Warren Morris

WWII Veteran, Real Estate Broker, Lawyer

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Announcer: Warren Gene Morris was a World War II veteran working up the ranks becoming Captain in the Army Air Force flying B-29s. By the age of 21 had flown thirty-four combat missions in the South Pacific. Often, he would fly for 15 hours or more — seven or eight hours to the target and then back to the base.

He contracted polio while on duty, crippling him for several years. But through physical therapy he was able to walk without braces.

After World War II, Warren entered the real estate profession developing 13 subdivisions and constructing 1,900 homes. Building a successful law practice, he also became a Master Appraiser, Real Estate Broker, and a Tulsa County Excise and Equalization Board Member.

Listen to Warren talk about his combat missions, including the day the bomb bay doors accidentally opened, losing an engine in flight, and his struggle with polio on the Voices of Oklahoma podcast and website, VoicesOfOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 9:32
Joined the Army

John Erling (JE): This is John Erling and today's date is March 8th, 2010. State your full name, please.

Warren G. Morris (WM): Warren G. Morris. Warren Gene Morris.

JE: Your date of birth?

WM: Born October 23rd, 1923.

JE: Your present age?

WM: 86.

JE: Where were you born?

WM: I was born in Prospect Township in Kansas. About 10 miles east of El Dorado, Kansas.

JE: Where are we recording this?

WM: We're recording this in my home --

JE: -- here in Tulsa. Your mother's maiden name?

WM: Was Gilliland.

JE: Where was she born and raised?

WM: In Western Kansas.

JE: And your father?

WM: He was born in a farm east of El Dorado, Kansas.

JE: What was his name?

WM: Duncan Dewitt Morris

JE: He was born there and raised in that area? What was his profession?

WM: He was a farmer and later sold cars. But the interesting thing about my parents, I think: the doctor rode a train out 10 miles east of El Dorado. And my dad took a wagon and team and drove three miles and picked him up and brought him to the farm. I was born that night. The next morning we took a wagon and took him back to the morning train, put him on the train. So I had a doctor came out all the way and spent the night and I was born on the farm. They don't do that anymore.

JE: No; they don't. So, the doctor, your father went out and picked him up?

WM: That was down at the railroad

JE: How did your family come to Oklahoma?

WM: Well, my grandfather, grandfather Morris, pioneered in western Kansas in the 1880s. And my grandfather Gilliland came in the 1880s to Kansas. He came from Indiana and my grandfather Morris came from Ohio.

JE: How did they come to Oklahoma?

WM: They didn't come to Oklahoma.. We lived in Kansas.

JE: So you're the one who --

WM: I'm the one that came here.

JE: All right, we'll get into that. You were raised in what town? What area?

WM: El Dorado, Kansas. I spent my summers with my grandmother's parents. My mother died when I was 18 months old. So my dad stayed on the farm a couple of years and my grandfather and grandmother Morris came out to take care of me and then we moved to town. My dad sold cars; he gave up farming and my grandmother Morris raised me, but I spent my summers with my other grandparents. He was a dairy farmer.

JE: Your first school? You were six years old, were you, when you went?

WM: Yes.

JE: What was the name of the school?

WM: Jefferson Elementary.

JE: In El Dorado?

WM: In El Dorado. Do you remember anything about that school? And that would have been 1929? 1930?

WM: Well, the only thing I really remember was my fifth grade teacher always paddled us and my dad went up to see her one day and she said, “Well, I suppose you're here about your boy.”

He said, “No, I came to talk to you about buying a car.”

Because if I got in trouble with school, I didn't tell it at home and she had paddled me. So anyway, I suppose I only remember a few things in elementary school.

JE: So then let's pick up the Great Depression of the stock market in 1929. Does that affect any of your family?

WM: At that time, we were living in town. I think my dad started selling cars in 1926 or 7. And of course, the depression were tough years. I remember when the government said that if he worked for our car places, they had to pay him $18 a week. I remember that was a good thing to receive that $18 a week.

JE: How was that?

WM: Well, they had some ruling that they had to pay him a minimum wage even though he's a salesman. And I remember when he got raised to $18 a week guaranteed, which was quite an item.

JE: So that was directed by the government?

WM: Yes.

JE: There were certain professions, I guess then...

WM: I don't remember now, but I don't -- he was a car salesman and if he worked there, they had to pay a minimum $18 a week.

JE: Do you remember then? The times -- were they tough for you?

WM: Very tough. Of course, I was very fortunate when I learned to sell magazines and newspapers and mow yards and that sort of thing. Did a lot of work on the side.

JE: So you brought money into the family, into the house.

WM: Yes

JE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

WM: No -- an only child.

JE: Your mother died when you were?

WM: 18 months old.

JE: 18 months old. Did your father remarry then?

WM: No; he and I lived with my grandmother and grandfather Morris.

JE: All under the same roof then?

WM: Yes; and then he remarried when I was about 12 or 13. But I continued to live with my grandmother Morris.

JE: So those days of depression, did you have to give things up? Didn't affect how much you ate or what you had to eat or anything like that.

WM: I know that I wanted a bicycle awful bad, and Santa Claus didn't bring me a bicycle. When I was in the ninth grade, I determined I didn't have to go to high school. I could do everything you could do on a farm and I could: drive a tractor, plow milk cows and do all that kind of work, because I spent my summers with my mother's parents. My grandfather was a dairy farmer, so I learned to do everything. I told my dad, I said, “I'm not gonna go to high school. I don't think I need to.” He talked to me a long time and he said he wanted me to finish high school. If I finished high school, then he would

help me get started in the farming business because I had to buy tools and equipment. He had helped me to start forming.

JE: So then you did go to high school?

WM: Oh, yeah. I finished high school, and a year and a half of junior college.

JE: What year did you graduate from high school?

WM: 1941.

JE: Then you were 18?

WM: 18 years old in 1941.

JE: Do you have any overall remembrances of the music or movie stars?

WM: Not really, because I worked 40 hours a week. I went to work for my uncle Ed in a filling station. I worked five hours every day during the week, and 10 hours on Saturday, and 10 hours on Sunday

JE: Beyond school?

WM: Uh-huh (in agreement).

JE: You're going to school and working, both.

WM: Yes. I did that three years of high school and a year and a half of junior college. Then I went in the army.

JE: So by the time you went in, you were ... 19? 20?

WM: 19.

JE: 19 in 19...

WM: 43.

WM: Active duty on February of ‘43.

JE: We all know that the United States was then involved in World War Two. Pearl Harbor had taken place in 1941. Why did you join the army?

WM: Well, I wanted to fly.

JE: Ok. So you had developed an interest in flying even before the army came along. So, where did that come from? Here you are, a farm boy.

WM: Oh, I just met guys that came back from flight school. Seemed like that was the place to go. So I wanted to go to flight school.

JE: At the time, they were drafting people as well. So, you volunteered before the draft came to you? Where did that all take place?

WM: Well, I went on active duty to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri in February of 1943.

JE: Was that basic training?

WM: Well, it was just kind of a holding; that was the starting.

JE: That's where you first went in?

WM: Yes. I was only there about a month and then they sent us to Beloit College for some training prior to going on to cadets.

JE: They probably knew that you would qualify eventually to be a pilot because you took tests, I suppose.

WM: I took all kinds of tests. At Beloit, we just had ground school. From there, they sent us to Santa Ana California for pre-flight. We spent three months out there in pre-flight learning aircraft identification, and Morse code, and that sort of thing; learned how to exercise.

JE: Prior to that, and you were on the farm, you heard news, I suppose on the radio, about the war about world war two and prior to even 1941?

WM: Oh, yes

JE: ... and kept track of all that. Do you remember listening to Franklin Delano Roosevelt on the radio?

WM: Oh, yes. Particularly I remember the day they bombed Pearl Harbor.

JE: Where were you then? And how did you hear about it?

WM: It was on a Sunday. I was working at a filling station. We had a radio on. I'd never heard of Pearl Harbor at the time.

JE: What was your reaction when you heard that?

WM: Well, you know, I was terribly upset about that, of course. But I knew eventually I'd go in the army, so I joined the army to be a cadet.

