantry. M Company was a heavy weapons platoon. So talk to us about your experience there.

DW: Well, the heavy weapons platoon consisted of two platoons of heavy machine guns—heavy being “water-cooled.” It's the same .30 caliber machine gun that ordinary infantrymen carried, but this one had a water jacket around the barrel to keep it cool enough that you could consistently fire the whole belt of ammunition. I was the number one gunner. I carried the tripod with the machine gun, which weighed 51 pounds. The number two gunner carried the gun, which weighed 42 pounds without any water in it. The number three man carried a gallon can of water and a box of ammunition, each weighing about 20 pounds. And all the rest of the guys in the squad carried two boxes of ammunition—two belts of ammunition, 120 rounds in a belt.

JE: So then you were preparing to go overseas. What was going on, and where did you go?

DW: We went to a camp in New Jersey—I can't remember the name offhand. I don't remember the dates we boarded ship, but it was sometime in October, I think, after the invasion of Normandy and D-Day. And the invasion of Normandy was in June, and we got over in October. The 100th Division—we ended in Marseille, I believe it was.

JE: Yeah. It says you've written here, "You came into the harbor at Marseille about 6 o'clock in the evening on October 20th. It was filled with scuttled German ships. All you could see was the tops of the masts sticking out of the water. Our ship could not get close enough to dock, so they anchored offshore and we climbed down cargo nets into landing craft." It was just like you see in the movies. So you can tell more about that—the difference was they weren’t shooting at you.

DW: After we got off the boat and into the harbor, we marched about 10 miles to a campground. And it seems like the only thing I can remember from that was a lady standing on the balcony of her house, waving an American flag.

JE: And you wrote here, it says, "A record of the Star-Spangled Banner was being played."

DW: She also was playing the Star-Spangled Banner while waving the flag.

JE: Man, that must have given you a good feeling.

DW: It did. It did.

JE: And this was in France, of course—Normandy, right?

DW: We'd been in France for very few hours.

JE: So when you got to that camp, what happened to you then?

DW: Well, we pitched tents. Can't remember how long it was before we actually were committed to the line.

Chapter 4 – 9:20
In Battle

John Erling (JE): So then you write, you had a trip to the front. You left early in the morning of October 30th. Tell us about your convoy—what it was made up of—and that experience.

Dick Willhour (DW): I don't actually recall how many days or hours it took, but it didn't take long before we were right outside the line—and committed the following day.

JE: The German army had retreated by this time?

DW: Had run the Germans back quite a ways. We had, up to that point, no problem whatsoever with infantry—the enemy's.

JE: So the second day, that second night, you camped in a park?

DW: When we were in the park, it had a stone wall around it, and the wall had a hole in it. It happened right close to where we pitched our tent. We couldn't go out—we weren't allowed to go out. French people weren't allowed to come in. But several youngsters and their parents or guardians came to the hole in the wall, and we attempted to talk to them. But I didn't

and none of my friends knew any French. I had had a semester of Spanish in high school. One of the kids standing out there spoke Spanish, so we tried to have a conversation in Spanish, but I didn't know enough that we could have a very extended conversation.

JE: Yeah. What about the food—the C rations that you had?

DW: They had two types of rations: C rations and K rations. The C rations consisted of six cans. That was our whole lunch. You got it in the morning—if somebody in a Jeep could get close enough to you to bring them. Otherwise, you didn't have any. And you carried those rations in your field jacket. You ate the first one, of course, and carried five. Then there were three cans of meat that, I swear, all smelled like Vigo that I fed my dog every day. They were a meat and cheese combination. A better ration, from my point of view, was the K ration. It consisted of three boxes—one for each meal. They had a small can of some kind of meat, and also they had 3 packages of 5, I think, of cigarettes. Anyway, the K ration was the best one that we preferred, but we didn't have any choice. It's just whatever they had handy, and if a Jeep driver could get close enough to give it to us.

JE: Got to remind our listeners that you are 99 years old, and you can still remember all those details. That's pretty amazing. You write about your pistol belt. What did you have on your pistol belt?

DW: On the pistol belt, we had—well, if you were armed with a pistol, and heavy machine gunners were—you had your holster on your belt, you had a trench knife, and you had hand grenades. And so you hung that on your belt. That was the way to carry them.

JE: So was it —your job then— to stop the enemy?

