

Poweshiek History Preservation Project

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Emma Friedlander

Speaker: William Belcher

Date: April 27, 2015

Place: Grinnell, Iowa

April 27, 2015

Persons present: Emma Friedlander-I
William Belcher-S

Friedlander: My name is Emma Friedlander and today's date is April 27th, 2015. I am talking with William Belcher for the Poweshiek History Preservation Project. Okay so, as I understand you've really lived through a lot of eras at Grinnell, but I'd really like to start at the beginning. Um, so, were you born in Grinnell?

Belcher: I was born in Story City.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: Or Story County.

Friedlander: Mhm.

Belcher: And came to Grinnell when I was just a baby.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: So I've lived here all my life except six months in Des Moines.

Friedlander: Mhm. And so, when you were growing up in Grinnell I'm kind of interested in kind of, what family life was like. What it was like being a child in Grinnell was it in the '30s mostly? Like during the Depression? '20s and '30s?

Belcher: Well I was born in '23.

Friedlander: Okay so '20s and '30s.

Belcher: Mhm.

Friedlander: So um, I was wondering what your family life was like? Your parents. Did you have any siblings? Or...

Belcher: Oh, I have seventeen half-brothers and half-sisters.

Friedlander: Wow. And did you all...

Belcher: There were eight of us in our family but there were seventeen half-brothers and half-sisters and children.

Friedlander: So what was the living situation like?

Belcher: Times was hard. Ah, we never did go hungry. We raised a big garden. And Mom canned a lot. And in the winter time we hunted rabbits and Mom would cold pack them and put a little sage

with them and it just would be like sausages. And we'd have them in the summer. We had a great life and I don't know of ever going to bed hungry, so. But uh, bread was a nickel a loaf if you bought bread. Eggs a nickel a dozen. Uh, a cup of coffee is a nickel and uh, I would say we had a great life. You didn't have refrigerators, air conditionings and stuff like that. But. And the well you had to hand pump. And uh, we had an opening in the well—top of the well—and a bucket and we dropped meat and stuff down in—put it in that bucket—and dropped it down to keep it cool. And uh, like I said, we lived I don't know how well you're familiar are with Grinnell but we lived on East Street right there. Which is by the railroad tracks. And uh, Mother I don't think ever let a hobo come to our house. She did give them a little bit something to eat. She fed them and they said that our house was marked.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: That people would know that they would always get something to eat there. Like I say, we didn't have much but we raised a big garden and stuff like that. And Dad always worked and stuff. I don't know, we just had a great life.

Friedlander: What did your dad do?

Belcher: Oh, he worked the roads and stuff like that. Anything he could get to do that's what he did.

Friedlander: Great.

Belcher: And.

Friedlander: Great. And so, talking about childhood what was education or school like during that time?

Belcher: Well, uh, it was good. Education was good. Uh, I quit school when I was in eighth grade. Three days in ninth grade so I just say eighth grade.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: I thought making money was more important than an education. Which,

Friedlander: During that time—

Belcher: Later in life I learned that that wasn't true and uh. I don't know, I just wanted out of school. And back in the day I went to school teachers could correct you. Teachers can't correct children now. And I think that's the biggest mistake they ever made. People just, um, the old... the Bible says that if you take a life you give your life. Today they put them in prison forever. And you know, they just stay there in prison and I think if we'd go back to the old teachings and stuff that we would see less murders. Des Moines is getting just about as bad as Chicago on murders today. And uh, it's just...hard to really say and my son had two children and he lost his wife and we took the two children to raise them, my wife and I. And one day I gave them a whipping, with a belt, he sort of frowned on that. He bristled up against me and "I'm going to call the police" and I said, "No you're not." I said, "I'm going to call them for you." And I said, "When they come they're going to take you

and not me because I don't want no more to do with you." That boy today he lives in Texas, he's over a big outfit, he's got an excellent job. Ideal. I mean, I made a man out of him.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: And I had. I don't mean to say that you leave marks on children. I don't mean that. But let them see whose boss. Parents can't do that today. They, children can have parents arrested for that today and they go to jail. I don't know.