JE: You chose the Army and not the Air Force.

WM: Well, then see, it was the Army Air Corps. In World War Two, I was an Army Air Corps. Korean War I was in the Air Force.

JE: Okay. FDR had these fireside chats. You remember listening to those on the radio?

WM: Yes. My grandfather Morris was not a fan of FDR, I know.

JE: Oh, really? Why was that?

WM: Oh, I don't know, but what he really wasn't.

JE: Yeah. You heard about Germany and Adolf Hitler on the radio and heard all of that?

WM: The main inspiration came after Pearl Harbor. People had gone to flight school and I thought that was the thing to do.

JE: Once you had gone through your basic and your flight school, you were eventually given an assignment.

WM: I graduated flight school in March of ‘44 -- class of ‘44. And they sent me to Roswell, New Mexico to fly B-17s. Another guy and I, together, in five weeks, flew 105 hours in B-17s.

JE: Where did you fly?

WM: Roswell, New Mexico.

JE: Did you see any war duty with your flights?

WM: Oh, yeah.

JE: Tell us about that.

WM: Well, most of the people who went through B-17 training, went to Europe, but they held some pilots back to fly B-29s. And I was terribly upset. I want to go to combat. I talked to the training officer and they said, “Well, the top 10% of the B-17 students were held back to fly B-29s. Now, this was in May of ‘44 and I didn't go overseas until March of ‘45. During that period of time, we flew 65 hours in a B-29, training. And then we went overseas in March of ‘45.

JE: March of ‘45. You went overseas. Now, where was that?

WM: Went to Tinian.

JE: What’s that?

WM: It's an island between Saipan and Guam. I was assigned to a bomb group there.

JE: You were flying a B-29.

WM: Yes.

JE: You were the pilot.

WM: I was a copilot.

Chapter 3 – 8:10
Lost an Engine

John Erling (JE): Your first missions? What were they, what were your targets?

Warren G. Morris (WM): The morning of my sixth day out of San Francisco, I'd been to Japan and back on a fire raid with another crew just to see what it was like

JE: A fire raid. What's that?

WM: Well, we'd firebomb Japanese cities and then we dropped mines in the sea. On the end of the last mission of the war, I was over Japan on my 34th mission and I was an airplane commander. I got promoted to be an airplane commander. We heard over the radio that the war was over. It's 14th of August '45. From 12th of March to the 14th of August, I'd flown 34 missions. I asked my navigator to give me a heading to Hiroshima. So I dropped down to Hiroshima, 3000 ft, and flew around Hiroshima, flew around Japan -- wanted to see the towns that we burned out. I was on all those fire missions when we bombed Japan.

JE: A B-29. Can you describe that plane, what it was like? Did you like that plane?

WM: Oh, yeah. It's the biggest plane been we had then. We could carry 20,000 pounds of bombs. Four engines -- had a lot of engine trouble with them. They're pressurized. When they first started using them, they were flying from India into China and then they bombed Japan. Well, they tried to bomb from 28 to 30,000 ft and they weren't hitting anything. Then later, after they took the Marianas, they were still bombing from altitude on 20 to 25,000 ft and they weren't hitting anything. That was a big problem. [Unintelligible name] came over, he was a colonel in the air force. He came

over, and he decided the thing to do is pull us down to 5000 ft. So the 12th of March, they bombed Tokyo -- 350 planes hit Tokyo and I got there two days after that, but they burned Tokyo and had lots of repercussions over that.

But he took a gamble. He had a bombing from 4 to 5000 ft. The advantage: you didn't have to take all that gasoline to get up to altitude. And that was a big problem we had, was running out of gas and engine trouble. It was a big gamble on his part. So from then on, if we flew a daylight mission, we'd fly at 4 or 5000 ft to Japan and then climb up and get into formation and go in on the daylight target. But the bulk of our bombing was at night and we bombed through our radar. They found they could be more efficient bombing through an undercast. They had special targets. Everybody tried to hit that target. Well, if that target was off, everybody was off. And they found that if we bomb through the clouds, we got a lot better efficiency. So then they had us bomb by radar. A radar found a land-water contrast, and then it would fly off that contrast to a heading, and then drop our bombs. Everybody tried to hit the middle of the target. We bombed cities like Osaka and Yokohama.

The biggest raid we had was Kawasaki between Yokohama and Tokyo. Our group of 40 planes lost 4 planes that night. We didn't know about that until 50 years later. But, our crew -- we couldn't get our bomb bay doors open. So we went back out to see, and I got out and forced the bomb bay doors open, and went over the target again. We didn't know about it being such a tough target until we went to a reunion in 1992. And we heard about it because when crews were lost, unless they lived in your tent, you never knew about it.

JE: Your unit, what was the name of it?

WM: 9th bomb group.

JE: The 9th bomb group. They were attached to...?

WM: 3/13th Wing, which was part of the 20th force.

JE: Okay.

WM: In fact, there are a bunch of guys here that have airplanes. Mike Sizemore testified for me in a condemnation case we just finished last week, and he put the pressure on me to talk to these guys. So, Friday night, I had a meeting of about 60 flyers. Some of them were airline pilots and recreational flyers. And I spoke to him about B-29s and he opened up a book about the 9th bomb group. I'll let you read it if it's interesting to you.

JE: Yes. Did you personally draw any fire to your B-29?

WM: Yes.

JE: Tell us about that.

WM: Of course, we got some flak at times.

JE: Flak -- what does that mean?

WM: That just when the burst of flak and scattering -- we didn't get hit. The closest I came to getting shot down: my tail gunner called me and said, “We got flak on our tail,” and he said, Three or four more will us get us!” He said, “Go up to an altitude and then they move forward,” and he told me: “Three or four more bursts, and they'll get us.”

So I pulled up and got over on top of the rest of the formation and it had -- boom, boom, boom! They had our altitude and if they got on an altitude, they could shoot you down. And I've seen planes shot down where the first flak hit them, but sometimes we had some minor damage from flight. Of course, our big problems was losing an engine on takeoff and that happened to me once.

JE: You lost an engine on takeoff.

WM: Yeah.

JE: What happened?

WM: Well, we were overloaded. About two thirds of the way down the runway, the engineer said, “We're losing three!”

So I pulled up about 200 ft, then dove back to the water, to try to get as much speed as I could, but we couldn't feather that engine. So I just stayed right on top of the water, got my gear up right on top of the water. Just seemed like I flew forever to get enough speed that I could get height. So I had to get my speed up. I finally got the speed up. And when I landed, I landed about 150 miles an hour. That night, we all went up the mess hall and had several bottles of whiskey. We just barely made it. We thought we were going in the water.

JE: So you had lost one engine.

WM: One engine.

JE: How many engines are there?

WM: Four.

JE: Four engines? So you lost one engine, flew your mission on three engines.

WM: But that one engine -- we’d normally feather it.

JE: “Feather it.” What does that mean?

WM: It stopped it from going around. After you feathered it, it stops it so that you don't have as much drag. When we couldn't feather it, it was still wheeling around and caused drag. So I was afraid I was never going to get enough altitude to be able to land.

JE: You were too busy to be afraid, I suppose.

WM: When I finally got enough altitude, then I dropped the bombs, and came around, and landed. And we all ran up the mess hall and had several drinks. It was a pretty upsetting night.

JE: Was it a nervous time for you?

WM: Oh, yeah. In fact, when I set my brakes after we landed, I had trouble getting my brakes set because by that time I was shaking. I didn't really shake until I got on the ground and back in to park our airplane.

JE: Because you thought you were “going into the pond,” as we say.

WM: Yup. I had the lights on, and had to gear up, and just barely above the water trying to get enough speed. Kind of exciting.

JE: And what body of water were you over when you were flying?

WM: We were in the Pacific.

JE: So if you had gone into the water, there would have been no hope for you at all.

WM: Oh, no. I don't know how far we were from Tinian. We flew out probably 15 to 20 minutes before we could get enough speed and altitude that we could drop our bombs and then turn around and come back.

JE: How many with you in the crew?

WM: 11 of us.

JE: Was there a lot of talking, yelling, anything going on on the plane?

WM: No.

JE: You were the pilot.

