

Interview with Myron Basal

November 2, 2015

Beaver Grove, Michigan

START OF AUDIO

Gabe Logan (GL): Okay and we're recording. This is November 2, 2015. Dr. Gabe Logan, Northern Michigan University and I'm interviewing Mr. Myron Basal.

Myron Basal (MB): Right.

GL: Of Beaver Grove, Michigan and his daughter-in-law?

Pam Basal (PB): Yep

GL: And Pam your, Pam?

PB: Pam Basal

GL: Basal, Pam Basal. And so we're covering Mr. Basal's involvement in the Korean War, Integration, Marquette Prison, prison riot of 1980, early settlements in Beaver Grove, Upper Peninsula, and we'll see what else comes out. So to begin, Mr. Basal could you please spell your first and last name and your birthdate for context?

MB: M-Y-R-O-N B-A-S-A-L.

GL: Okay.

MB: Born October 10. 10-10-29.

GL: 10-10, You've just had a birthday!

MB: That's right.

GL: Congratulations, or Happy Birthday!

PB: And if anybody checks the records, we just had to go through, and he was actually birthed as Albert Paul Basal.

GL: Okay.

PB: And we literally had to go through a legal name change even though he's used Myron Albert for his entire life, including the military and everything else. So anybody were to check birth records, they would find it under Albert Paul Basal versus Myron Paul Basal.

GL: Good to know

MB: Yep, it had to be. Otherwise everything would have been in turmoil for somebody, someday.

GL: Sounds like the family decided to change the name and said, "It's good enough for us."

PB: Well there was actually a story behind this.

MB: There's a history behind that too.

GL: Please.

MB: Okay. Years ago there was no ferry across the bridge of Mackinac, there was a train come here in the early, middle 1800s. And these farmers here took anybody they could from the big cities to deer hunt. So every year those trains would come up here with loads of people. Well my mother and dad, in the middle, late 1800s, they had a guy who was a detective in Detroit. His name was Myron Jacobson, Myron Paul Jacobson. Well they thought that was just wonderful this detective would be at the farm up there hunting deer every year, they'd come up. And they'd take care of them and make sure they got deer hunting and that. Well that's, I was just born and I didn't know nothing about it, why my name was changed. My birth certificate said Myron Albert Paul Basal and they changed it to Myron Paul Basal because Myron Jacobson had his name Albert Paul Jacobson. So they put Jacobson in there, Myron. And that's how it got changed.

GL: [Chuckles

MB: And I didn't know nothing about it and then now in the rig-a-ma-role when I make a trust, I gotta go to through all this stuff with the courts and everything. It cost me a many, many hundred to get that, that Paul off of there, back to Albert

PB: Well, Myron on it and yeah.

MB: Yeah, Myron and Albert Paul Basal, I went through service in Korea and everything, through all the prison as Albert Paul, Albert, Albert...

PB: Myron Albert

MB: Myron Albert, not Albert Paul. I get confused, the senile is setting in, excuse me, I have a little senior. But anyway, that's ___-, it was a nightmare. I would have never expected this to happen in my age. I got it done, I had to go through the court, F.B.I., and the whole works.

GL: and thank you for clarifying, that might help some future historian or contemporary historian. Pam informed me and I understand your family was one of the original twelve families that settled Beaver Grove and I'm kind of curious how you know, what you know of that. How they came upon the land and who were these families? Was it given by Indian Treaty or other?

MB: It was through the government,

GL: Through the government.

MB: They'd just buy a certain amount of land, and it was very cheap by from what it is today, of course. Yeah. At first my, the first families as I remember were the Billy Kemp, there was Kreugers, there were Kuhndies, the Basals.

PB: The Gentz

MB: Who?

PB: Gentz

MB: Gentz' were in on it. But there was, that bunch of them and they all settled around here. And they built that Green Garden Church up there, that was in the 1800s, the German Lutheran Church

GL: The Lutheran Church

MB: They were all from Germany, the whole bunch of them we5re from Germany.

GL: Okay.

MB: Every one of them, they were all German settlers and they came over after.

GL: Did they come over as a group?

MB: No they came over at different times. Even my mother, my mother she came over with the Gentz' side, and my dad came over with the Basal side. They first settled in Ohio and then they came up here with the rest of them a little later. They're all in the middle 1800s. Beaver Grove was nothing, here, there was hardly nothing. There was just a couple of little stores started around here. There was a Mrs. Laurie, she had a little confectionery store and then Bob Wagner started over there, right in Beaver Grove, and he had a little store. And that's how the farmers sold stuff there and they got a little bit of their stuff sold, and then Cohodas came in and then it got bigger and bigger and a lot of the produce was sold with Cohodas.

GL: And are you referring to Sam Cohodas's family?

MB: That's the family that started it, the big producer. And they'd give, they'd furnish the boxes and that meant that the farmers would fill the boxes and he made the money on it and of course the farmers did too. They'd fill the boxes and then they'd go into the bigger cities that people were coming in from Ishpeming and Negaunee and everything else. And later years there, I don't think there's a store, or a house in Marquette, or Ishpeming-Negaunee that I haven't been when I did go peddling strawberries, potatoes. I sold many, many, many bushels of potatoes. About a peck at that time was one for fifteen, two for a quarter. That's what potatoes were selling for.

GL: And for the uneducated, could you remind us what a peck is? And I'm referring to myself here..

MB: A peck is fifteen pounds, fifteen.

GL: Fifteen?

MB: Fifteen pounds.

GL: That's a peck then. Okay, thank you. So when you say you went into town, was this car, train, horse and buggy?

MB: At that time we had a, later on it was a, we had a station wagon. We finally got an old station wagon. We hauled truck loads and that with a van, it was a Chevrolet van, that was later years. But they took me out of school a lot later on to peddle all this stuff. The older brothers, they were in service in World War II, that's when things started to boom and move.

GL: Okay.

PB: But normally it was horse and buggy that they went into town with.

MB: Yeah horse and buggy, my mother and dad, yeah. They'd go to town maybe once a month or maybe less than that, they'd get what they need, barrels of flour, lard or something like that, but they usually had enough with the pigs that we raised. We done well at the farm up there, we were all well producers, raising strawberries, potatoes, anything. Cattle, chickens.

GL: Do you know what brought this German migration from Ohio up to the U.P.? Any idea of how they found out about the land?

MB: I think they knew about the water, the wondrous, the streams and the fisheries and everything, that brought a lot of them.

GL: I see.

MB: Lake Superior and all these beautiful streams. These streams over here, Big Creek, Cedar Creek has changed dramatically by now. I used to go over here and get the brook trout I wanted, you can't do that no more. The Cohos or whatever, they ate them. The up streams, there's still some in there, but you can't get a basket full of brook trout no more. I started as a, it was Chief's Kawbagam's great-great-grandkids, they were older.

GL: Great great grandkids, okay.

MB: They taught me, they wouldn't even. They couldn't even, I didn't think they could talk English and they'd kind of grunt and they'd tell me how to fish over here on Big Creek, and they'd gesture through their hands, say "Mmm-Mmm" like that and put the line underneath the bank, to get the trout to come out from beneath the bank, how to eat. The Indians, Chief Kawbagam's great- great grandkids taught me, they were sixty something years old, and they lived in with Mrs. Delorean in a shack over here and I was only a young kid, you know. But they kind of took me under their wing and they taught me a lot of stuff, a little bit about hunting and trapping and fishing and that, and I learned a lot from them. But they lived with Mrs. Delorean out here in the back

GL: I see.

MB: And she took care of them and fed them and that and helped them at the store, she was widowed. And she had a couple of sons and later on her sons married a two of my sisters, Dewey Shorkey was, first she was married to a Shorkey and then she married Delaurie, Josberg Delaurie. And there was Francis Shorkey, he married Lillian my other sister.

GL: How many siblings did you have or do you have?

MB: Eleven others, we had twelve in our family

GL: Twelve in your family? Plus parents or?

MB: By twelve we had two parents, there was fourteen of us together

GL: That's a pretty big household.

MB: It was. Yeah, we were all well workers and that's.

PB: When they first landed in Cleveland it was actually, their last name was Bessler, two E's

MB: Yep

PB: and an E-R. When they came to Marquette it was changed with two E's and that's what the stained glass window with Ferdinand Besel's name shows up at the church. It was then changed to the As to get away from the

MB: The A for the Germans

PB: The ___- for the Germans during that time, so they changed the name with two As instead of two Es.

GL: Okay, so that would have been around World War I with the anti-German propaganda.

MB: Right, right.

PB: Exactly.

GL: Okay and for the record you're referring to the Lutheran Church on South 41? That stone building?

MB: Right on top of the Green Garden Hill there, yeah.

GL: Yep, yep. That's a very solid structure building, I've always seen that and admired it.

PB: Back when you were young too, how old were you when you helped your father build M-28 with a team of horses?

MB: Oh I was, I'd guess I was nineteen years old. M-28 was done by, a lot of them was done with teamsters, and he had two teams

GL: Sure

MB: a heavy team and light team. And I'd stay with them in a lean-to over on M-28 down there, right where them, right where them fancy houses are on M-28 now. There was a lean-to there and I'd stay down there with him all week long and then we'd come home on weekend, he'd come home with his team and get extra food and, for the horses and grain and everything. And we'd ford the Chocolay River to our farm which was only four or five miles across the river, and then on the job and they'd go clean to Munising grading. And of course he had people on the grater, would handle the grater, but he'd just drive the team. And that was big money, and then, and the only trucks that were started at that time was a company that had duce and a half trucks was, I think was Bridges. A company by the name of Bridges, that was the only trucks that was known at that time. Otherwise it was all, there was Forton's had two or three teams two and other, other farmers had Forton's that would, or teams that worked on, they worked, I guess it must have been twelve hours, twelve hours a day probably on that during the summer months.

GL: And what would be your job on that? Were you handling the team of horses?

MB: No, no, I'd just take care of the horses for my dad. I'd just stay there and make sure the feed was there and get water from Lake Superior to make sure the horses were watered when he'd get done in the evening or during the day when he'd come in to feed them, and I just stayed there with him all week and at weekend we'd come home again, but he had the team there.

GL: And when you were grading M-28 would that, so was it, were the horses teaming, a plow pulling a plow or a grader or?

MB: It's a big, like a great big scoop with two handles and a man that was working with my dad he would have been that other laborer, he'd be just handling this thing and it'd probably hold maybe a quarter square yard of dirt. It was a shovel, maybe I think it was maybe about six inches high and maybe two feet wide and it was ___ with two handles. And it would scoop and grade it and then when he want the dirt to dip they'd lift the handles and it'd flop over,

GL: I see

MB: And it would level it that way and then they'd come with a drag afterward and level it, they'd do mostly the sloping down. Horses and ___ and my dad would slope on M-28 all the way to Munising. That was all summer or two summers. But I spent most of my time over there just and then we'd come home and do the work on the farm and dress it up. And my mother and other girls, they'd do everything around the farm and we'd went and stayed there with my dad.

GL: Well that's...

MB: But I was about, I think I was about eleven to twelve years old at the time.

PM: Dad was the youngest of all of them

GL: and you were the youngest?

MBV: I was the youngest, yep.

GL: And you were the youngest. Okay. Before I leave that because this is a fascinating story, I've never thought about this. Would the road be, would it be laid out, what you were to, what your team was to pave or were you just kind of free forming it?