DW: The machine guns were always attached to a regular infantry rifle company. When they got stopped, we would dig in. I say dig in—we dug a hole for ourselves, so that you could sleep there.

JE: But the enemy did engage you. A long night—an eight-man patrol came through about dawn, and one of the guys had his helmet hit right in his forehead.

DW: He had a bullet that got square in the middle of his head. It hit the steel helmet, but for some reason, the bullet circulated between the plastic

helmet and the steel helmet, and then exited out the back. A freak deal that saved his life.

JE: And shook him up pretty much.

DW: Oh, yeah, sure.

JE: All of you, probably. And so you were on this roadblock for a day or two, and then you moved one mile down the road, set up another roadblock. On November 14th, 1944, you moved out early in the morning. Do you remember engaging the enemy?

DW: Can't help but remember being shot at. I don't think they were aiming at me particularly—they were just firing in our direction. You can't help but remember that.

JE: Were you firing your weapon?

DW: When we were moving, we couldn't fire it because it had to be set up. Basically, we made roadblocks so the enemy couldn't get down the road.

JE: You say here your regimental commander was killed when his Jeep driver took a wrong road. They ran into a German machine gun. Do you remember that?

DW: Yeah, I remember hearing about it.

JE: So at the end of the day, you were in pretty sad shape?

DW: Well, our regimental commander, battalion commander, company commander, and platoon leader had all been either killed or hurt bad enough that they couldn't perform.

JE: And, well, that's amazing—all those leaders were killed. So they were up there in the front?

DW: Well, they were, yeah, somewhere in the area.

JE: But were many of your other soldier friends—were they killed as well around you?

DW: Oh yeah. Yeah, we had some guys that were lost. But all the ranking men for our regiment—the platoon leader was the first guy, then the captain,

then the battalion commander, then the regimental commander, then the division commander—they were all put out of commission in the first day.

JE: So then the rest of your soldier friends there—I mean, were you thinking, became kind of fatalistic, “This is it”? You knew you could lose your life soon?

DW: Well, yeah, you knew that from the beginning. If somebody is shooting at you—and German artillery was firing pretty consistently all the time. And they had a gun called an 88—88 millimeter—and they were, supposedly, it was the best field piece in the war. Better than what we had. When they fired, you could hear that shell coming. And then it wasn’t long—but when you heard it, you hit the dirt and got down. But it wasn’t long before you could tell from the sound whether it was coming close enough to hit the dirt.

Chapter 5 – 6:45
Wounded in Combat

Dick Willhour (DW): I was in combat—actually, I think it’s almost six months. And I was digging a hole, and when the artillery started coming in, I didn’t have it very big. When I heard it coming close, I got in as much hole as I had dug and got hit in the foot and ankle. When a tree burst or shell hit a tree that I was under, it... it didn’t hurt very bad, but it kind of numbed into my foot. And from the same shell—or the same group anyway—I got hit again on my knee. But it was just... it just hurt. It was spent shrapnel, and it just slapped on my knee and didn’t penetrate or hurt anything, but it hurt more than the one that actually was in me. Because the shrapnel that hit me and actually got in my foot, it was a little piece of... looks like a timing ring off of the artillery piece. But the whole piece was only about the size of a .22 shell.

John Erling (JE): And you're now—how old are you now about now when this is happening?

DW: How old then?

JE: How old were you then?

DW: Well, that was 1944.

JE: You were 20 years old.

DW: 20, yeah.

JE: Those of us who've never been in combat are just amazed by your story. And I guess you're kind of numb to everything that's going on—that your life is at stake?

DW: I guess so, because you couldn't do anything about it.

JE: But to be in combat for six months—that was a long time.

DW: Yeah, it was. Six months is a long time, period. But a lot... there are a lot of guys that were in a lot longer, and they had it a lot worse than I did.

JE: At the end of six months, were you brought back—or why were you brought out of the combat?

DW: It's because I was hit and went to the hospital.

JE: OK, now I didn't realize that because you just said, "Well, it didn't hurt that bad," but you did have to go to the hospital.

DW: Yeah. It penetrated and went in -- the shell went in -- just below my ankle and ranged forward in my foot for a few inches. So when they operated, I had an incision about four inches long on the bottom of my foot. But before long, it started draining—seeping... anyway, it was infected. And it was going to have to be opened up again because when they got the shrapnel out, they left some of the wool from my sock in the incision. They had a rule: If you're going to be hospitalized for 120 days, then they send you home. It wasn't worth keeping you over there.