WM: I was the pilot.

WM: And you brought it out.

WM: It’s pretty funny. Later, when I got to be an airplane commander, we had a reunion in Wyoming and this crew said the first mission they flew with me, they thought I was gonna fly them in the water. Because the danger

time is that initial time before you get your speed.

So when I'd get up, I'd go right back to the water and get as much speed as I could, so I could climb up. One group that lived in our quonset hut, about two thirds of the way down the runway, and he lost his number one engine, and that wing dropped and he cartwheeled. Everybody was killed except the tail gunner. The plane caught on fire. That was our big problem. We'd lose engines on, take off because we're overloaded so bad, see?

JE: Was that the only experience, then, where you lost an engine?

WM: One other time, I started down the runway, and I got it stopped. I had the engine kick back on me, and so I got it shut down quick enough. I took it in, and the engineering officer, he told us to run it and fly it anyway. And I said, "Well, I think the best thing is if you fly the damn thing; I'm not gonna fly it." So one time I turned down a flight but it had engine trouble, and I just didn't want to take any chances.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 4 – 6:30
Iwo Jima

Warren G. Morris (WM): I landed on Iwo Jima a number of times.

John Erling (JE): Talk to us about that.

WM: The Kawasaki mission, which was about our fourth or fifth mission, we had to make a second run over the target. I broke the spring that held the bomb bay doors up and the bomb bay doors fell open. So we had to land on Iwo so we could wire their bomb bay doors shut. People worried about landing on Iwo because there's so many people trying to land at the same time. Those guys would shoot off flares, and they'd have wounded on board. So what happened if you got in a big line trying to land, you'd have to pull out to the side and slow everybody up and pull back in land with power. They'd have maybe 20 or 25 planes on final approach at the same

time. Everybody that came back from missions would be full with people that were shot up.

In the very beginning, they had gasoline like on one of these little farm trucks. But by the time the war was over, they had a modern gas system there just like, you know, a major airport. I landed probably five or six times.

And when I got to be an airplane commander, the first time I flew with that crew, I got back to Iwo and asked my flight engineer, “How are we doing on gas?”

And he said, “I don't know.”

Well, when he didn't know, I landed on Iwo Jima anyway for gas; but I landed several times where we'd have engine trouble. Gas was a big item. We were always fighting the fuel consumption. We didn’t have very good gauges.

JE: You took flak.

WM: Just some that scattered holes in the ... not of any consequence.

On a daylight mission, when we'd be at 12 to 15,000 feet, the fighters would come through us. They'd make a pass through us. By the time they get turned around and trying again, we were gone.

The last day of the war, they had 800 B-29s over Japan in 24 hours -- and 200 fighters. They wanted to have 1000 planes; they just couldn't get 1000 ready. So we had 800 B-29s that bombed Japan in that 24 hours.

JE: And when you were flying, you were very close to these other planes.

WM: On the daylight missions, when in formation, we were. At night, we weren't; everybody tried to hit the middle of the target. Bomb on an individual and you'd see the first fires ahead of you. And six minutes later, time you get up there, the smoke could be up to 50-60,000 feet. Cities burn that fast.

JE: So at night you weren't close, but how close would you be flying in formation -- daytime flights?

WM: Within 50-60 feet.

JE: Did planes ever get too close and collide from that?

WM: Not that I know of.

JE: For those of us who are just watching this through your mind, it's hard to believe that you could be that close to other planes and not have a problem. You were dropping bombs; you weren't to shoot at other planes, were you? The B 29 just dropped bombs.

WM: Dropped bombs. Uh huh (In agreement). Now, we shot at their fighters when they came through.

JE: And would your gunners from your plane shoot other planes down?

WM: Never had, no; we didn't hit them.

JE: You said 34 missions on a B-29. How long were you up on a mission?

WM: 15 hours. 15 to 16 hours. They had an article on a national magazine and the guy that wrote the article said of all the people on that last mission, I was the only one who remembered it; and I remembered it because I dropped down and flew around Hiroshima. Nobody else remembered doing that. Some national magazine had an article and quoted me on it.

JE: You were flying for 15 hours?

WM: Yeah.

JE: Tell us how you could do that. How did you fly for 15 hours, and why did you? You were flying from your station to the point of target? And that took how long?

WM: About seven hours. Seven and a half, depending on just where you hit the target.

JE: How long would it take you to drop your bombs?

WM: Not very long. We might be over Japan, maybe, 20 minutes or 30 minutes. Not very long. At night, we dropped mines by parachute -- water mines and dropped in the water, but dropped them by parachute, and then they floated. When ships came over, they'd go off. They had the inland sea which connected all of Japan. All the major cities were off the inland sea which shut down all of the traffic from one city to another during July of ‘44.

JE: By dropping these mines, boats would come up and hit them.

WM: Yeah, when they went over and hit them. The mines were timed. They might go off on the first ship that came over, or it might not go off until the fifth ship. They had them timed at different amounts.

JE: So it wasn't a matter of hitting, it was a matter of timing.

WM: The mines were timed. Some of them were timed that the fourth ship could go over it before it exploded. Sometimes on the fifth ship. Some of them, the first ship.

JE: Did you drop those mines out of your B-29s?

WM: Mm-hmm (in the affirmative). We dropped them at about 4000 feet by parachute. Our radar navigator would line us up on the channel.

JE: You obviously knew what your mission was and you knew that we had been attacked by the Japanese. So I guess it was no feelings about when you drop a bomb and you know you're destroying cities and people are being killed as a result of that. Did you think much about that?

WM: Sure. But you got to turn that off in your brain. Nothing I do about it. We're doing it and there's no point in worrying about it.

JE: Any other close calls?

WM: No, not really.

JE: So, you, I guess, felt like you were invincible. I mean, you went up all these times -- 25th time, 26th time -- and, I guess, it was a job, wasn't it?

WM: Well, but towards the end after I got up to 30 missions and I really got concerned when the name would go on the list for flights.

JE: Why 30?

WM: I don't know. But towards the end, I'd gone so far and just had a few more to go. See, I only had one more mission to fly and I could have come home anyway, if the war hadn't been over.

JE: Oh, so when somebody had flown 35 missions, that was it.

WM: That's right.

JE: You were done.

WM: Yup. In fact, because that 509th group that dropped the atomic bomb were on our field, C-54s came in every day with supplies to the state. So sometimes people get their missions in at nine o'clock in the morning, go home that afternoon. They just had a lot of traffic in and out. That ship, The Indianapolis, you remember reading about that? That brought the atomic bomb parts to Tinian? It was offshore; it was later sunk by the Japanese. That 509th group, we used to trade whiskey for ice cream from their people. They had all kinds of food. They were on the same field we were, but we didn't know what they were doing. They were flying practice missions.

Chapter 5 – 7:48
Atomic Bomb

John Erling (JE): Tell us where you were when they dropped the atomic bomb.

Warren G. Morris (WM): I was on Tinian.

JE: And that was an island?

WM: Oh, yeah. So it's in the Marianas Islands. The Marianas got Guam, Tinian and Saipan. It's about 100 miles down to Guam and 15 miles over Saipan. We had four 8500-foot runways on the north field where we were. They built them out of coral.

JE: The atomic bomb came off your --

WM: Island, yeah.

JE: And you had no idea.

WM: We knew they were doing something special because they had guards around; and their planes were maybe 300 ft from where my plane was. We knew that it was something special because they practice missions all the time. They were not flying combat like we were; they were flying B-29, but C-54 cargo planes brought people and experts in every day. They flew in from the States with supplies. A lot of flights came in because the 509th's the group that dropped the atomic bomb.

The Indianapolis, if you remember, The Indianapolis was sunk after the war and a lot of people killed. Well, they brought that bomb to Tinian -- I remember seeing it come up to shore.

JE: But you didn't know an atomic bomb was on that ...

WM: No, I'd never heard of it.

JE: ... on The Indianapolis.

WM: We just knew they had some special project. And they were very secretive. We never talked -- other than we traded whiskey for ice cream with them. Each officer got a bottle of whiskey a month and a bottle of rum a month. We had five officers on our cruise, so we had plenty of whiskey in our officers club. We traded for ice cream.

