

Norman Midthun
Narrator

Douglas Bekke
Minnesota Historical Society
Interviewer

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DB: Minnesota Historical Society Greatest Generation Project interview with Norman Midthun in Excelsior, Minnesota on December 20, 2006.

What is your birth date, Norm?

NM: August 28, 1924.

DB: And your birthplace.

NM: Minneapolis, Minnesota.

DB: Were you born in your home? Were you born in a hospital?

NM: I was told that I was born in my home on Summer Street in Minneapolis.

DB: Probably a midwife attending?

NM: Right.

DB: You don't remember, though.

NM: No. I don't remember that but I know that my mother, who died about a year and a half later, had a midwife and I was told that they called the doctor when she didn't perform well or according to how they expected her to and . . . part of the placenta had been left in her and she developed blood poisoning and died as a result of that.

DB: This is when your younger brother was born. A year and a half later.

NM: That's when my younger brother was born. Yes.

DB: We'll come back to your parents a little more. Your ethnic background?

NM: Ethnic Norwegian. My grandparents . . . great-grandparents all came from Norway. My dad was born in this country but he was a confirmed Norwegian (his church confirmation was given in Norwegian) and my mother's parents came from Norway.

DB: Was your father a World War I veteran?

NM: No. No. He was not.

DB: Did the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 affect your family at all? Do you have any stories from that?

NM: I don't think so.

DB: You never heard of it. It wasn't a major consideration.

NM: No. No.

DB: And a little bit about your father. What did he do? What was his background? Had he been raised in Minneapolis?

NM: No, he spent his youth on a farm near Frost, Minnesota. He moved to Minneapolis when he married my mom. As early as I can remember he worked at a furniture store and was a salesman of mattresses and furniture and then he was laid off when the big layoffs came. We lived in northeast Minneapolis at the time on Jefferson Street and I can remember walking with him. Walking with him to the grocery store. I was probably about six or seven years old. It was about three, four blocks away and it was owned by Syrians. The guy's name was Simon. Simon refused to give my dad credit or sell him food on credit, you can say. He wanted to buy some peanut butter and some potatoes. And we were really hungry at home. I remember that. Rightfully so, I guess, Simon said, "Well, you've already got credit . . . you already owe me . . . I don't know how much. Twenty-five or fifty bucks and that's way over the limit. So I can't give you any more food."

I remember walking to the store and back with my dad about that time. That was quite a memorable occasion. He came from a family of twelve. There were seven boys and five girls. Several of his brothers lived in Minneapolis and what they would do was drive down to the home farm, which was about a hundred and twenty miles away. Drive down there and get food so they could feed their families. I remember several trips down to the farm and getting chickens and vegetables and all that sort of thing so that we could continue living. I also remember another occasion when my dad got a job at the Ford plant and he was going to make . . . I think he got a job there at five dollars an hour working . . .

DB: An hour or a day?

NM: Five dollars . . . was it a day? It was five bucks. I guess it was a day. Five dollars a day. Yes. And he didn't have money to ride the bus. We probably lived about ten miles from the Ford

plant. So he walked back to the Ford plant and home again every day until he finally got paid so that he could then ride the streetcar. I think it cost ten cents at the time. A token.

DB: But he did what he had to do.

NM: Three tokens for a quarter or something like that. But I can remember him coming home so tired because it was heavy work. Working on the assembly line at the Ford plant. That he just barely made it in the door and he'd lie down on the kitchen floor and didn't have strength enough to get into bed.

DB: Had to get up early the next morning and do it all over again.

NM: Right. Well, he'd sleep there for a while and then eventually I think he would get up and then he would eat and go to bed and go walking again in the morning. Off to the Ford plant. Just unbelievable. I've taken my kids over there. Several years ago when they were younger I took them over to show them where I was born. The house was gone, of course. And then I showed them the grade school that I attended. Webster Grade School. Webster was gone. So I took them to the place that we had lived many, many years and it was gone. So they kind of kidded me. My junior high school was still there. Sheridan Junior High. And Edison. I took them to both places to show them where I went to school. But all of the other places were gone. [Chuckles]

DB: Did your father put a priority on education for you? Was that important for him?

NM: Not that I recall. No.

DB: He was probably too busy working most of the time.

NM: Right. He did not. My mother had two years of college and she had prepared to be a teacher. I had an uncle who attended St. Olaf College and had to quit. Quite a dramatic change in his life. In all of our lives, really. But as a result of that I thought of St. Olaf when I decided that maybe I should go to college and do a little bit more than I was doing at the time.

DB: Now you mentioned that your mother died in childbirth or as a result of the delivery of your younger brother.

NM: Yes.

DB: And that caused a change in your life.

NM: It certainly did. I went to live with one set of grandparents. I went to live with my mother's parents who lived in a small town in southern Minnesota called Bricelyn. It's still there. My brother went to live with my dad's parents. His father was gone but he lived with my dad's mother and her oldest sister who was married and ran the home farm. So he lived in a little town about five miles from where I was. It was very close. His farm was outside of Frost, Minnesota, which was the name of the little town. And I lived in Bricelyn. And we'd get together once in while when the grandmothers decided to visit. I can remember visiting him on the home farm.

Then when my dad remarried, I think he remarried after about four or five years. But I lived with my mother's parents and at the time she had three sisters. My mother's sisters. She had three daughters who lived in the house and I was a little guy. I can remember all three of those ladies. They're all three gone now. The oldest was Esther, and then there was one called Borghild. That was her name. And I couldn't say Borghild so I called her Bo Bo, and I was probably three years old. She was Bo Bo until she died. In fact, at her funeral . . . she was in her eighties . . . they called her Bo Bo. Then the youngest sister was Ruth and I called her Fifi. I don't know why. So she became Fifi to her family. All of her kids and her husband and everybody called her Fifi. [Chuckles]

DB: Because of what you started.

NM: Yes. I named my two aunts. Gave them names.

DB: Now you were about six years old when your father remarried and you moved back to Minneapolis.

NM: Right.

DB: Was that . . . do you remember the experience of moving home? Was that fairly traumatic for you?

NM: It was traumatic for my grandparents. I can remember my grandpa was kind of a stern old guy. He was born in Norway and he was a tough bird. He would come home . . . it was before electricity of course. And he had a crystal set. A real fancy one. He would sit and listen . . . put the earphones on. I remember being told when grandpa has those earphones on you don't say anything or do anything to make noise because he's listening to the news. I remember the day he heard Lindberg had crossed the Atlantic on his solo flight.

DB: Just to clarify. A crystal set was an early radio.

NM: Early radio. Yes. And so he would . . . I think it was a crystal set. Maybe a radio with a generator. I don't know. But I thought of him. He would put the headset on and he would listen to the news and then he would write it down and people would drop in at the bank. He was president of the bank in town. He was the wealthiest man in town as I found out later. Quite a prominent individual. Owned a half a shoe store, a grocery store, canning factory, several farms and we lived in a very nice house at the time. Those were my grandparents.

When I left there and went with my dad to Minneapolis it was tough on them. I remember them both, even my grandpa who was so tough, he was shedding a tear and I couldn't understand why they were so unhappy. But I had lived there for . . . I think about four years. Three to four years at least and so that was like my home. They were very good to me, of course. My grandma was a wonderful lady. I have very fond memories of her. My dad . . . the idea was that he would eventually bring my brother to Minneapolis as well and we would live together. I can remember making trips down to the farm. I would go down and spend a couple weeks with my brother.

Two or three weeks. Maybe even longer. I don't remember. On the home farm. We were just little guys and he really taught me a lot about farm animals that I had never been around before.

I can remember in those days they plowed with horses. They had a team of maybe eight, ten horses. Big ones. Did all the work with horses. The hay wagons and all of that. We were big enough to carry lunch out to the farmers in the field. So every morning at nine thirty or ten o'clock and also in the afternoon my grandma would make up a lunch and we would take it out to her husband, her son-in-law, he was my aunt's husband, and also the hired men. They always had two or three hired men. We would take the lunch out and of course then we'd get a little treat and we would be around the animals. But I can remember the pigs. My brother had a pet pig and this pig would follow him around all over the farm. It was fun. Once in a while he would sneak the pig in the house and then we'd catch heck for that. There is one time I'll never forget. My brother and I shared a room with the hired men. They had one big bedroom upstairs and one downstairs and they were . . . my brother and I shared a bed. The hired man had some hair lotion that he put on to slick his hair down and it smelled good. My brother would take that and he would put it on his pig to make the pig smell good. Well, he got caught and got heck for that.

DB: From the hired man.

NM: From the hired man. Yes. That hired man was a nice guy. He would wrestle with us and we played. He was always playing tricks on us. I'll never forget one time. We played a trick on him because in those days we did not have indoor plumbing. We had a pot under the bed. Grandma had a flowerpot out in the garden, and also had flowers in a pot that had been used at one time for taking a leak at night.

DB: A chamber pot.

NM: Only it had rusted out and so it was out in the garden and she had flowers in it. We . . . what my brother thought of . . . I'm sure I didn't think of it at the time. But to play a trick on the hired man he took this pot, took the flowers out, and brought the pot in and put it under the hired man's portion of the bed on the other side of the room. Well, the hired man . . . on Saturday night they would go to town and drink a lot of beer and during the night he had to go several times. Of course he would just put his feet out and pull the pot out from under the bed and then put the pot back in and go back to bed. And that's the way it was. But in the morning his whole side of the room was all covered with urine because the pot had a hole in it. We got heck for that.

DB: These hired men . . . what kind of wages could they get? A farm hand in those days. Do you know anything about that?

NM: No. I don't remember what they got. It was minimal, though. They got their room and board. Most of them were farm boys who came from very poor farms or very poor families with lots of kids. I don't remember but I think it was ten, fifteen dollars a month or something like that that they earned. Not very much money. Even then.

DB: It was a way of surviving for them.

NM: It was a way of surviving.

DB: When you came back to Minneapolis to live with your father and your stepmother . . . you came back to the house that you were born in?

NM: No. After my mother died he moved to another house and we visited the house where my mother died. We would visit another family who occupied the upstairs of the house.

DB: But you moved back to northeast Minneapolis.

NM: Moved back to northeast. Just a couple of blocks away.

DB: Similar neighborhood.

NM: Right. Same. My dad had about three brothers who lived in the area and they were all married and had kids, too.

DB: Typical wood frame house in northeast Minneapolis?

NM: Right. Right.

DB: Did you share a room with your brother?

NM: Well, see, I didn't live with my brother in Minneapolis. So I had my own room because I was the only kid.

DB: He stayed on the farm.

NM: He stayed on the farm. Yes. Every time we'd go down to take him back to Minneapolis there was a reason why he couldn't leave –like it was time for an inoculation or the doctor said they wanted to check up on this or that. There were always a lot of excuses by my aunt. I understood later because she had lost a little boy about the time my brother came along and she could never have any more children. So then she had this little boy and couldn't have any more children. She didn't want to give him up and she never did. So my brother grew up in that family and he was treated very well. He was well loved and treated extremely well.

When he later on finished high school, went in the army, came home, and got married to his high school sweetheart, the farm . . . not the home farm but another farm that this aunt and her husband owned . . . they sold that to my brother and he was to pay them monthly. Which he did. Eventually the father or my uncle died. Then my aunt, just before she died, called my brother and his wife in and by then they had paid back all of the money for the farm and she said, "Here is all the money that you have paid for that farm." She put it in the bank in his name. And he was her heir to whatever fortune or whatever she had. Which was meager I think. So he, from a financial standpoint, did very well and lived with somebody that loved him very much.

I remember that when I would go down and live for a couple of weeks or a month with him on the farm, we had favorite hiding places that he would show me. Up in the attic . . . up in the loft, the hayloft. We'd hide our candy up there and then the mice would always find it. That wasn't a very good idea. But he had two favorite places to hide. One was in the corncrib that was to the side of the front yard. We could hide in there, or there was a big oak tree that was not too far away in an oak grove, and we'd hide behind that oak tree. So any time we wanted to sort of get away we'd either go to the corncrib or the oak grove and no one could find us. Every time that it was time for my father and me to go back to Minneapolis, my brother would disappear. In those days he had a car and I got my suitcase or whatever I had. Clothing in the car and all the food that we were going to take back to Minneapolis and then they called my brother and he was never around. I can remember that. But I knew where he was. He was either in that corncrib or behind the oak tree. I could find him. So I knew where he was but he was feeling very bad because we were being separated again. I felt . . . at the time I didn't realize how bad I was feeling about it. But I did later.

DB: The home that you had in northeast Minneapolis, in your neighborhood, what was your neighborhood like? Was it a lot of Scandinavians or was it quite a mix of people?