MB: Oh, no it was all surveyed. They surveyed it, they surveyed it forever. That was, M-28 was pretty straight clean to Munising, and it was narrower at that time, of course it's much wider now but it was a shoulder to the main trunk. Yeah, it used to go trough Mangum road here. There was no old road to Munising, the Mangum road used to be the road from Beaver Grove and Marquette to Munising, it was, Mangum Road...

GL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MB: it comes out at Deerton, down by Deerton. That part was made afterward. There's so much history there, and there was nothing here, there was nothing here. Very little, there was maybe a handful of people here that I knew, and I grew up you know, and most of them are all gone now. But everything has changed so much in this township.

GL: You mentioned, you mentioned earlier that your father would take you out of school and your parents would take you out of school to supplement the income and learn to work. Where did you go to school? And did you to go grammar school and high school, and if so where?

MB: I went mostly right here, there was this little lean, a little one story here in Beaver Grove and then they made it later on, it was sixth and seventh grade they opened up a bigger one in Harvey. And by

that time there was transportation, and I went from sixth to seventh in Harvey. There was more kids then around that time.

GL: I see.

MB: And I've got a, Pam we got to bring that picture

PB: That's what I did.

MB: Yeah, and it'll show a lot of the people that were at that school down there at that time and we...

PM: Dad is actually in the back because he had to tend the fire.

MB: I was their best kid, that's why I was dressed so darned well.

GL: Okay I'm looking at a picture here and what school is this here?

MB: This is Chocolay, down in Harvey

GL: Chocolay down in Harvey, I'm looking at.

MB: This is Harvey here, I think...

PM: Take your time

MB: This is me way back here, see it? I knew that stove, that's the type of stove that we had at the farm. I knew it, and I was in charge of taking that thing and make it so it was nice and cool in there. Now all these kids, this here is Patsy Lemay, she married, she was a cop a city cop in Marquette, you might know her. That's Patsy Lemay

GL: I don't think I know her.

MB: They're Laura and Patsy Lemay, there's twins.

GL: Okay.

M<B: I'll show you Marvin Heidtman, you probably know Marvin Heidtman. That's Marvin Heidtman right over there he's the lawyer in Marquette. And there's Verley Gentz, that's my cousin. And there's Lois Bignaw, she was married to Carl St. Onge right over here, that's Lois Bignaw .

GL: And these are, you got a variety of ages in here it looks like.

MB: Yeah, there was five sixth, and seventh grade I think it was. And that's Paul White right there, I know every one of them. And that's Nancy Zitman, she was Nancy, that's Nancy. I know pert near everyone of them, many, many are gone. There's Calbert Gentz, the Gentz out there that had the stove in Marquette, that' there is Calbert. And that's all names that are in the vicinity here, of roads. You mentioned Heidtman, and you mentioned Kuhnde earlier.

MB: Oh yeah there's all or at least kids of the early settlers that sprang out of the other areas around.

GL: Okay, that's an excellent photograph. Very nice little archive there.

PB: Dad and you were in grammar school till what, about eighth or ninth when your parents had to ____
____?

MB: Yeah I was out of school a lot, they'd come and get me. I was in, I was at the Provo School, Howard Provo School and I lost a lot of time there because I was taken out an awful lot for peddling produce.

GL: Work to be done on the farm.

MB: It had to be done, because there was other, they were in service in the early part through a lot of other ones were gone. Some of them were gone away from the farm, they were older and I was left. I was pretty much the last ones with my mother and dad toward the end. And then I got drafted of course, that's another story.

PB: But dad went onto finish his G.E.D. and he has some college from when he was at the prison and stuff. So, although he got pulled out of school he was an extremely educated man.

GL: School of life.

PB: Yeah

MB: yeah, I learned more when I was out of school because with the university there I had a lot of _____. I went to middle management school and I also had many other courses. With my career down there, I ended up, I started as a, at the prison as a regular guard or a corrections officer. Then _____ the guard name. But I started as an officer there, I was a little bit more, I was ahead of most of them at that prison because I was born and raised by the Mangum Farm. And that used to be a kept farm, and Mangum Farm which is now is Mangum Farm used to be Billy Kepp, one of the early settlers with my dad and that. Our farm bordered the Mangum farm on three sides, so I knew inmates, I knew them. And my dad was, at that time he was the president, superintendent, and repairman of the Mangum roadway. There was only seven people on that line. The magnum Prison Farm was one, both stores at Beaver Grove, there was seven on that line. And my dad was secretary, treasurer, all of it. And he, I think it was only about maybe dollar and a half they'd have to charge. And if the lines would go down, every time the wind would blow we'd have to go down them lines and get the trees off them because they went through the woods_____ woods, and if you wanted an operator you had to press the button and the operator would call and then the seven people that were on the line they'd, our ring was three longs and three shorts and some of them was at two shorts, some of them two shorts and one long. That's the way it was in them days.

GL: Yeah. Okay

MB: So it was comical. And then a lot of other people they'd get in and they'd say, "Well you didn't get through, can I ring them for you?" Of course they'd listen to find out what's going on.

GL: Oh it'd be a party line

MB: Oh it's a party, and then later on Menhennick got into it with Bill _-__ years ago. But I learned a lot at the prison at Mangum Farm because my dad would go up there and change the batteries, you had to change them every month up there. And I got to know Roddemaker and Herman Wittock and Big Cookie and stuff like that. And they'd that Herman Wittock, he raised bees at that Mangum farm and one time he gave me a jar of honey. Can you imagine a seven, eight year old kid getting a jar of honey? Oh, that was, I'd never forget it. And then, and then later on he'd be in the field next to me, I'd go get my cows, had the cows with my dog and he'd come over and talk to me at different times you know, and there's the fence and that. And he taught me a lot about trapping too and how to trap things in the winter so

their trap wouldn't freeze. He'd tell me how to do it in a manure pile, he hid in the manure pile, the trap and how to put the bait in there. I talked to them inmates on a daily basis, I got to know them real good. So when I went into the prison after I got out of the service, I was way ahead of everybody else because I knew convicts, and I knew who to trust. And I'll tell ya, I always say there was, they were, at that time there is different inmates now than what there is now. And you got dopes and stuff like that and molesters and stuff like that, just outta whack. At that time most of them was what we'd call nice, clean killers, you know, they had a job to do. Like Leo _____ and Needles _____, they were on the Purple Gang down there,

GB: Okay

MB: at that time you know. And I'd asked them about it and he said, "Well," he said, "You know, there's people that were just no good and that was my job, I had to kill them." And those were, I _____, them guys were just so nice, I thought they were. And I always _____ them, they're killers, there's no doubt about it. I don't make fun of it but they really were, then that's the way they were. They just had a job to do.

GL: So this would have been in the 30s and shortly in Prohibition and shortly after Pro. So yeah, you would have, you were a young kid. Wow. You just don't hear about childhoods like that anymore.

MB: Yeah, so. No, no you don't. And there's so much more, it just comes to me little by little. I'm sorry I can't remember it all, but there's just so much more.

PB: I'm going let you guys keep talking, I have to go get my son at school and make a couple of little errands. But you guys keep talking, I'll check back in on you.

GL: Thank you Pam, we'll be here

MB: Alright

PB: Have fun dad.

MB: Alright.

GL: I had before..

MB: Get your gloves out there.

PB: I will.

GL: Before, this was kind of fascinating, what you were saying about the trapping. If I understand this right, put the trap in manure to kind of give it insulation and keep it warm and bait the trap?

MB: Yep.

GL: Would that, so when it gets thirty, forty below, would it hold that heat or?

MB: Right, the heat of that manure would generate enough heat. Actually if you got enough manure that's holding, it'll actually start a fire, it'll burn. It's kind of like an ash in there. I'll be, you'll see it in the middle of winter, it'll smolder, it'll be burning in there. Which is not good manure because you're burning a lot of nitrogens out of your manure. But that, if you had a big enough manure pile and it

generates you could set around that there, and if you put any kind of bait in there, part of a chicken or the innards or the legs or whatever, feathers. And he'd tell me how to do that, but my traps wouldn't freeze. As a kid, I'd guess I must have been not even twelve years old, I was really pretty damned good at trapping. I always had money as a kid and I sold a lot of fox and weasels and coyotes and at that time coyotes was fifteen dollars for male and twenty dollars for female, coyote. And that was a lot of money in them days, for me. So a lot of the older kids that were around my age, a few that were. They were all kind of jealous of me because I always had money. I was good and I learned. I learned from the inmates and I learned by the Indians, they taught me a lot. I was, and they wondered why. But then I got damned good at it toward the end. I got, I was probably one of the best trappers around. And I got letters from Hudson Bay and _____ & _____, and Sears and Roebuck, Taylor fur company. I got many, many letters from them that I sold.

GL: From selling, selling the hides and the furs to them?

MB: yeah, yeah and I got real good at it. The Perry Brothers were the latest ones in Au Train, they were fur buyers and I got good letters from them too that they were really pleased the way I handle my furs. And I got commendations from Hudson Bay about how I handled the mink and boxed. And by the way, Michigan, from the Upper Peninsula I got the best cherry red fox around. In the world, they are the best red fox, they've got the best hide. They called them cherry reds, and you could get, at that time you could a hundred, maybe, I think I sold some of them for a hundred and ten dollars.

GL: So when you would skin and preserve it, did you have a specific technique that set you apart?

MB: Oh yes, oh yes. Yeah. You'd have to get all the fat off and first you turn it outright for the skin will dry and then you turn it fur side out, but some of them they want the skin side out like mink, muskrats, and weasels. The fur, the skin side out it wouldn't make no difference, but you had to make sure there was no blood or mixed fat that would decay and mold or go like that. It would have to be clean and scrape it. And beaver was something else. You would have to get all that grease off and scrape with a with a knife or a piece of, a sharp piece of, I used to have a spring of a spring toothed plow and I used to sharpen and it would scrape that fat off the beaver, that worked good for me.

GL: And then would you just keep that and then would you just keep pelts until you had enough of that to sell?

MB: Right, right.

GL: Okay.

MB: Yeah. And send them in a bundle and they'd give you a tag to put on them and, with the number and then they'd tell you how they were graded. Sometimes you wouldn't get your check sometimes for three or four months. Wherever they'd be, and they'd go all over. A lot of them went to Germany and Switzerland, and actually Russia. Russians took a lot of it.

GL: A long way from the U.P.

MB: Yep, all those furs. And they're still doing it.

GL: So looking at your youth, this exciting youth of growing up on the farm and the prison and trapping and agriculture and working the road. I understand you served in Korea. How were you drafted? Did you sign up? Was it, you're eighteen, welcome to the Army or?

MB: It was mandatory. Anybody eighteen had it mandatory, you had to sign up for the draft, __ eighteen

[Phones ring]

MB: Excuse me, ____ ____ Hello? Yes!

GL: Okay, so continuing there from that brief phone call, I had asked, I understand that you served in the Korean War and how did that come about and you indicated that you had to sign up or register when you turned eighteen?

MB: Yep by eighteen you had to be on notice for the draft. And I got drafted in, I think it was, I went in June of '51 I think it was, yeah '51. And I went to Camp Chaffey first.

GL: Arkansas.

