

Eric Walz History 300 Collection

# John Elliott

By John Elliott

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## Box 4 Folder 11

Oral Interview conducted by Jessica Tew

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Brigham Young University – Idaho

Interview with John Elliott, 1 March 2004 in Iona Idaho.

Jessica Tew: My first question, where were you born?

John Elliott: Gooding.

JT: Gooding, Idaho?

JE: Gooding, Idaho.

JT: When were you born?

JE: What year?

JT: Yes.

JE: March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

JT: On December 7, 1941, which is the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, how old were you and where were you then?

JE: I was 21; I was working down here at the Lincoln sugar factory chasing samples when they bombed Pearl Harbor.

JT: What do you remember about it, how did you find out about it?

JE: Well, it wasn't hard, it was all over. We were still playing basketball. We played a lot of church ball. And that was all the talk was. We never experienced a war; we thought maybe we would go in the next day or two. I was married for almost a year so I got a classification that I didn't have to go right away so that go me out for a while. Rod was just a baby when I left, about a year and a half old. He just said 'dada'. And I got on the bus and the lady sitting next to me... and Barb handed me little Rod and I jostled him on my lap...and he was saying 'dada dada'. And when I gave him back to her and we left, the lady said 'that's your younger brother'? 'No'. That's my first born. She about had a fit.

JT: So that was really hard on your family and on you?

JE: Yeah, that was tough. That was about as tough as you can get when you get drug away from your wife and kids. It was the next time that I shipped out. You see we had to sign off the ship...we only had 30 days, then we had to be on another one, and that was the time it was tough. Barb was about to have Steve and we were taking off again. I will never forget that.

JT: That would be very difficult, I can't even imagine.

JE: That was as tough as anything other than being seasick. Oh that's rough water up there.

JT: Did you serve in the armed forces then? Or what division were you in?

JE: Well, it was in the maritime service, merchant marines they called them. And I remember when my one A came with the greetings 'report so and so for your physical' and I was living in Pocatello working with the navy gun plant down there. So a friend of mine he joined the merchant marines earlier and his brother had been in it before the war. He talked me into going to Salt Lake and join in there. And that's what I did. I went to Salt Lake to the offices, to the Merchant office in Salt Lake, so they took my application and he said 'you go ahead and take your military examination and then we will send you one and we'll take care of this transfer and you out of there into this'. And that's what we did. So I had to go down there to get a physical and about ten days later I had to get one in Pocatello. So but anyway, they had to take care of that. And then I had to go to the Catalina Island. It wasn't bad duty, it's just that you wasn't home and it gets tiresome. I had thirteen weeks there.

JT: On an average day what did you do? What were your assignments?

JE: Well if we's were in port then we would work on the ship. If it needed painting, you painted it. If it needs ropes spliced you done that. Or different things, maintenance. The boats men was there to tell you just what to do. But as soon as you left the port you broke into sea watches. A friend of mine from Ogden, we went to training together. And we got on this tex auto ship. It a U.S. Army transport ship. And you have to draw for a watch. Your four on and eight off. So, during the four hours on...now we always drew the twelve to four...that means we would go at midnight to four in the morning and from noon to four in the afternoon. And during that four hours you was an hour and twenty minutes on the wheel steering. Another hour and twenty minutes you would be on lookout, whether in the crows nest or forward. You seen 'Titanic'?

JT: Yes.

JE: Did you see the two guys up there on watch who spotted the iceberg? And he called it in and the iceberg was over on the star berg and he...I think it was a mistake in the movie because he said 'hard right rudder' and that put it right into it. But anyway, it's just one of those things. But that's what you had to do and the other hour and twenty minutes you's on standby in case of emergency or whatever.

JT: What would you do while you were on standby?

JE: Sit in the galley. Maybe you would have a cup of hot chocolate. Or whatever. It was always hot.

JT: Was that exhausting work?