JE: What did you think then, when you heard Nagasaki had been bombed?

WM: I'm just amazed, you know, just like everybody else. I never heard of the atomic bomb. We later knew all about it because, after that, they bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They dropped the first bomb, I think, on the 6th of August. And we went back to flying -- went back to bombing. In fact, we had a crew from our group shot down between the two bombs. I think the second was the 9th.

We had gone back to flying between while they're trying to settle ... The big argument was whether they would punish the Emperor. These Japanese were holding out: “I voted to save the emperor!” I just want the war over, I didn't care who they saved. That was a big discussion going on then. They decided they weren't going to punish the emperor.

JE: The end of the war was August --

WM: 14th.

JE: 14th of 1945. When did you leave the Army Air Corps? When did you get out of the service?

WM: January of ‘46

JE: The war ended. Japan surrendered, obviously. Did you hear that on the radio that Japan had surrendered?

WM: Oh, yeah. Heard all about it. See, we would hear San Francisco radio sometimes on the way back from missions, and they'd say we bombed a

certain target and everybody returned safely. Well, hell, we hadn't even got home yet, but we'd heard over the radio.

JE: How would they know?

WM: I don't know. But when the war was over, there was no way to come home. So they were sending people over to Saipan to go home on LSTs -- those landing crafts. Well, I had a friend who was a navy pilot on Guam, and I'd heard they were going to come back to [unintelligible], my hometown. So I went down to Guam to visit him and to see if I get a ride back.

Anyway, I found after I got down there they weren't going to come back. So when I came back to Tinan, and I was on Guam trying to catch a ride, The guy had C-47 and he said, well, he'd take me.

So I said, “Where are you going first?” I thought he say Saipan or Tinan, and now he's going to [unintelligible].

I said, “Hell, that's on the way home.”

So when I got back to my unit, I got some friends on there and we went to wing headquarters that night with two bottles of scotch. And I came home with a set of orders, ordering me to return to the continental United States at the first available military convenience. Well, I got back to my unit. They said, “Those orders aren't any good!”

I said, “I don't give a damn. I'm going home anyway!”

One of the things that happened, I had to clear the base. Some went back to my quonset hut, some had taken my air mattress. So I went to supply to talk to them about it.

And Wally Bryant came out and said, “Lieutenant, what's your trouble?”

I said, “Well, somebody stole my air mattress.”

He said, “Well, that's all right. We'll charge it off.”

And I said, “And I’d like to take my 45.”

Well, he said, “How many can you carry?”

And I said, “What do you mean?”

He said “Hell, we got 300 of them. You have all you want.”

So I stood around a while, decided I didn't want ‘em after all. I had to carry it home. And he, later, worked for me for 20 some years selling houses here in Tulsa. That's where I met him overseas. He was a supply officer. He made the money, playing poker, to buy the town tavern at Norman when he got out. His brother-in-law ran the drug store. So when I came back to Norman, there was Wally Bryant running the town tavern.

He was later a car dealer up at Pawhuska. He worked for me for about 20 years. Looking back 45s are worth a lot -- a 45-caliber pistol. But at the time he said, “How many can you carry?”

So I decided, “Hell, if it’s that easy to get ‘em, I won’t do it.”

JE: And all pilots were armed with a 45.

WM: Oh, you had to carry one. So then Jack Payne got a B-29 and flew me to Guam, and I stood around down there for two or three days, and finally got a ride on a B-24 into Honolulu. I couldn't get out of Honolulu, so I went down to the navy. Some lady got me on a ship. When I hit San Francisco, I was the first guy off the ship. So I hitchhiked then to Clovis, New Mexico because a friend of mine had been shot down, and I wanted to talk to his parents. So I hitchhiked there and then got a train into Kansas.

JE: Did you stay in touch with your family? And they knew you were flying all these bombing missions? They had to be real nervous about your safety.

WM: My dad worked for Boeing during the war. He had been a car salesman. There weren’t any cars to sell during the war, so he worked for Boeing in Wichita.

JE: Did you send mail -- letters?

WM: We had mail going back and forth.

JE: So you did stay in touch by mail? The pressure and the stress of this -- that ever get to you?

WM: Oh, yeah. Towards the end it did because I just had a few more to go and I'd go home, and they did worry me then.

JE: "In your tent," should I say. Did you lose people out of your tent?

WM: We had one crew. If we lost people, you didn't know about it unless they lived with you, because they didn't announce it -- because that Kawasaki nation was early and we lost four crews. I didn't know that until 50 years later. But we had one crew, got about two-thirds the way down the runway, and they pulled it off the ground and lost an engine and cartwheeled. And I saw it happen. They were overloaded with gas and bombs and just didn't have enough power.

JE: How often would you fly a mission?

WM: Every three or four days. I was there seven months and flew 34 missions.

JE: What did you do with your time off? How did you entertain yourself?

WM: We played cards; and some guys went swimming and slept a lot.

JE: Were there entertainers who would come over?

WM: A few times they had shows.

JE: You remember who they were? Any big-name people?

WM: One night we had ... oh ... the guy that was with Jack Benny -- a comedian. I can't remember his name now. He was up the officers club and sang for us.

JE: What rank were you as you were flying?

WM: I was the second lieutenant. And I got promoted to be a first lieutenant when I was in the war. See, I started out as a copilot. But they had decided, back in May of ‘44, who was gonna fly B-29s and we didn't fly from May of ‘44 until March of ‘45 before we went overseas. And when we trained, we trained primarily in B-17s because they didn't have room for that many B-29s.

Chapter 6 – 4:35
Bomb Bay Doors

John Erling (JE): Were you awarded any medals or citations?

Warren G. Morris (WM): I got a DFC -- Distinguished Flying Cross -- and air medals, 3 or 4 clusters and som others.

JE: Was that for specific flights?

WM: Yes.

JE: Because they were dangerous?

WM: Dangerous, yeah. You know, they had a write up of what we did on those particular flights.

JE: Do you remember any of those that led to a citation or a medal?

WM: I think the one about Kawasaki -- when I went I forced the bomb bay doors open.

JE: Let's talk about that again, when you say you “forced the bomb bay doors open.”

WM: What I did: We went over the target, but the doors wouldn't open

JE: The doors of the...

WM: The bomb bay doors.

JE: The doors would not open so the bombs would drop.

WM: Yeah. So we made a left turn and went back out to sea. I went out and held on with one hand and bounced the doors. Well, that didn't work.

JE: You had a stick or something to try to force the doors open?

WM: No; I just bounced them first. So then I went back inside and two guys held on to me, and I hung out with a pair of pliers and some other tools. There was a spring that locked those doors. Well, I lost my tools, but somehow I broke that spring. Now how I did it -- I tried to do it on an airplane on the ground and hell, I couldn't touch it. But anyway, I managed to break that spring and the doors fell open. And when the doors fell open, I was hanging out there, and I thought “God, what am I doing out here?!” Then these guys pull me back in and we went on and flew that mission again.

JE: Were you literally hanging outside the plane?

WM: Yeah. Mm-hmm (in the affirmative).

JE: And they were holding on your legs?

WM: Yeah. I had to lean up to down to where I could hit my hand on this.

JE: So the plane is flying -- how fast? What's the speed of the plane?

WM: About 160 miles an hour.

JE: (Laughing)

WM: The doors opened and I thought, “Good Lord, what am I doing out here?”

JE: So the doors are open and it's just you and mother earth.

WM: Mother earth, yeah!

JE: They were holding onto your legs?

WM: My legs. Two guys had a hold of me. They pulled me back in.

JE: But you were a pilot too, weren't you?

WM: Yeah.

JE: So the copilot is flying the plane?

WM: Back then we called the first pilot the “airplane commander,” and the copilots were the “pilot.” That was early in the war and I was a copilot. So the pilot was flying.

When we were in Texas, the copilots didn't get very much time. And the guy that I flew with, I rode from Nebraska to Texas with him, and along the way we had five flat tires and I fixed the flat tires.

So when we got to Texas, he said, “Why don't you be my copilot?”