MB: Arkansas, I went through Artillery, which I really liked, that was really nifty, shooting them one oh fives and one fifty-fives artilleries. They'd jump off the ground you know, when you pulled that lanyard. I really enjoyed that, I thought I was going to be in. But low and behold I got outta that and they put me on the Marine Hatter. And I was twenty one days on that Marine Adder was the last trip of that big boat. I was on it for twenty one days.

GL: What was the name of it again?

MB: The Marine Adder

GL: The Marine Adder

MB: They got it in mothballs now, they're making a historical thing out of it. I just found that out.

GL: Okay, I see.

MB: They're going to make a museum out of it. There was, that trip when we went over at that time, that was the last trip for that boat. I think there was forty some, I guess many thousand that was on that big boat, big, big ship.

GL: That's a little city floating around.

MB: Oh yeah. And a lot of them were sick, of course I was used to the lake, I didn't get sick, but a lot of them did. That was a nightmare for a lot of them on there, they'd sick and they'd bunk and they'd heaving at you. I stayed on up on deck, I'd eat and I'd go and I stayed on the whole time, I'd eat and then I'd go up on deck and I'd stay up there all, all the way across the ocean. And it was nice and clean up there and I just stayed up, and ____ it wasn't cold or anything.

GL: Where did you pull out of, New Orleans?

MB: We went out of Seattle

GL: Seattle

MB: Seattle.

GL: Okay. So did you train up to Seattle or?

MB: We went, we were supposed to go to Hawaii. Then they had all the mess hitting on, in Korea they went right to Pusan. They went to Pusan, Korea.

GL: Okay. The Peninsula there, the Pusan Peninsula.

MB: Yeah, _____ goes onto Japan and that. So then when they found that out, that I worked for DOW Chemical and they seen that I knew something about chemicals: Aspirin and alcohol. And that registered, "Oh we're losing a lot of medics over there." Which they were doing, they were knocking the medics over one after the other because the morale would go down because the medics would get killed. Well, soon as I got there they pulled me out of artillery and they put me into the medical aid training in Japan. In...I think it was called Shinadeyama, I think _____ called _____, little town _____>

GL: Shindeyama

MB: It was out of Osaka

GL: Osaka

MB: Out of Osaka and that was a real nice school. That was the best time, I thought, "Boy this is really nice." Nice school there you know, we ate good and everything medical, you know. And I learned a lot about medical how, care wounds and blood and how to give shots and told us how to use morphine. At that time we were taught how to use morphine, it was a little thing that you just, you'd wipe it off and it was sterile. And if you had pain or one of your combat people were hurt you'd just take that thing off and you'd stick them with that morphine and you couldn't care what anybody did to you after that.

GL: It was a topical application then?

MB: It was, you could stick yourself in the arm with it and squeeze it, and it was just one dose. And you could, anybody could say, "Well you wanted to cut my head off, boy that'd be alright."

GL: [laughs]

MB: That, it was, you didn't have no pain. And it worked for me and it, another buddy of mine that happened, little more I'll tell you. He got shot and I told him you'd better pull your butt in, well I'm getting. At that school anyway in Osaka in Japan, that was the best time. I learned a lot, it helped me through life, it helped me with my wife when she died of cancer. I nursed her for, with the nurses at hospital. I knew how to give shots for her pain and everything, I had her at least six months in and out. And they said they got all the cancer which they didn't and of course she died. And August sixth of 1993, my wife has been dead since August sixth of 1993.

GL: A little over twenty years, twenty three years. My condolences.

MB: Yes, yes. ____ Yeah, anyway when I got over there they noticed that I had that medical, so that's why I got into the medical. Well I got into the medical and I really learned a lot, I was pretty darned good, through the medical I took care of a lot of wounded guys and even my buddy. He got shot after I got

shot, it didn't bother me, but Allen out of Arkansas, Allen, I've lost track of him and when he got shot and I told him, and I said, "You better pull yourself in!" I said, "Those bullets are hitting rocks." I already got it through here. Bullets through here, they got me right through here

GL: Right up in, right below the clavicle,

MB: And shrapnel

GL: or right below the clavicle

MB: Yeah, yeah, yeah

GL: And you knee and your leg, you were shot in the leg?

MB: I got shrapnel in the legs but that was minor, it was minor.

GL: That shrapnel was minor is that what your saying? Shook it off and [laughs]

MB: Yeah, yeah. I had enough clothes on, it didn't cut much.

GL: Okay.

MB: And so anyway I told Allen, I said, "Boy" I said, "them bullets are hitting," I said, "We're pinned down here." And that morning it was thirty two below zero. And that god-damned come out of Siberia, that snow would just jump across the ground. We up here, we know a little about that, how cold it can get.

GL: yeah

MB: And it would skimmer off the ground, and I told Allen, I said, "Well this it's a hit," and I said, "They got us pinned." Better pull him in, and just then I heard it go "Kerpluck," he got it right, I thought it got in the hip, but later on I found out it got him in the stomach and he just glazed over. And I gave him a shot of morphine because I was alright, hell I just had little bullet wounds for me. Hell, I'm okay. I had a lot of blood, I had a big patch of blood jump up with that cold and then, I said, we got artillery called in for smoke to cover to get our butts out of there. We were trapped in this valley, and I said, "Hell," I said, "I gotta get you outta here, I don't know if you can hear me," but I said, "I'm not going to leave you here because I am not going to be captured, I am not, because you're not going live if they get ahold of us wounded." I said, "I'm going to get you outta here somehow." So I grabbed him by the back of the neck, like that, and like dragging a deer I dragged him a good half a mile up into our line's aid station. And of course they put me on the helicopter and they put him on a helicopter we went down toward Pusan to the hospital. And so I was in there, it must have been a month and I'm patched up. They said, "How you feel?" "Heh-heh, I'm okay." A cocky kid from Beaver Grove, you know, nothing gonna bother me. A few little bullet holes and shrapnel here and there, I'm okay. So, I could have whined, I could have went, I would have went home. I'm sure, after I think back. And then when they found out Eisenhower started integration at that time. I had no idea. And what they did, I was the first white boy in that completely black company in transportation, the forty-third transportation company. I came outta the hospital and they put me in this transportation company, complete black, the captain was a black, the general was black, the colonels they were all black. Maybe some of the other, drivers might have been something else, but I was the only white boy in that transportation motor pool. Well, I knew something about tractors and stuff like that on the farm. I know I wasn't that good. But I had seven to ten Southern

Korean workers that were, them kids were good. They ___ so good, they were smart. They could take a damned truck and take the clutch out and take the transmission in the dark. They were good. And I had them working for me and I worked with them, I and then I had a couple of older ones there, and he'd come over, the commanding officer would come over, "How you doing?" And then he'd ask me what I got, and I said, "We got old trucks," I said, "I'm just trying to keep going what I can do here." I said, "We're patching them, but go over to the forty-third, they got some trucks that's down that maybe got a good clutch. We'll go barter for a clutch, maybe for a set of break shoes." And that's what we did to keep as many trucks as we could, back and forth. Because the trucks were World War II trucks, they were wore out, and we kept them going, that's why the commanding officer was giving me them commendations about how I kept them trucks going with my Korean workers, Southern Korean workers, and the little knowledge I had. They were good. I wasn't that good, but they gave me credit for it. You'll see by the article there, my articles about around the clock business ___

GL: I see that

MB: It was amazing, you know. Like I said, I wasn't that good, I know I wasn't but they gave me credit for it and they didn't want nothing to happen to this white boy, I'll tell you that. [chuckles]

GL: Fifth Armored Division

MB: Yeah, that's the command

GL: And who was the major general?

MB: I think it was Hyatt and Mottley. Hyatt and Mottley, they were both black commanding officers.

GL: I'm sorry, Mossler?

MB: Mottley. I think his name was Mottley

GL Mottley, Okay. Major General.

MB: The other one was Jack Hyatt.

GL: Okay.

MB: He'd come over everyday you know, and he'd, I never knew what black people were, you know, even at the Mangum Farm and next to the prison. There was no blacks even then, the only blacks I'd see was my mother and dad would take me in maybe once or twice a year and there was a guy by the name of Braxton, he was under the Sta ___d's store which is Fargo Bank now in Marquette. He had a little barber in there and they'd take me in there about once or twice a year to get my haircut for school. And he was a black barber. And he always asked me to ask him for a partridge or a duck. He always wanted me to get a duck or a partridge for him and he said, "If you get me a duck," he said, "I'll cut your hair for free, for the rest of your life." And then he told me, he said "I'd like to get that duck," he said, "because I want them to get good and old. Don't worry about cleaning them or anything," he said, "because I like to eat them with the maggots in it" And I don't know, and I understand I guess that is a preservative if maggots get in it, it makes meat tender. And he must have watched me as a young kid because I must have had an awful face. And I always wondered if it was true but I found out afterward they actually do that, the meat rot, they let it ferment untill rotten and it's better flavor. And I often

wondered about that, but you know I guess I did get him a couple partridge or a duck or something later on. And he was always good to me, and like I said, that was the only black I knew as a kid.

GL: how did you get selected to get selected to be integrated into this unit and then what, why, what were you doing in the unit other than you were a mechanic? How did you jump from medical training to mechanic?

MB: Just because I knew a little bit about mechanical, and ___the same as when I was in the medics there I knew a little bit about chemical because I worked for Dow Chemical before I went in.

GL: I see.

MB: And they had aspirin and stuff and they figured, well, I knew a little bit. So that's how they, they wanted medics so bad, because they were, they were killing them over there. They were getting _-_ medic, which I found out, and I didn't last long either. I only lasted less than a month on that line. They were shooting at us medics as soon as they could. They'd kill us because then the morale in the rest of the ranks would go down, no one would care of them then, see? If they wounded the guy that's going to take care of them, their morale would go down. That's how the north, they weren't Koreans, they weren't North Koreans, they were Chinese. They were too big for Korean, we all knew that they were Chinese.

GL: So for the historical context, United states was in the Pusan or was driven down to the Pusan and then counter attacked up to the Yulan, Yulu

MB: Manchuria, Rape of Manchuria clean to the thirty ___ parallel

GL: And then

MB: Back and forth

GL: And then settled back on the thirty-eighth?

MB: Yep, that's where it was during the peace talks. While I was, just before I came home the peace talks was, it was grinding down already then it was fifty-three, it was, they were still going a little bit but not much, it was settling down due to the peace talks that were going.

GL: So you were drafted when Truman was in power and had finished up when Eisenhower had come to power?