NM: Yes. There were quite a number of Scandinavians. Most of my friends and neighbors were Polish. There were also Ukrainians or White Russians. I didn't know what a White Russian was, but there were many Ukrainians or Polish. My Polish neighbors and friends, they were really tough on their kids. They'd spank them and beat them up. The kids were tougher than nails, but they minded. They were very strict with the kids and very clean. The houses were cleaned. I remember some of the ladies would go out and they would scrub off the steps outside the door. Which they did back in the old country, I guess. But it was a good neighborhood to grow up in. I had a lot of good friends who were Polish and Ukrainian. I remember my Sunday School teacher. We went to a church called Immanuel Lutheran, which was a block north of Logan Park. It is still there. At one time, on this block north of Logan, each corner had a Lutheran church of a different denomination. It was ALC, or ELCA . . . you know. You name it. But they were all Lutheran churches and so that was in *Ripley's Believe It or Not* at one time. I remember that. And the church is still there. I've gone by it a couple of times and showed the kids where I was confirmed. I remember that I was in confirmation also when the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped, and that was part of our conversation with our confirmation teachers. About the Lindbergh baby. That was the time of the year when I was confirmed.

DB: In this home that you lived in in the early 1930s, you had electricity? Part of the city system?

NM: We had electricity. Yes.

DB: Indoor plumbing?

NM: Indoor plumbing. Right. But they didn't have it on the farm yet.

DB: Right.

NM: Yes. I remember an occasion that was kind of humorous when I was probably in the fifth grade. It wasn't humorous at the time. But it was in the fifth grade. We lived about one, two, three, four, five, six blocks from school and I had . . . that particular day . . . we always went home for lunch. Then I ran to the library, which was about four blocks further away. The library was at Sheridan Junior High School, which is still there. To exchange some books that I had, and come back. Then I walked back to school. I think we had forty-five minutes or something for lunch. So I didn't spend a lot of time eating, but I traveled many blocks. Anyway. I was back in school and all of a sudden . . . my homeroom teacher . . . her name was Johnson. I still remember because it was quite a traumatic thing that happened to me.

The door opened and a policeman was there. He motioned to the teacher and she went to the door and the next thing I know, she turns around and she motions to me to follow her. I go to the door and this policeman takes me down to the office and I had no idea what this was about. So we're in the office and he said, "What did you do with the money?" And I said, "What are you talking about?" I was probably twelve years old, I guess. "Well," he said, "we know exactly what you did. You went into the teacher's restroom and you went into a purse and you took some money out of that purse." I said, "Absolutely not. What are you talking about?" I think I said that. I can't imagine . . . I don't remember for sure what I said, but I was shocked. So he said, "We have an eyewitness. We have someone who saw you." My homeroom teacher, Johnson, was a very nice lady. She came down to the office and I talked to her and I said, "I don't have any idea what they're talking about and they're accusing me of taking some money." I said, "I did not. I have no idea what they're talking about." So, she said, "Well, who is the witness?" It was another teacher. So they called the other teacher who came down to the office to identify me. And the teacher said, "Oh, that's not him." Well, the principal said it was Norman Midthun. Yes. She said, "That's the Norman." Well, in front of me was a guy by the name of Norman Mastrian. Have you heard of him?

DB: Yes.

NM: Yes. Okay. Norman Mastrian sat in front and I sat right behind him. He sat in front of me all during grade school and junior high. Well, Norman Mastrian was the guy that had taken the money. But for a while I was in deep shock. I mean I had no idea what was going on. So anyway, I was cleared of that. Well, later in junior high school Mastrian again sat right in front of me. We were in chorus at Sheridan and we had a choral director who was . . . I guess he was gay. I didn't know what a gay person was. But he was very nice and we were in this class singing and this guy says something - I think he wanted us to sit up in our chairs. Sit straight. Mastrian smarted off and he called him a "gay" or called him something that was derogatory and this teacher came up about three steps toward him and Mastrian jumps up and knocks him in the jaw with a swift . . . he was, he became a featherweight champion in the state of Minnesota. Mastrian. He later went on to Macalester College. I think he was featherweight.

Anyway he knocks this teacher down and of course the next thing we hear the teacher or somebody ran down and got the principal, whose name was Mooney. He was a big Irishman. And in those days Mooney was tough. Mooney walks in and surmises what happened. The teacher was bleeding. So Mooney came up and he picked up Mastrian. I don't know if he had one hand or two. But anyway, he picked him up and I'll never forget. He put him against the wall

and his feet were dangling. Mooney was a big Irishman and he said something about if you ever touch him again I'll . . . you know. So then he takes him by the nap of the neck and out the door they go. I guess he took him down to the office and paddled his fanny. But you could do that in those days without getting – you'd probably be arrested now. Put in jail. But anyway, that was another experience of Norman Mastrian. Then later on, of course, he was hired by T. Eugene Thompson, if you remember, who was a lawyer. He hired Norman Mastrian to kill his wife and Mastrian . . . I don't know that he did the job or if he hired somebody else to do the job. Anyway, they killed this guy's wife. Eventually, Thompson wound up in jail for many, many years. He's still alive. He got out of jail eventually. He's got to be as old as I am. But he came from Elmore, Minnesota. That's a little town down near the Iowa border and Elmore's famous for two people. T. Eugene Thompson and Walter Mondale. Walter Mondale went to school down there. I got to know Walter pretty well.

I've gotten to know Walter through the years. He came from Elmore. He went to high school with a cousin of mine. One of my dad's brothers was a farmer and his daughter, Irene, was in high school in the same class as Walter. Walter was a football player and he was called "Crazy Legs," which I've kidded him about. When he was in high school, he and Irene went out a few times. I got to know Walter because after I retired from the airlines, my wife and a couple of friends started a candy store in the Pillsbury Center in Minneapolis. Eventually, the other friends wanted out and for some strange reason we wound up with the store and I wound up working in this candy store for about fifteen years. Walter was then a lawyer for the Dorsey firm which was right in the Pillsbury building, and he'd come in and get popcorn two or three times a week. So I got to know Walter pretty well. He's a real nice guy.

DB: I want to go back to your house in the neighborhood and get a little more information. Heat in the house at that time. Coal? Coal furnace in the basement?

NM: Let's see. I can remember we had a furnace in the living room that my dad would start with wood and then put coal on it and we had a coal bin in the basement. In those days, you had a chute outside. Somehow they opened up and they would dump in the coal. The people that delivered the coal would come with a basket they'd carry on their back with these coal lumps. They'd dump it down and it would go down the chute into the basement and that's where you kept it. Later on, I remember we had a stove in the basement as well. Or a furnace more or less which heated the house.

DB: Gravity heat through the ducts there. Did you have holes in the floor to go upstairs?

NM: Right. Right.

DB: No real ductwork upstairs.

NM: No.

DB: It was just a hole in the living room ceiling that would go upstairs.

NM: Yes.

DB: Did your room get pretty cold?

NM: I remember the floors were really cold. We didn't have rugs on the floors, and if you got up at night to go to the toilet or even in the morning, it was really cold to walk on the floor because we didn't have rugs.

DB: Did you have an electric refrigerator or did you have an icebox in the kitchen?

NM: I can remember before we had a refrigerator we kept the butter and anything that was perishable down in the basement. We had an icebox and we would buy blocks of ice to put in the icebox. But we also kept things in the basement that were damp. We had a dirt floor and bricks on the side. We'd go down there and place the food. But I remember when I was living back with my grandparents. My grandpa had a hole in the floor in the kitchen and he would open that up and he could go down there. On the end of a string he had gamalöst. I don't know if you know what gamalöst is. Gamalöst is old cheese and you can still buy it but you have to be Old Norwegian and *love* gamalöst because it smells like rotten socks. Even then my grandma made my grandpa keep this gamalöst below the floor, down in the basement in the kitchen. She would make him keep it down there so that she and the rest of the family didn't have to have that smell. But he would put that on crackers and think that was the best stuff in the world.

DB: Was it like a blue cheese?

NM: Yes. Sort of. But it would be like spoiled blue cheese. I mean I like blue cheese but this was . . .

DB: Not that stuff.

NM: No. You can still get it. It's called gamalöst, "old cheese." The reason I know that you can still get it is I had an uncle, my mother's oldest brother, who died about ten years ago. He was ninety-five at the time he died. But he used to love gamalöst, knowing his father, I guess. I would get gamalöst imported from Norway for him. You had to keep it in a closed container. Otherwise the smell would permeate the air. [Chuckles]

DB: Your stepmother. Was she a housewife? Did she work outside the home?

NM: When she and my dad first got married, she worked at a hospital as a cook. She did desserts. She was a great pie maker. Then she decided to go to beauty school. When my dad couldn't get a job she decided to become a beautician and she went to beautician school and then later opened a beauty shop in her home. So when I was in grade school and my first year of high school she had a beauty shop in her home in northeast Minneapolis. One of the ladies who came to her beauty shop was Muriel Humphrey. I can remember the shop was . . . the front would be kind of the living room of our house and Muriel would come and get her hair done. I think it cost thirty-five cents or something like that. Hubert would come by on his bicycle. I think he was going to the University. Anyway, I can remember him riding his bicycle and meeting his wife. Whether she had a bike or how they got home I don't know, but I can remember him coming to pick up his wife on a bicycle.

DB: Was he a very gregarious person at the time? You don't remember too much about him?

NM: No. This is jumping ahead but Hubert later . . . when I started flying for Northwest Airlines and we were flying Stratocruisers to Washington, D.C., every Friday night Hubert would come out of Washington. He was a Senator. One time . . . and I don't know if Don Nyrop told you this story. Nyrop really ran a great ship, you know, and he got his fingers on everything. He noticed that the last flight out of Washington was always late. How come we were late? He was a great guy for being on time. Well, he called the station manager down in Washington and he said, "How come you guys are always late in getting out on the last trip on Friday?" "Well," they said, "it's due to Senator Humphrey." "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "he calls." The flight is due to leave at, let's say, five-thirty, or whatever. The last flight out of Washington. He calls and says, "I'm ten minutes away from the airport. Hang onto the flight." Well, it's five minutes before the departure. So he gets there and checks in. They're waiting for him and it's ten minutes to go. And the old Stratocruiser . . . I know you probably never even heard of it, but it was built by Boeing. It was the civilian version of the B-29. The same structure. We had fourteen seats downstairs and fifty-nine upstairs. Seventy-three passengers. So Hubert would come and they would go up the stairs into the lower lounge and then away they'd go. But they were always late because of Hubert.

When he found out about that, Nyrop said to the station manager, "Now, I'll tell you what you want to do." He said, "You load up and you can wait five minutes for him but if he's not there within five minutes, I want you to go." So the next time for sure they load up. Hubert says, "I'm ten minutes or fifteen minutes away." The five minutes is up. They close the door and away they go and Hubert arrives at the airport and can't believe it! My flight has left! Yes. How can you do this to me? The station manager, of course, he said, "Well, I was instructed to do it by Don Nyrop. He said here's his telephone number. You call him. And so he called Nyrop. I don't remember the conversation . . ."

DB: I'll get it from Nyrop.

NM: But anyway, you'll get it from Nyrop. Nyrop said Hubert was never late after that. But I flew several of those trips between Washington and Minneapolis at the time and Hubert in those days would come up and sit in the cockpit. You know. He was a consummate politician. Just a terrific guy. Very personable. He would come up and sit in the cockpit and he got to know us. Called us by our first names. And we got to know him. Walter Mondale was an assistant of his at the time and Walter was in the back. Along with Hubert's wife. They were treated well, I'm sure. But Hubert would sit in the cockpit and talk all the way to Minneapolis. We made several . . . sometimes two or three stops. So we got to know him very well. Everybody really thought the world of him because . . . even though you didn't agree with his politics. Or if you did, even more so. But he was such a personal guy. So completely involved in the lives of Minnesota people and in his job. He was quite a guy.

DB: You told a couple stories about your dad's work situation and how the Depression changed your family life situation.

NM: Oh, yes. My dad worked at the Gluek Brewery. I remember that when Prohibition ended, he got a job at the Gluek Brewery Company, which was not too far from where we lived. We lived on Jefferson Street and Gluek's is on Marshall and that probably is a mile away. I don't know if he had a car at the time or not. But anyway, he got a job at Gluek's and so he worked at Gluek's for many, many years and when my folks moved south when I was a freshman in high school or had completed my first year, they built a house out south Minneapolis. The house cost \$7,300. That was a new house.

DB: Do you remember the address?

NM: Yes. It was 3941 16th Avenue South. And about three or four blocks south of that was the end of the city. So we were living south and I went to Roosevelt for my last two years of high school. I also got a job in a meat market on 43rd and Nicollet. Well, when I lived in northeast Minneapolis, when I was about twelve or thirteen years old, I don't ever remember getting an allowance or having any money to spend. There was a meat market owned by a guy named Sid Rein. He was Jewish and came from Chicago. I think he was born in Chicago. But he came from a meat family. That is, his parents or somebody had been in the meat business. So he came to Minneapolis and started this meat market. I got a job there. I got to know Sid pretty well. I would deliver meat packages to neighbors. My pay was ninety cents a week.

DB: For how many hours?

NM: Every night after school. So I got there probably around three-thirty and then the meat market would close at six and all day Saturday. I worked there for . . . I think it was about six months.

DB: So twenty-some hours.

