



Beaty, Wilson
Interviewed by Nooruddin Fakir
Transcribed by Nooruddin Fakir

Tape #1 Side A - April 17, 1993

WB : Wilson Beaty
FS : Nooruddin Fakir.

FS : You moved here in 40...uh...

WB : we bought..uh..we started the Dodge garage, we had Dodge and Plymouth and Chrysler took Plymouth away from us, we started in '46

FS : okay

WB : and , we ... uh... we sold out to Wes in '80..uh..'87

FS: I've heard that there was a car factory in Grinnell

WB : Yes, Spalding

FS: Spalding

WB: this big brick house right down here, right across from sixth avenue,

FS: uhu

WB: That was Spalding's home, when I came to this town, I nearly bought that, but I didn't think I could afford to put that much money in a house and take it out of the business, my business money, so I bought instead of spending seventy-five hundred dollars for this house , seventy five hundred dollars

FS: Back in those days that was a lot of money

WB: I bought a five thousand dollar house, and, uh, I lived in it for about... '44 to '49, five years and found out that I was out of the school district. Didn't realize it. And my kids, my kids had, my oldest daughter had gone to school here, five years, or four years actually, start in the fifth year and they came to me and wanted tuition. And I had two girls in school then, and I said, uh, why? Well, then, you're not in the district and I said, Well, why didn't they say that five years ago.

FS: uhu

WB: Thank you, (laughter) and uh, so I went over where I am now, and bought a house. (clears throat) I am over on the east side of the college

FS: Okay

WB: Elm street, 9 th and elm. And My house was 55 years old when I bought it and I've lived there since 49, so I've lived there, uh, darn near 50 years? (laughter)

FS: 50 years, yeah. (laughter)

WB: You now, not quite 45. It's a good old house.

FS: what was the college like in those days? Uh, now the college, now I mean, like now, the college is doing a lot of things...

WB: they have built a lot of things. They have torn down some buildings. There used to be a woman's gyms, used to be a uh, swimming building, and the women's gym, and the science building is new, and just the dorms, the dorms well the men's dorms are all new, compared to the triangle and the women's dorms over on this other side well I guess they're all now interchanged. Over there on East street, was there, in the 40's and the quad was there, you know,

but, the college was much much smaller, the theatre wasn't there.
The library wasn't there...

FS: There was no library at that time?

WB: They had a library, but it wasn't, they didn't have that building..

FS: yeah.

WB: They built that building! Uh, the student building wasn't there, the heating building. They didn't get their heat. They got their heat from the gas company, the ISU. They made their own electricity down here, they run out of the gas plant. And uh, furnished heat and everything for the college, and they had tunnels that run up, underground.

FS: I never knew that

WB: and uh, supplied a lot of stores downtown didn't have furnaces, they got city heat. They called it city heat, it wasn't city it was ISU that furnished it. Now, uh, it changed, when I came here there was a little ole wood apartments, I forget what they called them, uh, right across the street here. This wasn't here, uh, but there was some little ole wood apartments one story high just shacks, just nothin". Just shack row or something they called it. I forget what they called it. Just scum of the earth lived there. The Buick garage was down there, that was the Buick garage down there where the hardware store is.

FS: and what was the car business like, I mean there was...

WB: There was new and used, there was 11 dealers in Grinnell, Iowa.

FS: That is surprising, for the number of people who live here, I mean how many cars can you buy?

WB: Everybody fought through the business. We, we worked the country. We'd have two or three salesmen, everybody, every dealer had two and three salesmen. So, you had, you had lots of people out peddling' cars. I, and uh, everybody made a living.

FS: And, uh, then when did, this uh, Spalding close down. This car manufacturer?

WB: Ohh, before I ever came to town. They were in a building, as a matter of fact, we opened up in one of their buildings. And then, a guy built a building where the Eagles are now,

FS: uhu

WB: and I rented that building. And we were in there ten years, in that Eagle building. We and the Eagles are the only two people that were ever in that building. When we moved out it was empty for a year or two and then the Eagles bought it. They tried to buy the building that we, we was down there by the railroad tracks, we, well my son and I have used furniture and storage and stuff down here in a building right beside, what does he call that, the Depot, the Station, no, yeah the Station Bar? Station Bar or whatever it is,

FS: Oh, the State Street Bar, yeah.