MB: Yeah, he went in there and he went with integration, and that's why he was, that's when I went in as a white boy in that black company, they integrated. Like I said, they didn't want nothing to happen to that integration. They wanted it go good and they really taught me, they really took care of me. I could do no wrong, I knew I wasn't that good but I did have good Koreans that helped me. I knew enough about mechanical and that, I got by. And they were eager, they were all eager Korean boys you know. And another story I gotta tell you about the American way of life. One, was called Kim. The oldest guy in there, he must have been, I guess he'd be a sixty or seventy year old man, the rest of them were young, young guys. Well Kim, he was my more or less the top man in that he'd advise me what's going to be done to the trucks. He was really knowledgeable. And I leaned on him and he took care of me too, he told me what had to be done, and that helped me a lot. And then he got hurt bad, a battery blew up in his face and he got burnt bad. He overcharged the battery and he got burnt bad. Well dog eat dog in

them days, they always wanted me to get rid of Kim, they wanted me to fire him and get rid of him and bring in one of their friends, see, the younger guys. "Because he's no good, he's not doing his job." I said, "Look you guys." I said, "I'm an American, we don't do that in America. Can you understand me?" I said, "This guy worked for me. He's doing a good job. In the United States, we take care of a person that's got hurt. I don't know if you understand that. But," I said, "I'm not going to fire him. I'm not going to get rid of him and then get one of your friends." But I said, "That's the way it's gotta be." There was about six or seven of them, they rallied around me. They wanted me to fire him to bring in one of their people to replace him, see good jobs are very scarce at that time. They were out of their village, and they'd come out of the village, they'd get check in at their on duty for that date, whatever I had doing for them. So that's the way it was. And I kept him. Now I was proud of that, I'm not sorry I did it, I felt good about it because I left there and I got along good real good with the South Koreans. They took care of me, and Mottley and Hyatt, they knew that too. And I just went by the book, I wasn't that smart a kid I guess but I got by. Like I said I was self educated and I knew how to make money and trap and make change. My legs would get raw when I'd run them streets with change in my pockets making change for peddling strawberries, potatoes, rutabagas, chickens whatever, you know. And then sometimes Braun, Oakie Braun's dad, he had a big family and he was one of my customers. And sometimes I'd have twenty five bushels of potatoes and she'd buy that. That was good, but that Braun family was, the early construction guys around Marquette, that was one of our customers too. And so we sold a lot of stuff to special customers.

GL: Before we leave the Korean War, it's a fascinating story. How did, the Korean War is kind of one of these ambivalent, excuse the word, I don't mean to minimize your service, but it doesn't seem to have the clear aims of other wars.

MB: Back and forth.

GL: And how did you and your fellow soldiers look at the war when the fighting was going on and the political aims or it.

MB: Well the morale was up we knew what we had to do. We knew when we had a force and then we'd go and look and sometime we'd find them and sometime they'd find us. But there was always a move to find out where the enemy was, to gain their ground back, they'd push back and then we'd try to get ours back again to try to hold that line. And we ended up at on the thirty eighth parallel when the talks started, that's where it ended then, toward the end. But then when talks were on, but everybody in there, the morale was good with us. Everybody doing their job and I, I know it was good, actually that M*A*S*H* outfit was right down in Uijeongbu where that movie, MASH?

GL: Right

MB: I took some of my troops over there to work on their vehicles for that MASH outfit that's another part of the story

GL: How about that.

MB: That was in Uijeongbu, right outside of the 43rd Transportation Company. So, I laugh when I watch this MASH thing, it isn't like that, it's not like that believe me. Because I went in there on what they called it detached service. They wanted me to take my mechanics to straighten out with their

ambulances and stuff like that and we straightened out a few of their trucks. __ Mash, that was MASH, that was the real MASH, right down the street from the 43rd, the MASH outfit is in Uijeongbu.

GL: So you see the T.V. show and it's like, well that isn't what happened!

[all laugh]

MB: No! No, they didn't talk, that lieutenant and that captain didn't talk to Colonel Potter like that, I'll tell you that, no way. It wasn't horse manure either. Oh, that was so funny.

GL: So the Korean borderline I guess it's the last holdout of the cold war now. And it's still there.

MB: And look at South Korea, South Korea is __ better than us. I run into people when I go travel with the kids. My granddaughter is in Rapid City, South Dakota she's going to be a geologist, she's getting her final years now. She's doing real good and when I go over there to visit and there's some Korean girls in there and they see with my Korean War hat they fumble all over me, they just want to talk. And I said, "Where are you from?" And they told me where they're from, and I said, "Do you got any relatives?" She said, "I've got two brothers there." I said, "How are they doing?" I said, she said, "They're in South Korea and they got all good jobs, good homes." So it was nice talking, every time I got my hat on, and I run into other people that was, actually even last summer went out there and I run into a guy that was on that Marine Adder when I went over.

GL: Okay

MB: He, "You were on it?" I said, "Yep!" I said, "Well how'd you make out?" He said, "I was one of them that was throwing up," he said, "I was downstairs." I said, "Not me," I said, "I stayed up stairs."

GL: And for the record I want to say that's your Korean War service hat that you're wearing that the students see.

MB: Yeah, yeah, it's hard to believe how it was. They were, we were, a lot of them over there, I was from the Upper Peninsula, I think I was benefitted by how I knew about how cold is. I knew enough to keep my stockings dry, if I got wet, I'd find some way to dry them. If I take them off I'd wrap them around my waist to dry them and get another dry pair, because I wasn't freezing my toes, bad enough. And my hands, you can still, right, right now you can feel how cold they are

GL: Right. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

MB: My hands, their circulation is, they froze bad but. I do what I can when they turn __ the best. But they were froze a lot when they were working in wet fingers and that but like I said.

GL: On metal engine blocks, yeah, yeah.

MB: You've got to learn to keep your gloves dry and yourself dry, otherwise that fierce wind, you're going to have frostbite. Like I said, Allen now, I never knew until last summer my granddaughter found out on the internet that he got wounded on that same day, February, Groundhog, during 1950, '52? Yeah, '52. And she said, "Well this Allen it looks like he got wounded." I said, "That's my buddy! That's him!" And she had found out and through that net she got a hold of his address and I talked to her the first time last summer, I finally found, and I says, "Well, where is Allen?" He said, "He died of stomach,"

oh something bad from drinking anyway. Cirrhosis of Liver, he couldn't handle it, I said, "What happened?" He said, "He lost a lot of his fingers and toes."

GL: Oh frostbite?

MB: And I said, "Well how long did he live?" He said he died in 1978. And I just found out and talked to his sister last summer. It was amazing, when I found out about it through my granddaughter, she knows on the net that it was and that's how I found him.

GL: Sure, that's bittersweet.

MB: And I've been trying to find him all the while, and when I was in the hospital I said, "Well where is he? Where is he?" And then there was a guy over from Caprici, Greece, he got wounded. He was on, he was on, he was one of the, he was on one of these forward observers too. And he got wounded at the same time, so I got to see him when I was in the hospital over there. And he was from Greece, Lieutenant, I got a picture of it in here, I should bring that out too for the Archives. But anyway I got to know him real good and I talked to him a few times, and he lived to be, I guess he's still alive. But he was, had got wounded at the same time I and Allen did, and I was in the hospital with, but I never could find Allen. I tried all the while but I never did until this last summer I finally got ahold of his...

GL: Where were you wounded, what was the name of the vicinity or the town or was it a battle?

MB: It's on that thing there, Sanpadong. It's called right on there, I got wounded in Sanpadong.

GL: Sanpangdong.

MB: Sanpadong, that's what they. It's just a little ditch in the road is all it was. It's just one of them little communities where maybe a few rice paddies or something like that, it wasn't much. There's a lot of places over I didn't know much about a lot of them. I was really surprised about the Yellow River, when I seen that river when we used to cross it later on, when we'd pushed forward across the Yellow up toward, past the thirty-eighth, that river was such a beautiful river. I always looked at it and it was comparative to some of them that we got around here.

GL: Oh really?

MB: And now they tell me it's so polluted it's worse than going into the Rio Grande down in there

GL: That's too bad

MB: They said it's completely polluted now.

GL: Let's move on. So after you, after the war you returned to the U.S. What did you do after the war? Did you go right into, you said you worked for the prison. Did you go right into the prison? Or did you do other jobs?

MB: NO, I started at the Dow, I went back to my job at the Dow. But my shoulder really was _____, I was on what was called the pulling gang was the retorts. That was a pretty hard job with a sledge hammer. And that bothered me a little bit and I knew I had to do something different. I stuck with it until I put in for the civil service tests, and I put in for the government, the post office, and also the prison. Well, at that time the prison was, I got both offers the same week. I got a job from the post office and the prison, well the Post Office was paying fifty, fifty-five cents an hour at the Post Office and

fifty, fifty-three I guess, fifty-four they were fifty-three and the prison was seventy cents an hour. So I took the prison. And right away I got a job right away and I worked through the corrections department. I went in there as a regular officer and I worked just about every job in there. Then, I moved up into the ranks from first I was a rover, at that time they had a new position was called "The Eyes and Ear of the Institution" to find out what was going on in there. Talked to the inmates and I got along good with them and I knew a lot of them.

GL: From when you grew up? So some of them were still there?

MB: Yeah some of them were still. I had a, the deputy says, "Find out what's going on." Well that's what, I was the eyes and ears of the institution. It was called a rover and I mingled wherever I wanted, although I went through every chow line and I watched every line, everything else is gone. I was on my own, it was called a rover, it was, the name of it was C.P. dash thirty seven I think it was at that, the policy of the duties that I was to

GL: A Rover

MB: Do what I want, rover. And actually they still got them. And then after that I went Specialist school after DeMars got killed. I knew that was going to happen because there was a lot of assaults. I got hit lots down there. I got my lips busted and my nose broken many times.

GL: What school did you go to?

MB: I went to Specialist School.

GL: Specialist School.

MB: That's similar to like they got at Northern right now, it's called Specialist school. They opened it up at the Honor Camp. I was the first one they sent there. But it was really getting bad in Marquette at that time, there was a lot of assaults, you never heard about it, it was pretty quiet.

GL: So this was in the '50s and '60s?

MB: Yep, yep

GL: And what did you learn at Specialist's School?

MB: Well, about courts. How to handle inmates and how to address the courts, and how to do the right job. The facts, just the facts and only the facts, and do it honestly, don't. And that's another thing, when I was in that thing down, I always told the people under me, "You don't have to bum rap." I've never bummed the rap an inmate, that's why I think I survived because the inmates respected because I never bummed rapped one.

GL: And by bum rapped you mean?

MB: To give them the wrong thing that

GL: Dishonest, okay.

MB: I knew they did something but I wasn't sure. And rather than bum rap somebody, lock them up or something that I wasn't sure, I would not do it. I had inmates come up to me and he says, "Captain," I

was Captain by that time, and they said, "Captain, you were right." And I said, "I know you were, but," I said, "you know my reputation, I won't bum rap." I said, "There's enough stuff going on here. I fl want to write tickets, there's enough going on. All you have to do is open your eyes and see what's going on. With some young kid getting punked on everything that's going on. You could learn it. And like I said, I knew inmates, I knew the prowlers, I knew the traps that they'd set for them and everything, give them a good ____, that type of stuff. And I'd be way ahead of that, I knew, I knew that, I knew how it worked. And I worked my way up through the ranks, and like I said I was in the riot.

GL: What would be a typical day at the prison before we get to the riot, this is fairly fascinating.

MB: Well, well you had. On the six to two shift, it was six fifteen would be breakfast line it was a small line. And then at seven fifteen would be the main bunch. You probably have four, five hundred of the different blocks that would come in. And then the other one would be about quarter to twelve would be noon line, and that would be breakfast, dinner and then supper would be toward evening, that would be on the afternoon shift. But then there was showers, there were court hearings, there was always something you had to do, if you were involved in court, you had to go to court. If you had written a ticket you had to go testify what had happened, that was just a typical day, and if there was an assault on you, you'd have to go into town, verify what had happened and sometimes you had to go downtown at court. Like the stabbings with, with one __young lad there I had, I had just came home from Specialist School. And there was a guy by the name of Anderson Hood. I don't know if I should mention, be using names like that.

GL: That's okay.