NM: Yes. And by then he had taught me how to trim. You take all the meat off the bone that you possibly could. And he taught me how to draw chickens. I could clean a chicken. In those days we had chickens around . . . you had to take the insides out. Cut them and take all the lungs and all the guts out and also around Christmas and New Years we had ducks and turkeys and all those things. I got to learn how to cut those and trim them. Anyway, I got to where I knew that I was worth a lot more than ninety cents a week and so I said I wanted a raise. He said, "I'm not going to give you a raise." I said, "I'll quit." He said, "You go ahead and quit." I'll never forget. And I quit. All of a sudden I was without a job. I don't know how long I thought about it. Probably about a week or so. I went to a couple other places that I knew and tried to get a job. Some of my friends were delivering newspapers and some were delivering groceries. There were no other jobs available. So, I swallowed my pride and went back and said, "I'd like my job back. Ninety cents a week." So he said, "Okay. You can have your job back." So at the end of the week, he gave me a raise. I think I got a dollar ten or dollar twenty-five. But he decided. I'll never forget that. He decided how much I was going to get. But still I was making a buck and quarter. But he taught me a lot. He was a nice guy. He was very concerned about the German invasion. That was because of his background of being Jewish, I think. I can't remember now where his parents came from. They were being persecuted. His whole family.

DB: He still had significant family in Europe?

NM: He did. Yes. And he talked about the war and that was 1938-1939. Somewhere in there. He was very concerned about it. I used to listen to the stories. I had no idea about persecution or even much about Hitler. But he talked about him.

DB: We'll come back to that a little bit later.

NM: Yes.

DB: I want to go back to your earlier years before you were working in this meat market. What other opportunities were there for kids to make money? I've talked to some kids that would go out and salvage bottles in the street and turn in the bottles for the deposit or salvage scrap iron. Anything they could do to make a buck. Yesterday I interviewed a guy who worked at the golf course.

NM: Yes. I don't remember many opportunities. We used to have a guy . . . we called him a "Sheeny." Again, I think he was probably Jewish but I'm not sure. But he'd come through the alley about once a week with a wagon and a horse and if you had bottles or metal or something he would buy it. If it was of value. And you might end up with ten cents or fifteen cents. Some of the kids would go up and down the alley looking in peoples' backyards to get things to sell to the Sheeny. I don't remember that I ever did that. But there were paper routes. Guys would get up real early in the morning and deliver the paper. We had a couple of different papers in Minneapolis at the time. There were not many opportunities for a young man to earn money. So I was kind of lucky to get this job at a meat market.

Later on when my folks moved south I got a job in the summertime in a meat market on 43rd and Nicollet when I was about fifteen. I worked for a guy named Oren Fystrom, who was Norwegian, and he had three meat markets. I worked at each one of them for a while. In the summertime I'd work all day long. I remember I made ten dollars a week and that was a *lot* of money for that time.

DB: Compared to ninety cents a week.

NM: Yes. Well, the manager of our meat market on 43rd and Nicollet made twenty-seven dollars a week. The assistant manager made twenty-one and I got ten bucks and I thought I was doing very well. The reason I remember that is that the assistant manager became a very close friend of mine. He got married and bought a new car on twenty-one bucks a week. Oren Fystrom, who owned the meat market, would buy a new Ford every year and I remember him telling me that he paid five hundred and seventy dollars for that car. That was 1937-38. Somewhere in there. That's when Social Security came into effect. I was working in the meat market when Social Security was put into effect and I signed up for Social Security at the time.

DB: So they took a little bit out of your pay for that.

NM: They took a little bit out of my pay plus the fact that when I was in the meat market at 43rd and Nicollet the union would come around and collect union dues from the guys. When I was fifteen I became the youngest journeyman meat cutter in Minneapolis. By then I was able to take a quarter of beef . . . part of my test was to take either a front quarter or a rear quarter and cut into the steaks, roasts, etc. The test was held downtown. I can't remember the name of the school but it was downtown in a school.

DB: Vocational? Was it Vocational?

NM: Yes. I think it was at Vocational. Yes. And you had to take this . . . they had a block, a big meat block there. You had to take the quarter of . . . I think I had a hindquarter. But anyway, cut up all the steaks and the chops and the different kinds of roasts and what have you. I got my journeyman meat cutter's license. But as a result of that I had to join the union. So I was one of the youngest union members of the Minneapolis Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America was the name of the union.

DB: So they took a little bit in union dues. How about taxes? Was there much taken out for income tax at that time?

NM: I don't remember any tax money taken out at the time. No. I don't think I filed taxes at the time. I don't remember that. But anyway, I had some spending money. Across the street from the meat market on 43rd and Nicollet was a bicycle shop where they sold Schwinn bikes. And in 1938 or '39 they had this beautiful model of a Schwinn bike in the window. Balloon tires with . . . just a fantastic bike and it cost a hundred and five dollars or something like that. You could buy a good used car for sixty, seventy bucks. Of course I didn't think about buying a car. But I saw that bike and wanted that so badly. So during my lunch hour I'd go over and talk to the guy that owned the Schwinn bike store and nobody was . . . he had it in there more or less as an attraction. I finally worked out a deal with him. I think I paid five or ten dollars down and he would keep it in the window until I had paid for it. Well, it took me about six months or a year . . . I'm not sure how long . . . to eventually get my bike. But I rode that bike and it was the fanciest bike that I'd ever seen or still have seen. I'll show it to you if you want to take a look at it.

DB: Okay. [Break in taping]

That was a pretty impressive bicycle and a huge fortune at the time. Now, you used it. You rode it around. What kind security issues might there have been for the bicycle?

NM: At the time I don't remember ever being concerned about somebody taking my bike. I worked at this meat market on 43rd and Nicollet and I would park it right behind - outside the door in the back and it was available, you could say, for anybody. But this particular bike had some security. You turned the front wheel about sixty degrees and it had a key that you could remove so then the front wheel was locked at about a sixty degree angle to the main frame and so you'd have to pick it up and walk away with it. And that's the only way that you could steal the bike. But I don't remember ever being concerned about somebody doing that. Next door to the meat market we had a bakery. They took my bike and took it into the bakery just because . . . we

were good friends. I always went over there and the guy made fresh bismarks and gave me a bismark every time I went. But just to pull my leg they took my bike and put it in the bakery. So when I came out I couldn't find it and they thought that was real funny. But never was I concerned about having someone take my bike.

DB: How about just in general? Did you worry about locking cars, locking up your house? Was security much of a concern in those days?

NM: I don't remember my folks being concerned about locking the doors in the house at all and where we lived the doors were always open, I guess. As far as I can remember. I don't remember taking a key when I went to school and having to unlock later on.

DB: Earlier you mentioned an incident in the school where the police confronted you. They'd mistaken you for someone else in a theft.

NM: Oh, yes.

DB: What was the attitude towards police in those days? Or how did police treat kids? What kinds of relations were there between the community and the police?

NM: As far as I know, I had a good feeling about the police. I don't remember ever being encountered, but I don't think I knew many policemen at the time. One of the gals that I went to church with . . . right after the war, her father was a policeman. So I got to know her dad. But other than that I don't know that I remember knowing any of the cops. I think it was . . . everybody seemed to be law abiding and there was very little crime. I can remember as a kid my folks talked about someone in Minneapolis, where they chopped up a lady - or maybe it was a guy - and put the body in a trunk and it was shipped to Chicago. And that was a conversation with my parents and friends that we would visit about the terrible thing that happened where they killed this guy and sent him to Chicago. That was a conversation for a long time.

Well, today, you pick up the newspaper and there's shootings every day. Several people killed. You just don't talk about it any more. It's hardly mentioned in a conversation about who's being shot. I mean it happens all the time. I must say in this neighborhood I'm very concerned about making sure that the doors are locked. Fortunately, we have the Deephaven police right across the street. They're in the back of the Deephaven City Hall and I've gotten to know the chief of police. But I asked somebody in the neighborhood when we decided to buy out here whether there was any crime and the guy said, "Yes." He said, "Somebody knocks your mailbox. That's a crime wave." That's about as much as we experience out here. In all the years I never heard of a robbery around here. They found a guy who was dead about a mile away off the walking path and they somehow later discovered or determined that he had been involved in a drug deal and he had been killed someplace else and they dumped his body over there. But other than that I haven't heard of any kind of a crime out here. It's very safe.

DB: So it's a nice, safe neighborhood, just like when you grew up.

NM: Very safe.

DB: But you do lock your doors now. You didn't when you were a kid.

NM: No. But we do. I make sure they're all locked. And, of course, I've got the dog.

DB: You mentioned earlier that during the Depression when your father got the job at the Ford plant he had to walk to work because he couldn't afford to pay the streetcar.

NM: That's right.

DB: So for you, as a child, if you wanted to go someplace, a lot of times you probably had to walk, too. The streetcar maybe wasn't an option.

NM: Oh, right. When I went to grade school or to high school I walked all the time. I was maybe seven, eight blocks from grade school and I must have been at least a mile from Edison if not more. Walked it every day and never thought of it. I don't think there were streetcars that ran up to Edison so it wasn't something that I had an option to do.

DB: And spending money was tight. Was going to a movie or going to a theater or anything like that an option when you were young? I know things changed when you worked in the meat market. You had ten dollars a week. That was a huge economic change. But prior to that time when you were pretty young, were these things an option for you? Were they just economically out of reach?

NM: Pretty much out of reach. I think the biggest thing that we would do . . . I remember on Saturday afternoon kids could go to a movie and I think we got a quarter. A quarter would give you the movie and popcorn or candy and you'd see a double feature. That was a Saturday afternoon treat for the kids. But you're right. You just didn't spend money. [Chuckles]

DB: So most of your activities were just running around with your friends.

NM: That's right. We made our own. We didn't, even when I was in high school, during the early part of the war, really spend money. I didn't have it to spend.

DB: And did the parks in your neighborhood, did they organize activities for the kids or were most of the things you did organized by the kids themselves?

NM: Well, most of the time we had a group. When I was in high school at Roosevelt there were probably eight or ten boys who lived in the neighborhood and we played basketball and touch football and we may have gone bowling a few times. Roller skating. We'd go to the roller skating rink on DuPont just off Lake Street. That's where the Minneapolis hockey team used to play in the early days. But that was a big thing, to go roller skating. I don't remember how much it cost. Twenty-five cents, probably.

DB: Activities in your school, in your high school. Were there a lot of things to be involved with? Was it fairly structured? Sports, social activities?

NM: I think there were activities but because of the fact that I had this job in the meat market, that kind of took over all of my free time outside of classroom work. I remember as a freshman in high school going out for basketball and . . .

DB: This would have been at Edison then?

NM: This was . . . actually, I was a sophomore. I was at Roosevelt. Went out for basketball and the freshman junior basketball coach at the time . . . I was trying to think of his name. Peterson was the senior coach and this guy was the assistant coach and he later became quite a prominent coach in Minneapolis. It seemed to me he was mayor of Minneapolis at one time. What the heck is his name? It's amazing. I can remember the football coach at Edison. It was Pete Guzzy. There was a kid in Edison whose name was Tony Juros. Tony was about twenty years old and he was still in high school and he later played for the University of Minnesota. The same when I went to Roosevelt. The high school football coach was Al Gowans and Al was a history teacher and in my history class was a guy by the name of Red Williams. Red and his brother Wayne were both good football players. But where the rest of us kids in the class would sit and read history chapters that the teacher set down, I want you to read this, the coach and Red Williams were up at the blackboard and they would be drawing different plays for the football game. We kiddingly said that Red, he doesn't know the First World War is over and there he's up there drawing plays with the coach. [Chuckles] Red was good enough. He went on to the University of Minnesota and played with Bernie Bierman in . . . it would probably be about 1942. He was quite a football player. I belonged to the Norwegian Club in high school.

DB: And what did that involve?

NM: It involved all those who took Norwegian and we would get together once a couple of weeks, I guess, and they would have a guest speaker and they'd talk about things in Norway. My Norwegian teacher at the time would usually be the guy that would be talking about it and he was the one that eventually told us about German invasion of Norway. But I didn't participate much in high school activities because I had this job working in the meat market and it was big time money. You know. Ten bucks. [Chuckles]

DB: Was Roosevelt considered a pretty good school in those days?

NM: It was considered a good school. Yes. It was near the end of south Minneapolis, you could say. And all the kids in the school . . . we did not have a single black in the school at the time. Not good or bad. It was just the idea that most of them were Scandinavians. Most of the kids were Scandinavian. And there was only one kid that had a car. His name was Vernon Dinger. I can't tell you why I remember his name. But anyway, Vernon's parents had moved to Minnetonka. Had moved west, let's say. He had started Roosevelt and wanted to finish his high school career there and so he had a car. He was the only student that had a car and he was killed the first few months of the war. I remember; it was a tragic thing.

DB: Were there set programs of study?

NM: Oh, gosh. I just took whatever was required and Norwegian was my language.

DB: It was pretty much an academic . . . a set program. Academically. Everybody pretty much took the same thing.

NM: Yes. Pretty much. I don't remember that I tried to specialize in anything.

DB: And you took Norwegian because of influences in your family or your own curiosity or . . .

NM: Mainly because of my background, and my Norwegian grandparents. And I wanted to learn a little about . . . you had to pick a language and I remember at the time you could have German, Swedish, Norwegian. I don't think they offered Spanish at the time.

DB: Probably French.

NM: I don't remember.

DB: Now you had gotten pretty extensively involved in being a butcher, working in the meat market.

NM: Right. Right.

DB: You're fourteen, fifteen years old here. What were your plans? What ambitions did you have? Did you think you were going to get into meat business?