JE: No, no. It's good. Except, except when you are sailing in the Gulf of Alaska. You just...well, the seas would run as high as that telephone pole right over there and you can imagine getting tossed up and down. And then you rolling this way and that was the worst part. Sometimes you couldn't even go out forward to get...to watch. You couldn't sound the bellgess, that's measuring how much water would seeped inside the bellgess, and you'd have a lifeline running through there to hang onto because when that ship would hit into a wave, that water would go clear over the whole ship. Then sometimes you'd wash off. If you ever did that your done. Up there...

JT: Did that happen often?

JE: No we don't, the skipper wouldn't let you go out there and do all that stuff. And then when it...the ship wasn't as big as what you'd like to have and when it dips down the head...the screw comes out, the propeller you might say. It just shakes everything. And we were on our fourth trip and this was how we got in a little early the first trip, we've bent the shaft to where we had to cut back on the power and slow down. And then in the storm you have to keep the ship headed in the sea. That means they break this way not so it rolls over, so you have to head into the storm. Then after the storm comes up...and if you get any sun, all the mates were out looking at the sun trying to get to know where they were at because they were blown off course. There are a lot of little islands out there and they all have a Russian name, I couldn't pronounce them if I had to. When the weather was good, the only time I ever seen a fight was a place up there was in cold bay on a...I think it was a Christmas day, in out of the wind and sea, it was just like a mirror. It was something else. But up there the marine life is whales all over, porpoise, sea otter, everything. They go up there and feed in there is abundant, you know. So them damn whales come up in there to feed in the winter and then when the summer comes they go down the coast line down south and to have their offspring and then when they get big enough they all go back. There is a lot of sea life up there. It was cool.

JT: It was a neat experience.

JE: But the weather was never good. And there was never a tree on the islands, just like big high cut grass, tundra they called it, and sand. And that sand...the wind would blow up there...wet sand would blow right up in your face and just sting. Yeah, Barbs cousin was stationed at Adack, in the Navy, and I seen him every time I went in and out. We would always stop at Adack. So that's how I could tell Barb where I was at cause I was going to stop and see Ray. And she knew where Ray was. But otherwise they would cut your letters in shreds before you realize you could do all that stuff. But, yeah, that kid from Ogden and I, we got together in training.

JT: So you met him in training?

JE: No, we went together. He joined up the same time I did and we went to the same place to train. And we were in the same section.

JT: That's nice.

JE: I got a picture of that too. But I can't name all them anymore. But a lot of them are gone...he's dead too now. Yeah so...but I would of...after I shipped out south and the weather was half-way humanlike, it wouldn't have been a bad occupation. But you're always with a rough crowd. Everybody swearin' and smokin' and drinkin' and...but you don't have to do that you know.

JT: Were there a lot of LDS members like on your crew or anything else like that?

JE: Any what?

JT: LDS members.

JE: LDS members? The friend I was with was, but that didn't slow him down any. He like to get out and enjoy himself. I guess he call it enjoy. Because a kid on there by the name of Lester that he was studying to be a mate and he never got out much, he was always studying. And every time we would get into port, like a Canadian port, Juno, or a Canadian port, Prince Rupert and some of those...we hit on the inside passage going up or back. We would always head out for some ice cream because their ice cream is so much richer then it is ours. The milk content is richer. Everything is richer in there, and that's all we'll do. We would go get us a malt or a ice cream and stuff up on that and go back to ship. There were glaciers and you'd talk about icebergs. When we left Juno, we'd head north out through the inside passage through icy straights, they called it. And you seen pictures I'm sure of these great big walls of ice that keep crumbling down? Well, we went right by them and the funny part of it is...that ice is not always white. Sometimes it's green like grass, or blue, depends on the age of it. And you can see it all within four or five miles of one of those glaciers that were coming out. And they'd be different colors.

JT: Oh that's really weird.

JE: It is. But you can hear it hit the water when you're going by. And the splash and the birds flying up...it's quite a sight. You see a lot of...and there is this one place up there, I can't remember where it was, they had uh tops of them big mountains and they would have sparks coming from the top of the mountains. You see a lot of the things that you wouldn't see sitten' here. But there were a lot of stuff ain't worth it either. But its nice aboard ship. It's dry or it's awful wet.

JT: So its pretty cold most of the time then right?

JE: Up there?

JT: Yes.