Friedlander: So you did experience, was that experience something you definitely had at school during that time? Or—

Belcher: What?

Friedlander: That is an experience you had at school. When you were at school there was more correction?

Belcher: Yeah. And Mrs. Miller took my hand like that one time I don't remember what I did now. She took a wooden ruler and boy she smacked my hand. and oh did that feel good when it quit hurting. Yeah, it really stung. Man it did sting. And T.T. Cranny was our principle and he had a rubber hose.

Friedlander: So you talked about, you mentioned faith and you know, you're ideals about how um, how in regards to education and upbringing—but I also kind of wanted to, kind of skipping ahead a little bit. I was kind of wondering, you know, how your faith has kind of served you throughout your life here but also especially when you were in the war. Like kind of what role that played or how it maybe helped you.

Belcher: Did, I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

Friedlander: You mentioned your faith briefly and I was wondering you know, how that's kind of really served you throughout your life. Both in Grinnell, but also kind of skipping ahead to when you were in the war kind of how that—

Belcher: In the Service?

Friedlander: Yeah.

Belcher: I was the Signal Company and I was in England and France. And I got to see London. I got to see Paris. I got to see Brussels. And I had a great life. I was a currier and when the radio and ah, teletype had to be silenced then I went and—I'd go into the offices and take the messages into the offices and give them to them. I'd sit down on the corner of the desk, officers' desk and chat with them. I had a wonderful life. The house we lived in there was a hundred and thirty-six of us lived in one house.

Friedlander: Is this in France?

Belcher: That was in England. I lived off-base. There was a hundred and thirty-six of us lived in that house. It was a big house. The library has pictures of that house. And they have a picture of my outfit. A matter of fact they have my original picture. They made me copies. The original picture was beginning to, it was sorta like cardboard and—not cardboard but stiff – and it was starting to fall apart and they wanted to preserve it. So they made me a new copy of it and uh, I have that rather than—I have my soap dish yet that I had in the Service. I still have that. And I have a New Testament that has a steel front on it. You carried it in your pocket and it—it's the only one I've seen of them but I didn't have it during the war but I have one now that it's the only one I've ever seen of them. So, it's... I've had a great life. These big cranes that sets elevators and stuff up—you've seen the little ball on the end of them?

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: I've sat on one of them and went way up and then hooked legs and went way up in the air. And uh, when I was eight years old, uh, I had uh, pneumonia and my brother had Typhoid fever and he had a balloon and he couldn't blow it up so he asked me to. So I blowed up the balloon and I got Typhoid fever and I also got pneumonia. Not expected to live through the night and uh, neighbors came over and asked if they could pray for me. And from that time I began to heal. I'm ninety-one years old today. So, I've had a great life. Uh, I think I did everything I desired to. I was asked to go out to the Christian school and talk to the young people about the Great Depression and my time in the Service. And about a week, two weeks after I was there I got a big manila envelope. The kids all wrote me a note or letter telling me, even the school teacher wrote a nice letter. I still have that, it's a keepsake.

Friedlander: So um, you were in Europe for the war. Did you go like when the war started? Or, at what point did you enter the Service and go to Europe to serve?

Belcher: When it first started.

Friedlander: When it first started. So, okay with that so of course, the United States didn't declare war until December 1941 so there was a couple of years when you knew there was war but the United States wasn't involved. So do you remember kind of what the feelings about the war were before the United States entered? And kind of what the feelings were you know when the attack happened and how that changed—

Belcher: I don't think I really had any feelings one way or the other. I was married at the time. I was married for sixty-eight years.

Friedlander: Wow.

Belcher: That's a long time.

Friedlander: Very impressive.