NM: I don't remember thinking about it, but at the time I was good enough to probably eventually become an assistant manager and a manager of one of the meat markets that this guy Oren Fystrom owned. I don't remember making any plans, but I just felt good about the fact that I had the best bike that money could buy and I had a good job. My other friends, they were kind of envious of the fact that I had this job that paid me ten bucks a week. Didn't have any plans and never thought about college.

DB: Didn't think about becoming a pilot necessarily?

NM: No. No. I had not a thought. Not a thought. I do remember when I was probably ten, twelve years old, down the alley from where we lived on Adams Street, across the alley and down about half a block, was a World War I airplane that a guy had. I'm not sure how he got it, but he had it in the backyard. The wings were off. But the cockpit was . . . it was an open cockpit airplane. He would allow us, the kids in the neighborhood, to go up there and sit in the cockpit provided we didn't monkey around with anything. I remember sitting in that cockpit thinking, wow, wouldn't that be fun to be in an airplane and actually fly. But I don't ever remember dreaming that maybe I could do it, because I had no plans for college and that seemed to be totally out of reach.

DB: You decided to go to summer school and finish school early. So you actually graduated when you were seventeen. What prompted that?

NM: Well, I was seventeen when I graduated. I graduated in January. I went to summer school. I went to West High School. In those days I could get on a streetcar and take it from home. I could go Bloomington to Lake Street to Hennepin Avenue and then get off at Hennepin, and West was north of Hennepin and Lake about two, three blocks. I'd go to high school over there. So I'd take my summer courses. I was able to graduate early as a result of that. I had no plan, no. I just wanted to get out of school, I guess. Get out as early as I could. I didn't have a lot of friends at Roosevelt because I only went there a year and a half. With the kids in my neighborhood . . . we had a group of maybe eight guys that played basketball and touch football and would get together and listen to good music and stuff like that.

DB: What about girls? Was that part of the social atmosphere or did . . . was there much dating?

NM: No. I can't remember dating much at all in high school. I remember going roller skating with a particular gal who would be passed around in our group because if we went roller skating everybody wanted to make sure that Alice Johnson – that was her name - would be in the group because she could skate backwards and forwards and it was just fun to roller skate. I got to follow her career and I still know her. She later became a stewardess for Northwest and married a guy that I knew very well. A pilot whose name was Skeeter Johnson. So she didn't change her name. They had a couple of kids. Skeeter has passed on now but Alice is still around and I see her once in a while when we play bridge. They call her. It's in the pilot group.

For high school graduation I remember dating a gal that I had never had out before and we went to Long Lake, Minnesota. Just out beyond here a little bit. There was a restaurant out there. I don't remember the name of it, but they had buffalo in the backyard. Real buffalo. And they served buffalo steaks or buffalo hamburgers. And there was a bowling alley next to it. So we went bowling and had buffalo hamburgers. That was my big high school graduation party. Contrast that to what my grandson did last year when he graduated from high school. We went over to take pictures. He and about three, four of his buddies had tuxes and the girls had formal dresses and they had a big black limousine that pulled up and they all went off to a fancy restaurant in town, Kincaids, for dinner. It probably cost him fifty bucks a plate. And then they had a dance and they stayed out all night because the dance was guarded by the parents, more or less. But what a contrast. [Chuckles]

DB: Yes. Did you go dancing when you were young? Was that something that . . . other kids? Just in general. If you didn't do it . . .

NM: We had dances at Roosevelt. I remember going to several. But the guys would stand against the wall and the girls would stand against the wall. I'm sure that some of them went there together and you maybe danced together. I don't remember dancing very much at all when I was in high school. But I must have learned how somehow because I enjoyed it later. I remember now that I did dance in high school because we went to the Prom in St. Paul and somebody would get the use of a dad's car and two or three of us would go to the Prom Ballroom. That was a big thing to go to the Prom. You'd reserve a booth for fifty cents and I think it cost a buck to get into the Prom and have a couple of Cokes or something. That was a big evening. I remember at the Prom at the time that we had several big name bands. Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman. And I also remember coming out here to the Excelsior

Amusement Park. We came out on the streetcar. We'd catch a streetcar in Minneapolis down on Lake Street and we'd come all the way to the Excelsior Amusement Park. They had an open air dance floor. I think it was all screen on the sides with a cover. They would have big name bands out there. I did that a couple of times before I graduated from high school. So I did go dancing.

DB: Just kind of picked it up.

NM: Yes. I guess so.

DB: Picked it up on the floor. Yes. You graduated from high school in 1940?

NM: No. January of 1942.

DB: Okay. January of 1942. So just prior to that was Pearl Harbor.

NM: Right.

DB: But two years before that World War II started in Europe. September of 1939. How much attention did you pay to world events and things that were going on? I know you mentioned that you had the Jewish boss in the meat market who was concerned about his family in Europe.

NM: Yes. Right.

DB: But other than that as far as listening to . . . as a young man of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old, did you pay attention to the news and world events?

NM: Not really. I remember Pearl Harbor, of course. It was a Sunday and we had just come home from church when it was on the news. I also remember my dad had some friends who came over to the house and the idea was . . . how dare they do this? All of the guys who had a shotgun, all the Americans, we'd get . . . I can remember the conversation. They'd get all the shotguns together and all the guns and they'd go over there and take care of whatever the situation was.

DB: Neighborhood gang was going to go clean it up.

NM: Yes. [Chuckles] No problem. But I don't remember following news events very much. When Norway was invaded I heard that in school.

DB: You had that one particular teacher in school that you mentioned earlier.

NM: Yes. Right. Ben Eggan, who was our Norwegian teacher. The athletic director, ski coach. He had been born in Norway and had a son who was in my class in high school. His name was Jack. Jack Eggan. And Jack was in our Norwegian class. He was taking Norwegian from his dad. We said, "Well, you're probably going to get a good grade."

DB: But this teacher talked to you a lot about the situation in Norway.

NM: Yes, he did. Well, not every time. I don't remember how many times we had Norwegian. Probably three times a week. But he would bring us up to date on what was going on.

DB: In the German occupation of Norway.

NM: The German occupation. How they moved up the coast and how eventually the royal family left and all those things. He talked about all those things and so we were aware of what was going on in Norway more than we were aware of what was going on other places.

DB: Now you say you graduated in January of 1942. The war has just started. A year before the National Guard had been mobilized and sent down to Louisiana. I don't know if you had friends who'd been in the Guard or if that touched your life at all.

NM: No. Not at all.

DB: Okay. But with the attack on Pearl Harbor maybe some of your older friends were enlisting. A lot of people were . . . there was a lot of pressure to join the military, to go in. You're out of high school. What were your options? What did you think? What were your plans, if anything?

NM: Well, as I say, I tried to . . . once I got out of high school I was thinking about joining the Air Force and I went out to Wold Chamberlain. Took a physical and I passed the physical. Then I was too young to get in the Air Force and I remember them saying, "Well, you come back when you're old enough," or something like that. But I did get this certificate of physical health. Okayed for the U.S. Navy Air Force. I was very proud of that. I put it under my sweater. I had a sweater on then. You're supposed to hand it in. I took it home. Showed my dad. I was very proud of the fact that I passed the physical. I had no other plans for it. Somehow I got thinking about this little Norway and so I went down to the Norwegian Consul General's office that was in the Foshay Tower at the time. As an American you could join an Allied Force provided you did not swear allegiance against the American flag or the government or what have you. You couldn't renounce your citizenship and do this. But as an American you could join an Allied Force and retain your citizenship and so that's what I did. I joined the Norwegian Air Force. I went from Minneapolis on up to Little Norway.

DB: Now, how did you get up there? You're sixteen years old or just maybe . . .

NM: Seventeen. Yes.

DB: Just seventeen.

NM: Well, I got on the train at the Great Northern Depot. Got on a train and then went from here to Chicago and on up to Toronto.

DB: Now, this is the first time you've been on a train like this?

NM: I think it was. I can't remember being on a train before that. But it was one of the few times that I had been out of Minnesota. I'd been to North Dakota once or twice. And I'd been down to Iowa because where I lived was only five miles north of the Iowa border and so we would go down and visit some relatives just south of the border. But this was the big thing for me. As I said when I went through Chicago, I saw where Hoover vacuum cleaners were made and I wrote home and said I saw where Hoover vacuum cleaners were made. It was a big thing.

DB: Expanding horizon.

NM: Right. [Chuckles]

DB: And getting into Canada was no customs issue or anything. Did you need a passport?

NM: No. No. I received papers from the Norwegian government. As I joined the Norwegian Air Force I was accepted to take this and got the train tickets and everything and so there was . . . I don't remember even going through customs or immigration as I went into Canada. I no doubt did, but I went right to Toronto and I was met at the train station and taken over to the camp.

DB: Were you were all by yourself, or were there other guys with you?

NM: Yes. No others. In fact I was one of very few Americans who were in the camp. Most of the people . . . ninety-nine percent were Norwegians. I'd say sixty percent of them came right from Norway. They were fishermen. They escaped through Sweden or somehow. They were in the military and got to Little Norway. The other large percent of them were from all over the world. Norwegians living in South America. As I say, one of my buddies was born in the Philippines. Another one from India. They all came to Little Norway at that time. I can remember the very first Christmas at Little Norway. I'm not sure how I wound up doing it, but I was telling somebody a couple days ago that I was picked to dance around the Christmas tree. They had a Christmas tree. I can remember that. The kids in Norway dance around the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. And I was one of those that danced around the Christmas tree. At the time, on one hand as we danced around, Crown Princess Martha was on my left and Prince Harold was on my right. He was about six years old. Well, he is now the king of Norway and Marta, his mother, was the gal who lived with the kids at the White House for about three years during the war. Roosevelt liked her very much and she and the royal family lived right at the White House for quite a long time.

DB: When you enlisted did you enlist specifically for the Air Force?

NM: Yes. Yes. This was the Norwegian Air Force.

DB: So that base was going to be all Air Force people.

NM: It was going to be all Air Force people . . . and it was all Air Force people. The Island Airport is where the airport was where the runways and hangars were. Then off the airport there's a bay, Toronto Bay, and on the mainland at about a ten-minute ferry ride between the mainland and the airport is where they had the camp. Little Norway. So Little Norway was

actually at an area called Summerside by the Canadians. It was at a little area on the mainland away from the airport per se where the airplanes and the hangars and everything were. And so that's where we had our basic training. Pre-flight.

DB: Let's go back just a little bit. When you enlisted, inspired by your passing the flight physical at Wold Chamberlain, did you immediately enlist to try to become a pilot?

NM: When I enlisted in the Norwegian Air Force?

DB: Right.

NM: Yes.

DB: So that was right from the start.

NM: That was right from the start. My hope was that I would become a pilot. I had no idea what I was even getting into.

DB: Did you have to go through another physical and series of exams or anything?

NM: I went through another physical but I had this Navy Air Force physical. I remember the doctor was an American. He was a Norwegian but he had American physician training in the States. I can remember him checking me all over and he said my legs were unbelievably strong. He had never seen a pair of legs like mine. It turned out that the reason for that was that with my bicycle riding from my home to high school and back and to the meat market and back, I probably rode that bike maybe six miles a day, every day. Except weekends. And I used it every day winter or summer. Even in the snow. I can remember sometimes having to get off and walk it because the snow was so deep I couldn't ride. But I rode my bike all winter long. And in snowstorms. So my legs were really strong. I was in great shape when I went in the Air Force. I should have been, of course. I remember him saying, "Now, you're going to have a hell of a difficult time." He said, "You don't speak Norwegian. You're going to have a problem." All the classes were in Norwegian. And he said, "I'll give you some advice. Don't ever leave the camp and go out into town." The little town of Gravenhurst was north of the city of Toronto. He said, "Don't go out partying in Toronto because you're going to need all the energy and effort that you have to stay. Study, study, study. Don't drink. Don't smoke. Just study." And he said something about, "I hope you make it," or something like that. That was about it. But I remember that was awfully good advice and I followed it. I stayed in camp.

I found out early at Toronto what I'd have to do if I wanted to be accepted by the group, and I wanted to be accepted. I was considered kind of an outsider for a while because I couldn't speak Norwegian. So I didn't say anything. And if you wanted to be accepted you spoke Norwegian. They would even shut the radio off because it was Canadian radio. It was in English. And the guys, a lot of them, came right from Norway and they only spoke Norwegian. Or they spoke very little English. Most of them took English as an option. High school English and German. They could speak German and English, but they couldn't speak much English. And so the conversations between the guys were always in Norwegian.

DB: You could speak a few words probably.

NM: A few words but very, very few. So I didn't say much. And the humorous thing is that maybe ten years ago they had a reunion back in Norway which I went to, and there were only a few of us left then. A couple of the guys were in the flying school ahead of me . . . my flying school was number thirteen. I was F13. They were in F11 and F10, I think. These two characters both became aces in the Norwegian Air Force. It was a small group and we chatted and one guy says, "I remember you well." He said, "I can remember you because we were sure that you were a little short in the head. You never said anything and I was sure you were going to get washed out because you had to be the dumbest guy that I ever saw." He said, "You never said a word." And, of course, we laughed about it. I said, "Of course, you know the reason I didn't is because I couldn't speak Norwegian."