MB: Anderson Hood, he was a great big black guy, six foot something, and this young, young lad was a little black boy, he was in the tailor shop, how he got, that Anderson Hood got in there I don't know. But anyway as the whistle blew at one o'clock, I was out in the yard, I was only a Sergeant at that time and the officer that was in the tailor shop hollered, "Help" out the window. Well I and Gingrass, my __partner, he was still in Marquette, he works for Alger now. And he went around to the left side, and I went around to the right and I could see Anderson Hood had that big knife, and that knife is on display at my daughter in law is training these officers now about what's going on now in that prison, when they had that machine shop. And that knife was big, bad, how he ever got that made in the machine shop is beyond me. But he had that little lad over that table, folding table and as I came in there and I could [Makes noise] "Zhoom" I could hear that knife going through his chest right into that table, and his chest and "zhoom". And I could see that he was, well the blood was gushing out of his chest. And unarmed, strong lad out of Beaver Grove, no brains I guess, too much cockiness. I go up to this guy, he's got this knife, and do you know what I told him? I said, "Okay, give me the knife." He handed the knife, he could have took one swing at that and that would be the end of Basal again. And he ____ and well of course I cuffed him and took him in detention and, and he ended up going to court after that deal. I gotta tell you about these courts. After that, going into court, he was in court, of course Anderson Hood was in there and of course the young lad was dead there.

GL: Yeah I was going to say, did he? He had to have died.

MB: Oh he did, yeah he died before he even got in the hospital, I knew he was dead, he died yeah. ____ I'm trying to think of it, I'm having a senior moment again but I know the last names real good, both of them. So going back that it was months it was court and when I was testifying in there, there

was a, he had an attorney from the south and I remember he was a red-headed little attorney. And he wanted to test me, he says, "Now I understand," he said, "You went around," I said, "No I already testified, I didn't go around to the right side, I went around to the left side. My partner went around to right," He tried to trick me. And he said, "Let's see now," he said, "What, what this young lad there, what kind of an inmate was he?" I said, "Well I guess I busted him a few times for little minor stuff but as far as an inmate, he was a likeable type of inmate. He never gave me a lot of trouble, no trouble at all. And he was, as far as an inmate was concerned, he was a likeable young lad. "Oh, in other words you kind of liked him yourself, right?" So he was trying to get me hostile see if I'd get mad over that remark And I didn't, I said, "No, like I said, he was a likeable young, as an inmate." I left it good, but you see he was seeing if he could get me mad, that I kind of liked that kid myself

GL: I see.

MB: That's what they do, that's what lawyers do. I didn't fall for it, but that's the type of stuff that'd go on in court. Now, like say in a killing now, if that would have happened this day that would have been all over the papers. There was no mention, there was no mention in the paper, they didn't even know who even took that knife away from the prisoner. It was Sergeant Basal, I was a Sergeant at the time.

GL: And did that inmate that did the assault, did he finish his life out here?

MB: Oh he's I asked Pam and she can't find him, she thinks he's dead. She couldn't find him, he was doing here a long time, he was in MIPC, special detention for years.

GL: P.C. or?

MB: M-I-P-C, it's a special training outfit for hardened criminals. It was a real lock up, that was right outside, but now it's a training type thing in there, but anyway that's where he was. Walls, that young lad's name was Walls.

GL: Walls

MB: Walls, young lad, he was just a young one, puny little, like I said, he was a likeable kid.

GL: I see.

MB: And that's the way they were, so you had some that were nasty that weren't never good to you, but they never, I got along with them and sometimes they didn't like you but you had to go along with the flow.

GL: Sure

MB: In order to survive. And like I said, I had at least two or three bad situations that I should have never walked out of that institution. I was very, very fortunate that I had inmates that had enough respect for me. There was a guy by the name of Whitey Moran, he was a many, many time killer and I walked in the last minute, I'm making my last round, and I went in there and there was a drunken party going on. They knew I was busy getting trucks in and out of the gate, and they knew I was busy but the last minute I went in there and they were getting ready for a football game or something and I went in there and they had some booze in there, bunch of booze, how they got the spud juice going, they were a lot of drunken party in there. And a whole bunch of them, as I walked in there I said, "You! Get! Get! Get! Get!" And Whitey Moran, like I said he was a well-liked, respectful inmate in that institution and he

says, I think I was Lieutenant at that time or maybe I was still a Sergeant. But he said, "Basal," he says, "Go home to your family. Go home to your family. Go home to your family." He said, "Don't bust us, don't bust us." And I said, "Whitey, you know I can't do that, I can't do that." And he pleaded with me, he said, "Don't bust us." I said, "I can't do it Whitey." And I said, "You! Get, get, get!" I kept saying "get" because they weren't supposed to be in there they were supposed to be in shops and that, but they were having a party a birthday party, whatever. But that was a bad situation, they could have killed me and cut me in pieces and flushed me down the toilet, they would have never found me. By that time the shift had changed I was alone in there, waiting for the shift, my partner was already out the door, gone, gone. Which I never did with my partners, but I had a couple of stinkers, that day neither one of them, and they both got, they're gone.

GL: Wow.

MB: The Sergeant would, Captain Sommers when I went through I was dripping booze and Captain says, "What happened Myron?" I said, "Well I sent most of them to the cell," I said, "I'll give you the report in the morning, two o'clock." I said, "I'm going to go home." And he said, "We'll be able to get you're a new uniform." I was just reeking booze from all that booze in there. And I told him what had happened, he said, "We'll take care of it." And I did and the next thing I know there was, those people, he, Captain Sommers took care of it. I don't know what they did, but anyway it was a bad situation. That was a bad, bad, bad, bad day. I went thirty years in that wall. I went thirty years inside that walls, I wanted to work the Mangum farm but they wouldn't let me. They wanted me in that, he said, "We need you in here." So I did, I ended up being a Commander down there. Like I said, I was a tough, young, strong farm boy that threw milk cans and hay bales around for years, you know and I was, I'm nothing now. I'm weak. But, I'm wore out. I was, I could take ahold of an inmate and he knew he had somebody different at that time, and they knew it, they knew I wasn't easy.

GL: Yeah. Did the, did you, did the union, was there always a prison guard union there before you came or were you there when it was formed?

MB: Yeah, yeah. But do you know how many days, they got as many as ten to fifteen overtime people at that prison right now. They can't get anybody in there to work. Pam is working all the time, she's gotta go to another meeting tomorrow I understand. Trying to recruit, get people to work in that place, they can't. They'd go and they'd quit because of their benefits they get and they just, there's just so much _____ and stuff now that they just can't get enough people in there. But all the years I worked in that prison, do you know how many days overtime I had?

GL: I have no idea.

MB: One.

GL: One.

MB: Out of thirty years. Other than the meetings, like there was overtime for that, of course. But I had one overtime, and the reason, I hate to bring religions in on this, but at that time in my era, until the last years it was run by the Catholic outfit. And if you weren't Catholic, which I was Protestant, you didn't get much of anything, no matter how good you were. They took care of their Catholic buddies. It was a shame, politics, but it was Catholic. And Butch ___ - was highly Catholic.

GL: Okay

MB: And, what's the one called before that? I went through, I think four different wardens, I was there. But Butch __, I got along real well with Butch __. Butch __ was, he didn't treat me bad, he was, every so often he'd as I would go through and he'd pull me aside, "Come in here, what the hell are you doing?" I said, "What do you think I was doing?" He said, "How come ya?" I said, "Warden," I said, "That sonabitch hit me first." And I said, "I knew you were in post five," But I said, "That sonabitch hit me first." And he said, "Why'd you have to hit him so hard?" I said, "Goddamnit, he hit me first, warden!" And I got along good with Butch __. I got along good with him, but that's the only time I'd get into it. And there was another time he called me in, he says, "Did you," He said, "I got a report." He says, "You got in a fight with an inmate down there," and he said, "You called him an N-word. A rotten N-word." I said, "You know warden," I said, "How long do you think I'd last back there if that's the way I was? I am not prejudiced, I get along good." I said, "I am not prejudiced." I said, "In the heat of a fight like that, I may have blurted something like that to him, when I was fighting him." But I said, "I doubt it very much," I said, "Because I'm just that kind, warden." I said, "If I did it," I said, "I'm sorry." But I said, he said, "Well he wants you in court." I said, "Well have him in court, but," I said, "I do not believe I would ever did that," But I said, "in the middle of a fight I said I might have blurted something like that or was wrestling with him. I may have. But," I said, "I am not prejudiced," I said, "because Warden you know how long would I last in that place back there, if I was that type of a person?" I said, "I'm", You know he said, "I know, he said, "you're respected by all." So that's why I survived a lot in there because I got along good with the inmates.

GL: When you speak of the inmates, I don't know if you can speak to this. Marquette being up here away from the rest of the state, did you get a feel of how the inmates viewed at being in Marquette Prison as opposed to downstate prisons or?

MB: Sure, sure, sure. They knew when we outside, we were different. They knew what we, I'm talking about the last few years, we didn't even have that many blacks in there. It was mostly all the whites and the lifers. Like I always call them, the nice, clean lifers. But that was the majority of Marquette. But now they closed Newberry State Hospital, when they did that we had a bunch of nut cases, I mean they had no business on the streets. And they mingled in with these other scum and ____ it. We had lots of them from Saginaw, Monroe, and stuff like that and a lot of the blacks and that. There wasn't that many blacks at Marquette, very, very few as I recall. But they were all lifers, old, old lifers doing life from the Purple Gang and that and the, the time when there was booze making and that, Prohibition, at that time. That's what it was, most of the problem was during Prohibition during the 30s and then Marquette got filled with that type of stuff. But Needles ____, he had a shop down there. He made snowshoes inside. Like I said I had done a lot of snowshoeing, I had done a lot of trapping. He'd get, I'd bring in my snowshoes and bring to the shop down there and he'd make a special snowshoe with a heavy binding on my foot because I had travelled a lot on snowshoes, I done a lot of trapping in the winter. And so he'd model those especially for me. Needles Zilkowski. He had rawhide and that was his job, and he'd send to the road stand, you know the road stand is up there, it still is but it's closed. But then he'd ship it out there and I'd see the job he'd done, well I had seen him while he was doing it. I'd tell him where I wanted the heavy rawhide, and he done a wonderful job. I went through at least three pair of ____ snowshoes when he was there in my thirty years. So there's another inmate like I got to know real good.

GL: Expert snowshoeing. Your daughter in law mentioned you were there during the riot. Can you provide background, I believe it was in 1980?

MB: Yeah I think it was '80, '81. I would have been out of there one year I would have missed that riot, because I was going to retire, I had my thirty years in.

