

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Felix L. Burrus**

Date of Interview: April 10, 2016

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## **Fredericksburg, Texas**

### **Interview with Mr. Felix L. Burrus**

Interview in progress.

Mike Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano and today is the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016. Today I'll be interviewing Mr. Felix Lewis, his middle name is spelled L-e-w-i-s, Burrus here in Austin, Texas at...Bellmont Westlake, no, Belmont Village of Westlake? Well anyway, this interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commissions, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Uh, good morning. Mr. Burrus, can you tell me when and where you were born?

Mr. Burrus: In Hartburg, Texas...H-a-r-t-b-u-r-g...Hartburg and when I was about one year old, we moved to Orange, Texas and then from Orange, Texas to Beaumont, Texas.

Mike Zambrano: Well I've never heard of Hartsburg [s/b Hartburg] or Orange.

Mr. Burrus: Well, you wouldn't have heard of it because...it was a sawmill town. My father was that...the owner...

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Burrus: ...of a sawmill. And they used to move from little areas to the other; they moved the...sawmills of the timber...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: ...instead of bringing the timber into the sawmill, and so they moved around. Hartburg was...was one of the places they were, and right now there's nothing in Hartburg.

Mike Zambrano: Really? It was that small of a...of a town?

Mr. Burrus: There's nothing there.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Huh, that's interesting that they would move to different areas to go...uh, cut down timber.

Mr. Burrus: They would cut out...

Mike Zambrano: (Throat clearing)

Mr. Burrus: ...what they called a...cut out in an area that was economic...(throat clearing) to cut...cut the timber within this...within a radius. I don't remember how big, but anyway, it got to be uneconomic to bring it in anymore, so they would move the mill...to a new section of...virgin timber.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: And so Hartburg was one...one of them; where...where the sawmill was located. My father was married to a girl in Georgetown.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, not to far from here.

Mr. Burrus: So that...what's the university there?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, Southwest University?

Mr. Burrus: Southwestern...anyway, they moved from there...after they were married they moved to Hartburg, and of course, she said she got off the train and looked around and...thought there was an Ind...and Indian behind every tree.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), oh boy!

Mr. Burrus: (Laughter), so...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Burrus: ...anyway, I was born there and then we moved, like I say, to Orange then to Beaumont where I spent...the majority of my...well, ninety-nine percent of my life...was spent in Beaumont. We had a sawmill there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: And so, then the war rolled around and I enlisted as a Cadet because I wanted to fly.

Mike Zambrano: I...just a question before that...just real quick. What was your father's name?

Mr. Burrus: Eugene Anthony.

Mike Zambrano: Eugene Anthony, and your mother's?

Mr. Burrus: Vivia, V-i-v-i-a...Dever, D-e-v-e-r; that was her maiden name; Vivia Dever Burrus.

Mike Zambrano: And...when was it...that you were born? What...what date were you born?

Mr. Burrus: August 19, 1926.

Mike Zambrano: Aug...oh, August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1926?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Burrus: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Burrus: I did; I had an older brother, Eugene Anthony...the...uh, junior, and a sister, Vitula (sp?) Ann (sp?), and then I was the baby so to speak.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum, hum, and I always have to ask this question because your generation grows up during the Depression. How was...how was that for your family? I...I'm guessing your...your father worked through it?

Mr. Burrus: To worked...to it.

Mike Zambrano: Well, did your father work through the...the Depression?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah; oh yeah. We would...let's see, the Depression...was in what... '29?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, started (unintelligible).

Mr. Burrus: It started, you know, the Depression...everybody relates the Depression to...to the market crash.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: And that was in 1929, wasn't it?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: Back in those days, you know, a dollar was a dollar; you go to the grocery store with a dollar and you could...you could buy all the groceries for a dollar. Everything was so cheap.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Burrus: Relatively cheap. And well, they did get through the Depression because we lived in a small community (throat clearing). A lot of people grew their own vegetables and their hogs and their cows and their (unintelligible), and it worked out. I was so young I don't remember it, of course. But...the real Depression did not end until the Second World War...1941.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: And I...that's when...money became plentiful.

Mike Zambrano: Since you (throat clearing)...since you say you grew up in a small community, did...did folks trade things...like...

Mr. Burrus: They did, oh yeah, yeah, they'd trade; barter...barter system.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: Dozen eggs for a...four ears of corn or something, you know.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: I don't remember that, but they tell me that's what it was.

Mike Zambrano: So, it sounds like your family did...fine?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, yeah; we did fine.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: And lived in Beaumont in a sawmill. I can remember, and I worked there with my dad at a later date. We had, every Monday morning, we had a line of...of Afro-Americans lined up; must have been three or four or five hundred of them in a line and we'd take what we needed and rest of them would go home. And the ones we kept we paid them one dollar a day for ten hours.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Burrus: Ten cents an hour.

Mike Zambrano: And what would they do?

Mr. Burrus: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: What would they do in the mill?

Mr. Burrus: Well, the usual...sawmill duties – stack lumber and they would...as they...as the mill...as the tim...the products came off of the carriage, they would take that and stack it up; put it in a dry kiln...k-i-l-n.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: And that was a series of steam pipes that radiated the heat and it...would dry out these...uh, the timber, the lumber.

Mike Zambrano: Why...why would they do that? I'm just curious.

Mr. Burrus: Well, if you didn't, it would warp.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Burrus: If you put green lumber in a house, it would warp...as it dried out.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay; I guess I could see that.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, so they...they dried it out uniformly so it wouldn't...warp. Anyway, I thought it was interesting, ten hours for one dollar; it's unheard of now. (Chuckles)

Mike Zambrano: I mean, one dollar is...uhm, what...some folks get ten...

Mr. Burrus: Well, you can't relate it to anything really.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it's...it's totally different times.

Mr. Burrus: And we gave them no insurance; there were no...there was no, no... no health insurance; no life insurance, but that's just the way it was.

Mike Zambrano: Right. Sort of different.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, do you...I guess you...you graduate from high school in Beaumont; is that correct?

Mr. Burrus: Correct, Beaumont High School in 1943.