So anyway, the basic training was all in Norwegian. When we marched, that was done at a camp up north in northern Ontario called Vesle Skaugum, Little Woods. And Skaugum is the summer home of the king of Norway. That's what they called it. So they nicknamed this place up in northern Ontario Skaugum and that's where they took everybody. There were fifty of us, with the idea that about twenty-five of us would get through the course and become pre-flight cadets. We'd get up every day, I think, at about five o'clock and we'd line up. This was in the wintertime and it was probably thirty below in northern Ontario. We'd line up in the morning with shorts on, tennis shoes and something on, and then you'd go off running and they'd run us two, three miles one way and two, three miles another way. I thought I was going to freeze to death but never did because you were so active. So you came back and then you'd have a shower and then you put your clothes on. They had breakfast and then you lined up. Around eight o'clock you'd line up with a full helmet and a backpack and a rifle on skis. I had never been on skis.

You'd line up with a full pack on and a helmet on your head and the rifle on your back. Each one of us had been assigned a rifle that we had to polish almost every night, and bayonets as well. And we polished the bayonet. We would go off on skis through the woods. Skiing on skis. When you fell down, which I did a lot of the time, the rifle would hit you in the back of the head and almost knock you out, knock off your helmet. It was a hell of a time. Anyway, in my class there were three or four of us who could not ski and the rest of them were Norwegians. They were all Norwegians except me. All Norwegian citizens. I remember it was just a terrible time. We had a sergeant whose name was Kattetret. Anyway, he brought up the rear and the camp commander would lead the parade and we'd go through the woods. It was beautiful. Just beautiful. But just to stay in the ski track took all the effort that I had. And we would fall down.

There were three of us. One guy became my good friend later, one of my best buddies in the Air Force. Arne Gordon Wesley was his name. He was a junior in law school at Harvard. His parents had been sugar plantation experts. They lived in the Philippines. He was born in the Philippines. His next door neighbor was General MacArthur, who lived in the Philippines and had a big sugar plantation. So Arne Gordon's dad knew MacArthur well because he'd advise him what to do with his sugar plantation. And then Eisenhower came. He worked for MacArthur at the time. So they knew Ike and MacArthur very well – the Wesley family did. But Arne Gordon couldn't ski any more than I could and we would be falling down and getting up and we had to keep going.

So the guys would be skiing for an hour and a half and then they'd stop. Usually at a lake or on the side of a lake and somebody would drill down through the ice and get water and they'd make coffee. They'd cook the coffee and then they had maybe a biscuit or something and they gave you the coffee and then away they'd go again. Well, we, bringing up the rear, we'd see the guys and we'd just barely catch up to them when they'd go again. So we'd have our coffee and a biscuit and we didn't have any time off. They were off for maybe twenty minutes. And this would go on and on. I think we did that for like two or three weeks.

I remember one of the guys was about twenty years older than the average. He was in this pre-flight training and he got pneumonia and died. He died while we were in pre-flight and they had an investigation and decided that he had been . . . we had all been treated too harshly as far as weather and conditions and so forth. So they were a little easier on us after that. But, once we got lost. We were out in a snowstorm. I'll never forget. By then they were skiing in this snowstorm and Arne Gordon and I stayed up with the group. We were exhausted. We had started in the morning. We skied all afternoon and now we're probably . . . I'm not sure how late in the day, but it was about six to eight o'clock at night. In the dark. No lights. I think they had a flashlight up front and the guys thought they knew where they were but they did not and they got lost in the woods. In northern Ontario.

Well, eventually they sent out an airplane. The camp knew that we were due back and when we didn't show up they called down to the airport and they sent out an airplane and he flew up over the area and the leaders had a Very Pistol. So they shot off a Very pistol . . . flares . . . and so they found us. Where we were. And whoever was flying then radioed to the people on the ground and they sent out a party and they found us. I don't remember how late it was - what time of the night. But it was like seven or eight and we were totally exhausted. Just totally exhausted. The commander of the Norwegian Air Force training in Norway in Toronto was named Ole Reistad, and Ole had been an Olympic skier in Norway. He was about fifty years old. Blonde. Handsome guy. He was also a pilot. Ole was the chief of the Air Force Training Command and Ole was an expert skier. He had been an Olympic skier. He skied to where we were and found us and brought some food and things.

It was quite a ways back to the camp and they decided that Arne Gordon and I and the sergeant, Kattetret, couldn't make it back. We were too exhausted. So they found a cabin and we broke into the cabin. They started a fire and we went to bed in the cabin. They had left a bottle of whiskey and chocolate bars. That's what they brought the guys. I think that was the first time I'd ever had a glass of whiskey. But I remember eating the candy bars and . . . I didn't drink at all. For no other reason other than I guess I'd never had any money to buy it and even though my dad worked for Gluek's Brewery I knew it wasn't a good thing to do. So I didn't . . . but I had a big glass of whiskey because we were so cold. We were absolutely chilled to the bone. We slept with blankets and everything on us with a fire going and we stayed there that night and then in the morning we got back to camp. But that was quite an experience to be lost in the woods in northern Ontario. We made it. But we really thought we'd probably die out there in the woods because it was so cold and we were so exhausted. We couldn't ski anymore. We could hardly walk.

DB: Now, this is pre-flight training. Do you think this was part of a weeding out process?

NM: Oh, it was. Yes. It was a part of the weeding out. I think eventually they got it down to . . . I think like thirty, thirty-five of us. There were about fifteen guys who were eliminated. I'm not sure but it seems to me that about fifteen . . . we wound up with about thirty-five that then went on to pre-flight. Then during the pre-flight thing, ground school, another ten were weeded out. All of our ground school was in Norwegian. We had navigation, meteorology, armament, etc. We had a fifty caliber machine gun. One of our tests, one of our training things was to take a fifty caliber machine gun apart and put it together with your eyes closed. I can still remember that. The smallest piece on this fifty caliber machine gun had the longest name. Rear sear retainer keeper and pin. I can't tell you why I remember that. But rear sear retainer keeper and pin. It was a piece about that big.

DB: About an inch.

NM: And you had to know the name of every piece and you had to be able to put it together in the dark.

DB: You had to learn it in English.

NM: And you had to learn it in English. Yes.

DB: That was tougher for the Norwegian guys then.

NM: Yes. The guy that taught it was Norwegian but his learning with the fifty-caliber machine gun was all . . . I think it was made in the States and he had to use the English names. They didn't have Norwegian names. Thank God. And the same with meteorology. Morse Code. We took Morse Code. Navigation. Military and some basic meteorology courses. It was a pretty tough course.

DB: A tough course aside from the fact that you were learning Norwegian.

NM: Oh, yes. Right.

DB: It must have been a huge hurdle to overcome.

NM: Well, what I would do is just . . . I probably started thinking in Norwegian after about three months. I mean this basic training helped a lot because all I heard was Norwegian, and I learned a lot of it. So conversations I had no problem with understanding. Then they got into the technical things. A lot of the things were named in English, which helped me a lot. Then I would take the translation and learn. I studied every night to learn what I was supposed to have been taught during the day. At the end of the week every Friday we had a test. If I remember correctly, it was either Friday or Saturday that we had the test. We only had one day off a week on Sunday. It was probably every Saturday morning that we had a test.

There was a rule that if you failed two or three classes, two or three courses, you were out. Well, many times I was close to elimination. They kept everybody's score and I would be very close to the bottom as far as scores. But I never made the washout list. Although, Morse Code was tough

for me. Although it was in English. So I'd go up to the hall where they had a machine and take Morse Code. Once in a while we had a guy who was in our class who had been in the Norwegian Navy, and he had been a radio operator. So Morse Code was easy for him. I mean he could send thirty words a minute. I started out with four or five words a minute. Well, one time he was up there and I think it was a Saturday night and we talked. Because he was an officer we had never conferred or had a discussion before. But that night we got talking and then he helped me with my Morse Code and so I got to be very proficient in Morse Code. Well, the end of that week we had a test in Morse Code and I took it and I knew had really creamed it. Well, the grades came out the next day and I had failed. I couldn't believe it. But then I saw that my buddy, who is the radio operator, had failed also. How can this be? So when he found out that he had failed he went . . . being an officer he went to whoever was in charge and protested and said there's something wrong. Well, the guy that had graded our papers had somehow moved the paper off one notch or so and so it turned out that he was in first place and I was in second place. We had just reversed the courses. That was a scary time because I thought it meant that I was going to be out. But anyway, I learned Morse Code and I still have some of the books. There's a navigation book that I have and I think it says something about high altitude navigation. Like at about twenty thousand feet there is no weather. We didn't know anything about what was above twenty thousand feet. There's no weather up there. [Chuckles] And a lot of other things that were really ridiculous.

DB: Now, a lot of the course work and the books you had were British or Canadian?

NM: Yes. Right.

DB: But you didn't have any British or Canadian instructors.

NM: No. They were all . . . pre-flight was all in Norwegian. Then when we got into flight training we flew AT-6s or they called them North American Harvards. No. This is a little bit beyond. Initially, we flew Fairchild Trainers built by an American company. This was before we got our wings. We flew Fairchilds. They had a picture of the Fairchild, and on each side of the Fairchild would be a state and Minnesota was on aircraft number thirteen. The money that Norwegians in Minnesota had given to Little Norway bought that airplane so they put Minnesota on the side. They had Michigan and Wisconsin and Washington and Illinois. They had the name of the state that bought the airplane for the Air Force on the side. That was kind of fun because I enjoyed flying. I always said number thirteen was my lucky number. I soloed in aircraft number thirteen which was named for Minnesota.

The actual flight training. I remember my first flight. The guy took me up and he did all kinds of spins and loops. The first time I'd ever been in an airplane and did I get sick. We were in the clouds and he said, "How do you feel?" I think I felt okay and we came out of the clouds and here we're upside down. I didn't know it. But I got so sick. I took my helmet off and I remember upchucked in the helmet and got down. A lot of guys got sick. But I don't think anybody got as sick as I did and I didn't dare complain or say that I was sick. Although he knew I was sick. He could probably smell it. Why he did it I don't know, but one of his purposes was to see if he could get you sick, I guess. Maybe some of the guys might have been overconfident or something. I don't know. But he really got me sick. [Chuckles]

We took our flight training from Norwegian instructors. My instructor was a guy named Semonson who later became a pilot with SAS and I met him a couple times after the war. He was a Spitfire pilot. Most of the instructors at Little Norway had been in the war the previous year, had been Spitfire pilots in the Norwegian Air Force and came back. Some of them had been pilots before the war but most of them, I think, had been trained at Little Norway and now they were on a sort of second tour or they were picked as instructors. During that time they weeded some of the Cadets out. I don't remember how many guys were weeded out. From there, for our advanced training, we went to a Canadian camp. That was Camp Borden in Ontario. At Camp Borden we had Norwegian and Canadian instructors. Well, it turned out there were more Norwegian students than there were instructors and so there were two or three of us that were assigned to others. Probably because of my English I was assigned to a Canadian instructor. I had a Canadian instructor whose name was May. He was my instructor all the way through. Lucky for me, I guess, because there was no language problem. We flew North American Harvards, or AT-6s. The Navy called them SNJs. They built more of those airplanes than any other training airplane in the Second World War. More SNJs. They're still flying around. So that's what I got my wings on. The AT-6.

Back at the early part of my training, just about the time that I had completed the basic training up in northern Ontario, I think I mentioned, it was called Vesle Skaugum. When I finished my training up at Vesle Skaugum and was going to go into the pre-flight, the word came that I was to go down to Toronto and see Ole Reistad who was the guy that found us when we were lost on that stormy night skiing. Ole Reistad was the chief of the Air Force Training and so the only time one would think that you would have to see him is you were all through. So I went to Toronto and saw Ole Reistad. I came in and he said that I'd made it through the basic training and I was about to enter pre-flight. He said, more or less, "We would like to have you just pack your suitcase and go back to Minneapolis." I remember being hurt and surprised and wondered, "Why? What did I do?"

Well, I hadn't done anything wrong but he said, "You know, as an American we have no control over you." I was the only American at the time. I was the first American to get Norwegian wings. "We have no control over you." He said, "You could stay here and get thirty, forty hours of training. You got your wings after about a hundred and fifty hours." I could pack my bag up and go back to the States and if you had a hundred hours of aviation flying you could get a job with an airline or you could join the Air Force and become an officer immediately because it was the initial training that was the tough part. And he said, "We need all the pilots that we can get, and you're taking a spot away from one of our Norwegian boys, and we just can't afford that." He was a real nice guy, and had been to Minneapolis. In fact, he had been to Minneapolis raising money for this cause and had visited a club called Torske Club, which I'm a member of now. The old, old timers remember Ole Reistad coming to Minneapolis and raising money in 1941-1942. And a lot of the guys here gave a lot of money and that's where they got that Minnesota airplane. So he was sympathetic but, you know, that's what he told me. Somehow I told him that I would . . . I promised him that I would stay. No matter what happened I would stay until the end of the war. If I should make it.

DB: In your enlistment contract, there was no stipulation that you had to stay. You could leave?

NM: No. Well, if you were Norwegian, then you were in the service and that was it. And I was a little different being American. They had never had to deal with that before.

DB: A new category.

NM: New category. Yes. They had never really encountered that before.