GL: You wanted to hang out for the riot? [chuckling]

MB: No, I didn't want to stay for the riot but I got caught. Bob, Rob that personnel officer, he said, "Myron," he said, "If you stay one more year," he said, "they'll give you a hundred dollars more if you make your wife," because she was three years older than me, "It'll make her a year older and it'll give you a hundred dollars a month more towards your retirement, if you stay in one more year." So I said, "Well heck, for one hundred bucks, I'll stay another year for that." So otherwise I would have been gone, I would have missed the riot. And of course when I did the riot started at Jackson and Ionia, and as you probably know, the riot ended in Marquette. And I was just gotten off my shift, six to two and warden Koehler was in there, and I had one knee in bed and it was about twenty to ten or something like that. He said, "Cap." He says, I was captain by that time. He says, "They're rioting in Marquette, I need you down here right away." I said, "Okay warden." So put my uniform back on, back down there dead tired of course I had worked the shift before and my place around here. So I went down there and when I came around ___ I was angry, I was mad. I was mad when I seen those flames, when I seen the smoke. I says, "How in the hell can that be?" When I went in through that rotunda I talked to the Inspector, the Inspector was Bill, Bill, anyway. He as the Inspector, he says, "Myron" he says, "we gotta get those trucks in." I said, "I guess so, we gotta get those fire trucks in, they're going to level this place." So, he said, "Okay," he says, "I'll get the squads going and," he says, "I'll have them lined up with buckshot, and," he says, "we gotta push them back." I said, "Okay." And ___ Chief ___ was the fire chief at that time. And I told ___ - I said, "I'm going to get those trucks in, and," I said, "I'm going to protect you. You will, you can bring them truck in." I had seven different fire trucks out there. They had fires, and they had the locks ripped off of those god damned buildings. Sorry for my language, I was amazed when I went and seen the locks ripped off the industrial building, the machine shop and noone shot an inmate. I talked to my best friend, Stein. I said, "Wayne," I said, "How in the hell, how come them guys never shot one of them guys? They had every right, they're destroying state property, why didn't they shoot them before they got all that equipment?" And all the bars and the jacks and everything, they would have knocked the wall down with the equipment they had in the machine shop. They had torches and everything, they could have cut anything out. So it was a bad situation. So when I went in there, I said, I think I had twenty five maybe thirty other officers that wanted to work with me in there. I took them all out there with buckshot, loaded buckshot. And I said, "I'm not giving you no more drills like we do, drills for fire and ___ squad, and pushing." I said, "Here's the line, I'm going to bring them trucks in, which ____." And I said, "We're going to push these inmates back in that corner." I said, "I'm going to give you orders," I said, "It's me. All you are witnesses now. Twenty, twenty-five thirty you." I said, "If they come toward these trucks, I'm never giving you no more. Shoot'em, shoot every one of them. Kill them!" I was very angry, and I got officers stopping here yet. They still, one was talking to me, he says they never had orders like that, and they said, "I wish I could get you back." They said, "Them inmates knew." I.. state prison "This is Captain Basal. I'm going to bring them trucks in and you better not come near these trucks, because I got orders. I'm going to use our guns, you're not gonna live. They're all loaded with buckshot and I'm giving them orders to kill you." And that's the way it was. After it was all over Chowder was there, the Director of Prison was there, I think it was Brown,

_____, all the other people in the institution, me of course. And I told them what I did, I said, "I gave those officers orders." I said, "It's my fault," I said, "Whatever happens, I'm to blame. I'm giving you this order to kill them. Shoot them, because we gotta save this institution." And I said, "Well fellows, what in the hell do you think would have happened if they would have charged them." "Not a goddamned thing, not a goddamned thing," they all said. I said, "That's what they said now." But I often wondered, if them inmates, if I'd have killed them, what would have happened to Captain Basal? But I lived, it worked out good. I was very well recommended for it. It happened, you know.

GL: Why did the riot occur?

MB: Well, it started in Jackson, they started over food and, well whatever it is. Maybe displacement, they didn't get what they wanted, maybe visits, maybe not the right kind of treatment for certain people, they ganged together, they started a riot, they didn't like the way they were handled. A whole bunch of things to use to get something going. All they have to do is a handful of a few of those troublemakers, and they'll get the majority to go in it, and then you've got chaos.

GL: I see.

MB: and that's what happened and even in Marquette. By the time I got in there quite a few of my good friends were hurt bad. They got hit with baseball bats, and I guess a couple of them are still on disability, still aren't right, you know. I got through it, I got hurt lots down, I got my nose broke by sucker, never be mad at me, just that authority. Like with Deputy Mallette there, you know, he'd have a hearing there and pretty soon they'd get mad at him and the first thing they would do is take a swing at me. Because if you knocked me out then they could get the deputy, see? And I used to tell Bob, I said, "You make them sonabitches mad," I said, "They swing at me first." [Both laugh] I had my nose broken at least three times, that's why I had this, in the hospital, ___ ruptured blood vessels.

GL: Okay.

MB: So anyway. So, I got through it sir, it was a rough and tangle like I said. It's amazing through the years there was, that riot was bad and I had a lot. And then, you know I gotta get a little more humor in here. I, they started integrating women in the prison in my last few years.

GL: As guards?

MB: As guards, yeah they were different. They were special assignments and I ended up, there was seven of them originally, that was women. Some of them were married, some of them weren't, and they had girlfriends/boyfriends. Well toward the end, they all wanted to work for me. Why? Because I knew that the one of them wanted to be with the other one on the days off, so I worked, it took me a while, but if so and so was married to so-and-so, I'd make sure they got the same days off. And some of these times it'd take a month, but I got them in the same groups with all, different ones with in the same group. It made it better for me because if somebody else wanted a day off, then the other one wanted a day off at a different time with his day off. So it worked a lot better to have them with the same groups.

GL: Yeah.

MB: I ended up having all of those in the same groups and that was one of the things. Who's that, Pam?

PB: Yep

MB: I'm getting to around to the women that I had working for me, I got around to that part, and why I had them

PB: Oh yeah?

MB: Now, you know what they named my squad?

PB: Oh boy.

MB: I gotta say it.

GL: Please do.

MB: Because I had all them women working for me and they got a lot of real good, they had their ten days off, they could put their vacations together. It was harmony for me, and it was even-er for me. And they, there was one captain down there, he called it the Pussy Posse. Now, I'll tell ya he was humorous, everybody knew it, but I had to tell you, that's part of the humor. But that's what goes on. But I got along good with them, I still, for years and years I still have messages from some of them girls, they're retired now too, you know. I got along good with them. I never had no hanky-panky with any of them, like I told Pam, I had a lot of opportunities with other ones __ but I never did. I was honoring my wife, and I never did. I had a lot of opportunities but I didn't.

GL: There you go.

PB: And you are still respected for it now, for that reason.

MB: I am, I still am, and they know it.

GL: Did the riot change relations among the prisoners or guards or did it just go back, kind of cool down, then back to the way it was?

MB: Oh no, it just wasn't as easy as getting along. It seemed like there was more turmoil all the time with something with courts and that, because they threw in a lot of other rules that were in favoring inmates and some of them weren't, and that caused a lot of friction in the courts and there was always was, always a attorney that was trying to get started and he'd get a hundred dollars even to come to talk to an inmate, and he'd start something up. Even if he had a frivolous suit, he'd, that attorney would pick it up because he'd get paid by the defense you know for the courts and the taxpayers.

GL: And this had to be at the last of your years?

MB: The last years, it mingled in bad with that because they had so many opportunities to fight every menial little thing, was ridiculous. They're never going to win. I went to Lansing on some of them things there, it was just so ridiculous. And Marsha _____ man was the Ombudsman in Lansing down there. I'd go down there and they'd fly me out of Marquette and then she'd pick me up in Lansing down there, and I'd have to be in court for some stupid thing with the union or something about something with an inmate or something they were trying to get going about how I run the institution or my rules and regulations. But I never lost like Marsha _____ said, she said, "Myron," she said, "You were so well prepared," she says, "there's no chance that they'll win." And I did, like I said, going back I never bum-rapped anything, I had my facts and that's the way it was.

PB: A lot of changes came from the riots,

MB: Huh?

PB: a lot of changes came from the riots

MB: Lots of changes, yeah. Well, you know some of them there, as far as their...

GL: Do you want elaborate?

PB: Yeah, I mean there was changes that came that were necessity changes. Things that, better communications between supervisors and line staff, we had now line ups and times where we can have those sharing of communications. We had labor relation meetings that came out of it, we had Resident Unit Officers put into all of the housing units so that regular staff were in the units that knew the prisoner's needs at those times. Different classification systems, part of the reason we had troubles were prisoners were being classified to lower levels because of expense, that shouldn't have been in lower levels. It's cheaper to house a prisoner at a lower level than it is a higher level.

GL: And lower level and higher level, what does that mean?

PB: Security.

GL; I see, okay.

MB: more privileges.

PB: And more privileges, so then you're giving a prisoner that maybe doesn't deserve as many privileges because of behavior, and the classification system was changed to where it was more strict. How misconducts were handled, like if you were to get a ticket. Like a speeding ticket, I always tell people, there's a consequence for that speeding ticket, there might be a fine or something where a prisoner usually loses his privileges if he gets a ticket for violating the rules. So so many things changed, there was actually a Milliken Report done for Governor Milliken at the time. And those changes were made, and the officers were given, now retirements, and better pay, and better benefits to keep them around so we didn't have such a turnover. So you weren't constantly teaching a new officer how to do a job, which disrupts prisoners. Prisoners like structure prisoners like things in a certain way __ ____+.

GL: Sure.

PB: And when there's a problem with it, then there's an issue. Some other things came to benefit the prisoners, there was the dissent decree that came out that said they have to have a certain amount of yard time, they have to have a certain amount of living space, there's certain things they have to have for humane conditions. Those things were met by the dissent decree, it was only a few years ago that that was expired, but we still go by those rules and regulations to make sure that we fall within humane treatments to prisoners, not to put us back. Unfortunately though, due to many, many budget cuts, we are back to the conditions prior to what they were through the riots. We actually have less staffing than we had the night of the riot.

GL: And that's what you were saying earlier, wow.

MB: Yep.

PB: So even though the words were taken well, and things were changed, thirty years later as we usually see the cycle. Because in '81 and then before that it was in the 50s, the riots were. It's about a thirty year cycle where we forget what caused them to start with and we revert back to ways that are budgetary driven because it's what's a problem in the State of Michigan. And so we base everything on budgets, now we no longer have lineups, we no longer have retirements for officers, we no longer have the classification system we used to have, tickets are done differently, we're putting prisoners in lower levels once again to push them out the door as fast as we can.

GL: Okay

PB: So there's some history there as well, but that's not dad's history per say, he's the one who helped see the changes through, he saw what happened prior to the riots, he saw the changes after the riots. I just happened to be thirty years' generation, I've been in the prison for over twenty five years now, so I've seen these changes come and go too, and many of the officers down there can tell you that've been around for a long time, we see it coming back. But as dad tells me, prisoners aren't as smart as they used to be, and if they'd only get their act together they would be able to riot again.

MB: Yep

PB: But unfortunately we have a bunch of young kids in there that are dope dealers and meth heads and drive by shooters, and they're not as educated as a prisoner once used to be. So they don't have that ability or the smarts to gather themselves together to riot as well as they did back when dad was doing it.

MB: I was telling her, it's amazing that you don't have somebody sooner or later they're going to get somebody that's got enough smarts to get it going with this food and everything. I am amazed that you don't have a riot over that food

PB: That's true.

MB: When you got maggots and stuff in food, when we the people in there that were stewarts down there, there was Nan Caro and Gabe Bennetts, and people like that, you know that they were stewarts there, everything was immaculate.

PB: Yep...___ until we changed it was still that way.

MB: The food was excellent, and we could eat the food! It was good, everybody knew it. But now, it, I, with these, I tell Pam, "I can't believe what the problems they got." Now they fired this super, all this people now, they got a new one in there now.

PB: Trinity, yeah.

MB: Going to cost a few more hundred million and it's not going to get any better

PB: Well it's interesting, you know. The company changed but we kept the same employees.