Mike Zambrano: 1943. You're in high school when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurs?

Mr. Burrus: Uh yeah, correct.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember...where you might have been or what you might have been doing when...that happened...I mean for...?

Mr. Burrus: Well, I've forgotten exactly where we were but we had a friend who had a farm out in the country and they...the hay stacks...there was big stacks of hay as a result of harvesting rice. You don't see those anymore, but in

those days, they used to stack up...this...made hay stack and the rice...twenty feet high.

Mike Zambrano:

Rice?!

Mr. Burrus:

And we used to go out there and play in those...in those hay stacks. Then when the war...when the deed...when the Japs raid...attacked Pearl Harbor in '41, there was a lot of racial problems.

Mike Zambrano:

Uhm.

Mr. Burrus:

And I can remember just vaguely that blacks and the...racial problems we had and I think we...if I'm [not] mistaken, I remember the...we sent in the National Guard. They set up their machine guns and everything; it was quite...quite...

Mike Zambrano:

In Beaumont there?!

Mr. Burrus:

Oh yeah.

Mike Zambrano:

Hum, okay.

Mr. Burrus:

To control the racial problems.

Mike Zambrano:

Uhm, did this go on for a couple of days; was this...?

Mr. Burrus:

Yes, seems like, yeah, maybe a week or so.

Mike Zambrano:

It sounds familiar.

Mr. Burrus:

Oh yeah. Well, you, of course, you weren't around.

Mike Zambrano:

Oh no; I didn't come till much later (laughter).

Mr. Burrus:

(Laughter)

Mike Zambrano:

Uhm, so...when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, you know, I understand a lot of...a lot of...men decided to go and join. Did you know any older boys who went off to join...the Army or Navy?

Mr. Burrus:

I did; I remember...well, my brother was in the Merchant Marine and he was in there before me, of course. You know, the Merchant Marine carried a lot of...of the various supplies to the troops.

Mike Zambrano:

Oh yeah.

Mr. Burrus:

And so, there were a few of the local boys we knew that went off to war and...some of them came back; some of them didn't. But those were...they were hectic days, but they were interesting days...you know?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I would imagine; I mean, the war...the...life changes; people start rationing and...

Mr. Burrus: That's right.

Mike Zambrano: ...victory gardens...and did your family...well, how...how did that affect your family? What did your family do?

Mr. Burrus: Well, we...we of course, had a home there in Beaumont, Texas on Liberty Street in Beaumont, and my sister...well, she was in the...University of Texas and I later went up there for about...six or eight months and then I...I enlisted in the Air Corps. They called the Air Corps in those days; now it's the Air Force.

Mike Zambrano: Right, and 'cause your...your separation paper there (unintelligible)?

Mr. Burrus: Sure.

Mike Zambrano: Just so we can get some of the dates here that were...were recorded. Okay, this separation...

Mr. Burrus: I don't if...if it gives all of that information.

Mike Zambrano: I did see it here a moment ago. Oh, date of enlistment 10 August 1944.

Mr. Burrus: That's...

Mike Zambrano: Why did you chose the...why did you chose the Army...to enlist in?

Mr. Burrus: Well, it wasn't really the Army, it was...I guess it was...I didn't chose the Army; they sent me...they told us that we could have a choice of either enlisting in the regular Army for one year or we didn't...they couldn't tell us when we would...when we would get out of the service, and so I chose the...enlist in the regular Army for one year because I could...I could know exactly...when I was going to get out.

Mike Zambrano: So...so when you go enlist, you go down to the post office; do you go down to a government office; what...?

Mr. Burrus: No, I've forgotten exactly how you did it, but...we did sign some papers I'm sure.

Mike Zambrano: And did you go immediately into the Army?

Mr. Burrus: I was in...I was in the Army at that time...

Mike Zambrano: Oh...



Mr. Burrus: ...I was in the Air Force at that time...Air Corps at that time.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, and...I read somewhere that you were an Air Cadet because you wanted to fly?

Mr. Burrus: That's right; I was an Air Cadet and that's when they decided they didn't need anymore Cadets, and so they gave us a choice (throat clearing) you know, even though the war was over. You still had a lot of equipment still overseas...lot of airplanes, so they needed Mechanics. So they told me I was a Mechanic (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Just like that?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: You know, I notice that...between the time that you enlist and the time that you...uhm, let's see, what does it say here...entry...where is it; I keep losing it. Uh, date of entry into active service is the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 1945; I guess at Fort Sam Houston. Uhm, between those dates...what...what's going on?

Mr. Burrus: I was at the University of Texas.

Mike Zambrano: Ah! Okay.

Mr. Burrus: For about...a little less than a year.

Mike Zambrano: So, you enlisted...you go to UT?

Mr. Burrus: Right.

Mike Zambrano: And then they finally take you into the service?

Mr. Burrus: Correct.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Burrus: In...Sam Houston in San Antonio I believe.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it says right here. So...

Mr. Burrus: You know, it seems maybe strange to you that I don't remember all those details, but we're talking about...we're talking about seventy some odd years ago.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I under...I understand; I mean, it's a long time.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, oh yeah!

Mike Zambrano: So, at Fort Sam Houston...what did you do?

Mr. Burrus: That was a form of...induction.

Mike Zambrano: Where you get all of your shots and your...clothes?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, shots and shave your head and all that, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Do you receive your basic training there?

Mr. Burrus: No, they shipped us from there to Keesler Field, Mississippi.

Mike Zambrano: Keesler Field?

Mr. Burrus: Keesler...K-double e-s-l-e-r.

Mike Zambrano: Keesler...

Mr. Burrus: Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi; that's where we had our basic training.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay. Now what do you recall about your basic training?

Mr. Burrus: Oh, it was quite in...interesting. Uh, nothing really in particular. It was, you know, ath...calisthenics and...(throat clearing), and indoctrination. Uh, let's see, we went to Airplane Mechanics School in Langley Field, Virginia...this came later on.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, it says here you shot Expert with a thirty caliber carbine?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, right.

Mike Zambrano: And, I guess, a Marksman with a forty-five caliber...