WB: State Street Bar, that's what it is. Larry, uh, Brian, down there. But we was right next to him.

FS: okay

WB: We're in the ,the west end of that building, west side of the building. The same people that owned his building, our building, and the Bowl-o-drome, they owned all of that at one time, the Norris's. And um, the Bowl-o-drome was sold off first, and they put a bowling alley and uh, about, I didn't bowl but I think that was put in maybe '40

(pause) 5 or 6 or something like that. And then we rented from 56 until 60 and they came once to us and sold us that building. They had, had an offer on the building. And they said "We'll give you first chance. If you wanna meet their price we'll sell it to you." So we bought it, with the understanding that we could buy the lot across the street. If and when they got ready to sell it. Because they had some other businesses over on that but we had a used car lot there, over on the south side of the street. Yeah, they'd give us first chance. So there was uh, about four lots across the street. And then we owned this building and we owned back of the Bowl-o-drome. We owned most of the parking for the Bowl-o-drome. And uh, when they got ready then to sell the one across the street they came to us and uh we bought it, my brother and I. And we put up a storage building across there and one thing another. And uh, had used car lot, and uh. And then we uh, when we sold out to Wes, we sold that west side property. And they put up that twelve unit apartments over there. But uh, we thought about doing that, but we were at the age that we didn't think it would hardly be worth the uh, the effort. Uh, we had some rental properties, we didn't, we didn't, we sold it. But uh, Grinnell has been, then my brother passed away two years later after it sold out. Cancer. Never knew it when we, when we sold out. Never knew he had it. My son-in-law was in D.C., one of my son-in-laws. And uh, working for the government, he was with the Navy. Not in the Navy, but Navy intelligence. Traveled the world for them. And probably pretty good in his field. But anyway, he was just a young man, 53, 54 years old. And uh, darn if he had a sore throat. (aside) How are ya? And uh, made an appointment to see a doctor

on a Tuesday or something and he got to feelin' bad on Friday and went to the hospital. And Tuesday, when he was supposed to see his doctor, he passed away. (Laughter) So we had to go ahead and bury him and when I come back out my son said, uh, "You seen Warren..." and I said "No.", my brother Warren, and I said "No, why is he lookin' for me?" "Yeah." Well I thought it was something about building or properties or something, you know he wanted to talk to me about. I got, went on out home and was gonna call him, but I had a bunch of mail or one thing another. Was settin' there piddling around and here he came, and, uh. Wanted to know how the trip was and this and that you know, and just as pleasant, just as, boy, just all smiles. He said, "Well," he said "since you had a good time" he said "well, I got something I wanna tell you." I said "What's that?" He said "Found out I got a cancer." I thought 'Jesus Christ, ' (laughter) 'what a way to break it to me but that's alright'. Then he only lived only, that was in May and I think we buried him, uh (pause). Passed away the 17th of October. So he didn't have to suffer long.

FS: You've lived in Grinnell for about 50 years now, or just about. What was the town like then, when you came. What's changed?

WB: I was down there at the Eagles' building, go down at the corner, the first street. Spring street. It was, dirt road. They'd never paved it. It was no paving, from there west, except 4th avenue. But nothing on the cross streets, in that part of town or across the tracks.

FS: And I, uh

WB : And up where I lived there was no pavement. When I bought at Ninth and Elm, there was a ditch on the north side of my house on Ninth avenue, on both sides of the street, and it was a mud street.

FS : Was there a road from here to Des Moines ?

WB : Oh, yah, oh yah

FS : Was it paved ?