JE: So you'd been hospitalized for how long?

DW: I don't remember exactly how long it had been, but when the infection showed up, it had been long enough—and plus what they were going to have to do, it would be more than 120 days—so they sent me home. It was a wound called the "million dollar wound." It got you sent home, but you weren't hurt bad enough that it was going to make any difference in your life.

JE: You still have a scar there in that ankle?

DW: Oh, yeah.

JE: Yeah. That's all right. Yeah, with you forever. So how did you look at that? It was painful to go in the hospital and have the surgery and so forth, but did you think, "Well, it got me out of combat"?

DW: Yeah, I'm sure it did. I'm sure it was a whole lot better to lay in a hospital bed than in...

JE: In bunker someplace?

DW: In a hole in the ground.

JE: Being shot at. Yeah. So it probably saved your life.

DW: Oh, I wouldn't doubt it. Yeah. Very easily could.

JE: Were you awarded the Purple Heart?

DW: Oh, yeah. That's automatic. If you're wounded, you get the Purple Heart.

JE: Any other awards that you received?

DW: The Combat Infantry Badge. Every guy that was in the infantry and in combat got that. They didn't do anything special.

JE: But you know, those of us who are listening to you know how special it really was. It was... it was special. And when you think about it—the fact that you were fighting them over there and not over here—

DW: Looking at it that way, it was special.

JE: Yeah. But anybody who was in combat—you were taking fire and you were even wounded. It's a pretty amazing story. And I'm sure you've been thanked. You've been thanked many times, I would imagine, when people know you're a war—

DW: I've got a couple of caps with the insignia on them, and yeah, there's a lot of people that say, "Thanks for your good service."

JE: I make sure I do that too when I see veterans wear those caps. Yeah. And preserving the freedoms we have today.

DW: It's been so long that you'd have to be close to 100 years old to have been in it and still be alive.

JE: Exactly. Right. Right.

Chapter 6 – 4:06
Family

John Erling (JE): Let's talk about your wife. What was your wife's name?

Dick Willhour (DW): Margaret Brown.

JE: Where did you meet Margaret?

DW: At First Christian Church.

JE: Downtown Tulsa?

DW: Yeah. Her parents and her family were members of First Christian. One of her grandfathers was one of the early ministers of First Christian. My dad—I don't know how he joined or why he joined—but he was a member when I was born. My mother was a member of Centenary Methodist. Why they put me in or went to First Christian, I don't know. That's what they did. Most of the people I knew very well, they were from the church.

JE: And then you and your wife had how many children?

DW: Had three. We lost one—lost the first one. We had a girl and a boy and another girl.

JE: And what are their names?

DW: Susan Lee, and then Richard Junior, and then Sandra Kay.

JE: Do they live here in Tulsa?

DW: They all live here. They're the best kids you could have. They come to see me regularly. They buy or pick up or help with anything I need. My son, who lives on a ranch—I guess you'd call it a ranch—he raises cows. On the farm anyway, out by I-44. Every Wednesday, he comes in and takes me to First Christian, and we feed the homeless.

The idea for feeding the homeless came from a lady who was the person that greets you when you come in the door during the week. I mean, she works for First Christian. Her husband and I were friends. It was her idea that we needed to feed these people because she could see what they wanted when they came in—she was close to the front door. So they started this program, and every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 11 to 12, we served a meal. This was when the guys came in off the street, but that was prior to the... whatever you call it—

JE: COVID.

DW: Prior to that. After that, then we started doing it by putting the food in a sack, and a guy picked up a sack. So for six years, Bill Osteen and I—every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—passed out the food to the people.

But unfortunately, Bill died about two months ago, and since then, the church changed things. Instead of having us or somebody doing it every Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, they just have a permanent person on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and that's all you did. So my son comes in from Wynoa and picks me up and takes me down to the church.

JE: So you still do that?

DW: Yeah.

JE: That's great.

DW: I still go every Wednesday. I actually enjoy it because it gets me out of here. It's kind of boring here.

JE: Yeah. That's good.

Chapter 7 – 7:42
After the War

John Erling (JE): A little bit about when you came home and all—what was your profession? What did you get into?