Mr. Burrus: ...caliber pistol, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! So, did...did you hunt as a boy at all or did you...I would imagine so, right?

Mr. Burrus: For...oh yeah. Oh yeah, I was quite...quite good with a...firearm, and I still...up until a few years ago, I still was...pretty good with a shotgun; it was my specialty (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Burrus: And those...we...we used to go to these live pigeon shoots, and I won two of the biggest shoots in the country...in the world really. We had foreign shooters came...came over here, and those (throat clearing) one of those shoots was held in Houston.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: And that was...that was a...the Houston Museum sponsored that shoot. There were probably a hundred contestants, and I won that one. And then...a later date, they had a...another shoot at...at the...Neiman-Marcus...farm up in Lewisville, Texas north of Dallas, and they invited people from all over the world to come shoot and...and I won that one. Well, you know, it's live birds.

Mike Zambrano: Was this something...you would just show up to and sign up and...and...

Mr. Burrus: Well, they...they knew who the shooters were, the good shooters. The T...TAPA TAPAs, the (unintelligible words); T row...throw...throw the pigeon...(unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: T (unintelligible words); what is that?

Mr. Burrus: Throw the pigeon. It's Spanish, but throw the pigeon, (unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Okay, alright.

Mr. Burrus: (Laughter)

Mike Zambrano: So, they...so you were pretty good; you...you won some competitions then?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, two of the biggest shoots in the world, I guess.

Mike Zambrano: Wow. Well, it's no wonder you shot an Expert then.

Mr. Burrus: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: It's no...it's no wonder that you shot Expert.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah (laughter), yeah. Had a good eye; a good hand...hand eye coordination.

Mike Zambrano: Did you like shooting the carbine?

Mr. Burrus: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Did you like shooting the carbine?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, and...and the M-2 Garand is...that was a big rifle; weighted about nine pounds if I still remember, but it was a very reliable...forearm, rifle. And the carbine was a light...kind of a side arm deal; it was a very...low velocity...uh, had a very low muzzle velocity.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: It was for...in-fighting.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: Jungle fighting; that's kind of it, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Right, I mean at long distances, it wasn't very good for...

Mr. Burrus: Oh no, no, no; the Garand was the long distance.

Mike Zambrano: Right. Back to basic training, uhm, what else do you recall – obstacle courses, uh...

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, the usual. I'm being honest with you; I've been...I've forgotten. We had some forced marches with our gear, you know, but whatever we were carrying, we would...we would walk for ten or fifteen miles and then camp out. You can imagine a basic training; I don't remember the exact details, but that was...essentially is what we did.

Mike Zambrano: Were you in pretty good shape going into the service?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, you know, at...at nineteen years old, you're in pretty good shape...lot better shape than I'm in now!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Burrus: (Laughter)

Mike Zambrano: Wow. What about sleeping arrangements? What...I'm sure you were in barracks of some sort, right?

Mr. Burrus: Barracks. Yeah, we had...uh, (throat clearing) the barracks; they were wooden barracks with a corrugated iron roof. And we had individual bunks, and it wasn't bad living. At that age, you know, we would put up with a lot. And then went to...Langley Field, Virginia. I think that's in those papers somewhere.

Mike Zambrano: Langley Field?

Mr. Burrus: Langley Field; can you find that in there?

Mike Zambrano: Oh yeah, it's right here...Langley Field, uh, (unintelligible) airplane, and that's where you got your training for...

Mr. Burrus: Airplane mechanics, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Well, at what point did they tell you that, "Hey, we don't need...we don't need Pilots anymore; we're going to make you an Engineer."

Mr. Burrus: Well, it was very shortly after I enlisted...because the...the war was...end... '45, wasn't it? The Pacific War ended when?

Mike Zambrano: August of '45.

Mr. Burrus: Was it?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: Okay, well, you can see I was pretty...I was...it was...it was in the foreseeable future what was going to happen...there was no war. And as a consequence, they needed no Pilots; that's what I wanted to do...is fly.

Mike Zambrano: I'm curious, but did you ever learn to fly?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, (unintelligible) little airplanes.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: 172s, 150s...the little small ones.

Mike Zambrano: So you get to Langley and...and...it doesn't really say how long you were there.

Mr. Burrus: No, I would say a few months and then we went to...they shipped us to...Ogden, Utah and we were there for a...about, I'm guessing, two or three months. And then from there, they shipped us to...San Francisco to get on a troop ship.

Mike Zambrano: Well, just...just real quick. Why...Ogden, Utah; what did you do there?

Mr. Burrus: It was a base just about...I don't know why they sent us there.

Mike Zambrano: Just...how long were you there?

Mr. Burrus: Two or three months.

Mike Zambrano: Huh.

Mr. Burrus: Short period of time.

Mike Zambrano: So, no training or anything?

Mr. Burrus: No, no training there.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay. So, then you get shipped out to San Francisco.

Mr. Burrus: That's right, and we were on a train. We were shipped to San Francisco and we got on a troop ship and I do...I remember one interesting thing. The...the ship was docked, of course, tied up to the...wharf. A lot of the boys that were...that were with us...they were farm boys and never been

on a ship in their life, you know, and so a few of them got sick...as soon as we got on the ship where it was tied up, and just, you know, had swells so the ship was moving.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles)

Mr. Burrus: And perceptively, it was moving but you couldn't really tell it. You know, it was...like the tide would come in and move a quarter of an inch. Anyway, they were sick throwing up...on the...troop ship before we left.

Mike Zambrano: And how...how did you do? I mean, you're from the Midwest; you've never seen the ocean before.

Mr. Burrus: Well, no, I'm from the coast...Beaumont, Texas.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Burrus: It's right on the coast.

Mike Zambrano: I'm not that up to date on my Texas geography.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle), I'm...I'm from California, so...

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, Beaumont's only fifty miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, did you...

Mr. Burrus: We used to fish in...and...and in the Gulf, so I had some experience on the water.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, so you were fine; no sea sickness?

Mr. Burrus: No, no...no problem.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what...what the name of the ship was?