JE: It was. Now in Juno, when we'd go back to load up and most of the time we'd loaded lumber to off to these bases. They must have been building somethin'. And it'd rain

every day in Juno. They have that Japanese current that'd come up the coast and circles around in there. And everything we'd have on, rubber boots, rubber pants, coats, hats, and rubber gloves...and we'd load and it'd take about ten days and it would rain everyday. Now not every time we'd come in there, but I remember once it did. It rained every dang day we were there. But I guess that's the way it is. Those Eskimos, they'd call them kuliches, they must be used to it I guess. There was a nice little town in Juno...in the states, everything was rationed you couldn't buy sugar without a ration card, gas, prestone, ammuniton, whatever; you know it was always rationed. And up there you watch somebody put a dollars worth of groceries and they would give a ten pound sack of sugar. They didn't know what rationing was! Silk socks, nylon socks, Mother you know they couldn't get them, down here.

JT: My next question is do you feel like they trained you and prepared you for your service and for the things that you did?

JE: Well, they did for where we were because us guys coming out here out of farming community and going in there and trying to learn what a ship does, and what all the parts...We had one class on just ships nomenclature, just different parts and how they functioned. But first you had to decide whether you's going on deck, you's going down to the engine room, or you's gonna learn to be a cook or baker. So you see there were some classes that we didn't need to take, depends on where you went. I chose the deck because I wanted to be out where I could see. And some of them went down to the engine room where it was always war, but I don't like to be down in there we it...if you have problems you know. But anyway, they gave us thirteen weeks and we went right to school, I mean it was just like going to school. You had classes; you march from one place to another for different classes. We always had a band. Man you learn how to march. If nothing else. It was fun. Every Sunday you had review. You'd have to march on the playground. So it wasn't all that bad. You'd learn to get up that morning; you'd learn how to make a bed; shine your shoes, that was for sure. And you had to...I don't know they would gig you for any damn thing, you know. If your hair wasn't combed right I guess, but...I thought we got a pretty good training. Course it doesn't cover a whole lot of world wide stuff, it's just to know how to steer... you know, cause you got the guys there to tell ya. And they had these not uh...old type compass, it's a gyros. It's about this big, and they give you a 270...go right to 270, that'd be straight west. And its in there so you can...but it the rough water...that needle would just zzzzz, zzzz and you'd try to keep it averaged, you know you just couldn't control it; it was just up and down and around. Sometimes you'd be steering like this and sometimes you'd be...you can't believe what it would be like to live in that motion. Yeah, and if you ever dock the ship and get to step up on the dock where its still, you find yourself walking on your toes and talking to somebody. And it's just the motion you do to offset the motion that you were in. And you do it, say for thirty days. You catch onto it. But you go out for six to eight months without getting off ship and you hear a car honk and you get on...it scares ya. You're just not used to...to the civilized...I don't know. You swear the cars are going to kill each other, but...and the ship...you know everything is just slow paced. You feel like you are in the lower gear. Food. Man. It's just like going into a buffet, there's a blackboard up there and you'd have two choices. See. Now if you were in the trenches,

you'd have a little dried piece of biscuit. It had its advantages. And I'm glad I went into it. Although I was awful glad to get off of that first ship. I never got so sick in my life. You upchuck until you so sore...there...nothing could come, but oh. I was so sore I could hardly put my shirt on. That's how'd it get. And it's just nothing but green, bile. And it's terrible. It's airsick, airplane. That's the same sickness. But for a couple of hours that's how long your flight would take, but when your seasick, It might be two weeks, two months and aww...it just takes the life out of you and you just give up.

JT: So you don't really get used to the motion or...?