WB : Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

FS : And was it in the same place as this I-80

WB : No, no, no

FS : or

WB : No, no, no

WB : It was out here on 6, highway 6 and sixth avenue same same thing. Yah, we had, we had a lot of state, Iowa had a lot of cement ,state roads from the late twenties on. Iowa has always had real good roads, honestly. In all comparison to other states, we have good roads. We have more roads per capita than any other state, I think. Good roads, now, and always have had. We have kept up our roads state-wise and county-wise pretty much, the southern part of the state was slower than the northern part. You go up to Northern Iowa, from 30 on up, highway 30, Marshalltown on up, you get up into some pretty nice roads and pretty nice farm land and you can see why they had good roads because they had some money up there

FS : Yah

WB : more so then down here. But when I, when I, we didn't (pause). I was on the park board for five years. Went on in the late forties, '40...maybe '48, probable. Because I went on the city council in '50 something. I got those figures so I could tell ya. (pause). But I was , I was on the park board, yah, '56. I must have gone on the park board in '48 or 9, and cleaned up and developed Merrill Park which is up there by the college, uh.. you couldn't see across it either way, and

there was practically nothing from Main street to Park street but brush. That was just awful heavy,

FS: Yah,

WB: and that circle up there, was just grown up and just tur(indistinguishable) there was just nothin' there, it was just, growth. Uh, Bailey park, Bailey school wasn't even there, but Bailey park was just right across the street from Bailey school, and hell a rabbit couldn't run through that park or that city and a half block there you know. I cleaned that all up. I had two wheel-barrows, two or three shovels, pointed shovels couple of picks, couple of axes, a cross-cut saw, my equipment for my men was nothin'. Some push lawn-movers, nothing.

FS: (laughs) (coughs) It must have been quite a job doing that !

WB: My, well, my, my budget I think, was like four hundred dollars to maintain the parks,

FS: (coughs)

WB: trees in Grinnell Iowa. We had Elm trees, we lost, I don't know, eight, ten thousand Elm trees in the Elm tree disease in the late forties and fifties. We lost probably, we lost ten thousand trees (laughs). But anyway, it was amusing because when I left the park board we had a budget of thirty-six hundred dollars, they just, oh they just fought me something fierce. But I had, I had the park over by Monroe hotel, which was no longer there, was over there by Rock Island railroad depot, over by the depot there is a park there. There is park right across the street, a little two cornered park that has never been maintained, it was nothin' but weeds and just grown up, just nothin', nobody moved it, nobody trimmed a brush, nobody did

anything. On that little triangle, over there by the college, just right there by the railroad, I cleaned all that up and put in picnic tables and planted a couple of nice trees, and they've been broken off many a time and (aside) who are you looking for young lady ?

Unknown old lady: I am looking for Dixie, ah she is way in the back.

WB: There ya are ya found her.

FS: Did you also make Easter Lake, and Easter lake park, or was that made after you left?

WB: No, no, we cleaned that up. And also Lake Nianza, we bought from the railroad, and developed that, lake Nianza down there.

Ahh...we ... I was young, and Bill Cory and my brother and I and that the guy that was manger of Cargill, and Abe Brian and ... bunch of young bucks less than thirty five, because when you become thirty five you get kicked out of it, but we formed the J.C. club here in Grinnell, and the J.C's bought that from the railroad company, 'cause they used that water of that lake to fill the, the old steam engines,

FS: Oh...okay.

WB: They had a station that they could fill their engines with, (indistinguishable), and we ah, we bought it from 'em, for little or nothin', they had an awful lot of paper work and took us a long time, and then we had to cut all the brush and everything out of it, 'cause they had never taken care of it, they couldn't care less whether it was taken care of, all they wanted was the water. And we developed it into a park and then gave it to the city. But it was, it was, we were park poor honestly in Grinnell. Then ah, then renamed it Miller park later, because of Jim Miller's longevity on the council, and he lived in that ward and he has been from that ward. When I was on the