Mr. Burrus: No.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Burrus: There were about twelve or fifteen hundred troops on (unintelligible) ship. I had no appetite; I remember I had some Hershey bars, I used to eat those Hershey bars. And I...the...the mess hall was below deck, and in order to get to the mess hall, you had to go through a lot of the quarters...of the troops...below the sea line. You can imagine the smell.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, yeah.

Mr. Burrus: And by the time I got to the mess hall, I didn't have any appetite at all, so I quit going.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle), it's not like you can open a window.

Mr. Burrus: There's no windows!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Burrus: Open a window and the water comes in.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, you wouldn't want that.

Mr. Burrus: So, we...I stayed on deck most of the time. And they played that tune...clear water...let's see, clear water...*dah, dah, dah, dah* (singing melody); remember that?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, who sang that?

Mr. Burrus: Clear water. Anyway, they played that constantly. But anyway, I stayed on that ship for twenty-one days, and the propeller of that ship...it had a pitch...of forty some-odd feet. Every time...every time the propeller would make one revolution, the ship would move forty feet.

Mike Zambrano: Good.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, and we did that for twenty-one days in the Pacific. That gives you a good idea how big the Pacific is. So you never saw any land for twenty-one days (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: What did...what did you do in...in your spare time? I mean, it's a long time to be on a ship.

Mr. Burrus: Oh, you played cards and...first one thing and then another; there was nothing much to do.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: Anyway, arrived in the Philippine Islands. As we were getting off of the ship, a lot of the sailors...who were in that area...they were selling pints of whiskey. This is...there's no whiskey available when you get off the ship, so, "We'll sell you these now." And I've forgotten whether I bought any, and as soon as we got off it was...liquor stores lined up everywhere, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Burrus: (Chuckles)

Mike Zambrano: Well, they must have a good business going there?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, where was it again in...in the Philippines...

Mr. Burrus: Uh, Clark...Clark Field.

Mike Zambrano: Clark, okay, Clark Field.

Mr. Burrus: Clark Field in the...in the Philippines, and that's where we did our mechanical bit where we worked on the '29s and occasionally we would fly in...with the 29s and it was quite interesting. You could see airplanes that had been shot down for miles; you could see them in the jungle.

Mike Zambrano: The war is still going on at this point though, right? But it's very close to the end?

Mr. Burrus: The war?

Mike Zambrano: Has the war already ended at this point?

Mr. Burrus: Pretty well. You remember...Pita...[s/b Emperor ?] Hirohito...and they met on that ship and...and declared the armistice...or when was that? I've forgotten, anyway.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, it's...probably Aug...August of '45.

Mr. Burrus: Pacific War?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum, well, the Pacific War and the entire war...basically.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah okay.

Mike Zambrano: August of '45. So, you saw all these...all these wrecked...planes over...

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, planes that were shot down. They were...there was...the Battle of Manila...Manila and Clark Field are side by side; well maybe a few miles away. And then the battles of...of the...Japanese...there were a lot of the Zeros, the airplanes that they had, Zeros...they called them Zeros.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: And it was a light...uh, real maneuverable aircraft...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, they were.

Mr. Burrus: ...that they out maneuvered some of our P50...P40s in those days, and they were shot down all over in the jungle. You could see them from the



air. And I was there for...what? Seven, eight, nine months. And there was...strange weather; beautiful weather and every afternoon at two o'clock you'd see a little blue cloud on the horizon that would get closer and closer and closer...and finally it would get right over us and rain.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: Rained so bad you could hardly see...for about one hour, and then...and then it cleared up again.

Mike Zambrano: Would that happen pretty often?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, every day! That was quite interesting. And then a friend of mine, a buddy of mine, we got a...we got a jeep and there was ammunition lying all over everywhere and we would check out a couple of Garands and go up in the mountains and...shoot...from one mountain to the other; there were caves in the other mountains, and we would pi...we left tracers, tracer bullets?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: And you could see them making the arc into those caves; just something to shoot at.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: We didn't know whether there were any Japs in there or not, but the Japs...of course, there were some Japs didn't even know the war was over.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, for a long time.

Mr. Burrus: They were...they were...oh yeah, they were back in there and they thought...they didn't know it was over so they continued to do whatever they did; that was interesting. And, let me see, the food was adequate; we had...uh, there were a couple of Lieutenants and Captains, Pilots, who liked to fly and they would fly periodically down to Samar; that's S-u-m-a-r [s/b Samar] I believe which was another island...in the area...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: ...and they would bring back steaks and eggs which is something we didn't have.

Mike Zambrano: Well, that was nice to know!

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah! They'd bring those back. Some of the bread we had was infested with...uh, weevils. You'd look at it and it'd be, you know, it'd look like someone put pepper on it.

Mike Zambrano: Right, no, I know what you mean.

Mr. Burrus: We didn't eat much bread.

Mike Zambrano: Right, bread or...or cereal. If you...

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...it won't last very long (unintelligible words).

Mr. Burrus: Weevils were everywhere.

Mike Zambrano: Ah!

Mr. Burrus: But anyway (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: You didn't mistakenly eaten some...eaten some by mistake...

Mr. Burrus: (Laughter)

Mike Zambrano: ...when you were first there, did you?

Mr. Burrus: No, (laughter)...probably did.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Burrus: But we...uh (throat clearing)...we lived there and we had barracks and we had some interesting times. I had a little monkey that I had; I called him Jocko (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?! A monkey?!

Mr. Burrus: And...and he was my pet...Jocko. And he would sit on the...we had a little...a...a wooden, uh, pole that we had him...buried in the ground, and he would sit up on top of that, and we had a little chain on him. And he would sit up there and...he was quite friendly except when he didn't like someone, you know? He'd bare his teeth and his ears would go back, yeah. In fact, a...a guy come in there one day and he was...he was taunting Jocko; he was...he'd had a few beers so he was taunting Jocko and I said, "You better...don't do that to Jocko; he doesn't like it...he doesn't like that." And he kept doing it and Jocko...grabbed him,

bit...bit his index finger...all the way to the bone. And I said, "I told you...not mess with Jocko...they didn't like it," and so (laughter)...

Mike Zambrano: Boy! Yeah...