DB: So did you have to sign a document or something, swearing that you'd stay?

NM: No. Just a conversation with Ole Reistad. I promised him that I would stay and so then he permitted me to stay. I went through my basic training, my pre-flight and then eventually my flight training and I got my wings. I think there were maybe twenty-two or twenty-five guys who got their wings. Then we went back to Vesle Skaugum, this place up in northern Ontario, for pre-overseas. We had about two weeks indoctrination up there before we went overseas. We were to be fighter pilots, flying Spitfires.

DB: That's what I was going to ask. Had they targeted you for certain type of aircraft?

NM: Yes. We were all targeted for Spitfires. The Norwegians had two Spitfire squadrons, PBY squadron and then they had units in different airplanes. But anyway, I was going to be a Spitfire pilot, fighter pilot. Just before - while I was up there - I don't know if you ever remember Sonja Henie. Sonja Henie was the Norwegian Olympic ice skater. She made *Sun Valley Serenade*, the movie. Anyway, Sonja Henie came to Little Norway and came up to Vesle Skaugum and spent about a week there with us. I was there at the time. I have some pictures of her with our group.

Just about halfway through the two-week period, the word came that I was to go down and see Ole Reistad again in Toronto. Well, this was a hundred and thirty miles away and so I got on a train and went down to see Ole Reistad. Again, the only time you were usually called in to see him was when you were all through. Well, anyway, he congratulated me on the fact that I got through and that I made it and he said that I had kept my promise and stayed. Would I do him a favor? He had done me a favor by letting me stay. Would I do him a favor now because the next two classes F14 and F15 most of the guys were directly from Norway and going into advanced training. The training was going to be in English and they were having a terrible time in ground school. The word had come up that they were really going to have a tough time in advanced training. So he asked if I would stay, because at this time I could speak Norwegian very well. I wasn't real fluent but I could read it, I could speak it and I could write a little bit of it. He asked me to stay and help these next two classes. So I did, and as a result of that, when I finished I got a chance to pick the kind of airplane that I flew. So I was fortunate in doing that. I know that I saved my tail because about half of my guys were shot down in the next year, year and a half, flying Spitfires. I felt very fortunate in being able to do that. So he really did me a big favor.

After the war was over, back in Norway, the general in charge of the Air Force was jealous of Ole Reistad because Reistad was so popular with the men. He assigned Ole Reistad to a godforsaken airport in northern Norway, Bardufoss, to be the CO [Commanding Officer] of the base. They had a party for Ole Reistad and it was broadcast on the radio and I spoke at that party. I was already slated to come home to the States but I spoke at the party telling what a great man

Ole Reistad was and that to send him to Bardufoss was a travesty of justice. The general was there and of course you wouldn't be able to say that if you were going to remain in the Air Force. But I did and I got a lot of accolades from people who agreed. Everybody agreed. This was a terrible thing to do. Well, he was killed up there because this airport was an airport surrounded by mountains and it was very treacherous flying. I don't remember how it happened, but Ole Reistad was killed up at Bardufoss. But he did me a favor and allowed me to stay and become an instructor. Of course this had a great influence on my later career with the airline because I knew I could instruct. I was an instructor for Northwest for almost twenty-five years.

DB: So now this decision came, what? Mid-1943? Something like that?

NM: Yes.

DB: Took about a year to get to that point.

NM: Right.

DB: And how long were you instructing then?

NM: Oh, let's see. Probably about three months.

DB: That was pretty good duty, I suppose.

NM: It was very good duty. Yes.

DB: Did it give you more flight hours too?

NM: It gave me more hours of experience and I got to be just more experienced and had more confidence. Thinking back, it was just amazing I didn't kill myself. Not at that time, but probably earlier. Because what I knew then was just nothing compared to what you have to . . . or you should know. So we were lucky to get through.

DB: Did you actually ever fly a Spitfire? You never . . .

NM: No. Never did.

DB: Never got to that point. So you just went right to the PBYs then.

NM: When I got overseas I got checked out. I chose multi-engine airplanes. So I was checked out in multi-engine airplanes in England and then went to Ireland and checked out in the PBY in a little place called Killidies in northern Ireland. That's where I got proficient in the flying boat. The PBY was a boat. Some had wheels but we didn't have wheels on the airplanes that we flew. We had floats under each wing.

DB: So you had to land in the water.

NM: We landed on the water. Had to land on the water. That's right. Because it was a seaplane per se.

DB: And what was that experience landing in the water?

NM: You know, it was different because you think you know how high you are and you really don't. At least at the beginning. Eventually, I got proficient enough to do the job and be accepted. That was good duty.

DB: So this was about the start of 1944 now when you're starting . . . when you're proficient and qualified in PBYS?

NM: Roughly, I think. That I remember.

DB: So you come out of that training and you're assigned to a squadron?

NM: I was assigned to 333 Squadron in Scotland.

I can't really remember when I met Bernt Balchen. It was shortly after . . . or before I got on the 333 Squadron. Bernt Balchen was . . . I always said he was Norway's Lindbergh. He was that kind of a guy. He was an outstanding pilot and I could talk about an hour and a half about Bernt Balchen alone because he was such an amazing guy. He was born in a little town in southwest Norway. His father was a country doctor. He had a sister. Eventually, his parents got a divorce and as a very young man he used to go out and live in the woods, or he would survive in the woods, let's say. He loved the woods, loved nature. He was a very, very intelligent guy. I don't think he ever went to college, but he had prepared to be a wrestler in high school. A Norwegian wrestler. A boxer. He joined the French Foreign Legion as a very young guy. I think about seventeen, eighteen. He wound up fighting for the Norwegians, but he also joined the Finns and fought against the Russians.

Bernt Balchen was born in 1899 in a little town in Norway. One of his dad's best friends was Roald Amundsen, who was a Norwegian explorer. Amundsen would come and visit his dad when Balchen was just a little boy. Bernt would tell Amundsen that some day he wanted to be a famous explorer like Amundsen was. Not really knowing what he was going to do, of course. But in 1925, Amundsen was going to fly over the North Pole and Balchen was twenty-seven years old then and was an Air Force pilot. Amundsen was going to fly over the North Pole. The airplane went down and they set up a mission to go find him and Balchen joined that group to go to find Amundsen. Well, they did find him. Balchen didn't find him but they did find him and he was okay.

Then, in 1926, they decided Amundsen was going to fly over the North Pole in a dirigible, and so he picked Balchen to be part of the group because of his allegiance to his dad. Also, that he knew this young guy was quite a savvy man. So he picked Balchen to join his group and they went to Spitsbergen, which is a godforsaken spot northwest of Norway on the road to the North Pole. It's called Svalbard in Norwegian. They went to Spitsbergen and while they were at Spitsbergen with Amundsen, getting the dirigible ready, Admiral Byrd, the American admiral,

came into Spitsbergen and unloaded a Ford Trimotor named the Josephine. They brought the airplane onto the land and they were preparing to take off and fly over the North Pole. Well, as they were getting ready, Balchen saw the skis that they had on this airplane and he let it be known that they would never be able to take off with those skis. Somehow the word got to Byrd that this Norwegian says that he's not going to be able to make it, you know, and Byrd, being a very egotistical guy, thought who the hell is he? What does he know? The pilot on his airplane was Floyd Bennett. New York Floyd Bennett Airport is named after Floyd Bennett, who was an early American pilot. Byrd was not a pilot. He was a navigator. And so on their first attempt to take off they stopped before they crashed, they didn't get off and they would have crashed had they continued. It was discovered somehow that the skis were no good.

Well, they knew that this Norwegian had said that you're not going to get off with those skies. So they got a hold of Amundsen and asked him if they could use this Norwegian who says that he can make some skis for them to get off. They got a hold of Bernt Balchen and he took a couple of large wooden oars and crafted a couple of skis that they used and he told them what kind of wax and what time of the day and everything to use to get off the ground. Byrd and Floyd Bennett were able to get off. They got off, flew over the North Pole, came back, landed. So Balchen was a big part of that operation. Byrd and Floyd Bennett went back to the States and they had ticker tape parades and were invited to the White House and he became a national hero because he was the first man to fly over the North Pole.

When they came back with the airplane, Balchen was a very curious guy. He was always analyzing everything. He got to thinking about the time that they were gone and the distance. He was a navigator himself. The distance from where they were to where they had to go. He was trying to figure out how much speed they had to have had. Then he got checking on the fuel. Not to check up on them, but he was just interested in finding out how much fuel they had before they left, and how much fuel they had when they came back. He figured out they couldn't have gotten to the Pole. No way. They would have had to have a thirty-five knot tailwind both ways and that was not possible because that particular day the weather was such that it just wasn't there. So he knew that they didn't get over the Pole, even though Byrd said they did. I'm jumping ahead but Floyd Bennett later became a good friend of Balchen's and Floyd Bennett told Balchen that they did not get over the Pole. That he didn't think they were over it. But he was flying the airplane and Byrd said, "Oh yes, we're there."

DB: He was navigating.

NM: He's the navigator. Yes. "We're there. So circle around and go home." Well, anyway, that was 1925. In 1927, Byrd decides that he's going to go across the Atlantic in the Josephine Trimotor airplane. They were in New York getting the airplane ready to fly across the Atlantic, and because of Balchen's help he asked Balchen to come along and fly as a copilot on that trip. Byrd would be the navigator. They were in New York getting the airplane ready when somebody else by the name of Lindbergh came along. Lindbergh and Balchen were good friends. Got to know each other very well. Balchen was there the night that Lindy took off. He even asked him . . . he told me that he asked him, "What you got in the bag?" He said he had some sandwiches in the bag. So that was it. He was there that wet, rainy night when he took off. They made it across, of course. The story of Lindbergh is an amazing story.

Balchen said they were disappointed that they didn't beat Lindbergh but Byrd continued to be not quite ready. Well, they got the airplane ready and he was finally ready to make the trip. I think it was two or three weeks after that, or maybe it was a month. Anyway, they took off and they were going to go to Paris and they would be the first multi-engine to cross the Atlantic. Balchen was the copilot and they made it out okay. They were out over the Atlantic and they got into some clouds. Anyway, Bernt had to go to the toilet. Went to the can. They had a can back in the cabin and he was back there relieving himself when suddenly he felt G forces. He could hardly move his legs. He said, "My God, we're in a spin." He said he doesn't think he even got his pants up and he didn't remember. But he got up and got back in the cockpit and they were in a spin. He gets into the seat and the pilot on this trip . . . because Floyd Bennett has broken a leg or an arm, he was not the pilot. Byrd had selected a guy by the name of O'Costa who was an Italian pilot and O'Costa was the pilot on this airplane. But he didn't know how to fly instruments. So Balchen took control of the airplane, got it flying again, climbed up, and he sat there for the next . . . I forget how many hours. Seventeen hours or something like that. He didn't get out of the seat because he didn't trust this guy. They got to France. Saw when they crossed the coast. It was still light enough so that they could see the coastline. They got over to Paris. It was dark and the weather was zero zero. No way could you land. Well, they circled what they knew of Paris and they were running low on fuel and so Balchen said the only thing they can do is go back and see if they can find the coast and ditch. Byrd had to agree. That was the only thing. So they got back and he kept going down until he finally . . . he found the coast and he ditched in the water just off the rocky coast and everybody . . . of course the airplane was destroyed more or less. Everyone lived. They got off the airplane and were taken ashore and once again Byrd was the hero because he had crossed the Atlantic.

Well, in 1928, Byrd decides to go to the South Pole, and on this trip he decides that Balchen is going to be the pilot. So Balchen is picked by Byrd to go with him in 1928 to the South Pole and they were going to be there for two years. Which they did. On this trip, the second in command - of course Byrd was the commander - the second in command was a guy named Larry Gould. Larry Gould later became president of Carleton College and happened to be at Carleton when I was at St. Olaf. Between 1948 and 1952 I was at St. Olaf and Larry Gould was the president of Carleton.

Anyway, they spent two years at the South Pole and the stories of Byrd were numerous. He became a real nut case, and he doubted everybody. For the last six months he was there, Byrd would take the guys out one at a time for a walk and he'd say, "Now, you're my best friend. What are they saying about me? You tell me what they're saying about me and I'll protect you or I'll do this or that for you." He lived by himself, more or less, in a place and everybody knew that he was going off his rocker. He was sort of a spit and polish guy. He wanted you to be dressed even at the South Pole. Like you were in the military. Well, Balchen was the pilot and Larry Gould was the second in command. They became very, very good, close friends. They spent these two years together and they thought the world of each other.

Gould told me when I was at St. Olaf, when I got to know him, that by the time the two years were up the men who were at the South Pole with Gould and Balchen and Byrd all detested Byrd. Just detested him because he was so mean and so mean spirited. I don't know what the word is, but he really had gone off his rocker. And they loved Balchen because he was the kind

of guy that whatever the task was he would say okay, let's do it. He was a mechanical genius. He was just a great guy in every way and being as big and strong as he was he could do things that other guys couldn't. So everybody loved him and he really ran the camp and did the job and then they came back to the States from the South Pole and they again had a ticker tape in New York on Fifth Avenue. And they went on to Washington and they were given all kinds of medals. Invited to the White House by President Hoover. Everybody except Balchen.