JE: Yep you do. Even after we was up there and gotten used to it, and you come in and unload or something, it takes eight or ten days or something and your on the ground or the dock...and then if you bust right out into another storm you got to watch it because it will get you. And the worst part of it is, it ain't so back when its daylight and you can see the waves coming in, you can prepare for it, but...if you just be sitting and reading a book you can...hit...I don't know. Anyway, it ain't all that bad, just up there and the north Atlantic is just the same damn way. It must be that northern hemisphere, the warm and the cold water. But the winds tough up there. I heard guys tell, and I don't believe it because we was parked there once when that wind came up and it broke a ten inch hawser. That's a line, a rope...and it just sound like a canon. So I know it blows. They had a name for it, willow walls. And it just picked up water like wind up here does dirt. It just picks it up and blows it everywhere. So it is...it can happen. And that damned old ship we had I was afraid it was going to sink. You know when you get out in that water, as cold as it is; your life expectancy is only about 30 minutes. So, but, it wasn't all bad.

JT: Um, when you were on the ship and you were not really connected with a lot of the people and land; did they keep you updated on what was going on? I mean, did you feel like you were...

JE: You were hooked up to the armed forces radio. They always have news and music, some of the best. Yeah they had radio. If you was in the right place, if you's on duty, I mean if you was on watch, you was steering, you'd just listen to the common talking about this and that. Now the officers were in there, the chart room...the guy that runs the sparks, he runs the telegraph machine. But uh, we knew about what was going on. And especially after we signed off of this ship, now I was home in January...we went back and I stopped in Ogden and stayed with a friend that...Becksted. And then we went down south and caught a brand new one going to...for the next ship. You don't really know...you can pick the ship, but you don't know where it's gonna go. You don't know what it's going to look like. All we knew was that is was a new victory ship. Now the first ones they made were Liberty ships remember they were kind of a round bottom thing and they...a lot of motion on it. This on here was really a nice looking ship. Ructers victory it was, it was brand new. So we went on down to sign onto that and I think that's about the time that Barb had Steve. Remember Steve? The second boy. We signed on that and after we got all the stuff loaded and the stuff that they needed, supplies and things...why we took off and went to port Chicago. Now that's in the Bay area. Go under the bay bridge, out past that penitentiary there. There's two of them, there's

Alcatraz and we went up the river past the other one...way out. That's an ammunition depot, we loaded ammunition up there. I think it took us about ten days and nights. We had all kinds of navy ammunition: shells that they shoot little cannons...now we had a five inch thirty-eight on the back and three inch fifty on the front. But the navy, some of the battle ships and navy cruisers shot sixteen inch shells. That was something. One of those armor piercing shells with 270,000 pounds, just the projectile that goes out, and it took two four foot things of powder in each one of those shells that went out. We were loaded with everything besides a deck load of utility vehicles, trucks. I don't think we had any tanks, but we had a couple of half tracks, and 10,000 tons of the damn stuff. Oh we couldn't have any...we didn't a convoy; it wasn't aloud in a convoy. You couldn't get within ten miles...when we went out...we went to Pearl Harbor for orders, we didn't know where it was going. And just at that time the kamikaze started up, suicide blame. Oh hell, we had a navy gun crew and we had two canons on there and eight twenty millimeter machine guns. Man, that wouldn't begin to...to chance...kinda iffy. But anyway, we left Pearl Harbor and they got their messages with this...you see the light that...And we took off south. And we were south about a week I guess, going south...zigzag course and the President died. Roosevelt died in '45, in May I believe. So, Harry Truman took over and all the flags went down to half staff for a month. And we went all down through the Carolinas, all the group of islands down south. We were just about to the equator, and there's a little group of islands, of course there are millions of islands of different groups that formed a big kind of place where the wind and the current...and we pulled in there and there were hundreds of ships. Navy would come in there and picked up ammunition that they had used, and some of it as they went along was changed to better ammunition. Well anyway, they come in and there was a lot of us shipped in that already had navy ships and it had ammunition on. And they would come tie a side and we would give them what they wanted and we'd take back what they didn't want; something that nobody would use anymore. And so finally I think we sat there for six months...and we'd give it away as fast as we could because we wanted to get home. But anyway, we were still sitting there when the war was over. The Japs surrendered, they dropped the bombs. When we heard that, man we were jumping up and down. A friend and I made our bed on number one hold...number one hatch. The first hold they loaded you know. There are four of them, two forward and two left. It's just a great big huge department they store stuff in. And then they flatten it down with canvases. We'd put our bunks out there and sleep out 'cause it was warm. You didn't have a North Star, you had a tarp up around in case it rained, and one of the kids come back and said they had dropped the bomb on Japan. And I think it was a day or two later, maybe three, they dropped another one. And that's when they decided to give it up, but they haven't signed a treaty yet. So then we were only a few days after that and we had orders to go to the Philippines. So just about a week or ten days before we went over there is when that Indianapolis, the cruiser, was sunk and all those kids...Jaws, the movie Jaws was made of that. They lost all them kids floating all around their and the sharks just ate the bottom of them off. You know. They lost a lot of kids. That's where we were going. We left Ulithi, a little island Gropi, where we were. And we headed for the Philippines... Lady... in the Philippines. And when we pulled in that Lady Harbor, ships was almost half out of the water. All the superstructure were sitting out of the water. Pine trees, not pine trees, palm trees had been blown around and they had just bulldozed them into piles.