Mr. Burrus: And then we'd put him on the roof...of our barracks which was corrugated iron; he'd run up and down this...(unintelligible) thing...building, and one day somebody brought a lizard; lizard was about...almost as long as this table here, solid black, but they were harmless.

Mike Zambrano: As long as this table?!

Mr. Burrus: Almost as long.

Mike Zambrano: So, like about...maybe five feet?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, four...four or five feet and they were motionless, you know, they was...he was just sitting there...lying there and Jocko was up on the roof. And so Jocko looked down there and saw him and he jumped and landed on the...on the lizard's back.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: And then he walked down the back of the lizard and he put his hand under his head; raised it up and the tongue, the lizard...tongue came out and (laughter) and Jocko jumped all the way back up on the roof (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), I think I might, too! (laughter)

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, (laughter), scared him. (laughter) But it was a...interesting over there, interesting and boring, so, I was happy to leave. When we left, I took Jocko down...with me...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, you did?!

Mr. Burrus: ...down...down to get on the ship and there was a sign there that said, "No animals...blah, blah."

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Burrus: And I said, "Oh, my god, I'm going to have to lose Jocko!" And so one of the ropes, the huge ropes tying the ship to the...to the...war...wharf...wharf...I took Jocko and put him on one of those

ropes and *shhhh*...went right up in the ship...and I hopefully thought I'd get him in the ship; never saw him again.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Burrus: He...

Mike Zambrano: Just went in the ship and...you never saw him again?

Mr. Burrus: No, I don't know what happened to him.

Mike Zambrano: Maybe another GI got him.

Mr. Burrus: No, no GI...I don't know what happened to him, but anyway, he was my buddy (chuckles). And then we sailed back the same way...about twenty days. And then we got right off of the coast...San Francisco harbor, and we could see the...uh, all of the lights...of San Francisco.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: And they stopped and anchored the ship...instead of taking us in there and we were mad as hell.

Mike Zambrano: To go all that way and just...stop that short?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, well they did it for some reason 'cause I'm sure...it was to protect the ship or something. Anyway, next morning we sailed in and unloaded. Then we went to Camp Beale, California and we were...that's where we were discharged.

Mike Zambrano: Tell...tell me a little bit about your job as a...as an airplane mechanic for the B-29s. You were describing earlier before we started recording...about the size of the engines and what kind and that.

Mr. Burrus: Oh, they were what they called Wright Cyclone engines. They were...about four thousand horsepower each, and of course, there were four of them; huge engines. And of course, they needed that for the B-29.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Burrus: The '29s were huge airplanes. I think the wing span was a hundred and forty feet.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, they were huge!

Mr. Burrus: And that's one...one that carried the bomb...to Hiroshima and the Nagasaki bombs that came out of...B-29s. We used to primarily work on the engines. I guess that was all the...we were qualified for.

Mike Zambrano: When...when you work on an engine, uhm, do you work on...uhm, while it's on the plane, right?

Mr. Burrus: Oh sure! There were scaffolds; we had a scaffold.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum. And we...part of a team?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, we were; I was the Crew...Crew Chief, so to speak.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: And I had two or three additional crew with me, and we'd go up there and change the...these cylinder heads...were huge. You know, the...these...these cyclinders...the pistons would be attached, of course, to the inner part of the engine; they would go up and down, and the cylinders themselves would be a...would sit on top of the...engine...for this piston to come up, you know, and the...you know how that works, I guess.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Burrus: And we would those...those cylinder heads off and they were quite heavy and so, we needed two or three guys to...manhandle them.

Mike Zambrano: Was there ever an instance when you had to remove an engine from a plane?

Mr. Burrus: I can't remember any of them; I'm sure there were. If the engines were shot up or something, but normally it was just wear and tear, but it was interesting. There were some Negritos they called them over there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: They were little people, and they had...some of them had beards. And they had long bows; the bows were...really longer than...they were, and then I said to one of them, I said, "Can you shoot pretty good with that?" And he says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." And so I said, "Well, show me." And so he put a beer can out about, oh, twenty or thirty yards out there and he pulled that thing back and the arrow would hit the ground right in front of

the can...come up and go right through the can. That's how accurate they were.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, and they were just...

Mr. Burrus: Long bowers (?).

Mike Zambrano: They were like...local natives?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, they was just wandering around at the base; they were harmless.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Burrus: But they could have been bad, I guess, if they wanted to.

Mike Zambrano: Well, hopefully they were mad at the Japanese.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah. Well, we had huge supplies of everything...sulfa power; you know, that's what they used back in those days for a wound.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: We had a warehouse just full of sulfa power, and ammunition...more ammunition; more ammunition than you could shoot up in ten lifetimes, and all of that went to waste.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, because of...the war comes to an end.

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, they...because they didn't take it back.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember when they dropped the atomic bomb or you had heard that they had dropped the bomb?

Mr. Burrus: I think that was after we got back, wasn't it? I don't know; I can't remember that.

Mike Zambrano: It says...

Mr. Burrus: I really can't remember that.

Mike Zambrano: Well, you're separated from Camp Beale on...uhm...

Mr. Burrus: When?

Mike Zambrano: I think it's 21 November, 1946.

Mr. Burrus: Okay. When was the bomb?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, August of '45, so, I'm not sure where you were. You...you...

Mr. Burrus: I think I was still in the Philippines.

Mike Zambrano: You...might have been.

Mr. Burrus: We heard that the war was over, you know, and they had dropped the bomb. We didn't see it.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Burrus: Apparently Clark Field was too far away to...to see any of...any of the explosion or the...cloud, the atomic cloud; we didn't see that.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what about when the war was over; do you remember where you were at...at that point?

Mr. Burrus: San Francisco, I believe.

Mike Zambrano: Oh on...on the way back?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, no, on the way over there.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, on the way over, okay. Ah, okay.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, I used to tell my friends...they heard I was coming, so they quit (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Well, what'd you think about dropping the bomb?