Belcher: I had a great wife and she was sixteen when we was married and I was three days nineteen. And of course right after we was married not too long, I got a friendly letter from the Draft Board that said, "Greetings, you have been selected by your friends and neighbors to serve them in the armed forces of the United States. T.T. Cranny. That was the principle of the high school; he was head of the Draft Board. And it's been a wonderful life. I've had a great life and I've seen a lot of things and did a lot of things and my health basically has been good. That's the most important thing, if you've got good health. That's more important than money. [laughs]

Friedlander: [laughs] What did your wife do while you were in Europe?

Belcher: She was a housewife.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: She never worked out. Well yes she did too. She worked out while I was in the Service. She, they had a place in Grinnell here where they made cans for the army and she worked there. And then she worked in a restaurant. But other than that she never. She was a housewife. We lived south of Grinnell on an acreage for forty years and she always raised a lot of chickens and a big garden and canned and stuff like that. She was a great lady.

Friedlander: Great. So I was wondering, you know, you were drafted as soon as the war began. So do you remember what her reaction or your family's reaction was to that? Or what—

Belcher: No. I had four brothers. Three brothers in the Service and myself.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: One was in the Marines, one was in the Army, I was with the Army Air Force. And one was in the Navy. We was all four branches of the service.

Friedlander: Wow. So, you know, you seem so positive about your experience so at the time when you were there. Was your family very positive about you serving your country too? Was there any fear there? Or—?

Belcher: No, not really.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: No. I would say that my family was very proud for us going in to Service and serving our country. We have a great country.

Friedlander: Do you have a proudest moment from your time in the Service?

Belcher: What?

Friedlander: Do you have like a proudest moment from your time in the Service? During moment?

Belcher: Proudest service?

Friedlander: Proudest moment in the Service. Or like proudest thing did or proudest thing you encountered during the Service. I'm sure there was a lot.

Belcher: Like I said, I had a great life in the Service. Lieutenant Gelward, he one day—I was like I said with headquarters and um, he met me in the hallway and he said, “Belcher,” he says, “ I want to be the first to congratulate you.” I said, “On what?” and he said, “you made PFC.” Private First Class. And I said, “Could you spare it?” and he said, “Well if you don't want it you don't have to take it.” And I said “I'll take it because it's for \$4 a month more increase in pay.” And I said, “I'll never sew the strip on.” And he said, “You will.” I said, “nope.” We was getting ready to leave Le Havre, France, and he said, “Belcher, you got your stripe sewed on?” “No.” “You want to go home?” “Yes.” I sewed the strip on. [laughs]

Friedlander: [laughs]

Belcher: I was sort of bullheaded. Like I said, we had a great life.

Friedlander: So you talked about how there was, what was it? A hundred and thirty-six of you in one house?

Belcher: Yeah.

Friedlander: So was there like comradery and friendship amongst your fellow servicemen? What was life like with them? Did you all get along or—?

Belcher: Oh, we all got along.

Friedlander: Good friends yeah?

Belcher: Yeah. We all got along. We all had a job to do and we all, each one of us did our job. And our officers was very good, nice officers. They didn't pull their rank on us or nothing like that. I mean, they was our bosses and we had to obey them but they was really, I remember we had a place in France that had a club. We started a club where you buy drinks and stuff and eat and stuff like that. And when we left France we sold that and ah, I don't know what the deal was but we couldn't get the money out of it. The officer, Captain Farver, he got the money out of that. and I don't know, it was sometime after I was home, I got a letter from him with a check in it for my share of what that was. He said, “Here's your money Belcher, quit your griping.” [laughs]

Friedlander: So you say that your experience in the service was very positive.

Belcher: Yeah, very positive.

Friedlander: So was there, were there any moments of, I don't know, fear or loss or was it—?