Yeah, I'll tell you, they really had it going on over there. We went over there and dropped...and tied up and of course kids had shore leave. Where the hell they'd go, I don't know. But they all come back with their nose full is...but anyway. We stayed there for about a week or ten days because we had to take on more obsolete ammunition; and when we got all that done, we had orders to come to states. That was a...lets see...I think that was the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, I was sittin' there writing a letter back home to Barb. But here, we were a day and I don't know how many hours we were ahead of here, because we would pass the International Date Line four or five hours back...or four or five zones. So you really had a heck of a time trying to keep track of the time here, you know. But after you set out there so long in one place...and I remember one time here come a boat alongside that had stores on him. Evidently he was running out of food. Anyway, they had meat...in these ships you can't believe the storage, cold storage of stuff for...especially in a battle wagon, or a big heavy cruiser. They have...a battle wagon will have 5000 kids on it. So that's a city almost. And that storage...you look in there and see all that beef and that stuff hanging in their, in that cold storage would just surprise ya. You just can't believe it. But in there. It was the 26<sup>th</sup> I was writing a letter to Barb. So it was about a day or two later. It took us 21 days; of course you would go night and day. And this victory ship was quite a...you'd go 16 and 18 knots. And that's pretty fast for a freighter. And I know I was on the ship once we were up by Guam, south of Guam, Midway Islands and here comes a radio man in. He said 'skipper we gonna have to change course. We've been ordered to go to Banger.' Banger. And the skipper said, 'Banger'? He says 'there's a Banger Maine.' And I went 'oh my hell, we got to go through the canal and I'll be clear across the continent from home.' So...but anyway, they went back into the sparks' room and come back and it was Banger Washington. That's just north of Seattle a little ways. So we had to change course. I was on the wheel that's why I knew all this. And uh, they went into the chart room and figured out the course. We wasn't zigzaggn' then. So you made a little better time but it still took 21 days to get over. And when we got their to Washington, Seattle area, it's just north or Seattle, they wouldn't let us in. We had ammunition on. They wouldn't let you park within ten miles. So we had to pull out there with one of those inlets around Seattle...a lot of water there...We pulled right out there and dropped the hook. And there we was. I had been away from home for damn well a year, and then sit out there and look at all the buildings around. And I remember the ship has a carpenter, ships carpenter. Anyway, some of the bumboats, that's guys that live on the islands around there, would come out in there canoes and boats and the carpenter gives the guys, kids on this boat...I don't know how much he gives 'em, to take him ashore. He got on that boat and went ashore and we never seen him again. When we signed off that ship in Seattle they had to mail his check and all of his clothes and belongings to him. He lived down around Fresno California, where he lived. So he was pretty sea sick I mean, homesick. OH you run acrossed the damnest things. But going south the water was beautiful...Real aqua blue. A lot like that blue right there...down there. Flying fish sometimes land on the deck. I've never seen a flying fish before. They have a dorsal fin but...they hang...down about that long. And they spin that thing and get up and their little fins and they fly around and if they happen to get over the ship, they lose their speed, down on the ship they come. Here are a lot of things you see that...and swimming. The water was warm but you sure couldn't swim in it. You get bugs in your ears and your nose and you get a fungus...