council, I was at large, I, I went on the council in '56, and went off in '70. But during that time, I finished a guy's term as mayor, from '59 to '60 and then it took too much time, and I didn't want the job so I, ah I gave it up. But '59 to '60 I just finished Johnny Hotchkin's as the mayor and he wanted to be city clerk, and our city clerk was retired, so I, I was mayor, they appointed me as mayor. I as mayor pro-temp anyway, so they just appointed e mayor, but I was mayor pro-temp, I think, all the time I was on the city council under whoever might have been mayor, and I enjoyed it. I think that everybody should get in on city politics, and make a better city. But we built the Memorial Building, we built swimming pool, we built the fire station, ahh, we built streets, put in all the streets in the city, and had people, long toward the last, people was, that we didn't think maybe the properties and the people maybe, its gonna be a hardship on 'em to put 'em in, sections of town. They was asking for 'em, stood a fight and the state was asking for 'em, but you gotta sell those programs. You know you gotta, you gotta present it so that, so that they're gettin' something instead of we want something. And they can see the benefit if you present it right and proper, just like schools and anything else, if you...they said that you couldn't sell a swimming pool past first election, seventy-four percent or something. You know just hell, found out who was against it, put 'em on the committee, and while they was talking to the people on the committee and and stuff, and learning about it, they sold themselves. Pretty quick they are talking for it themselves and not against it, they were good people, they just didn't think it was needed, that's what you gotta do you know, and don't make a difference whether it is the city or whether it's a school

or whether church or what it is. If you are on a committee you gotta, you gotta be positive and listen to everybody and get everybody's idea. You can't, and then go in the right direction, so that most, most of the people are happy, can't satisfy all of 'em,

FS: Yah, that is true.

WB: never at one time, never ever, on any project, I don't care what project it is. You can be handing out ten dollar bills and there will be somebody yelling like hell 'cause they wanted twenties.

FS: Yah, that is true.

WB: you know, people are funny, can't satisfy everybody.

FS: One thing I especially wanted to ask you Mr. Beaty, you have lived here, and you been on the town council (cough), excuse me, one thing I never understood ahh, I am sure you have heard also, from time to time there are acts of violence against Grinnell students, I mean I doesn't make any sense to me because whenever we come into town we talk to people like you, or we come into town, people treat us very nicely, all college students, then who are these people who go out and beat the college students up or molest them or attack them or try and run them over ?

WB: Who are they ?

FS: Yah, and why do they do it ?

WB: Comes out of the bottle. A college student is in or at the bar, having a social drink, the other guy is in there having a social drink, some of the college personnel have one or two too many, the town, local folk have one or two too many you know, and first thing you know it, they are arguing and fussin' and fightin'. They'll do it in families, businessmen'll do it, company people do it, you read

everyday where some family, somebody got drunk at a certain family affair and got in a big fight, police had to be called to break up a family fight, it is nothing but alcohol does it. Hell they probably both real fine people before and after, same way with students, you know. I have never ever had any feeling that the students, green, pink, yellow, I don't care what color, what country, what anything, was ever picked on on just everyday going ons. And I have never heard any student, and we had lots of students come down past our place come into town, and they would stop and visit. And for a long time they could not have cars, so they did not come in to buy cars, but they would stop and visit with us, and they would look cars over, after all they are young folks and they love cars, and all young people love cars, I don't care who they are or what country they are from, I don't care where. And, and we'd them to stop and get warm in the winter time if they was going into town or coming back, why from town, just stop in and get warm, hell our business was open for them, just come and sit down, we didn't care and they knew that. And word got around, you know and heavens, there would be, we would have, Saturday we'd have five, six, ten students at a time in there for hours. They'd come and go and everything but, and they were great people we found out that heavens to betsy, you don't visit with anybody for long unless you learn something, may not amount to anything but you learn something, and we have some real good friends that went to school here, and never sold them a thing and never expected to. Wasn't, that wasn't our objective at all, we didn't care about selling them anything, no I, that is all I can see, I can't, no I, that's the only thing that I ever know, anymore than when I moved into this town,

there was a feeling of the south side of the tracks and the north side of the tracks, which tracks ? The wasn't any east or west side, of the M and St.L, there wasn't any east side people and west side people, they also said the north and the south. And I said what the hell you talking about, all the moneyed people at one point in time lived and grew up here on Hamilton avenue and Washington avenue, that is the wide streets and the ones that were the really nice part of town. Then the town grew north, why you know it is a bunch of hogwash. Nothin' but talk. (aside) I have had enough thank you very much. They, I don't think, I, I honestly never could see where there was any hard feeling between the town, no more than, and I am not a bar man. I never developed a taste for beer, I just never did, I'd just as soon, God, I could go for ever without it, a glass of beer. If I was going to drink I'd much rather have a hard drink, which is probably worse for you, I don't know, but God, that beer, I just never developed a taste for it. And I've got friends who love it. Matter of fact, I was talking to a guy this morning, and he said we ought to take our wives out, where are we going, he said we ought to take 'em out for lunch some day next week, and I mentioned a place over in Adel, the depot over there. And he said oh yah, I understand that they've got a brewery right there and boy I could get a good glass of beer maybe. (laughs) I wouldn't, I wouldn't walk across the street if they gave me a car-load of the cotton pickin' stuff, I wouldn't drink it.