So I traded with another guy. And this guy, Jack Payne, had been a small engine instructor for a long time. He was a captain then; but he had a lot of experience. So we were training down there, and I wasn't getting any time, so I talked to him one day and I said, “I'll tell you what: I want to learn to fly this airplane. And if you don't teach me to fly it, I'm not going to combat with you. I guarantee you, I'm not going unless you teach me to fly this airplane.”

Well, he said, “I'll give you every-other take off and landing.” So that's what he did.

JE: You mean a copilot could have flown without knowing how to fly the plane?

WM: A lot of copilots never did make a takeoff or landing. They were there to pull the wheels up and do their duty.

JE: What else did they do as a copilot? Pull the wheels up and...?

WM: They could fly in between things.

JE: Okay, so they could actually fly the plane, but they couldn't land and take off.

WM: When you talk about flying, the fact that we'd had 65 total hours in a B-29 when we flew our first combat mission -- that's very little time. Now they get thousands of hours before they fly. When we trained, we had to train formation, and drop bombs, and navigation. We used old B-17s for training, but we did make one trip to Havana and our navigators got us lost. So we got to Havana by tuning into Havana radio and coming back the same way they were lost. So we tuned into station in Texas.

So when we got back, I thought, “God, how we make it to Japan and back if they can't get to Havana?”

By that time, we finally had a radar navigator and a regular navigator. So anyway, I hitchhiked home.

JE: I want to keep you a minute and make sure that you've talked about everything of your war days there during World War Two, as you think about it. Do you think we've covered pretty much everything?

WM: Pretty much.

JE: It's a remarkable story how you were able to make all those missions. But do you think of all the planes flying? There were actually very few that were shot down.

WM: Yes. Out of our unit, I don't remember how many were shot down. Not too many.

JE: But very few.

WM: Very few, really. Not as bad as it was in the B-17s in Europe. In the early days, they shot down a lot of them.

Chapter 7 – 6:15
Military Recall

John Erling (JE): The day that your service ended -- you kind of talked about that already, haven't you?

Warren G. Morris (WM): What happened: I came back, I was going to go to KU and finish. But my cousin wanted to go to OU, and he had a car. In 1946 having a car was a big deal. So I went to OU, and I finished in engineering and in law, but I was in the International Guard and I was recalled during the Korean War.

JE: But when you came out of the service, you went back to school.

WM: Yeah.

JE: Was that supported by the GI Bill?.

WM: GI Bill. Mm-hmm (in the affirmative). So in my first year of law school, I finished off 14 hours. So I got stuff like that, so I got an engineering degree at the end of my first year of law school. I had to be down there anyway, I thought I might as well try to get a law degree.

JE: So you came out with an engineering degree and then you had your ...

WM: Law degree.

JE: ... law degree as well.

WM: I was admitted to the bar in September of '50. We were called to active duty the first of October in '50. I took the bar early, but I lacked a few hours, so they let me go to school for about two months. If I got halfway through

the last semester, I could graduate, and I'd already passed the bar. So, when I had polio, I was damn glad I had that law degree and I could do something.

JE: Again, you got out of the service in January of ‘46.

WM: Yeah. I was recalled in October of ‘50.

JE: In ‘50. Alright. So, there's four years there: You went to school, got your law degree and your engineer’s degree.

WM: I'll tell you what I did during the Korean War. I was in a fighter outfit and I had a kind of a Mickey Mouse job. So I was up at Langley one day, went in to the deputy for materiel. I reviewed all the jobs I flew to.

I said, “I've reviewed everything and I think I'd be a good contracting officer.”

So three weeks later, I was a contracting officer at Sumter, South Carolina at Shaw Air Force Base and they were having lots of trouble. I had never been one, but they had two contracting officers there and they put me in charge. So, in four months, we accomplished a lot.

Then they sent me to Clovis, New Mexico to rehab a base that had been closed for four years. I met with General Cannon and he said, “I want that base open in four months and I don't care how you do it.” The Korean War was going on and they needed to pull guard outfits out of Wyoming and Colorado. So we got it open in four months.

When that was over, they made me the contracting officer for 9th Air Force over all their bases. So I was up at a higher level and was stationed at Pope Air Force base. So that's where I was when the war was over.

But we'd had to maneuver in Texas and I stayed down there to settle some claims with the cities. I had four companies of engineers and I bought supplies. We had to fix the runways. I was supposed to have been discharged the 9th of July, 1952. And I had a job with Atlantic Refining, which later became Atlantic Richfield, and they said I could go to work in

September ‘52 as an engineer, a geologist, a land man, or an attorney. So I went back to 9th Air Force to get my orders. This guy that I worked for wanted me to finish a project. So I signed a handwritten letter for 30 days to finish this project. 10 days later, I was paralyzed from the waist down with polio in the hospital in San Antonio. That took me out of flying and out of the oil business. So I came here to work for the government as a lawyer. Then I got in the building business and I've done a lot of things.

JE: Let’s go back. When you had joined the National Guard, and were called up again, what was your attitude about that? Didn't you think you'd already served your country enough? And it was...

WM: Well, no. A lot of time, I was trying to get out, but the big problem I had -- I wanted to get my degree and the Air Force wouldn't give me any time off and the guard wouldn't either.

So Joe Turner came down from Tulsa to Oklahoma City, as our acting CEO, and I went in and talked to him. I said, “Colonel, I'm not trying to get out of going to active duty. I've been taking your money and I'm happy to go.” And I found out if I could go halfway through the semester I could graduate and I'd already taken the bar.

So he said, “I tell you what you do: you come up every morning and sign the duty roster and be the officer of the day, and then go back and go to class and don't say anything about it.” And said, “So when you can transfer out, tell me.”

And they transferred me to Alexanderia, Louisiana.

JE: How long did that take for you?

WM: About two months. I went on active duty. In fact, Dale Fleet called me one day in conflicts and he said, “Captain Morris, I believe I'll withdraw that question.” It was obvious I wouldn't prepared, but I went to school for about two months and got enough hours in so I could get my degree. But I already passed the bar.

JE: And then you went in, and you took up your first assignment then.

WM: I went to Alexanderia, Louisiana and I had kind of a Mickey Mouse job. I was in charge of the service clubs and on several different jobs. Langley was our headquarters. But I wanted to get somewhere to get some experience. When I was up there, the deputy for materiel ran everything all in construction. So I went in and talked to him and told him I had a degree in engineering and law. I thought I'd be a good contracting officer. I didn't realize it, but they were having lots of trouble at Shaw. Three weeks later, I was at Shaw and the contracting officer. So I talked to the base commander. I said, “You've already got two contracting officers.”

He said, “You're in charge.”

I'd never been a contracting officer. We had a lot of construction jobs which I managed.

JE: You managed to do it, and you saw your way through, then, to 1952.

WM: As soon as that was over, the deputy for materiel for the 9th Air Force called me one day and wanted me to come to Pope Air Force Base. So I went down to check out to go up there. The word came down from the base commander that I wasn't gonna go.

So I went back to my office and this colonel called me and said, “I told you to come up here.”

I said, “The base commander said that I'm not gonna go.”

So he said, “Well, just wait there a while.”

Finally, after about an hour, he said, “We got it worked out. You can go to Clovis on temporary duty. He's agreed to let you go for four months on temporary duty.” He didn't let me go.

When I was up there. I said, “If you stay in Clovis, tell me and I'll take my wife, we move out to Clovis.”

So he called the commanding general and said, “General Captain Morris is

here and can we assure him he's gonna stay in Clovis?"

And he said, "Yes."

So I went ahead and moved to Clovis on temporary duty for 120 days. Then they transferred me to Clovis. From that, they transferred me to the 9th Air Force headquarters.

Chapter 8 – 7:23
Polio

John Erling (JE): Where is it when you realize you have polio?

Warren G. Morris (WM): We'd had a maneuver. I went back to 9th Air Force on the 9th of July to be discharged. While I was there, this guy who I worked for, who had been one of Doolittle's pilots in 1942, he wanted me to stay in the service. I didn't want to do that.

But he wanted me to finish a project I was on. He said, "How long can it take you to finish what you're doing?"

I said, "About 30 days."

"Well," they said, "do you stay on active duty 30 days?"