Byrd made sure that Balchen was not invited to the White House because by now - and I don't know who told him - but anyway, Byrd had figured out that Balchen knew that he didn't get over the North Pole. He probably figured that as soon as he really understood Balchen, he'd know that he would find out because he was so curious about everything. He was just a curious, interested, intelligent guy. Balchen's visa to be in the United States was such that he had agreed not to leave the country without permission, and he had left the country without permission. That is, he had gone with Byrd to the South Pole. Byrd got a hold of the immigration people and they issued a deportation order to Balchen. He was to be kicked out of the United States. Just totally ridiculous. So, at the time, it came out what was going on and to Balchen's rescue came a guy by the name of Henrik Shipstead, who was a senator from Minnesota. Senator Shipstead and the representative from New York, whose name was Fiorello LaGuardia, went to Congress, or whoever they had to talk to, and said this is a travesty of justice. So that order to have Balchen deported was removed and Balchen became a citizen, a full time citizen of the U.S. as a result of that whole operation.

I think it was in 1930 that he spent the weekend with the governor of New York who happened to be [Franklin] Delano Roosevelt at Hyde Park and they were talking about . . . Roosevelt was intrigued by Balchen and they were talking about someday having trans-Atlantic routes between Europe and the United States. I mean Balchen knew all these people and all these people realized what a quality guy he was. He was just an unbelievable guy.

DB: And so all of a sudden in 1944 he's in your squadron or you're in his squadron.

NM: Well, he's our CO.

DB: Yes.

NM: In the early part of the war, General Hap Arnold, who was the American general in charge of the Air Force, couldn't get fighter airplanes from Canada to England. They put them on a ship but that takes a long time. They'd like to fly them over but they can't. So they needed a couple of airbases, one in Greenland and one in Iceland. At least those two. And so Balchen, being the most knowledgeable man about navigation in the northern area, was assigned to that by Hap Arnold. He brought him into the Air Force. Made him a colonel. I think he was a colonel. Or maybe made him a major right at the beginning. Anyway, he went up and he established these airbases in Greenland and Iceland and then later, near the end of the war, he was in charge of the OSS operation out of England. I got to know him at that time. He was a Norwegian in the American Air Force. He was a colonel. And I was a Norwegian-American. I was an American in the Norwegian Air Force. He became my CO.

We hit it off, you could say, almost immediately. I had heard a lot about the guy and thought the world of him. He called me “Kid”. “Come on, Kid,” he’d say. He was of course a colonel. He knew my name but he never called me anything but Kid. We just had a lot of fun together. His operation in flying into Norway with saboteurs and supplies for the underground was unbelievable. He also set up an operation where they flew out of Sweden. Flew American Air Force pilots who had crash-landed or landed in Sweden as a result of bombings and being shot down, or whatever. They were forced to land in Sweden. They were repatriated back to England through a squadron of night fighters that Balchen ran. He ran that as a kind of an underground operation.

DB: This was done illicitly. They were supposed to stay in Sweden.

NM: Yes. Right. Right. They were. So Balchen was just a fabulous guy. I’m jumping a little bit but at the end of the war he was honored by everybody. Hap Arnold came over. Right about a week or so after the war was over I went with Bernt to the American embassy in Stockholm. Bernt Balchen. There they had a ceremony and he was given the Legion of Merit, which is a very high American award. Well, Don Nyrop has the Legion of Merit. I don’t know if he told you that or not.

DB: No.

NM: Yes. He has the Legion of Merit. Balchen got the Legion of Merit at a big party at the American embassy in Stockholm and my job unofficially - and I say unofficially because no one else said I had to do it or anything - was to kind of keep my eye on Balchen to make sure that he didn’t get into trouble. He was a gregarious guy. Loved people. He would drink with you until you fell down. He weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds. He was about five ten and strong as an ox. I remember one incident following this party in Stockholm. We finally got him back to the hotel. Late in the evening. Got him up to the room. He barely makes it in the room and then he lies down on the rug and that’s it. So I got his shoes off. I remember taking his tie off, his jacket off and putting blankets under him, a pillow under his head, and he slept on the floor right there. I stayed in the room and made sure that he was okay and I had a double bed. When I told the story about him sleeping on the floor guys would say, “Why did you let him sleep on the floor?” I would say, “Well, a two hundred and fifty pound bear . . . where does he sleep? Any place he wants to.” You don’t tell a guy that big and strong where to sleep. But anyway, he became a big hero to the Americans and the Norwegians and the British.

Balchen went up to Alaska after the war and established 10th Rescue where they would land on glaciers and they would rescue people who were lost in the Arctic. He established 10th Rescue. While he was up there, about 1950 I think it was, I was now working for Northwest Airlines and I would go through Anchorage and we’d get together. While he was there they flew . . . he was in the Air Force and he flew a C-54 from Anchorage up over the North Pole and they landed in Norway. So Balchen was actually the first man over the North Pole. When he was with Byrd at the South Pole they actually did take off and fly over the South Pole. He flew the airplane. So he was the first man to fly over both poles in the history of aviation. Even though the history books today say that Byrd was the first man over the North Pole. But he never got over the North Pole.

So I'd get to see Balchen in Anchorage. About that time there was a book, *Hitch Your Wagon, the Story of Bernt Balchen*, that came out about 1950-something, I think. I got a copy from him.

DB: Yes. He dedicated it to you.

NM: Yes. Dedicated it to me. "With my sincere appreciation of a well done job and with my very best wishes for the future. Bernt Balchen. April 2, 1950." Anyway, I got this book from Bernt. I'm proud to say that in this book is the story of his life and pretty much what I told you about. He knew all the great aviation heroes. Here's a photo taken when he got . . . this is the day he got his Legion of Merit in Stockholm. I was with him. The king and Crown Prince Olaf were there, too. This is the guy, Reiser Larsen, who was the general in charge of the Air Force who put my friend up in Bardufoss. In Stockholm, following this presentation, they're going to take the official picture of Balchen with his medal on. The Air Force photographer is there and Balchen says . . . I'm sitting out there and he says, "Hey Kid, come on. Get in on the picture." So I got up and I got in there.

DB: There you are.

NM: Yes. This general, Haug, says, "Who in the hell is this guy? He's not even American." See, and I'm laughing. And Balchen looks serious, but knowing him he was just enjoying it because he hated generals. He hated people who were spit and polish guys. So he got me in on the official Air Force picture. This is a picture of General Haug putting the medal on him and that's following that. That was kind of a fun thing to have.

DB: Yes. Yes. So he was your squadron commander and what kind of missions were you flying?

NM: Flying saboteurs and supplies to Norway.

DB: Coming in at night?

NM: Usually landing early in the morning. We took off at night and would land in daylight because you had to be able to see where you were going to land.

DB: Did you come into isolated fiords where there weren't any Germans?

NM: Isolated fiords. At times with the underground they knew you were coming. You didn't know where you were going when you left and then you found out. They knew you were coming. You left one engine running and whatever you had they'd come out and take it and then as soon as that airplane was gone . . . or that boat was gone, then you cranked up the engine and took off again and came back.

DB: And didn't you have to worry about Luftwaffe patrols?

NM: No, because we flew below the radar. The radar was usually not . . . I'm not sure, but I think the radar began at six hundred feet. So if you flew under six hundred feet . . . we'd come

over at two, three hundred feet sometimes. You avoided it. You used more fuel but you avoided coverage by radar.

The squadrons mission was to fly supplies and saboteurs to Norway – there were many more successes than failures on missions. One of the measurements of success was this ingredient – to erase from your memory, the entire mission – and so it remains such to this day.

Balchen would occasionally fly to Sweden and go into Norway from Sweden. Of course, he took his uniform off. And he'd be walking down the street in Oslo. During the war. Being such a big guy the OSS knew who he was and they couldn't believe who he was and that he was there. A couple of times he darned near got caught. I mean, they'd recognize him and then they would decide to get him. He would somehow get out of it. But he escaped and came back. One time we were assigned to get some material to the underground near Bergen and we also had a Gooney Bird, a DC-3. It was assigned to the base. The weather was so bad during all this time that we couldn't make any flights into the area and one day when it was near the end of the allotted time, suddenly the DC-3 wasn't there. Nobody knew where it was – what was going on. The only guy that supposedly flew the DC-3 was Balchen because he was the CO. It was just for the camp management, more or less, or squadron management. Well, he never told me how he did it, but he had rigged up a deal where he took that DC-3 and flew . . . it was close to Bergen. Flew fifty to a hundred feet off the water, all the way up there. It didn't have an autopilot. Somehow, he rigged up the controls so that they would not climb or descend and he got back and he unloaded the stuff that had to be unloaded. It went down in parachutes to the underground. We never did find out about it except we heard that this valuable stuff had been delivered and the squadron got credit for it and Balchen had done it all by himself. But he was that kind of a guy. He wouldn't ask you to do something that you wouldn't . . . and so he had tremendous admiration from everybody.

We were visited one time by a British . . . I don't know what rank he was. A vice admiral or someone like that. This was in Scotland and he was in control of the area. He was inspecting our base and so we had to line up. We had to parade and line up, supposedly in our Sunday best. Well, most of us had caps and shoes on and everything but the shoes and boots were not polished because Balchen believed you don't spend your time polishing your shoes when you can be fixing that airplane or you can be doing this or that. So that's the way he ran the camp. This general, he looks around and things are in disarray, according to him. We have this parade and he looks at our uniforms . . . terrible. No ties. Or a few ties. No polished boots and all the things that are going on. Then he talks to Balchen and he reams him up and down about how poorly the camp was being run. Well, he wasn't tuned in to what was being accomplished by this group. Balchen was born in Norway and he could speak English so that anyone could understand it, but he had a broad Norwegian brogue. So when he was talking to this British high officer, he puts on a brogue that those of us who knew him and understood him could have barely understood. Oh, he really put it on. And, of course, this British guy didn't understand a word. And they'd go back and forth and finally the British . . . they said that he threw up his hands and he said, "What a crazy Norwegian!" And he stormed out, and his last words were, "You will hear from me."

Well, anyway, I think at the time Balchen gets . . . it was something to do with Norway. But he gets in contact with King Haakon, who was the Norwegian king. Haakon was in London, and the

Norwegian government in exile was at Kingston House. That was a building in London. They were operating out of Kingston House. Balchen gets Haakon, he gets Churchill, and I don't know if he had King George at this time. But anyway, they talk about something. My memory fades as to what it was about. It had something to do with getting Allied pilots out of Sweden. And it turns out that, of course, whatever he wanted to do, that's what they did, and this admiral or vice admiral, his remarks about Balchen, how he was going to have him replaced, they just disregarded that because he was such a valuable man.

DB: You had mentioned earlier . . . before we turned the tape on . . . about some of the personalities that you served with, some of the other guys. You did talk about the guy who was a Norwegian, raised in the Philippines, and you had some other characters in your unit, too.

NM: Oh, yes.

DB: Were you the only American in the unit? Do you remember?

NM: I was the only American pilot. There were several others who were in the Air Force . . . a couple guys from Chicago. Someone from San Francisco. They were in different units of the Air Force. I'm not sure if they tried to get into the pilot training but didn't make it or they were in and were washed out. I don't remember. But I was the only American that I know of at the time, although after me I think there were some more. Not that they opened it up. They were more . . . I believe there were some other Americans. But in my pre-flight group there were five of us and we called ourselves the International Squadron. I used to have . . . one of the guys made a deal where they had the flags of the five of us represented. My best friend was Arne Gordon Wesley who was at Harvard at the time that the war broke out. His parents were sugar plantation experts who lived in the Philippines. Their next door neighbor was MacArthur. They also knew Eisenhower. That's Arne Gordon Wesley and he was either a Norwegian or a Filipino. He had dual citizenship that's how he wound up in the Norwegian Air Force. We had a Norwegian whose name was Velmar Veek, who was a Norwegian skier.

We had Stephan Ingstrom, who we called Gandhi. His parents were Norwegian missionaries in India, and he was actually born in India. The smartest guy in our whole pre-flight area. Sometime during our training it was decided that they needed a certain number of navigators instead of pilots and so they came in and Stephan was picked as a navigator because he was very smart and was so good in math. I ran into him a year later in London. When he was at Little Norway, he talked about the fact that he had never seen a woman's face except his mother's. In India they wore the veils and he had never seen a white woman's face except his mother's and his nana, or whatever they called her. All the other women in his life had worn the veil. He had never had a date. He was about twenty-two years old, or something like that. Never been out with a gal. Didn't drink. Didn't smoke. He played guitar and sang songs and they were all religious songs. As I say we called him Gandhi, but he looked like Gandhi. When I saw him about a year later in London . . . I'll never forget . . . he was living with some gal who was married and whose husband was in the Navy and he was drinking and carousing and just raising hell. Telling us about what he had missed all those years. We got a big kick out of him. Gandhi was, unfortunately, shot down off the coast of Norway about six months after I saw him last.