GL: And this was, I remember reading about this. This was the outsourcing of the services that used to be internal.

MB: Yep, yep, right

PB: Exactly. Right and the internal services, in fact those internal food stewards are now officers because they were so that good at what they did.

GL: Oh boy.

PB: The people that are hired now, and I've made friends with some of them, there's some really decent kids that are in there, but the majority of them do not pass all of the standards that we had prior to. Aramark, literally when Aramark took over from our normal food service, Trinity has now has taken over for Aramark, Trinity kept the exact same employees, so I'm not quite sure what was so different.

GL: Different name it sounds like but ___ yeah.

PB: it's different name, and actually the quality of food I've been told, even though we found maggots recently,

GL: Oh goodness.

PB: has been actually a little better than it was with Aramark but not much. So there's still struggles, there's always going to be struggles, it's prison. The other thing is Dad talked earlier about the Purple Gang where you may have had the Purple Gang and maybe one other gang back then. Not by much. I'm a gang expert down there now and we have twenty seven different gangs that we have identified within the prison system.

GL: In the prison?

PB: And when you deal with that many, their issues are the gangs now. They're not fighting one common cause as they did back when dad was here, they're fighting against each other for the struggle for power. There's probably six major gangs that are there, we have more than that identified but of those six major ones, those are the ones that are struggling constantly and ones with weapons and fighting and amongst themselves instead of gaining together to fight the common cause.

MB: You don't have the hard time people that used to be in there with the brains,

PM: No.

MB the Purp, they're not there. They're just hot heads and dope...

PM: Young kids, looking for a name.

MB: molesters, child molesters and stuff like there, you know. It's a mess that's got in there, and like I said to him earlier about the Newberry State Hospital closing. You got them out in the street ____, you would be fearful if you knew some of the people that you're walking next to in the streets right now.

PB: Over forty percent of my current population at Marquette Branch Prison is outpatient mental health, they are on outpatient mental health ____.

GL: Forty percent?

PB: Over forty percent.

MB: You'd never know if you, you'd never know if you were going to get stabbed for your wallet or what.

GL: Well let me throw this, let me ask you both this since you're kind of experts on it. Prison and incarceration is certainly in the news today with the President and looking to reform. What reforms as with your knowledge, with this institutional knowledge that you both have. What reforms would help prison systems in the United States?

MB: You got to have respect of the officers that's running and the people that's running it. You can't have these bureaucrats that don't know nothing what's going on that's making, well all the way from the top guy in the White House now. They got, you're not safe with your cops anymore, they are getting down trodden so much and it's going right into the prisons and all the way, they have no respect for law enforcement no more, and it's getting worse. They gotta, the cops gotta have their respect back. There's a lot of good cops, and sure you're going to have, I know I've had a few bad cops that have worked for me and I had to get rid of them. They knew it, but you know, there's always a few in no matter what department you got, if you got the State Police, you got the DNR, whoever you got you're always going to have a few. But you can't name all these cops that are racists or are out to get the blacks, or out to get a certain people and pull them over, there's a reason. And now it's gotten to the point, they don't have the respect and they gotta change that tempo with the law enforcement, otherwise we are all going to be in trouble, deep trouble.

PB: I think the common thing I think I see now a days especially you get a kid coming in, and first of all he has no self-respect. And if you have no self-respect you can't give respect to others. To do a driveby shooting and have no idea who your victim is,

MB: Yeah, terrible

PB: Is no longer a respectful thing, you have no respect for your own life, you have no respect for anyone else's life. We bring these kids into prison and I'll tell you, I've watched changes, I've watched programs come and go. We have better programs today than we had twenty years ago. Some of them I see a change, but I'll tell you to be honest with you what I saw that surprised me the most. I recently, I do recruitment for the Department of Corrections, and I worked at the U.P. State Fair for the week to recruit officers. We needed a thousand officers, cause there's such a huge push right now with everybody retiring from my classes, I'm too young to retire so I'm still in. But in my week of working in the public, which is the first time I think we've really done that. It was many aspects one, I was recruiting and I became known as The Lady With a Thousand Jobs, and a lot of people came up to me to look for a job. But I also, when everyone found out, the general public had no idea what we do, have no idea the dangers that we do. I have display boards with weapons and stuff, weapons that dad actually took off prisoners that were stabbing other prisoners.

GL: That would be that knife you were referring to.

PB: Yes.

MB: It's in her display.

GL: Yeah.

PB: So it was an education to the public. But what surprised me most that week, it started out with a young kid that was working for the DirecTV booth across from me. And my booth was busy all the time, and finally he had a break towards the evening and he came over and he says, "I've been waiting for nobody to be here," and I says, "What's up?" And he said, "I wanted to thank you." And I said, "Okay, for what?" He says, "I did time. I did five years." And he says, "And it's because of an officer like you, I didn't come back." He says, "You kept me outta trouble, you made sure I went to school, you made sure I did what I was supposed to do, I got a job. And," he said, "I found a reason to have self-respect because an officer watched out for me." And that was the first time in my career I've ever felt any satisfaction of doing something right.

GL: How about that.

PB: We bring a prisoner in and we give them no reason for self-respect. We wash their clothes, we cook their meals, we do their dishes, we hand them soap, they don't have to buy their own supplies. Anything that they get, income coming in, they can buy anything they want with. We don't give them a reason for self-respect.

MB: Excuse me one second, I'm gotta go turn that light off.

PB: I have been, here dad I got it.

MB: Yeah, I gotta go to the bathroom too.

PB: Okay ____.

MB: Keep going, I'll be right back.

PB: I will. To me, I think if we changed our system to the point where, for instance if you're a person on the street and you walk into the hospital with a heart attack, we're going to take care of you. We're going to make sure we take care of you, but I'm not going to pay out of pocket for your glasses and I'm not going to pay for your teeth to get cleaned, and I'm not going to do those things unless you have insurance. In the prison system there's jobs. We have porter jobs, kitchen jobs, factory jobs, and to me you want eye care, you want dental care? Fine, you get the better paying job. You get to work in the kitchen or in the factory, work your way up to those jobs. Have a reason to have self-respect, have a reason to earn what you have there. These kids on the street aren't taught to earn, there's an entitlement. And if these kids are taught to earn what they've got and have pride in themselves. I have talked to kids that came in with no education what-so-ever into going to school. I said, "You got kids at home?" "Yeah I've got kids, I've got three baby mommas," or whatever it is. I said, "What are you teaching them kids by not getting your education? Do you expect them to go to school?" "Well yeah, they have to go." And I said, "Then why aren't you?" And so then they go to school and I get them coming back, and I'm at the lower level at Marquette Branch right now. I've worked twenty-one years inside the maximum-security portion. The last four or five years I've worked out in the minimum security Those are the kids you can get through to still, those are the ones that are coming with drugs, those are the ones coming in with B-and-E's and armed robberies. But the ones inside level five, you're not going to get through.

GL: And Level five is the?

PB: Maximum security, yep. Those are the kids you're not going to get through, too many years I've seen it, and it's just not going to happen. The lower levels, you have a chance. But you haven't given them any reason, you haven't made them earn enough money to buy a roll of toilet paper. We keep handing it to them, so we take and send them out into the street and what do we expect? They're expecting it to be handed to them, and if they don't get it handed to them, they go take it. So if we've given them no reason for self-respect and given them no reason to try to earn those things in life, then I think that you're never going to break that cycle. Sometimes you can do it, sometimes there's, my partner and I are, I swear we're more like parents inside the prison system than we are officers. Because we are, "Get you butt out of bed and go to school. You have an appointment at this time, this person's expecting you, and you know what, if you don't go to that appointment I'm going to write you a misconduct. And now you're going to lose your T.V., just like you would punish a kid at home. Okay, you've lost your privileges now because you didn't do what you were supposed to do." And I think that, I talked to the seven different ex-cons that came up to me during that Fair and told me the exact same thing. And it came up, almost the last couple of days, started making almost a game of it. I'd get an ex-con coming up and I'd go, "Okay, why? Why did you stay out and your bunkie didn't? Why do you have a family, and you have a job, and you have something?" I said, "Was it the programming we gave you? Was it?" And I think maybe that's where we need to start, is going back and asking some of these ex-cons that didn't come back why? Why did you stay out? What made the difference?

GL: Did you find a commonality?

PB: It was the officers, every single one told me it wasn't the programming, it was the officers that they had in the unit and how they treated them and how they made them react.

GL: And you're getting this response not at the work place?

PB: Not at the workplace, but at the general public as I watched them come through. And you can pick them out after a while, you tend to judge people, I guess based on behavior. That's my job, that's what keeps me alive. But, because I've always said we don't go in with tools, we go in with your brain and that's it. That's what you got to fight with, and it used to be up until just a year or two ago it was your fists if you needed them. Now we have tazers, now we have gas, but before that you didn't have anything. You walked in with your brains, that's what kept you alive, that's what kept dad alive. You'd watch for those details, you'd watch for those little things that didn't seem quite right.

GL: That's what you mentioned about.

MB: I got three got bad things on my whole career that I know that I was very lucky to be alive. And that's the only ones I've ever have night, well I mean but it comes up. Of all the things that I've been into lots of stuff, a real lot of messed up, but there's only about three of them that I know that I was very, very lucky that I'm alive. That was bad, I had bad situations. When you get a guy that's, weighs a hundred and some pounds more than you, and you say, "Okay, it's over. Give me the knife." And instead of taking a slash at you, and you know one slash is going to kill you. Guts, brains, no-brains, whatever you call it, that's what happened. And that's the way it went.

PB: I think dad can say, I've always said, "I never walk in scared, but I always walk out thankful." Every day I punch out, I thank God that I punched out that day and I went home to my family the same way I came in. That's the only way you can do it.

MB: I was lucky I was with all the supervisors I worked with, we always were respected to each other and I got along real good with them, even with the Wardens. I know some people were fearful of the wardens, I never was, and they knew it you know. I got along good with them, even Kohler down there now. We had a reception there and we had a couple of good words together and we talked about some of the things that happened when he was working and all that. It was old times. But we're both in bad shape, now Kohler he's in worse shape than I am now. I was really surprised, I was really surprised to see how bent over he was, and he's a little bit younger than I am. But I was really surprised to see his shape.

GL: What did you do after retirement?

MB: Like I said, I tried to tell you about when my wife. I had a hobby farm here, I taught kids with agriculture, I taught them how stuff grew. I had as many as thirty and forty tons of pumpkins that I grew just in this area here. My daughter had chickens and I had manure, and she had a horse and that and add the manure, and I fertilized a little, but mostly organic stuff and the rotted fields and wheat and that and chop it up. But I had as many as twenty thirty tons of pumpkins. I got a T.V. thing there with TV6 about the people that were coming down here with the pumpkins. I was known for years, I and my wife as the Pumpkin People. For years, they still know me as the Pumpkin man you know.

PB: And the kids would come through from school on tour groups and they'd look at the apple orchards and the pumpkins and.

MB: And I'd teach them how the blossoms were, and how the pumpkins grew and that. Like I said the male and female blossoms, how different. And the teachers and, Colonel Jurez, when you were probably too young for that, but he was the Commander of Sawyer at that time,

GL: Okay.