Mr. Burrus: Well, you know, uh, I'm, of course, not any expert on it, but we kept...we kept going from island to island losing thousands of Marines and you look back on it and you say, "Why did we do that? I mean...why?" It was stepping stones into the...Japan itself. I don't know why we went into those little...those little islands. They was...there was...that didn't accomplish anything. We should have gone right into the...into the...the...the...uh, continent or whatever the...the country of Japan; we should have just gone ahead and...and invaded them, but we didn't do it that way. We wanted to...every one of those islands, see, you remember all of those (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Burrus: We lost thousands of...of Marines. They was just like...shooting ducks; they were getting off of those landing crafts; wading through the water and the...the Japs were sitting up there with machine guns...killing them.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, there were some pretty...bloody battles on those islands.

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah. I had a friend, a Marine, he was in a...he was in a...bomb crater or something and send...this Jap jumped in there with him,

and...he had his forty-five and this Jap said, "Don't shoot me, don't shoot me; I want to live." And David, my friend, said, "Well, so do I," shot him...*pow!*

Mike Zambrano: Wow (laughter). I shouldn't...I shouldn't laugh but...

Mr. Burrus: It was...it was terrible really.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I can imagine...it was...I mean, it's war and...and...

Mr. Burrus: Oh god!

Mike Zambrano: ...it just, you know, kill or be killed.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, it's no fun.

Mike Zambrano: When you...when you were in the Philippines, did you ever see any...any Japanese prisoners of war?

Mr. Burrus: We had a few Japs that were cleaning up...the...airplanes. We'd put them on a '29 and let them clean it up. We had a tunnel leading from the front of...back to the...I don't know where it went, it's been so long ago, but they would go in there and clean it up...what...first one thing and another.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: But they did...they were, you know, they were...they were (unintelligible)...they were...not, uh, they had no reason to be...they couldn't do anything. They had no weapons or anything, so they were just there.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: But menial tasks; clean up.

Mike Zambrano: You must have had an officer that was in charge of you; do...do you remember who that might have been?

Mr. Burrus: No, no I really don't. I do not remember his name. I'm sure we did have one...someone...Captain...someone...telling us what to do.

Mike Zambrano: You know, earlier I...I'd asked if...if you remember what...what group you were with or what...

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, it's all in there.



Mike Zambrano: Yeah, and it says here...just to let you know, it says...and I'm sure this is under the Thirteenth Air Force...you're with the Fifth Bomber Group, 313<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, okay, yeah. That's it.

Mike Zambrano: You know, it's funny, I...I notice you have two discharges here; one says...

Mr. Burrus: Well, see, one for my...I enlisted...

Mike Zambrano: That's it, okay!

Mr. Burrus: ...and then when I joined the regular Army, I was discharged from that.

Mike Zambrano: And you're discharged as a Sergeant?

Mr. Burrus: I was a Tech Sergeant.

Mike Zambrano: A Tech Sergeant?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, I was, you know, a...a Technical Sergeant; I guess...had to do with my...my experience as a...as a Mechanic. But that's...that's...I noticed on that...it's not anywhere in there.

Mike Zambrano: That you were a Tech Sergeant?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, those...those things are incomplete really. For obvious reason, there's no reason to go through it if someone's whole history...I don't the guess the...the government now would have a...a hundred people doing it, but in those days they did (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: You mentioned earlier it was kind of boring out at Clark Field. What...while you were there, what...what else would you do, I mean, what would you do with your spare time?

Mr. Burrus: We'd go into Angeles, that was a little town...

Mike Zambrano: Angeles?

Mr. Burrus: A-n-g-e-l-e-s, I believe how you spell it. And there were some girls there and of course there's some clubs, and would drink and...and, you know, what you can imagine. And I do remember, they used to have...they served...the sold whiskey, bottled whiskey, and it was a bottle like a fifth of whiskey...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Burrus: ...and it was nothing on it except one...uh, one...label, and it had a horseshoe on it and it said, "Whiskey Good Luck."

Mike Zambrano: Whiskey Good Luck?

Mr. Burrus: That's all they had (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: I'll write that down, Whiskey Good Luck.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah (laughter). On a...(laughter). You know, this brings back memories that I'd almost forgotten about really.

Mike Zambrano: So, what else would you do?

Mr. Burrus: That was about it really. I can't remember all of the little...details. Coming back on the ship we had a, a friend of mine and I, had a...good...a game, a gambling game, of...what the hell do they call it...Chuckaluck, I believe.

Mike Zambrano: Chuckalug?

Mr. Burrus: Chuckleup; I don't know; I've forgotten the name.

Mike Zambrano: Could it be Acey Duecy?

Mr. Burrus: No, no, no, no.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Burrus: This is a...they had a tent shelter, tent...tent half, about twice as big as this table here...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Burrus: ...and we had...we drew...uh, six squares, one, two three, four, five, six, and the GIs would get around and who wanted to bet. And we had a canteen cup with three dice in it.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Burrus: And you'd put your money on one of those numbers or all those number or two or three or whatever you wanted to do, and you'd roll the dice. And if you, let's say you put your money on...on...one...ace...I mean, uh, yeah one, and let's say it came up, they would...you would get...they would get even money. We'd bet...five dollars, they got five dollars. If no ones came up at all, they would lose five dollars.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles)

Mr. Burrus: It was an interesting game. Anyway, we had a lot of action; a lot of GIs were playing, and we were doing pretty well. I've forgotten, a few hundred dollars maybe, and they...then the...one of the Captains on aboard ship...made us quit.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Burrus: I don't know why. If he'd of left us alone, we'd of made some real money (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles)

Mr. Burrus: But we had a good time (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I mean, you...when you...have time on your hands...

Mr. Burrus: Had to do something!

Mike Zambrano: ...than sit there; right, right!

Mr. Burrus: You can imagine twenty days on the...on the ship...with nothing to do; no...no...movies, nothing. And I had a bunk right in the bow of the ship, and I used to count...counted it...with...the ship would go up...like this...and then it would get to a certain height and then it would *come down*, and (laughter) I could...just about...I'd go to sleep and...*boom!*

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter)

Mr. Burrus: And it would start the same process over again. And those swells...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: ...you go up...up here, and then get to the point and then it would come down; I remember that. And also, we had...we had about twelve hundred black troops, pardon the expression, Afro-Americans.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: And we had about twelve hundred onboard, and they were separated in those days...segregated. And we got to...on the way over we had twelve hundred. We got there and there were about...about ten or twelve of them and they were missing. Nobody ever knows whatever to them.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?!