Belcher: No, I was always behind the line.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: I got four citations. But I was never actually uh, where the fighting was.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: Yeah.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: Like I said, I was at headquarters. But uh, I don't know, I had a great life in the Service. I was one of the lucky boys. Well, all of my brothers came home, none of them was wounded. So we was all returned home safe. And um, my brother-in-law, he was in the South Pacific. And um, he told me one time there's this place they took from the Japanese. He said they took it then the Japanese took it again, and then they took it back and it see-sawed back and forth. And he said, so they took it and went up on top of the building and painted the American flag on top of the building and then they fell back out of it and the Japanese come in and took it. Then the Japanese bombers come in and bombed the place. Destroyed it and destroyed their soldiers along with it. You know, it just. I don't know what to say. I can't say nothing negative so.

Friedlander: so um, did you come back once the war was over or—?

Belcher: Yes, I came back. I was scheduled to go to Japan. I came back when the war was over in France and Germany and I was scheduled to go to Japan and they dropped two atomic bombs.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: And I was home on R&R, Recreation, Relaxation and Recreation, and uh, they uh, dropped two bombs, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki I believe it was.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: And uh, I stayed home, I never went back into the Service. I was in the Service but I never went back to duty until in December when I went and got my discharge out in Lowry Field Colorado. And uh, got my discharge there. And while I was home, Christmas day 1945, my wife and I ran around in shirts and t-shirts in Grinnell here.

Friedlander: Wow.

Belcher: That's the only day that seen that, or that ever happened. And you know where Hy-Vee is, the grocery store?

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: In 1936 the snow was so deep that where Hy-Vee is now, it was a vacant field then. The snow was so deep that there's a Model T, a Model A car sitting in it and it looked like a little toy car with the snow up against it. And my brothers and I and another boy stood on top of it and you could almost touch the telephone lines up on the snow drift. And the cattle, the snow was so deep the cattle

could walk right across the fences the snow was so deep in some parts. Trains froze on the railroad tracks.

Friedlander: Wow. So I quickly want to go back to the issue of—you said you were scheduled to go to Japan. But that didn't happen. So were you relieved you didn't have to go? Or—?

Belcher: What?

Friedlander: Where you relieved that you were able to stay home or were you looking forward to—?

Belcher: I think probably yes I would have went.

Friedlander: Definitely. So, you mentioned the atomic bombs on Japan that ended the war. And obviously that's something of a controversial issue. So, do you remember how you felt about it or how you still feel about it?

Belcher: I was glad it was over.

Friedlander: Of course.

Belcher: Yeah. Glad it was over. We'd lost a lot of men but in both the German war and the Japanese. We lost a lot of men.

Friedlander: So you were talking about you coming back. Did you notice a difference before and after the war? Or was it really just life as usual?

Belcher: Life went on. You just came back in and went into life. You got a job.

Friedlander: What was your job?

Belcher: I worked Maytag for a while.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: Then I left Maytag and I went to Automatic washer and we made powder kegs for the government and that was a can about that long and they placed silk sacks in them with some powder in them for them big guns and stuff.

Friedlander: So um, so did you have children after the war when you came home?

Belcher: I had five children.

Friedlander: And was that in the '40s and '50s mostly?

Belcher: Yeah.

Friedlander: Okay great and so you know you kind of talked about the differences in schooling. So did you notice any differences in their upbringing and education versus yours?

Belcher: No, don't I think so, I think education back then was about the same as when I was. I think, yeah I think about the same. Schools, teachers was more strict and they had authority and they could carry it out too. I would say schooling and stuff was about the same. We had a physical education teacher. She had her little Crosley car and of course back then you burned coal or coke for the heat had a big ash pile. The kids set that car up on that ash pile. And or they'd take it and set it behind Davis school. Do you know where Davis school is here in Grinnell?

Friedlander: No.

Belcher: Well it's down in the south end of town.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: And you went to school for kindergarten to sixth grade there. And like I said, it had a big ash pile and they'd set the car up on the ash pile or behind the hedges or behind the school. It was funny. [laughs]

Friedlander: So um, still talking about after the war I also wanted to talk about the Cold War because people you know, talk about the onset of the Cold War during the '50s. Is that something you noticed or read about in newspapers or did you mostly feel apart from what was happening politically?