FS: Yah, that an be the only reason, because I don't see why else there would be these hard feelings because all in all I think the college does a lot for the town. And we students do a lot for the business of the town, also.

WB: I don't know what it is right now, I've been out of business for five years, and I honestly don't know, I don't know. But at one time the students averaged over twelve hundred dollars not counting tuition and food, in, in, right here in our banks per student. It is a lot of business when you can get twelve hundred dollars from an individual in a years time. Whether it is food, clothes, transportation, just come down here and buy tickets to go somewhere on the holidays. The travel agents here in Grinnell sell a lot of those tickets, I'll tell ya, they make a lot of money, they get a lot of commission. And of course the college, I think is a real asset to the city in any, I can't think of anything but good, but, the entertainment, the facilities they offer to the townspeople, the library, and my goodness they've got the biggest payroll in town and they bought cars. No so much the college, but the people who worked for the college, and, we had our fair share of the professors, and then there was always the students.

Tape #1 Side B

When there was not supposed to have cars, I always had more than my fair share of students, because, I had inside stories and I could hide their cars for them, and I did.

FS: How did you hide their cars ?

WB: Just sat 'em in there and these professors would come in and they'd say you have an awful lot of unaccounted cars sittin' around here, are those college kids you know, they'd ask questions, and I'd say, I'd be darned if I know, I never ask who it was, somebody took that it in as storage of some kind, I have no idea. (laughs). Do you want another lie ? I'd just look 'em right in the eye. (laughs)

FS: (laughs)

WB: They knew we were, they knew we were, but they were good. Of course I knew everybody up there, from the president right on down.

FS: That's, that's pretty amusing.

WB: Johnny Pfitsch, coach Pfitsch has been up there forever you know, and we were here before he was, and Ed Bowers, we were here before he was.

FS: And when was this, um.., approximately.

WB: Well, they couldn't have cars, students couldn't have cars 'till probably the middle seventies or early eighties. I forget now when they did relax that. Boy they couldn't have cars. The seniors could bring cars back in spring break to stuff back home, and they couldn't bring 'em back in Christmas or Thanksgiving, but they could bring 'em back in spring break. But heavens, I've had cars from freshman, the whole year. I had a dad call me up one day and say, "my son walked past your showroom, and he seen a, I think it was about a '50, about a '57, we had three toned cars, and it was a Dodge, three toned, two door, hard-top, he said, so and so color, three toned, two blues and a white, or whatever it was, you know, and he said you got one of those sittin' in there. And I said, yes. Well he said, just get it ready and that's his car. And I said, who is your son, and he said, he is at the college, and I said, he can't have a car. He said, well he said, well he told me that you take care of some of the college kid's cars, I said, oh it is one of those deals, okay. And another thing he said, he said my wife and I have two cars and we will be over this next weekend, for something or the other at the college, and we'll have two cars and we'd like to have them stored at your place, and

have them serviced while we are over there and there will be some wash jobs, and they had us wash their cars twice a day, and we serviced their cars, and come to find out that he owned a bunch of places in Nebraska and down through Kansas, and I sold him twelve trucks. He said, oh you guys have trucks. He said, you know I need some trucks, I'll have Anne or somebody call you over our specs, and he said, can you get me according to our specs, and I said, sure. Called 'em over and I figured it, and called him and he said, she said, I'll get this information to him and she did. And she called me and said he'd like twelve of 'em and he'll send you a certified check. And I had the check the next day, before I'd even got 'em ordered. (laughs).

FS: That's pretty amazing.