Dick Willhour (DW): As I said, I didn't want to be an engineer. When I went back to TU, I enrolled in marketing. Got a degree in marketing. Went to work for a guy named Jim Countryman and Countryman Oil Company. He had been a salesman with Stanley Oil and Gas—Standard Oil—who, you know, didn't have anything in Tulsa. But he moved here and became what they call a jobber, and he sold Standard Oil products to service stations or anybody that'd buy them. So I went to work for him. A year or so later, he retired and I bought his company. It wasn't any big deal. So then for the next 20 years, I guess, I was an oil marketer—selling gasoline to people that didn't... I mean, they weren't salesmen. They had their own pump tanks and... so sold oil. Quaker State oil.

JE: Let's take you back into the '40s, '50s—cars. Did you have a favorite car?

DW: The first car I ever owned was a '47 Packard convertible.

JE: Wow. That's a pretty classy car.

DW: Yeah, I wish I still had it. It'd be worth a fortune.

JE: Beautiful car, though.

DW: Packard made a 6-cylinder and an 8-cylinder, and this was a 6.

JE: Downtown Tulsa then—what do you remember about downtown Tulsa and some of the stores and movie theaters?

DW: I worked—when I was in high school—I worked for Harrington's.

JE: Harrington's Clothing?

DW: Yeah, Harrington's Clothing. Every afternoon, we went downtown and worked for a couple of hours, and all day Saturday.

JE: I remember the name Gladys Harrington.

DW: Gladys was Lee Harrington's wife.

JE: OK. Harrington's had a good reputation—a good store.

DW: Oh, it was a good store. I miss it some days. He had good solid people working for him.

JE: Did you go to movies in downtown Tulsa?

DW: They had The Ritz, and The Orphium, The Rialto were the main theaters in those days. Watched movies downtown. They had Vandever's and Brown-Dunkin were the two main stores downtown. Penney's had a downtown store.

JE: What about the music? Do you remember the first music that you listened to or enjoyed?

DW: I get a kick out of Lawrence Welk nowadays because they played some of the music that was popular when I was in high school.

JE: Well, then there was Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman.

DW: Yeah. Glenn Miller was the orchestra in those days as far as I was concerned.

JE: Did you listen to the radio back then?

DW: Yeah, had the radio.

JE: Remember which radio station you may have listened to?

DW: Well, there's KVOO and KTUL—were the main stations.

JE: I'm going to read. This talks about V-J Day—Victory over Japan—August 15th, 1945. And you were 21 years old. Probably in the hospital then. Well, as we've heard you talk about the war... more than 400,000 Americans and an estimated 65 million people worldwide died in World War II. Historian Donald Miller wrote in his book The Story of World War II, says, "It was too much death to contemplate. Too much savagery and suffering. And in August 1945, no one was counting. For those who had seen the face of battle and been in the camps and under the bombs and had lived, there was a sense of immense relief."

DW: I remember writing that. I hadn't read it.

JE: The war was over.

DW: The war was over. I remember being relieved when Japan surrendered. Knowing that—as long as they were fighting and you were in the Army—there's a chance you were gonna be sent somewhere.

JE: But you didn't get in on some of that victory stuff because you were in the hospital, wasn't it?

DW: Yeah. I don't... yeah, I didn't go to any victory parades.

JE: I interviewed one man—Frank Riesinger. He had Riesinger Jewelry in this town. He'd been in the military and was home, and then he happened to be in town when V-J Day happened, and the celebration that happened here in Tulsa broke out in the streets—downtown Tulsa. This has been very interesting.

DW: Well, I'm glad you think so.

JE: What kind of advice would you give to young people who are starting out in life? Or—what have you—do you give any advice to people? By the way, how many grandchildren do you have?

DW: I've got seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. And the only girl grandchild is pregnant and having a baby in August. The only thing that's going to keep our name going, if she has a boy.

JE: OK. Yeah. And again, you'll be 100 in December.

DW: Yeah. I'm just an old goat.

JE: How would you like to be remembered?

DW: Well... as being honest. Stood straight. Walked straight. I mean, shoulders back and... so forth.

JE: Yeah. Well, I thank you for this time. And feel like I need to be thanking you on behalf of all Americans for your service to your country and the life you led. It's very, very admirable. Thank you.

DW: Wasn't anything special. I mean, there were lots of guys that did more than I did. I thank you for thinking what I had done was worth recording.

JE: I do. And those who listen will think the same. Thank you, Dick.

DW: Thank you, sir.

JE: You earned your keep.

DW: (Laughing)

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