Belcher: I don't really remember anything about the Cold War. My memories not as sharp as it used to be.

Friedlander: Seems very good to me. [laughs]

Belcher: Well, but it's not. It's not as sharp. Things that happened when I was kid I can remember little nursery rhymes and things like that. And I can still remember all my teachers' names and stuff. But the things that happened last week I forget them. So.

Friedlander: Okay. Well, I wanted to talk about— So you said you had a lot of siblings so did you remain close to them in your adulthood or did they all stay in Grinnell?

Belcher: We was very close all of our life.

Friedlander: So did they have, were they active in your children's lives too? Was it really a big, did they all...

Belcher: What?

Friedlander: Were they active in your children's lives too? Were you all in Grinnell still?

Belcher: Yeah, we lived in Grinnell. Most of them. Back when I was a child, years ago, people didn't move like they do now. Families are scattered all over the United States today. And even in other countries. Where, back when I was a kid families stayed pretty close to where they was raised. It wasn't all over the country.

Friedlander: Great. I'm obviously going back and forth a lot but I wanted to go back to when you were talking about your childhood and you mentioned that your mother would always—you lived by the train tracks and your mother would always have food for the hobos. So I'm interested kind of, and it's also something I'm familiar with if you could talk about kind of what it was like or what those hobos were like or your interactions with them.

Belcher: They was hobos- was people that's moving from one place to another and riding down the railroad, the train, and is going to different places to try and find work and stuff. And uh, they would stop at our house like I said and Mom would give them not a lot but some. Up at Brett, Iowa, they used to have a hobo convention and all the hobos would come in on that town Bett, Iowa, and they'd have a convention. I don't know, I've never been there but I just knew about it.

Friedlander: Okay. That's not something that I was aware happened in Grinnell obviously but that's interesting. Um, so you also mentioned that you lived in Des Moines for six months, when was that?

Belcher: What?

Friedlander: You mentioned you lived in Des Moines for six months.

Belcher: About six months and that was all I could take of it.

Friedlander: When was that?

Belcher: Eh?

Friedlander: When was that?

Belcher: Oh, it was after the war. I can't remember exactly when it was but I just—it wasn't Grinnell.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: And I had a good job and everything but I just, I just didn't like the city and I came back to Grinnell and lived here.

Friedlander: So have you, since you've been here such a long time, have you noticed any changes in the community or the town?

Belcher: Oh, Grinnell has changed so much. It is really changed now I might have told you this but Grinnell wasn't to be built here. It was to be built out where Westfield school is. And then J.B. Grinnell heard that railroad tracks was going to cross here so he built it here. I might have told you that, I don't know. But yeah, that's how Grinnell got built here.

Friedlander: So how have you noticed, obviously it's a very broad question but how has the community really changed? Maybe what the town is like or how the people are over your time here.

Belcher: People used to be more friendly. As a fact, going back to my childhood we had an Atwater camp radio and there's battery and we never had electricity and we either had a hotshot battery or

Dad would take the battery out of his old pickup and on Saturday nights people would come to our house uninvited. Now, if you go somebody's house uninvited why, that's definitely not right. But, back then people would come and listen to that and the program *Creeping Door*, *Inner Sanctum* and programs like that. People never had to be invited, they'd just come, anyhow to our house. [Laughs] Anyway, like I said, all goes back, we had a great life. And Grinnell has changed so much. It's so much bigger now and the college sorta ran Grinnell at one time. They had a big hand in and they fought the, college is union now, but they fought, as I remembered, it seemed like they fought getting the union in because of wages and, like I said today's college is union and wages is good but they kept wages down here in Grinnell. That's my feeling and I might be wrong. [laughs] I've been wrong before. So.

Friedlander: So you said that the college like really seemed to be, really involved in the town at one point so do you feel like now there's kind of a separation?