So I wrote a handwritten letter, extending my active duty 30 days. 10 days later, I was paralyzed from the waist down in the hospital in San Antonio.

JE: Let's talk about polio. Because of the Salk vaccine, we don't have to worry about that today. Was polio rampant, then, in your area or did you know a lot of people who had polio?

WM: Well, when I was in San Antonio, we had about, probably, 40 service people in the polio ward. This is in 1952. I was supposed to have been discharged the 9th of July, '52. And I was going to go to work for Atlantic Refining in September of '52. I already had a job with 'em. Well, of course,

with polio, that took me out of flying and out of the oil business, and I came to Tulsa to work for the government as a lawyer.

JE: How sudden did polio come on to you?

WM: I felt bad for about a week. And, in fact, my wife had an aunt in Waco. I don't know when I stayed there and took a hot bath -- I just felt ached all over. That was like, about, Wednesday of a week. And then that weekend I had a staff car and I didn't want to take it out of Texas. So I drove it up the edge of Texas and left it at an aunt's house and hitchhiked on to Norman.

Well, the next morning, Saturday, I just felt terrible. So I talked to the Navy doctor and, in fact, I went out to see him. So he gave me his home phone number. He said, “If you get the feeling worse, you call me in the night and I'll meet you.”

Well, by Monday morning, I just ached all over. So I went out the Navy base and he said, “I'm not sure, but I think you have polio.”

He sent me up to Taker Field, and when I was walking into the dispensary, I collapsed.

So then they flew me to San Antonio. The big problem is that you get that paralysis out of your leg. But I think you have it in your system, for some time, I'm convinced of it -- because I'd felt bad for a period of time, maybe a week or two.

I'm just lucky I was on active duty because I get all my medical taken care of. For two years, I'd go in and for physical, and they said, “Well, if you need any help, go talk to the VA.”

And I said, “I need a copy of my records when I get out.”

And we argued back and forth about that for two years. And finally, one day, a guy called me and he said, “You've been AWOL for 60 days; you’re supposed to be in Wichita Falls.”

I said, “That's true.” But I said, “I'm not gonna lay around your hospital.

You're supposed to give me a physical. I need a retirement board in 72 hours." I said, "I'm not asking for disability, not asking for a damn thing. I just want a copy of my records. So if down the line, I have trouble. I got a record of it. That's all I'm asking for."

When I'm at the retirement board, that time, I had braces and crutches on then. They said I could stay on active duty as a contracting officer, even with braces or they said they gave me 50% permanent retirement. So I took the retirement. Now I get about $1500 a month tax free, plus my medical, which is a big factor for me and my wife. If I had to have it, I had it at a good time. I wish I never had it, but...

JE: That must have been devastating to you, to realize you had polio.

WM: Yeah. What they do is they take you into the hot water and stretch your legs because your legs are cramped up. Normally, you can cut your toes down and raise your feet up. I can't do that. I learned to raise my feet up with my toes. They stretched you, and stretched you in the hot water because your legs are cramped. Then they start exercising your feet and toes. And then they finally had to learn to crawl in a room with mattresses on the floor. Then they put us in the swimming pool of hot water and you walk with a girl behind you, with water up to your neck, and kept walking until you finally walk with water at your waist.

Then they put us in bars that you could raise up and down on, you know, into a wheelchair and into crutches. By that time, my wife was living at where they transferred her to San Antonio. So I was in wheelchair one day and a guy came up -- he'd had his spinal column severed, so he kind of swung around like that walking.

He said, "Get out of that damn wheelchair or you'll never walk."

So I did, I really worked at it. Although I did learn this: Through the years up front into people that were back in a wheelchair, or crutches, and things. I've asked them, "How much exercise did you get? How did you work at it?"

"Oh, I worked hard at it."

Well, a guy that ran the dry cleaners down here told me his son had had polio and he really exercised and he was telling me: “just don’t overdo it.”

So I didn't, I'd rest in the middle of the day. And if I got to feeling bad in the middle of the morning, I'd go home and go to bed. But I worked every day at it, so...

JE: How long from the time you contracted polio until you felt that you were able to walk on your own?

WM: Well, the first couple of years that I built houses, I used crutches all the time; and then I built a bunch of houses in Sand Springs and that summer is ‘55 or ‘56. I’d take off my braces because the straps irritated my legs. And one night I took those braces off and I never wore them again.

JE: So your legs have gotten strong enough?

WM: They got stronger, but had to get my strength in my toes. See if you turn your toes down, you can raise your foot up. I can't. Whenever I raise my feet up, I raise my toes. So I had to develop enough strength..

JE: Here you are, 86 years old, do you still feel the effects of the polio today?

WM: Well, I have to use a cane to get around because I work all the time. In fact, I worked this morning. I'm a commissioner on a case up in Rogers County where they're taking some land for some people. That's what I do, primarily. I do appraisals and I handle cases. Say you’re selling your property and you don't think you got enough money, or they think you got too much -- go to trial -- and I try cases like that.

JE: Through all of that, you think to yourself: “I flew all these missions over Japan. 34 missions. Didn't get shot down. Came close to losing my life. And then I end up with polio.” Did you get depressed? How did you fight it?

WM: Oh, yeah. The only good thing about it: I was still on active duty; because if I hadn't extended my active duty, I'd had it anyway -- because you have it in your system. So I was in the hospital. That was in July of ‘52 and I was in the hospital about April. And then I came up here. Do you remember Alan

Vera? He's a federal judge. He's a friend of mine. He had a job for him working as a lawyer with the government. But the problem doing that I wouldn't get any exercise. So I had a friend, Bill Francis, and he was a builder. He helped me get started in the building business. So I built 1900 houses, when I was building houses, and developed 12 or 13 subdivisions and really went back to practice law in the last 25 years.

JE: So when you build all those houses, you wanted to be active and that was going to give you strength in your life.

WM: Yeah, because it made me walk. But I use crutches a lot, walking through houses and use my crutches, and then I get too far away from my car -- and then I'd send somebody who worked for me to get my car.

Chapter 9 – 4:12
Secretary of State

Warren G. Morris (WM): And then, when I was at OU, I was active in a lot of things. I was President of the Engineering Society. And I ran for Secretary of State when I was in law school; I was a Republican from Kansas because I felt we needed Republicans

John Erling (JE): In Oklahoma.

WM: Yeah.

JE: You ran for Secretary of State?

WM: Yeah, when I was in law school. I felt that was the thing to do. But then after I came here, I got active in a number of things and I realized by the time I worked all day, I just got out of it.

If I owed you a favor, I'd return that favor or had somebody who worked for me return it. And I just quit getting favors from people. You know, you just get involved in so many things.

JE: What year did you run for Secretary of State?

WM: 1950.

JE: And who beat you?

WM: He was from Pawnee. Joel... something-or-other who'd run for governor. We campaigned together.

JE: You were young.

WM: I was a senior in law school. I was admitted to the bar in September of '50 and we ran that fall.

I didn't want to be Secretary of State. It didn't pay enough money, but I thought it was important that we had people run. Everybody was Democrats then. See, when I came down there in '46, I got involved with some of the Republicans. You know, Republicans. Everybody was a Democrat.

We had some oil men from Tulsa, Mr. Skelly, [unintelligible], some others. They put up money and paid us to go into towns in southern Oklahoma and find Republicans.

Well, my uncle Wilbur had been the postmaster in El Dorado in the Hoover administration. So I found, if you found a postmaster during the Hoover administration, that gave you a lead for a Republican. Our job was to find Republicans, so they'd have somebody they could write to and there's towns we couldn't find any of the Republicans. But the good, see -- then we got $65 a month on the GI Bill. They paid us $150 a weekend and our expenses to go out and to find Republicans. So we did that for about six months.

JE: That would have been what year?

WM: '46

JE: Mr Skelly sent you out and paid you to find Republicans.

WM: Bailey Vinson. Bailey Vinson had a fellow that worked for him that was kind of his political man and he's the one that really recruited us -- rent a car and pay all expenses.

JE: So you came into a town -- what would you do, then, the first thing to try to find Republicans. You just didn't walk up to people, did you?