WB: And this Ladin lamp, you heard of Ladin lamps worldwide, his daughter went to school here, Johnson. And Chris, we took care of her, and sold her a truck, and she wanted a truck, we sold her a truck. Mr. Johnson was a wonderful wonderful guy, I'll tell ya, he was a great great guy to do business with, but to this day she still writes my son who she went to work for him then, we had a deli over here on Broad street, and for twelve years, and she worked for him in the deli and Chris real good gal, I tell ya, she is a cracker jack. And here she is you know, my God, she is a millionaire. We had nothing but good relations with the college people and their kids and their... any businessman that didn't get along with, says anything bad about the college, doesn't even try. Hell, I think everybody likes me 'till they prove different. Don't you, don't you think that everybody likes you 'till they prove that they don't like you ?

FS: Yes..

WB: Hell, you know, I do. I don't care who it is, or where I'm at. I just figure, hell, that they don't have any reason not to like me , they like me, I make 'em prove that don't like me and when I get them to prove that they don't like me, I don't bother. I just don't bother. I can get along without them.

FS: How old were you Mr. Beaty when you moved here ?

WB: Well, I was, ah, God, I never thought of that. I was born in '18 and I came here, when I moved here it was '44, so it be, ah '34, '24, I was a twenty... twenty-four.

FS: And where were you born, again ?

WB : Pardon ?

FS: Where were you born, again ?

WB: I was born in Finchford, Iowa, little town up in North-West of Cedar Falls. I was born in January and I went fishing in Minnesota, my parents took me fishing in June. And I've been a fisherman all my life. And my mother always said, that a fisherman got an extra day for every day he went fishing, so I got plenty of days left. (laughs)

FS: (laughs)

WB: And it must have, it must have proved, because I was about five years older than my brother and he is already gone, and, and he never liked to fish. (laughs)

FS: (laughs)

WB: So, I'm sure glad that I did a lot of fishin'. I love to fish.

FS: That's something I never developed a liking for.

WB: I just happened to, I love it.

FS: So, what do you remember about World War II ?

WB: World War II, yah, I was in four years and nine months.

FS: You went to World War II ?

WB: Yes, I was on Saratoga, plane carrier.

FS: Yes, I've read about that. What were your recollections of it ?

WB: What, what do I have a collection of ?

FS: What do you remember from World War II ? You think it was a good war, bad war... ?

WB: Well, we thought, we thought at the time that we were doing the right thing. I think, I think it was a good think for the world at that time. There was people in the world that was just gonna run over everybody, and a bunch, and you know, there was two sides it, but then there is two sides to every fight. And, naturally, we felt good because we won, except I don't know whether we went far enough on some of that stuff. I know we didn't on this desert storm situation. I don't think they had an understanding with the gentleman, you know, they should have, I don't mean they should have killed him. I mean they should have, they should have, they should have come to some sort of an understanding with the guy. I think you and I can have a misunderstanding, but I think you and I should sit down and talk it over because, I don't think that we can take for granted that you're going to be alright just as soon as you let me up and let e gone on down the street, you know, I just don't think so. And I'm not too sure we haven't got something to learn. The good guys, if we are the good guys.

FS: (cough) Yah, ah...from what I've read America was a very different, from, I've read a number of accounts of people who went to World War II, and they said that when they came back America was a

very different place. I mean economically it was different, socially it was different. Many people had lost sons and fathers and...

WB: Oh yes, oh yes.

FS: What was it like for you coming back ?

WB: Well, I had nothing but good. I had a wife, I had two little daughters. Ahh..., I came back, we didn't happen to lose any cousins, I didn't. I had a lot of cousins and in-laws, my wife's family, and lots of, I lost some friends but not immediate family in the war, and we had a lot of 'em in the war. Most every one of ours, my brother as in the war, most of us enlisted, we did not wait to be drafted. I think that was part of the, my wife's brothers enlisted, ah..., I think people who want to do something succeed a little better than people who fight it. I was in the service with people, with guys who honestly didn't wanna be in there and they fought it all the time and they was unhappy everyday, every hour. And they couldn't take orders and they wasn't capable of giving orders, because they wasn't in the right frame of mind. They'd never ever be the head of a ,an assignment, I don't care if it were three men or five thousand, they just wasn't in the right frame of mind. You gotta be in the right frame of mind to lead, can't drive people, you gotta lead 'em, you gotta be a leader and, they weren't, and a lot of them got into trouble. But I think that war is bad, don't get me wrong, terrible bad, I lost a lot of buddies, I lost a lot of people. I saw a cigarette sittin' up on a, on a ledge in a radio shack that, on board ship, guy had set 'em up and he said that I'll pick these up when I get back, you guys leave 'em there, away he went, took off, he never came back. When I left the ship years later, they were still sittin' there. Nobody took 'em, you know, I