they wouldn't let you go in. I don't know...It took all the sport out of it. But its fun and it had good food. Like I said, they had good food on that ship because it's bigger. Three times as big as the first one we's on. We had a pretty good time on that one. But it blew...typhoons...we were in the Philippines and I remember this one time we was there and we were tied up alongside two navy ships, we were on the outside. I was out there by the beds, or beds were on number one hold that's forward, almost to the front, we had canvass around it to keep it dry. And the damn lightening and the wind and the rain was just coming this way. The lightening hit that center ship clear up the top of the superstructure. And I thought 'oh my hell'. Three ships loaded with ammunition, I just held my breath. But sitting in the water it just sucked it right out. Oh I thought we's gonners right there. Scary. Then two, that ship had torpedoes detectors set up here. And I was on the wheel once. It only went off two or three times while we's going, but it could've been a magnetic disturbance in the water would trigger it. But you didn't take no chance. When that thing popped on, told you which way to go, you's damn well turning that wheel. Then holding your breath. But it went off two or three time son us but we never...it must have been a false alarm. 'Cause those ships turned slow. You've seen Titanic. How big that was and how slow that would turn. You crank that wheel over it takes seems like forever for it start jerking around. But anyway, it's just one of those things. Just something that takes...that brings you to attention. But they had good food on them ships. You could order...they made the best shrimp omelets up north. Man they were good. But your eggs after a month usually they get old, so they feed you dehydrated eggs, which ain't bad. And that's the way your milk comes too. It just seemed like a short time, and then you'd be drinking dehydrated milk...but you can't expect much else. But you always had a choice of two...

Jessica Jemmett: I just wanted to know what was on...like what you loaded on the ships, or what they loaded so you could take it places?

JE: Now what?

JJ: You said you took lumber and what else did you take?

JE: Yeah well, 'course going south we had nothing but ammunition. But going north we had a lot of diesel and drums, gas, we had a lot of that. I think we had two trips with a couple hauls full of that. And we'd have a big...course you've seen big booms and stuff, that's how they load it and unload it. Whereas a couple of hands run by steams turban, wenches and they have a thing that hooks onto three of those barrels at once. A thing that clamps on at the top. And they would run them in there three at a time. But we took...I think more lumber. Cement, sacks of cement, dry cement. We took a lot of that too.

JJ: So were you a target for like the enemy or whatever?

JE: Well, we only had one alert going north of a sub in the area. And 'course all you can do then is turn the lights out; you have to run in the dark and...but those damn subs can hear you. You know they got them machines that they can hear that motor running. But

we...I think that when the Japs left Pearl Harbor, they left for good because we didn't have much run in with them up in there.

JT: What were your ideas about the Japanese and the Germans? I mean, how did you feel about them? Like in there stance in the war?

JE: Well, you know when we were kids here the Japs owned a lot of farms here and they farmed. And they rented because they couldn't own anything. And we went to school with a lot of Japanese kids. And we had them as friends here. But after the attack on Pearl Harbor, of course they were all rounded up and put into concentration camps. I didn't have much...I don't know, I didn't have much to do with them. It's kind of a sneaky damn thing to do with them. Some of the kids that went to the infantry, man I'll tell you they didn't have much use for them when they got back 'cause their...I don't know. A lot of them were educated here. You know they could talk like you could. They couldn't say their L's and so they adopted the trade of lolapolusaloo, 'cause they couldn't stick their head over a fox hole and 'hi joe'. And if you didn't have the right words, you were dead. That's the only reason... 'cause a lot of them could speak as good as we could only they have these things that they couldn't say too well. Like the damn Swedes, and they can't say their V's and W's. But it was just a trait and that's...you couldn't trust them though...their smart. Good little fighters. But I am glad I didn't get...have to go to...a mosquito infested place. I don't know. I was just glad it was over.

JT: When you like heard of Hitler and Mussolini and those over in Europe, what did you think about? Like what was your opinion of those leaders and how they...