WM: The way to do it was to find out who the postmaster was during the Hoover administration. People knew that. See, this was 1946. That would give you a lead. Once you found those people ...

JE: Did you go to them then once you found out who they were?

WM: You'd talk to them, and visit with them, and find out if they knew any other people -- got their name and address -- so that the headquarters could write 'em for information. See, there were very few Republicans in 1946 in Oklahoma.

JE: That database is what you were building, then, in '46.

WM: Mm-hmm (in the affirmative). The fall of '46.

JE: And did that pay off?

WM: We had one precinct in Oklahoma City. I'd contacted all the people to find out how they voted, and then made a point to get those people back to vote. And we won a precinct, I remember, in a Democratic area by working it that way. And now a state president of Young Republicans and then later the national president of the Young Republicans. I grew up as a Republican, and the only really Republican family we had was the Kelly's at Bristol. They own some banks now.

JE: The Spirit Bank family. Kell Kelly and that family.

WM: Kell Kelly. Kell's grandmother -- she wore a big hat and she came to all the Young Republican meetings right after the war; and she had four or five boys, and she's really a charming lady. Kell, his dad died young, but his

uncles are still around. I think there were four of them at OU when I was. They're about the only really Republicans I knew of.

JE: Henry Bellmon -- did he come along in that time period with you? Did you help him in a campaign?

WM: No. I remember the first night he was campaigning over the Ramada. I've been working hard, and it was about eight o'clock at night and I stopped to go in and talk to him, and I thought, "Oh, God, I'm tired," and I went home but I had a friend, Clyde Wheeler -- C.A. Wheeler -- that worked for him all the time.

JE: Did you work in a campaign for somebody?

WM: No -- other than I've been precinct chairman a few times. At the end of the day, I've done a lot of business. I've got lots of things going now.

Chapter 10 – 5:53
Condemnation

Warren G. Morris (WM): Right now, I'm the co-attorney on eight more condemnation cases, where the people are condemned. We just finished one this last week. We're in trial for four days. The Commissioner orders $150,000 and we went to trial and got her $400,000 more money.

John Erling (JE): Wow.

WM: And, plus, our expenses. Do you know how condemnation works?

JE: No, I don't.

WM: Well, in this particular case, the Tulsa Tech College -- they've got a lot of money, really. At least the assessor says they have. They wanted 10 acres on Apache, just east of their school off Apache in Harvard. And they had to appraise and offered her $150,000. But then the appraiser, someone of his men around tried to buy it quick from her. Well, she didn't want to do it. So

anyway, when I got involved in it, they raised her offer about 250 or $300,000. But they did a little work. I said, “I've hired an appraiser, Mike Sizemore. He's a hell of a good witness and I don't know what he'll testify, but whatever he testifies, that's the number we got to live with.”

In my estimation, he will testify about $500,000 and get a jury for $400,000.

“Well,” she said, “That's not enough! My land is worth a million dollars!” So we battled that around for 18 months and finally tried it this last week.

Mike testified. She'd already even paid $150,000. We got her another $400,000 plus our expenses. If you beat the Commissioner award by 10%, you get all your costs. So we get paid for attorney fees, and appraisal fees, and expenses.

JE: Well, all this experience, doing this today -- you learned your construction all while you were in the military.

WM: Yeah See, I had a lot of experience at Clovis because we rebuilt that base; and we had just almost no specs to work with. We got in trouble with the government because we made a deal with some architects over at Lubbock and paid them three percent to do plans. Well, there were protests: they're supposed to get 7%. We'd get a contract signed. I'd get a twin engine beach with five or six of our people and we'd hand-carry it to Pope Air Force Base at Fort Bragg. Walk up through, and get it approved, and hand-carry it back the next day. I'd work that day, fly that night, work up there at day and fly back. Out there there’s some local qualifications that decide who is going to get the work. So when we left the paving contract, man, they were upset. The guy came out at the last minute. They complained and said he wasn’t qualified. So they went to Washington, and then to Wrightfield, then to Langley, and then to Pope, and then they said, “Talk to Captain Morris at Clovis.”

Well, by the time they got back to Clovis, we had already had the contract approved. We were tearing up the runway. We had so much pressure from local people that we got guys in Jeeps -- two guys with air police on 45s -- we sent them up to Los Alamos to deliver their batch back down the

highway.

So we did a lot of things. We violated a lot of regulations, but in four months we had the base operational.

Cannon said he didn't give a damn what we did; he wanted the thing operational in four months.

He wanted to pull these guard units out of Wyoming by cold weather. So that was quite an experience.

JE: It sure was. We didn't talk about -- you got married at a certain time. When did you get married?

WM: I married in 49 and we were married in 1617 years and got a divorce. And then Carolyn and I have been married 35 years and you have Children. I did, I had a boy and a girl. They live in Texas. Carolyn has three Children and grandchildren, but we've been married 35 years. She's 80

WM: and you're in good health, aren't you?

JE: You know, I don't walk very well. But,

WM: but after polio, the fact that you could begin to walk again and walked without your braces. Was that unusual for polio patients?

JE: I don't know. I think a lot of it was, I never got too tired. I got a lot of rest at night. I got a lot of rest. And then in the middle of the day, I put my feet up on my desk, take a nap for 10 or 15 minutes. Done that for years. I just started using a cane in the last few years because of my balance had very good. But up until two or three years ago, I didn't use a cane. But the first years I used crutches a lot, but I quit wearing braces in, I think 55 or 56. I was out in Sand springs. I had to build up my strength of my feet. My toes took a long time to get enough strength in the early years of walking with any braces. I couldn't walk too far.

WM: Was it ever determined? Who got polio and why they got polio

JE: as far as I know

WM: it wasn't that you had got cold or got chilled or? I mean, there was no way you could figure out why it was, it was just that you started feeling bad. One day

JE: we finished this big maneuver. My wife was at Norman So I got a sign down to Fort Hood and on claims. So they left me down there to settle with the cities. We, we torn up airports. So I worked on that and settled claims. This general asked me, what should we do about it? I said, I think the smart thing to do is just go up and down the street in these little towns and see if we owe you money. If it looks reasonable we ought to pay them. So, I did that for a week or two with all these little towns. Does the air force owe you any money? I don't know anybody have done that before, but as a contractor had the authority to do it. Then when we fix these runways, they sent four companies of a engineers out of Pennsylvania and I bought supplies and asphalt and that sort of thing for them.

WM: Do thoughts of your military career flying or anything? Do they come back to you these days?

JE: Oh, yeah. You think about it sometimes when I have trouble going to sleep and I think of all the places I've lived, I've lived 57 places

WM: you won't dream anymore about flights or missions you took or anything. They don't come back to you now anymore.

JE: Sometimes I have trouble going to sleep. I think a certain place in my life and where I've been and help you go to sleep.

Chapter 11 – 5:40
Advice to Students

John Erling (JE): Young people will listen to this. You want to give out any advice about life and profession? What, what do you say to young kids listening to this?

Warren G. Morris (WM): Mainly, don't do drugs and get a good education. Education is the key to whatever you do.

JE: Many of them, of the younger generation, can't really appreciate what you gave to your country and how you served your country. I guess there's no way they can fully appreciate that.

WM: I was just happy to live through it. I feel sorry for these kids who have been on a second, or third, or fourth tour in the Middle East.

JE: Yeah.

WM: One reason I did well in flight school -- I got sick a lot. I almost got washed out at every stage for getting sick. And I finally learned, when I got sick, I'd throw up and carry a sack and throw it overboard. At each stage, I had to be extra good because -- I've learned it as long as I was flying, I didn't get sick. But if I'd fly with somebody else, I'd get sick. And, so, when I went through the B-17 training -- it's amazing that back as of May of '44, they're identifying people that fly B-29s later. They took the top B-17 pilots to train for B-29s. I didn't know that at the time I went through this training. But the reason I did good: I worked hard; I didn't want to get washed out for getting sick.

JE: Airsick?

WM: Airsick. Yeah.

JE: And when you were flying, you were in control --

WM: I didn't get airsick.

JE: And why do you think that was?