Belcher: They're more involved in the city of Grinnell and uh, they bring a lot of income into Grinnell. It's a blessing. Where's your home?

Friedlander: I'm from Kansas City.

Belcher: Huh?

Friedlander: I'm from Kansas City. I go to Grinnell College.

Belcher: I know you go to Grinnell College. You're from Kansas City?

Friedlander: Mhm.

Belcher: And another thing, back when we was kids, everybody had a washtub you get in the middle of the kitchen floor and the little ones started first. Dad was always last.

Friedlander: Okay.

Belcher: And I was talking to a young lady going to college up here from the Republic of Czechoslovakia and I was telling her about that. I don't know how we got started talking. Anyhow, I was telling her about that. She says, "We still do that over there" that's been several years ago. But they still didn't have running water or electricity or stuff. I mean, can you imagine living without electricity or running water?

Friedlander: Well, I was going to ask—you didn't have electricity or I think there is like, obviously there's more dependence especially with young people on electricity or technology. So I was kind of wondering what you did for fun or like, what you did with your siblings or friends in the '30s because obviously there was a limitation.

Belcher: What I did with my children?

Friedlander: With your friends. Like, when you were a kid like in the '30s and '20s kind of outside of school and work. Kind of what you did for fun.

Belcher: Oh. They used to have a wagon wheel. Used to have a rim on it on the hub and we'd take them off an old wagon wheel and we'd take a stick and we'd put a thing on back and we'd run that up and down the street, roll 'em. We'd play hide-and-go-seek. I lived down in what's known as Happy Hallow and we'd play hide-and-go-seek and Annie-Annie-Over. And we'd role car tires up and down the street, whoop and holler. And that's where it got its name Happy Hallow. That's down there by the cemetery. All the neighbor kids would come out and play. Boys, girls, and we'd be out until nine o'clock or so. Like I said, whooping and hollering. And I can't remember any bullying, what's called bullying now. It seemed like everybody got along good. And stuff, I don't know, it's just so much different today then... You know, you've got these computers and iPods and cellphones and all this stuff and children don't get out and play like they used to. We'd have snow fights, snowball fights and build snow forts and I think I've seen last winter two snow men here in Grinnell. Used to be about everybody made a snow man, stick a carrot in for his nose and have something for eyes.

Friedlander: Did boys and girls play together? Or was it like a separation?

Belcher: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Boys and girls there's no division between them.

Friedlander: Okay. And when did you meet your wife? And how did you meet your wife?

Belcher: She lived in Centerville and uh, I took and I knew the family, my wife's family and everything. And there's a young lady from down below Centerville. I can't remember the town. Bolten. Was it Bolten? Well anyhow, she was up here to Grinnell visiting and I took her down to her folks' house. And they were having a carnival in Centerville and I stopped by the carnival for a while. And like I said, I knew my wife's folks, brothers and sisters. And I was going to come back home, drive back home, which is about a hundred miles, and cars wasn't as good as they are today and so I met her family, her brothers. And uh, they asked me, invited me, to come stay at their house all night rather than drive back. So I went there and that's how we got acquainted. We was married in Union—

Friedlander: Oh, it's like they go off if you don't move?

Belcher: Yeah. We was married in Unionville, Missouri. And it cost us two and a half dollars. For our wedding, we was married by the Justice of the Peace and like I said, we had sixty-eight years of wonderful marriage.

Friedlander: How long were you together before you got married? Like, how long after meeting her did you get married?

Belcher: I can't really remember. A while. I can't remember because I would drive back and forth to Centerville. I remember one time, when you had a flat tire you took the tire off, took the tire part, put a patch on it and put it back on. And this one day it was so hot I had ten times I did that between Grinnell and Centerville. The heat would melt the patches back off. They didn't have repair like they do today and that stuff. But I had ten flat tires on one day. And I can't remember how long we did go.