JE: Well, I don't know. Hitler was quite a...and then they had so much Semitism. Jews what they did to them, it didn't seem like they were human to me. And I've watched a lot of movies. I got a lot in there like Schindler's List and a lot of those movies that shown what they done to them. I don't know. They just thought they were thinking about. I didn't have too much to do with them over there. And after they quite...see their war quite first in May. I think it was May or June. And it was quite a while before we seen any of them boats coming around our way, this way. But most of my friends went that way. If I had got into the army instead of joining this, that where I'd of went 'cause a friend of mine over here, he ended up over there. And he was working at Hill field and I'd thought he'd get out, you know. I went when the war first come I...Howard Haify, he was a friend of mine in school. He was working up in what's that uh...Boeing aircraft thing in Seattle. And he wrote me and told me to come on up and stay with him and get a job here at Boeing. Well, mother and I did that. We caught the bus and went up the Seattle and stayed with him for hell I don't know, one month or six weeks. But man, you go down there to Boeing to get a job and there a line for abreast on the side walk, it went clear around the block. You go t to have a lunch and everything else. I stood in that line and finally got in and then all they took was your name and address and 'we'll call ya'. And about a year after the damn war was over I got a letter from Boeing saying they could use me. That's how long it took. So I don't know. But we stayed there and I got a job, we stayed...he lived in the university district up there, University of Seattle of Washington. It was right down the street just a half a block, a great big A & P

grocery store, a big super market. Huge! I went down there and got a job in the grocery store to...I knew if I didn't get on here I would have to go back home. So I went down there to start saving for a ticket home. And uh, I worked my way clear up to the check stand. But, I enjoyed that because you're just busy a popping and asking questions. Everybody would ask you where this is and that was. And then the hardest part was to make change up there for me. We come here from Idaho and they had a sales tax. Fourteen eighty-four, fourteen eighty-nine and fourteen eighty-four change. Then it was three cents on a dollar. If you don't think that was...They didn't have these tells...tell machines that make change. Hell they figure your tax and your change and it's all computerized now. Man! We had to have a container their to put the money in here to separate it from what they were paid and that was the most confusing thing in the world for me until I got to know what the hell I was doing. But I done it and I enjoyed it and made enough money to get home on and after I got home and got settled in we had rented a little two room thing over here in that big house on the corner. Why the old man went worked down a the gun plant of course he was a builder by trade he went down there saw a foreman and so I took his tools and went down and got a job down there...Of course I was working down there then, Gordon and I went down and worked on the railroad for awhile and uh, when dad got down there in that gun plant, I just went...he had his tools and I just went and got his tools and he said come on in, and I said we have to work down there? And I worked down there for about a year before I got my notice to go...my greeting cards...so hell I don't know, it's been a long time ago.

JT: Yeah, I don't know, is there anything, you know, I mean, how did your family, were they really affected? I mean of course they were but...

JE: Well, Barb of course I left her here when I went down, they lived right up here and she stayed with them...and then there's a little house next door come available and she rented that and stayed in there...oh it was tough, everything rationed, gas you got five gallons a week...and we were working in Pocatello, and for five gallons ya' know you could hardly make it up from Pocatello here and back and then you used...but some of the guys that didn't use them they'd give 'em to ya, give ya two or three tickets...so you could go...everything was rationed, you couldn't buy a damned thing without having a ticket or a rationed card, so I'm sure they had their problem. Barbara wrote a lot, but I never got 'em only just maybe once every two or three weeks did I ever get any mail because we weren't in one place...down south when we were stationed there in that one place with all that ammunition we got mail call probably every two weeks, but hell I had a stack of 'em I had go through and date 'em so I could get the oldest one first to know...

Commentary by Barbara Elliot, wife of John Elliot.

JE: Yeah it was happy day. The only thing that was scary...you didn't trust the little buggers. The war was over. They had them sign the armistice and then they send us from where we was right over to the Lady in the Philippines...it was just about ten days after that damn Indianapolis was torpedoed and lost all them kids. I could have sit there in that little hole for another month, because you didn't trust them. You'd be just sitting ducks...That was the toughest part I think is getting jerked away from your family and

kids. You know, you couldn't imagine what you were doing, what time of day it as, what they'd be doing...I made it home safe and sound. Dad and I started to back to building houses.