WM: I don't know. When I ride with somebody as an instructor, I'd get sick. So I just carried a sack in my flight suit and I'd throw up and throw it over. I tried not to eat. We'd tried allk kinds of things.

JE: Do you think that, when you were flying, your mind was so focused on what you were doing?

WM: It has to have been. But when I came back from overseas, I went out to California to get discharged; and I had to get my flying done. So I went to March Field and flew with some guys in a twin engine plane. We flew several hours, because you had to have so many hours a month to get paid. I remember when I got out of the plane, I walked out the end of the wing and threw up. That was after I came back from overseas. I don't know what caused it, but I did.

JE: When you take a domestic flight now you don't get airsick, do you?

WM: I don't know what it is about jets, but I don't get sick. When I was flying C-47s and stuff like that -- I got the [unintelligible] medicine one summer; I'd fly out to Utah and I -- several times going out there from Denver to Salt Lake or Moab -- would get sick. I don't know what caused it.

JE: Hm. Well, you must have a lot of pride knowing what you did to serve your country. Do you?

WM: Well, when I finished the B-17 ring, almost everybody went to England or Europe. I wasn't going, I was held back. I was terribly upset. I saw the training officer and I said, "Hell, the war is gonna be over and I won't get a chance to serve."

And he told me what a big opportunity it was and how they carefully selected people, the best students and so forth. Finally, he said, "Lieutenant, I don't give a damn. That's what you're gonna do."

So that's what I did. So from May of '44 to March of '45 we did things, but really didn't accomplish much. Flew 65 hours during that period of time, but that's not very much time.

JE: Those hours flying. What were you doing?

WM: Well, on one trip, we flew to Havana and back.

JE: But you got in on that because of your insistence: you wanted to fly these missions and you wanted to fly during wartime.

WM: Yeah. But in the morning, about six days out of San Francisco, we went over by transport planning on Guam and then they sent up to Tinion -- this unit -- and I went on a mission with another crew. It was one of those fire raids right after the Tokyo raid. And right when I got back, I said, “Fellas, I'm ready to go home. I've seen all the war I want.”

I could hardly wait to get there, but in that one flight I determined that wasn't where I wanted to make a career. Could hardly wait to get over there. I thought they were never gonna send us overseas. Most of the people I flew B-17s with went to England or Italy and flew B-17s. One guy I roomed with was from my hometown. He got shot down, bailed out over Yugoslavia. He's never really recovered from all these things. But most of our training in B-17s as a unit included formation, and practice bombing, and navigation, and the whole world war I flew B-17s.

JE: You were real happy, then, when you got that assignment to fly the B-29 and you knew you'd be in military combat.

WM: Well, no, I got that assignment but I want to go and stay in B-s17 because it would have meant combat right away. Because everybody that had gone through B-17 training, they went to England or someplace.

What he said: they held the top 10% of the students back. See, that was saving us to go to B-29s.

JE: But you ended up with, obviously, a lot of combat anyway. And you thought you weren't going to.

WM: Yeah. I was ready to come home when that was over.

JE: I will probably always remember this interview when you said you were hanging outside the plane trying to open up those bomb bay doors. You have given to our country. And I admire you for wanting to be in there, wanting to fly, and you put your life at risk every single time you went up there. That's something to be admired.

WM: See, when I was in law school, we got about $75 a month for the GI Bill; the International Guard paid me about $75 a month. And I was a counselor in charge of a dormitory of freshmen -- that paid me $80 a month. And I was a circulation manager on The Covered Wagon and that paid me about $75 a month. So I was making about $300 a month and I had a new car. So when I was going on with that law school. I said, "Hell, I'm having a good time -- might as well just enjoy life." Because you could live on $75 a month on university housing right after the war.

Chapter 12 – 5:10
Busy at 86

John Erling (JE): And again those years when you were at OU?

Warren G. Morris (WM): Started in January '46 and I went on out of active duty in October of '50.

JE: Football, back then, when OU was playing...

WM: One of the coaches left OU to go off to a better job at $9000 a year. I remember reading an article about that.

JE: Bud Wilkinson -- had he come there then?

WM: He was there when I was there.

JE: Did you go to football games?

WM: Yeah.

JE: And he was beginning, then, to start his string of victories?

WM: The guy that was a CPA, and he looked after the student newspaper -- and The Covered Wagon was a student magazine -- I got acquainted with him. And as a humor magazine, I made a deal with him that I got a third of

all the money took in on The Covered Wagon.

So what I did, I had a lottery -- give two free trips to the Westpoint game. I had a drawing at the half.

That year, I got a third of everything we took in. So I made a deal with the fraternities and sororities: If they bought 50 subscriptions of The Covered Wagon, then we'd run their pledge picture in one of the issues that did that for several years and that was worth about $500 or $600 a year.

The Covered Wagon, I doubt you'd ever heard of it, but it's was a humor magazine that had been shut down during the war. So I ran it for about four years; and then the next year, they said a third of the money was too much. So I agreed to take 25% of that sale.

Then, on Saturdays, I parked cars off the campus, I could make a couple hundred dollars on Saturday back in 1946 or 7. That was a lot of money.

Then also, I had a deal: Mr. Bright, because he was a CPA for the publications, he had contacts with a lot of people and they would want somebody to put hand bills out at the games. They paid good money, but you had to get somebody responsible.

They didn't care how much it cost, they just wanted to make sure they got handed out. So I took some of those contracts. There are always things you could do.

JE: Well, you were a businessman way back when, weren't ya?

WM: As a kid I was, too. Got to where I sold the Saturday Evening Post and Ladies' Home Journal. If I got any money, I had to earn it.

JE: The old-fashioned way, wasn't it?

WM: The old-fashioned way. But I would probably went into the oil business if I had to, and stayed there and worked for my uncle -- if I hadn't went off to war.

JE: Was he very successful in the oil business?

WM: Well, when he died he was worth $10 million -- which wasn't bad.

JE: The life you lived, however, was interesting. Yeah, you could have stayed there. Might have been a wealthier man.

WM: Oh, I'm sure I would have. Anyway, I've made a good living and I like what I'm doing. So, I've done a lot of different things in the last 25 years. I got certified as an appraiser and I'm on the board of equalization. We regulate taxes. You know, if the taxes are too high. And I'm on the excise board -- only two things I do for the county -- but I've done a lot of different things: develop land and practice law.

See, in the law business you run in a lot of people have problems and you can help. If I got stopped as a builder for speeding, I got a ticket. Well, once I went back to practicing law and I got stopped for speeding, I'd say, "Well, I've got a hearing down here."

They'd say, "Oh, well, counsel will give you..." So you get some prestige to being a lawyer. I had no idea of doing that. I just thought it would be good working for an oil company if you had a law degree.

See, Atlantic Refining later became Atlantic Richfield back at the time I interviewed with them, back in the early '50s. It's a small company but it was a good company. And when I was on that maneuver in Texas, I interviewed with about a half a dozen oil companies. And I thought there was more potential working for them than anybody else. So they hired me to go to work in September of '52 as an engineer, or a geologist, a land man, or an attorney.

They said, "You decide where you want to start."

I wanted to start as a land man because that gave me the opportunity to deal with more people. Well, I didn't get to do that. Anyway, I'm still here.

JE: You are. I admire you. 86 years old, you're busy and still have a lot of things to do, don't you?

WM: Well, today they're condemning some land for a highway over by Catoosa. I'm a commissioner on it.

The way they do: If they want to take your house, for example, and you don't agree with the price, they appoint three commissioners. Those three commissioners set a price and they pay you that amount of money. Then you got 30 days to object to that, and 60 days to ask for a jury trial.

So I got two cases in Sapulpa with the VFW. And they hired me because they wanted a combat veteran. I met in a restaurant over there. And I got three cases down on Highway 75 where they're taking oil properties. One in Wager County, one in Tulsa County out there by 193rd. So I got quite a bit of work to work on.

JE: I guess you do. Yeah, that's pretty amazing. Well, I thank you for this time and this was very good. I just want younger generations to know what veterans like you did to preserve freedom for those of us here in America. You're active now and still doing things in our community. So, I thank you for that and I thank you for your service to our country. I appreciate what you've done for us today.

WM: You know a little bit more about B-29s.