It wasn't too long. And I suppose three months or so. I'm just guessing, I don't remember. But she was a great lady.

Friedlander: So you said she was mostly a housewife after the war. Did she just continue being a housewife throughout?

Belcher: She was a housewife all, except while I was in the Service.

Friedlander: Right.

Belcher: She did help make tents and work in a restaurant. And, yeah, it just, I wished everyone married a person and could have a life like her and I had. It was fantastic.

Friedlander: Are there any moments you remember as being especially great for you two? Do you remember any particular times or moments that were really great for you? Or was it just kind of throughout? Or do you remember any time specifically you really like, cherished as a moment and a memory of your marriage?

Belcher: I don't. I think. As I can remember, her and I had only one disagreement. Real. We had differences of opinion and misunderstandings. But I bought an old house out in the country, south of Grinnell. Five miles south of Grinnell. An old bachelor lived there for forty years or I don't know how long he lived there. An old bachelor lived in this house. And I bought this house without saying anything to her. And she was very upset with me over that. And we had to tear the whole inside out and put new plasterboard and redo it. And of course, when we got it fixed up it was a beautiful place to live in. And this one room that we ran out of money and so she decided, it had what they call wainscoting. And she decided to wash it down and that had the most beautiful white enamel paint on it you ever seen. It was beautiful. It was show place that room. The enamel that they'd used on that wainscoting just, whiter than white.

Friedlander: Do you remember what your relationship with your parents was like? Both as a kid and as an adult. Were there any differences? Well, did you have a good relationship with your parents?

Belcher: When Dad or Mom spoke, you answered. We had very good relations.

Friedlander: Good.

Belcher: Yeah.

Friedlander: Did you ever get punished for anything big or where you a well behaved child?

Belcher: Do what?

Friedlander: Were you well behaved or did you get in trouble with your parents?

Belcher: Oh, I got in trouble. What kid doesn't?

Friedlander: Of course. Are there any interesting stories there? Anything especially bad you did or..?

Belcher: Anything bad that I did? I'm sure there's a lot of them. But I can't remember off hand any. I can't remember any. I've never been in jail.

Friedlander: That's good. I was just wondering in terms of when you were a kid.

Belcher: What?

Friedlander: I was asking in terms of when you were a kid, was there anything your parents were especially mad about? But probably mostly minor things.

Belcher: Not really. Because like I said, when they spoke you obeyed them.

Friedlander: Of course.

Belcher: You didn't put it off. You did it. We had a washing machine; Mom had a washing machine that had a stick. We'd run that. Then we got a washing machine with a Briggs and Stratton loader on it that run it. Then we finally got electricity in the house. Like I said, I had a great life. It's always been great. I just. My children's' all very obedient and very good. But they always minded good everything.

Friedlander: What do your children do? Or what did your children do?

Belcher: What did they do?

Friedlander: Like jobs.

Belcher: My oldest son drove truck, semi-truck. My oldest daughter worked in Cedar Rapids. She and her husband both work for the same outfit. Next daughter she worked for Walmart and when she left Walmart she retired. Next son, he works down at the Victor, or Marengo, no Victor, Victor Plastics. And my youngest son, he drives semi for Van White Freight. So they all have pretty good jobs.

Friedlander: Yeah. That's really all the questions I have. I just wanted to say that, usually when you ask people about their experience in the Great Depression or the war, for a lot of reasons it's very negative. So it's great to hear that you did have a positive experience with that. Is there anything, last things you want to say about your life or your perspective or anything like that?

Belcher: Oh, I'd say I've had a great life. The Lord has been good to me. Like I said, I'm ninety-one years old and I've ready to go home any time he's ready for me.

Friedlander: So has your relationship with God been a big part of your life?

Belcher: That has been a big part of my life yes. I taught Sunday school, I have preached at church. Like I said, I would that everybody's have a good a life as I've had.

Friedlander: That's good to hear. Well, that's all I have.

[End]