Mr. Burrus: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: I guess some...some of...they did something wrong and...some of the rest of them threw them overboard; that would be my guess.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: I don't know where else they would be.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, hopefully, it was...maybe a...an accounting error.

Mr. Burrus: It could be. It could have been, but I doubt it.

Mike Zambrano: Ah.

Mr. Burrus: Anyway, they were missing.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, that's terrible!

Mr. Burrus: And I never them once they got...once they...disembarked. In the Philippines, I never saw...blacks anymore.

Mike Zambrano: They were...they were on the ship going over?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah! I don't remember coming back; I guess there was some of them. But they were going somewhere and I don't...never saw them again. But it was inter...interesting, you know, a different country. Everything was just as clean as it could be.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: And in Manila, that was a sign...that was the...uh, that's where they had battles, you know, the...the Japs and the...troops. And that...you couldn't find one object over there that didn't have a bullet hole in it; a little tree or anything; buildings, anything had holes in it. Must have been a *huge, huge* battle.

Mike Zambrano: So, you had gone into Manila then?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, when it...oh yeah, we went to...well, I guess, by truck into Manila and then by truck on out to Clark Field; I guess, I can't remember how we...I'm sure that's the way we would have gotten back.

Mike Zambrano: What'd you think of the Filipino people?

Mr. Burrus: They were nice people; they were (unintelligible words) did not speak English, but they seemed to be...just as you imagine. They went...went about their business, so, I'd say they were...nice people.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Burrus: We had no trouble with them; they didn't give us any problem.

Mike Zambrano: I imagine they were probably pretty happy...being liberated from the Japanese.

Mr. Burrus: Oh, they were, oh god, they were happy. Sure they were; they loved us!

Mike Zambrano: Did you get a chance to write home a lot?

Mr. Burrus: Beg your pardon?

Mike Zambrano: Did you get a chance to write home?

Mr. Burrus: Oh...did, yeah, I did...I did do that...quite a bit. Had pretty good mail service...

Mike Zambrano: Oh yeah?!

Mr. Burrus: ...coming and going, yeah. Well, we seemed to get us...get us our mail...when we were over there. I guess they felt like it was important...to keep....to keep our moral up.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I would think, you know, hearing...hearing from the folks back home...

Mr. Burrus: Sure! That's right, but that's about the extent of my military career. I was happy to get out. I went back to the university and then...later to...Lamar College in Beaumont. And I have some correspondence courses in...Southern Methodist University, and Tex...uh, Texas Tech...some correspondence courses from them. And I went back to work with my father and then in the oil and gas business. And the...we had...we had some minerals...mineral interests in a lot of those properties that we used to have the sawmills on.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum, oh okay.

Mr. Burrus: So, I had quite an...education in oil and gas...properties. And then we went into building business, oil and gas building business and development. I used to develop some properties, you know, get a raw piece of land and cut it up into...into lot-size tracts.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: I did that.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: And uh, that's about the extent of it over the period of the years, and then, of course, I got too old to do anything, so that's what...that's one reason I'm here. I went to California to...visit my daughter...for a year I stayed out there. And...she, of course, being much younger...I didn't have many old...older friends that were...they weren't there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Burrus: So, I decided to come back here. I broke my shoulder while I was there in California...

Mike Zambrano: Ouch!

Mr. Burrus: ...and...and it still bothers me.

Mike Zambrano: How did you break it?

Mr. Burrus: Well, one morning I was going out with a cup of coffee and a newspaper...out there...they have a patio and I was going to read...paper and drink my coffee and I slipped and fell on the steps going up to this...to the...patio...fell back and broke my shoulder. And I...and they never did operate and just left it alone; it bothers me a lot; I can still get by with it. But it's...and then when I left there and came back to...Austin, my son had an apartment there and he had hardwood floors and...there was a newspaper on the floor and I got out of bed one morning; stepped on the newspaper and (sliding sound)d...slid and fell and broke my hip (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Is...is that why you use the...the walker now?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, those are tough!

Mr. Burrus: Sure!

Mike Zambrano: The hip.

Mr. Burrus: So there was an Emergency he took me to...hospital to here in Austin, Seton...Seton.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it's a good hospital.

Mr. Burrus: Beautiful, wonderful hospital. But I was in emergency, you know, so they called a doctor, and I'd never met him. I don't remember any of the

surgery when they got through. You know, they cut me open and then they pulled a...put a pin down the...the...this fulmur or whatever they called it.

Mike Zambrano: The femur?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah...sewed me up and (unintelligible) terrible pain. I had a friend who had the same thing; she was a lady here. She said, "I know it's painful," and said, "if you were like me, you wanted to die." And I said, "That's exactly right!" I said, "Good Lord take me; I've done everything I wanted to do; just go ahead and let me die." But he didn't do it.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles), well, you're still here!

Mr. Burrus: She...she said, "It'll get better," and sure enough, she was right. It still bothers me a little. But anyway, it was a...an experience...in breaking bones.

Mike Zambrano: What...what year did you retire...from working?

Mr. Burrus: Well, I really never did...I...I really never did really have a job to retire from; I was kind of an entrepreneur, I guess, but I quite probably in my...eh, in my sixties. Did a lot of hunting, fishing and...live-bird shooting.

Mike Zambrano: But...you weren't recalled for Korea, were you?

Mr. Burrus: No, no, that was many years later.

Mike Zambrano: Right. I...I mean, there was no...

Mr. Burrus: No, I wasn't...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Burrus: ...no, I was not recalled. I guess I was too old. And I don't think that was a full-scale deal anyway.

Mike Zambrano: No, no, it wasn't.

Mr. Burrus: Kind of a police action (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: True.

Mr. Burrus: Of course, if you asked some of the people that were shot at over there, it wasn't a police action (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, they thought of it differently.