lost, we lost a lot of people. Particularly being on an aircraft carrier you lost a lot of airdales and pilots, an, and people, but we even had direct hits, that we closed hatches and drowned our own men, right aboard ship. Pretty tough to take at the time, but we had 5400 men crew on there. You can't sink a ship with a 5400 men crew on it, for a few lives. 12 or 15 guys. So you sacrifice some, for the masses. It's terrible. It's awful. But it those things that happen. We had eight direct hits, one time. We had to hole in that thing, you could drive a car through. (laughter) God, we still got to bring her in on our own power.

FS: That is something I can't imagine giving an order, send fifteen to their deaths even if it is to save five thousand.

WB: It, it, you can't, you can't imagine. You can't imagine the, you know, the stress and the stuff of when you are actually right in battle, and of course we had the big guns and we had a lotta protection, but we, we had a lot of protection, it was the protection of the airplanes and one thing and the other, but we was the target. We had the admiral on our ship, they wanted that guy, but they never got 'em. And there was a few of us lucky guys, we was lucky.

FS: You came back from the war and moved directly to Grinnell, or did you go back home and then come to Grinnell ?

WB: No, no, when I came back from the war, I was already, the Register and Tribune had moved me here before I went back into the service. And I came right here and then started the dealership. My brother was with Banks of America in Frisco, I went upto Waverly to see him one Sunday before he went back to Frisco, and I said come down through Grinnell on your way to Frisco and we'll have some

lunch. And he come down and I said, let's get into the automobile business. He said I haven't got a lot of money, and I said neither have I, but I gotta lot of desire, so we got into the automobile business, and he never did go back to the west coast to his job. And we had two of the nicest gals on earth, and those rascals helped us raise a family and helped us do without enough to keep those business, the business going and making a success of it, we ended up, hell I've been out of business five years and I got people who call me up today and ask me what they should do about their car, and everybody says that everybody hates an automobile salesman and this and that. Hell I got, hell I bet I could run for mayor of Grinnell, Iowa and be elected.

FS: That is pretty rare for a car salesman. (laughs)

WB: (laughs) Honestly I believe I can. You ask anywhere, ask any one of the banks, talk to all three of them, I don't care.

FS: Oh, I am saying you probably can, but..

WB: And I've been out of business for five years, an, and a lot of people don't know me, 'cause they weren't even here five years ago, managers in these company stores and stuff, but anybody that has been here over five years, ask them, my character, ours, my brothers and mine stand the acid test, I guarantee you. We only treat people like the way we like to be treated, and it works, its all you gotta do. And you raise your family the same way. Put yourself in that little guys or that little gals shoes, pretend like you're talking to yourself, you can get across to a kid just exactly what you want to get across to him, and never laid a hand on a kid and had four of 'em. You don't have to. Never went to the principle's office, police station. Had

three daughters, none of them were pregnant when they got married. Hell, they was good, their mother did a good job of raising them. (laughs) But she raised them, you know to the extent that she, she and I, if they ever gave her any lip or anything, she'd say dad, talk to Judy or Mike. And I'd say Mike, I want to talk to you, come here, and he'd walk over, he'd sit down or he'd stand up, if he was standing, I stand there, and I'd say, look right up in my eye kiddo, I want to talk to you, if they'd look down, I'd say, look right up here, I want to talk to you, pay attention, we'd talk it out, everybody was happy, it works. Kids today don't have any discipline, their parents don't care what their kid grows up to be, just as quick as they can get rid of them, they'd like to get rid of 'em.

FS: What changed ?

WB: What changed ?

FS: In America there is no family anymore.