MB: and he and his wife, he had a couple of kids and his wife they'd pick out one tree, and they'd, that was their tree, that was their apple tree. And they'd come out and pick apples. And I got to know Colonel Jurez pretty well. Well somebody turned the books on him up there, that they had gold faucets in the offices latrines and all that fancy stuff. Well he took the brunt of that, he could have cared less what was happening in that latrine at the officer's thing, but he took the fall for it. So a couple of years later he ended up, they fired him out of there, he was Commander of K.I. Sawyer. And he sent me a letter, he said, "Myron," he says, "I'm not _____." He said, "They got rid of me." He said, "But now I'm in the Pentagon," he said, "I'm not Colonel Jurez," he said, "I'm a General now." So that was almost comical. So he was telling me about how I made my pumpkins to grow and I was telling him how, the difference between a male and female pumpkin, of the blossom. And I said, well he said that K.I. Sawyer, because of the smoke, he says, "I don't think we got any bees." I said, "Well Colonel," I said, "You don't have to do that." I said, "You can go out there and take one of them male blossoms in the morning." He said, "I got them." I says, "Well you take that male blossom and you go hit every one of them female blossoms with that male blossom." It's only one day that this comes up, it's a football and that's the male, and it'll die. But you got to tap every one of them female blossoms, it will pollinate it. He says, "Yeah," he said, "I can imagine," he said, "they see me what I'm doing, I tell them I'm pollinating my pumpkins," he said, "they'll lock me up!"

[all laugh]

MB: We had so much fun, we had so much fun. That was Colonel Jurez, it was comical. They were such a nice family. I had a lot of people from K.I. Sawyer, I knew a lot of them. They came here way after K.I. Sawyer was closed, they still come and got apples and pumpkins or something from me. But I and my wife, we had twenty-five, thirty years of tours of teaching teachers how the stuff grew, and they'd take their samples you know, and they'd all have pumpkins and that. And they'd have samples of apples and like I said.

PB: You're still an avid trapper too then, dad.

MB: Yeah, I told him something about that. And I told him I had learned trapping, I learnt a lot from inmates and also Chief Kawbagam's great-great-grandkids, Johnny and Albert Cadotte, they were Cadottes, their names was Cadottes. And they lived in a shack at DeLaurier's down there, she helped with the store, shoveling snow and that. But they were, I don't recall them talking English at all, if they did I didn't understand it, but they'd know ___ gestures and I learned something from them. They told me how to fish, how to get the fish under the bank over there and that. But anyway, that was, I learned a lot from them and I learned a lot more from the inmates, and then I learned a lot on my own. I was, I'm not going to brag, I was a very good trapper, there's no doubt about it, I was very, very good.

PB: And plus you won awards at the fair for your produce.

MB: Oh yes, I got a lot of awards. And also ___ and staff and Northbay Fur Company and I've got letters from them too through the years how I handled my furs.

GL: you talked about that.

MB: Yeah, I got good awards from Hudson Bay. And I done that, I haven't no more now, I've got to have somebody else. I got an Indian friend of hers, I wanted an Indian, native ____, he's up there. Gotta get my beaver out of my land up there because I can't do it no more. And he's told me he'd take care of it for me because those son a guns are cutting trees around the camp and cutting, plugging my roads and flooding the roads. So, I used to see all the animals around and the more that would come, the better because I'd send them to Hudson Bay, you know. I'd skin them and send them to Hudson Bay, but I can't do it no more so I, a friend of hers is a good blend Indian.

GL: Where is that, up in the Keweenaw?

PB: Out in the Republic area.

GL: Okay

MB: So he's doing it now, he's going to come out and get those beaver out of there. Because I can't handle it, they're just working me to death and I can't do it no more, I'm so weak and.

PB: He's weak but he's still is very active. He helps me garden and farm over at my place too, just across the street. And he's with his grandkids a lot so that helps teach them the ways of things and how things can be done.

GL: Pass that generational knowledge onto them.

MB: I wish I could do more for them but, that Chocoley Township. I would like to talk to Dan Benishek before he retires, and if even a possibility that may through the veterans, they gotta get in with the

Agriculture Department from Northern. I talked briefly to somebody down there but I never got no feedback on em. I've told them the quagmire I'm in about this, I said, "I haven't have plums here now for years, because I can't use my smudge." And I'll be damned if I'm going to go out there to hose it.

PB: That's more of a township thing we have to deal with on an individual basis.

MB: Yeah, it's a stupid, it's stupid.

GL: You mentioned this earlier. And just to be clear, so you're lighting a fire and so the smoke comes up and that's the smudge.

MB: That's right.

GL: And so what does that do? Kind of coat everything?

PB: It keeps it warm.

MB: It keeps it warm.

GL: Okay.

MB: It keeps it warm, even in the smoke, it just need to drip briefly and it will save your blossoms.

GL: I see.

MB: They've done that for generations, they're still doing it out west. It's a known fact they're still doing it out west. But these people they just, no knowledge, you can't get through to them.

GL: They've forgotten there's farms. Well you mentioned it earlier, people, it's growing in the store!

MB: They got it, they got it, that's right.

PB: The thing is, you ask them where milk comes from, they say, "Walmart."

GL: I'd like to bring this to a conclusion. What else would you like to address or other insights you'd care to share? Wonderful oral history of the region, it's just not recalled anymore.

MB: Well there was a, there was another guy by the name of Art Belonge. That was the name of Beaver Grove actually, it was known not only, but that came years later. He wanted to raise beaver, he fenced in actually part of Big Creek where Kastles' is now? He actually fenced that in, he thought he was going to raise beaver. Well how long is beaver going to land if they don't have no popple? That's gone, it's gone, and he never would have gotten away with it in this day and age anyway. But he actually, that's how it became Beaver Grove their name, because of him. That was later on.

GL: And before that it was Kas?

MB: Right now it's still Kastle's Korner it's a store there now.

GL: Okay, Kastel's Korner, right yeah.

MB: My niece and her husband run that. But it was Art, Art Belonge, he started that and he thought he was going to raise beaver. But that didn't last very long because even he fen, it cost him a fortune must have been in those days even to try to fence that area in to try to keep beaver in. I don't know what

mindset he had, but that's actually, he tried to raise beaver because the price of furs was very expensive you know, in the early 1900s, you know, that's pretty, late 1800s that was a big thing, the beaver pelts going to England and Hudson Bay. It still is a big industry, beaver and furs are coming back now, it's a big industry. It's coming back right now again. I haven't been into it lately because of my condition but I was up on all the tradings of all the markets for years. And it was bad during the early 70s it started to go the other way, but now it's coming back according, from what I understand from her Indian friend there. And I guess some of the furs he's getting a pretty good price for it, and worthwhile to pay for his gas, you know. And when I was, in my era I worked at the prison and I had my garden in here with the wife, but I still had calls from the DNR when they had problems with beaver, even in Lakewood Lane. You don't know the places that tried to have apple trees or even a fruit tree in their yard. The beaver would even come off of Lake Superior, any little ditch and they'd cut their trees. Well the DNR would call me to go get the beaver out of there, and I did, even if it was in the summer. And they were, they people were really happy about it, they'd give me twenty five dollars just to get rid of the damned beaver. At that time, summer, you know, what the hell? The fur was never worth anything, but that was happening even then. So I was well known by the DNR and everything, at that time that there was problems with the natives. And M-28, M-28 was nothing when I was a kid, like I said, now there's houses and houses. That was another, Max Stearle he was an early day photographer. He had a photograph place where the general or the Marquette High School is there in that Old Graveraet. He had a gallery there for years. Well I peddled apples and stuff to him and he always had eggs, he always wanted extra eggs. So I got to talk to him and I found out that he was a well-known trapper and photographer. So he wanted me to go in with him to build a house, a cabin on Kawbawgam. He owned all Kawbawgam, pert near all M-28, Max Stearle did. Well I never had no guidance _____ and I was busy with the farm and everything, but he _____ there is when he wanted me to go with him as his partner in trapping and fishing and photographing and that, but I missed out. But Max Stearle is a well-known. If you look it up, they'll all know about Max Stearle. He was the same time as Kawbawgam and Cohodas, and there was another one, Blemhuber, Blemhuber, he was the first one that started the apples, that knew how to graft apples to get good apples around here. It was Blemhuber, and he as in on that farming stuff too with the local yokel farmers here got the boxes, they'd give them the boxes, they'd fill the boxes and they sold them to the bigger stores around and they peddled them around. So all the farmer had to do was fill the boxes, they got the boxes free. That was _____ on those days too. That was the era even during the peddling days, but that was all part of it too, but that's, I'm just naming some of the old heads that I was acquainted with as a young kid. As stupid as I was, I never had no guidance, I had opportunities.

GL: It sounds like yeah, you did fine.

MB: I could have been a multi-millionaire, I know, because I had it offered to me because I got along good, I was just at the right time. I got along good with Max Stearle, he'd buy eggs just so he'd turn them into bait. He'd let them rot and use them for fox bait and coyote bait and,

GL: Cause that's why he'd trap and photograph?

MB: Yeah, for trapping. And I knew he wasn't eating that many eggs, but I got to talking to him about it and he filled me in on that. But that was Max Stearle. And Blemhuber, like I said he was the one that started the grafting of apples around here, getting different types of trees. And then Cohodas, he started a business.

PB: Dad also helped both his son and daughter build their houses.

MB: Yeah I did that.

PB: He did the masonry work in both our houses, he is an excellent mason. Built his first house over there and built this house that we're in now.

GL: You built this house?

PB: Yes.

MB: I built that one over there too. And I built my daughter's house, log house. And I just about did all of hers over there. I done that I think, what was it twenty...

PB: We kept him busy in his retirement years.

MB: I think it was twenty eight hundred blocks in that house?

PB: Something like that. Yeah, I remember carrying them all, I know that.

MB: That fireplace, and he was a mineral, he was one of the mineral, he still in minerals heavy now in the mining industry, and now his _- his daughter is high in geology now. But he had to have a place of copper, he had that mounted in that fireplace. Well that took me about a week to get that fitted in on that fireplace and it was a solid piece of copper that he had built into that fireplace. And that was some fireplace.

GL: I'll bet that's pretty. So does it catch the flames and reflects it?

MB: It reflects, yeah it's, all stuff like that I went through. Like I didn't even bring up about the masonry, I done a lot of masonry work for other people, small jobs, foundations for people that worked with me down there. Did it for friends, you know, that worked for me, I didn't charge them, I was just good at masonry work too, I had a knack for that too, I guess.

GL: Alright, well, Mr. Basal I certainly appreciate your time. Pam, do you have anything you'd like to finish this with?

PB: No, I just think he's an incredible guy, I've gotten to know him for twenty-five years or more now, and I couldn't prouder to call him dad, so. He's given me a lot of guidance a lot of ____ there.

MB: Yeah. She takes care of me now, she takes all of my records, and I've got her as my caretaker and my medical and financial things. But I'm still well enough I can take care pretty much all of it, but she takes care of all of my records and...

PB: He's stuck with me.

MB: It's, she takes care of me pretty damned well.

GL: Alright, yeah.

MB: Anyway I'm sure happy to talk to you, I'm sure I'm forgetting a lot of stuff. And I'm just touching some of what I went through, but I wish I could talk to you maybe again someday, you never know.

GL: Well we certainly can arrange a second interview, that's.

PB: Maybe there'll be things you'll think of afterwards.

GL: Yeah, yes you will. Okay, this is Gabe Logan signing off and thank you all very much.

END OF INTERVIEW