Mr. Burrus: (Laughter)

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I didn't ask you...what did you get your degree in?

Mr. Burrus: I never got a degree.

Mike Zambrano: You...you didn't...did...you didn't go back to UT after the war?

Mr. Burrus: No, just for a short period of time and then came back to Beaumont and went to Lamar, and I graduated from Lamar, but that was a college. It was not a...a university.

Mike Zambrano: Right. What did you...

Mr. Burrus: Well, it was an interesting business being in business administration. And then after that I took the correspondence courses in...oil and gas and building materials at SMU and...uh, Texas Tech.

Mike Zambrano: Building materials you said?

Mr. Burrus: Uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: Building materials.

Mr. Burrus: That was SMU, I believe.

Mike Zambrano: Did you use the GI Bill for those?

Mr. Burrus: No.

Mike Zambrano: Or...for...not even for the...business degree?

Mr. Burrus: I did not use it.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, why not?

Mr. Burrus: I don't know; I've forgotten. I lived there in Beaumont and...the...uh, fees at those were noth...practically nothing.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Burrus: So, I probably just didn't call on them.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, college must have been...sounds like it was pretty cheap back then?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah, everything was cheap, you know, relatively so. So, I didn't use the GI Bill, but it was available. A lot of people did use it.

Mike Zambrano: And...my last question would be...uh, I...I assume you got married because you have a son?



Mr. Burrus: Yes, I was married, and divorced and I had a daughter. But during that time, and she's about sixty years old now living in Kingwood, Texas, and she had two wonderful children. One...my daughter started and owns three...newspapers, weekly newspapers.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?!

Mr. Burrus: She is...she has a degree in...English...Masters and so she owns those three newspapers. And she had two children – Olivia and...and Will...Wilson. Olivia graduated from the University of Texas with two degrees before she was nineteen, so real smart, very smart.

Mike Zambrano: That's impressive.

Mr. Burrus: And she married a...a boy from...from Australia and they moved to London. He had an elevator business; they repaired and built elevators.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Burrus: And she...looking for something to do...put an ad in the paper, and she was interviewed by...first...the first company she was interviewed by as the largest...PR firm in...in the world. I'm trying to remember the name of it; anyway, they interviewed her and...and they said...and she's...in...and they says, "You're hired," said, "how much do you want?" (laughter)

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles)

Mr. Burrus: She put...she named a number and she got it, and she still with them, but she is really a brilliant kid. She'll go a long way with that company.

Mike Zambrano: Well, good for her.

Mr. Burrus: And if I could remember the name, I'm sure you've heard of it; it's a...it's a public relations firm. And Will, Wilson, the boy, works for his mother in the newspapers and they started a new business of busbo...bus...advertising. They would advertise...whatever on...on...with...on...on buses.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay, okay.

Mr. Burrus: And that was something new with her; they...they start...that would have been...very successful. She has six or seven thousand buses she's on now.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah!

Mike Zambrano: There are a lot of buses; a lot of advertising.

Mr. Burrus: That's true! But the problem is getting the advertising; it's not getting the buses. The school boards are so har...so happy to get anybody that would give them money. She...they got seventy-five percent of the...advertising cost and she got twenty-five percent. The problem is finding the advertisers. You would think that advertising, you know, it's a moving billboard is what it is.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Burrus: Everywhere you go, you're looking at a billboard. Anyway, she's doing very well at that.

Mike Zambrano: Well good.

Mr. Burrus: And then...I was...married a girl from Norway; she was a stewardess...came over here to fly, and I married her and had...a son and a daughter, and the daughter lives out in California.

Mike Zambrano: Hum, uhm, okay, the one you went to visit?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, and she's married to a guy and they're very successful. He has...a hundred and fifty stores that he owns in rental tires and sales.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Burrus: He's all over the southwestern United...all over the United States. Got a hundred and forty...so he has two or three of them here in Austin.

Mike Zambrano: And your son is...Ryan; is that right?

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, he's...yeah; you've talked to him.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I spoke to him; I spoke to him.

Mr. Burrus: He's in the...in the real estate business.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Burrus: And he's kind of an entrepreneur.

Mike Zambrano: Kind of like you!

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, he buys land and flips it; done pretty well. And he's not married, but he's going with a girl he thinks he'll marry. He's forty-two, so it's time for him to get married.

Mike Zambrano: Oh yeah, (laughter). Uhm, let me see, did you do any reunions or anything like that after the war?

Mr. Burrus: We used to have a high school reunion. We didn't have any...any military reunion; no we did not have those.

Mike Zambrano: Have you ever done the Honor Flight?

Mr. Burrus: A what?

Mike Zambrano: Have you ever done one of those Honor Flights?

Mr. Burrus: What is that?

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Uhm, that is...uh, there's an organization...it's a...I think it's in different cities but Austin has one where they will fly the veteran back to the World War II Memorial, Washington D.C.; they assign you...

Mr. Burrus: Oh, I believe I've heard of those, but I have not participated, no.

Mike Zambrano: Hum! Okay.

Mr. Burrus: I should have, I guess, but I didn't.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I...I hear they...they take real good care of you and...

Mr. Burrus: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...and they, uh...

Mr. Burrus: I went to Washington when I was at Langley Field...in Virginia...we went to Washington one weekend...for about three or four days. So, I've been to Washington.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Burrus: And that's quite an experience, as you know.

Mike Zambrano: There is a *lot* to see.

Mr. Burrus: Oh yeah! We didn't try to see it all. We didn't have time. But anyway, you know as much about me as I do.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles), well, I...I think that's pretty much it; all the questions I have for you.

Mr. Burrus: Yeah, okay, Mike.  
Mike Zambrano: I certainly want to (unintelligible)...  
Mr. Burrus: It's been a pleasure talking to you.  
Mike Zambrano: It's been a pleasure and I want to thank you for your service.  
Mr. Burrus: And I'm sure if anybody has nothing to do and want to read about me,  
they can.

(end of interview)

**FINAL** copy

CD – #OH04590 – Mr. Felix L. Burrus

Transcribed by: K. Matras

Houston, TX

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