WB: No.

FS: People don't respect..

WB: We used to have family and community and friends, you don't go to friend's house, they don't come to your house, you may belong to a card club, but they are not friends, they are not personal friends.

Ahh.. my wife had three or four gals, if they were going somewhere for the evening, they'd bring the kids over and we'd take care of them. never got a dime for it, we'd feed them one thing or the other. If the was gone for a couple of days, we'd take care of them, never got paid for it, never expected to, they'd do the same thing. We got some friends down at Busly ? that are still our friends, it is fifty five miles south of here, and when she had her last two kids we kept her other

two kids, two kids once and three kids once, for ten days while she was having a child and getting home and getting settled, thought nothin' of it, never thought nothin' of it. Would do for her sister, sister-in-law, but never thought about getting paid.

FS: But what's changed, you have kids and grand-children ?

WB: It's, it's greed, everybody wants more and doesn't want to give. My dad always told me, son don't be afraid to give a little, every dollar you give, you get ten back. Don't worry about givin' a little bit, because you always get it back ten times over. Don't be afraid o give, whether it is to a friend, whether it is to a church, whether it is to the city, whether it is to anything, just give, and it works. If you look at in the right way, heavens to betsy, I vote good. They just, people are greedy. The human animal is a very very vicious greedy individual. I don't car what nationality, that don't make any difference, it is just the human animal. Everybody wants more and is not happy with what they have. They are unhappy, and that's greed. most people are not capable of having more than they have, they have all they are entitled too, and maybe a little bit more than they are entitled to, but they want more, it is greed, it is not anything else.

FS: From what I have seen, in college, and other places, people here, Americans equate happiness to money, what they fail to realize is that happiness does not come from money. You can have all the money in the world and not be happy.

WB: That's right. That is very true, and that's our athletes and our movie stars and our people in those places. And its greed, its not that they are worth anything. You know, it is, two people, husband and wife working and the kids get no attention, and they are not

taught anything they are not taught. The parent expects the day-care and the school and the church and the boy scouts and the girl scouts to teach their kids how to live, and how to act and how to read and how to spell and how to do arithmetic. Nine times out of ten, the girl at the cash register can't count the change back to ya, she'll tell you that you got two dollars and thirty-seven cents coming, and had 'em to you. She don't know why it is two dollars and thirty-seven cents, these lousy machines are screwing people up something fierce, I think. I can guess closer than most people can figure anyway.

(laughs) 'Cause, I think, I, I, people aren't happy, I don't think they are happy, we never had a lot, we accumulated over the years, 'till when I retired five years ago, we can do just about anything we want to do, and whenever we want to do it this and that, but that doesn't mean anything. Because when you get to our age, you don't want too much. but I have a mini camper, and we go camping. My wife had a stroke about four years ago, she has had two heart attacks, we have had a lot of problems, you know. I do most of the cooking, she lost her right side, she walks but she throws her leg, and gorgeous, gorgeous lady, oh God, I would've never made it without her. We went to school together, graduated from high school together, the only thing I would've done, been married almost fifty-six years, the only thing I would've done different, if I had to do it over again, is married her sooner.

FS: Now most people can't stay married for five years.

WB: Yah, yah we're old fashioned and out of step with society because we have been married for fifty-six years, you know. We're shooting for seventy-five, we may not make it, but that is the most, I

don't know how anybody can love somebody one day and not love them the next, I just don't understand it, I don't understand why I am not happy with what I got today if I was happy with it yesterday or the day before, because I got more today because I have lived two days more. But I don't measure things in dollars and cents, I could care less how much or how little you have, I could care less. I don't care what your political thought is, I don't care what your religion is, I could care less, doesn't change a thing.

FS: but I have seen that for most people here, money is everything.

WB: It isn't anything. If you haven't got health, you ain't got nothing, I can guarantee 'em that.

FS: I think health is primary, but I think that if you haven't got a family, you haven't got anything.

WB: That is why I got four children, I got thirteen grandchildren, I got fifteen great grandchildren and I love every one of them. They all live away from here, except my son. And I love to have 'em come, I love to go see 'em, but fish and family is about the same, three days and they stink. But I love them.