Another guy that we had in our group was Gregorus Olsen. We knew him by that. He was Danish. He was a big guy in stature. Strong. He was my lower bunkmate. We had bunks. Upper and lower. He was my lower bunkmate so I got to know him very well. I remember one time we had a break. Had a couple days off and he tells me that he's going to go to Hollywood and play tennis with somebody. I didn't know whether to believe him or not. I didn't know anybody that had ever been to Hollywood. But he went to Hollywood and played tennis and he was back in the allotted time. The reason I know he did it is because he showed me pictures of himself and this . . . it was a male Hollywood star at the time. But he had lots of money.

Well, it turned out after the war was over, he was a character. While we were in training, he couldn't tell his left from his right. Now, in Norwegian, left is *venstre* and right is *høyre*. So all of our commands as we were marching would be turn to the left, turn to the right, and that sort of thing. He would turn the wrong way and you could get washed out for that. Well, we wanted him to make the group so what we did is that on his left hand we'd put a "V," and then on the right we put an "H." So when he was marching and the marching sergeant would say turn left, he would look to see which one was the way he was to turn. That's the way he made it through. He got into flight training. He was a good pilot.

One thing happened. We got into night flying one night and I had made my night bounces and I was in the mess hall having tea or something at ten thirty. We heard the sirens go off and the next thing we hear is that somebody has bailed out because of a fire on his aircraft night flying. I knew that he was up flying. Well, he comes in. We waited around and sure enough, he had a big fire on his airplane and he bails out and he makes it down okay. Well, they have the investigation and they ask him about this fire. Well, in the SNG you make left hand traffic patterns. He had gone up with an instructor and they made left hand traffic patterns. Go up and take off and you make a left turn and come around and go in and land. He had made a couple rounds with an instructor. So then he goes solo. He's off and making a left turn and he comes in and I'm not sure how many take off and landings you had to make on your own but I think it was two or three. Well, about the second time around, for some reason, the wind changes a little bit and they decide to make a right hand traffic pattern. So now you take off and you turn to the right and then you turn to the right and then you turn to the right and then you turn to the right. Well, while he's in this traffic pattern . . . part of our deal was when you make a turn you look out to make sure there isn't something out there. On one of these turns he looks out and sees flame about seven feet long. A big ball of flame. Well, he's sure the airplane is on fire. So he pulls the canopy back. He climbs up, jumps out, the airplane comes down, crashes. He lands and the investigation proved that the airplane wasn't on fire. That was the exhaust stack off on the right hand side of the AT-6. He had never seen that exhaust stack which is a big ball of fire about seven feet long at night. So he bailed out. That was one of his proudest moments. We razzed him later on about being the only man who ever bailed out in the traffic pattern.

DB: He had an interesting family background, too.

NM: Oh, he had a very interesting family background. Right. After the war was over he told us that his real name was Eric Enfield. In Denmark, everybody knew Enfield was a very large, successful shipbuilder. He was Jewish. His dad had told him that if he ever was captured by the Germans he would probably be killed if his name was Enfield. So he changed his name and he

became Gregorus Olsen. But he's now Eric Enfield. After the war was over and I started flying for Northwest, I flew to Copenhagen one time and looked him up and we had fun together. At the time right after the war was over, his dad was so happy . . . they didn't know he was alive when he got home.

DB: And his father survived the occupation.

NM: His father survived. His dad bought him an airport and bought him some airplanes and he set him up in a flying school. So he had his own flying school. One of the students that he had was a young lady that he taught how to fly, and who eventually became his wife. So he got his wife and eventually he went out of the flying business and got into all kinds of ventures. Business ventures. He was on the board of directors of Ciba Geigy, which was the largest drug company in the world at the time. He also had several underwear factories in Denmark. So we kidded him. He was the largest man in ladies underwear in all of Denmark. That was one of his enterprises. But he was extremely successful. My wife and I went over and visited him and his wife and we sat around and told stories one whole night about the days in Little Norway. Unfortunately, he's no longer with us.

DB: You expressed some reluctance earlier. I'm wondering, are you okay, or would you be okay, with talking about the specifics of some of your combat missions?

NM: Well, you know, through the years several people have asked me if I would do that and I . . . it was such a terrible time that I have blocked that. I think I remember but I don't want to remember. I don't try to remember and I would rather not talk about it. I remember the day that one of my best friends, this guy Velmar Vik that I mentioned, he crashed on the airport and I went out amid a smoldering airplane and picked up pieces of his flesh and that was such a terrible time that I just don't want to bring it back. I would rather not talk about it. I remember praying to get through another day and if I did I would do something with my life that was worthwhile. So I got through okay and I'd rather not talk about it.

DB: Sure. Okay. At the end of the war you were assigned a special mission.

NM: Oh, yes. I guess the highlight of my career, you could say. When I was in Norway. I remember on July 4, 1945, the Fourth of July to me of course, being an American I still sort of celebrated inside even if I didn't outwardly celebrate, because I was in Norway and I wore a uniform that said Norway on one shoulder and had the Norwegian flag on the other. People didn't know I was American. And by then I could speak Norwegian very well. Earlier in the summer – in Norway the midsummer's day comes in the middle of the summer, the longest day of the year in other words, where practically the sun never sets or if it sets it's only for an hour or two.

DB: June 21.

NM: Yes. Every day at our base we had to have an officer of the day who was in charge of the base and he was on for about twelve hours.

DB: And your squadron had moved to Norway now.

NM: My squadron was based at Fornebu at the island . . . well, it's not an island. Fornebu is a small airport in Oslo and it was used by civilian airplanes. We had the seaplane base which was right close to the main airbase. So I was at the seaplane base at Fornebu. We had wonderful quarters built for the German Naval Air Force and that's where we lived. I was officer of the day of the midsummer's day, and then May 17 is Norwegian independence, or their Fourth of July. I was officer of the day that day. And on another occasion. And the idea was that if I promised . . . if I did it these days when no one else wanted it, then they would more than take my place down the line.

Well, on the Fourth of July, I figured I'd be off and be able to celebrate. Go to the American embassy and so forth and I get the word that my CO or squadron commander wanted to go out and do some take off and landings in our PBY and I thought, "What in the world? Why on July 4?" But anyway, I did. I don't remember how many take off and landings but that particular day I guess I was really putting them down smoothly. They got all through. He didn't tell me anything about it. He just said I want to see you do some take off and landings. So we got all through. We were taxiing back in and I was waiting for him to tell me what the story was. Well, then he said, "We have, coming up, a special mission. Two airplanes are going to fly the crown prince of Norway, Crown Prince Olaf, along with a British general, and there will be a second airplane full of press and Norwegian dignitaries." We would fly up and stop at many, many locations. Twenty-three different locations in Norway that the British general and the crown prince would visit. These were areas that had been damaged as a result of the war and were in need of help. They would be able to see first hand where the help from the Allies should be directed. So that was the purpose of the trip.

I was fairly young, and an American; the CO was under a lot of pressure to replace me with an older Norwegian. I can understand that. There was a lot of resentment at the fact that I was going to be able to be on this trip. But we took off out of Oslo and we flew up over the west coast of Norway and flew over Hammerfest, which is the most northerly city in the world, and we landed at a place called Kirkeness. That's very close to the Russian border. Seeing us off in Oslo was the crown prince's wife, Martha, and his children. He had one boy and two girls. I think the boy was about seven, eight, nine years old, and there were two girls. Of course he, Harald, the little boy, is now the king of Norway. The crown prince's father, who was the king, was King Haakon. He was Danish. His background was Danish and so he spoke Norwegian with a very Danish brogue. I don't know that you really even called it Norwegian. It was more Danish than it was Norwegian.

King Haakon saw us off and we made this eight-hour trip, landing in Kirkeness. Then we met the Russians there. The Russians were still occupying part of northern Norway at the time. But they had it arranged so that the crown prince was going to meet the Russians. At the town of Kirkeness we made an inspection. We drove around and looked at it and it was a little town. I understand it was about the size of St. Cloud, Minnesota. Maybe three thousand people, or maybe a little less at the time. Anyway, when the Nazis invaded Norway they occupied this area. The Russians invaded northern Norway and drove the Germans back. The Germans burned up everything they could as they withdrew. The Germans counteracted and drove the Russians out.

The Russians burned up everything. This happened two or three times and so the town had practically no buildings standing. I think they had one to three buildings. As we went around we saw that people lived in overturned boats and in caves in the hillside. In basements. Concrete basements with something covering it. Those were the conditions. It was just deplorable. And that was the beginning of what we saw. Then we stopped along the way at military bases every place.

The procedure at each place was about the same. We'd land on the fiord and the crown prince and the British general and then the other dignitaries would go ashore; we went ashore with them several times. They would either ride in a car or some places they didn't have a car. They would have a limousine or a Jeep. The crown prince would usually get in the open air car and people would bring flowers and they'd throw flowers. Pretty soon he was up to his ears in flowers. He'd get out and walk and people came. This trip started out to be an inspection tour of Norway to help decide what area needed the aid the most. But it really became a trip that lifted the morale of the people and today there are books written about what they call the "Crown Prince's Tour." Crown Prince Olaf was – I think he was born in Sweden. He came to Norway when he was about two years old. So he was born . . . you can say in Norway and grew up as a Norwegian and spoke Norwegian. People knew the war was over because they heard him announce it on May 7, 1945 from London, and they saw the king when he eventually came back. But Olaf came back early and a month later the king and the rest of the royal family came back.

To be able to see him and talk to him and touch him was so meaningful to the people of all these populated areas that it became a morale builder. The Norwegian government was trying to figure out how to get the Norwegians back to work in 1945. There was nothing to work for. I mean, whatever the work was . . . there was nothing to buy. People were so happy to be able to congregate and just to party. So, the summer of 1945, from June on, was just a big party time for the Norwegians and it was tough for the people to get back to work. But anyway, this trip of the crown prince was a morale builder. At each place he would give a talk about what a great day this was for him and everybody and the war was over and then we'd go on to another place and he'd do the same and gave pretty much the same talk.

I remember we had case of Scotch in our airplane and this is in a PBX. I think there were twelve bottles of Scotch in this crate that we had and that was put on for the British general. The crown prince and the British general each had a . . . they called them a batman or an assistant, an attendant who kind of looked after his personal affairs and made sure that everything was as the person wanted. They were on board and so it was a small group. We got to know them pretty well. Very well. I got to listen to the crown prince's talk so many times that by the time we got halfway through I could give his talk and I could mimic him. Because my ears were such that I could pick up the different dialects. I could hear people and know what part of the country they were from by their dialect.

One time, I remember the crown prince and the general had gone ashore and I was standing in the airplane with the blister open with our crew and the crew from the other airplane. We were having lunch or something out there. I put my foot up on the rim of the blister and I gave this speech. Just like the crown prince was giving. And everybody laughed because it was really

funny. It was so much like his voice. He had kind of a high-pitched voice and kind of a halting presentation and I had it down pretty cold.

Well, anyway, halfway through the trip . . . each day we had press along on this trip and we had a guy by the name of Öksenvad. Öksenvad was like the H. B. Keltborn of the United States. He broadcast every day from London to Norway about the war. They were not supposed to have radios in Norway, but they had a lot of radios that were hidden, concealed. So the people were able to follow the war by listening to Öksenvad. Well, Öksenvad was along on this trip as one of the news people. And every day he would call in and give his story. I supposed they had telephones then. But anyway, the press would come out at various cities and they followed our tour and knew all about us, since he wrote about each one of us in the crew. We became little celebrities in Norway at the time. Because people would read about it and they were hungry for information since the war was over.

We got to Bergen, which was the highlight of my military career, you could say. Bergen's a pretty good size city. I remember that we were going to have Sunday off. The only day that we had off. This was a Saturday night and Saturday night they were having a big banquet. The city fathers were going to have a big banquet. It may have been at the City Hall. Anyway, it held maybe two hundred people. So we got to go to all of these different banquets. Most of them, anyway. But we sat in the back. The crew sat in the back, and the head table was up front, and all the people faced them and we were behind. I remember that there were hundreds of people outside that couldn't get into the banquet. It was only the public dignitaries and some of the underground and some of the Norwegian military who were inside, and political people. Lots and lots of people outside and so the chant would be set up. They would say, "Heya, Olaf, hey, hey, hey. Ve vil yarna see po day." Which means, "Hello, Olaf. We want to see you." So the crown prince was sitting up there, but you could hear the chant even though we were in the room. I think it was on the second or third floor. The crown prince could hear the people chanting outside and so he would get up and walk to the windows, which were behind us. Out on the balcony. He'd wave to the people and they'd just go crazy. They would cheer and holler and it was so emotional for him. By the time he got up to the table again, back, he'd be crying. And fifteen minutes later, the same thing. I think he did it about three times. I don't remember for sure how many times this happened.

In front of each one of us we had about four or five glasses, and I always turned my glasses over except for water. I had water and I never had a drink. Only because I didn't drink. And most of the guys had champagne and wine and beer and what have you. Aqua Vit. Well, it turns out the waiter came by and turned a glass up for me and I didn't understand. I turned it down. No. No. Then somebody said, "You're to have some wine." I said, "What do you mean?" But they went ahead and poured the wine. I'll never forget because between the crown prince and me there were probably . . . I don't know . . . forty, fifty people if you counted each one right in line. But they kind of sat and it opened up like a V and he picked his glass up and he said, "Skoll." You know. When Norwegians "skoll" somebody, you keep your eye contact with them. Like that. You don't turn away. So he did that to me and that was the highlight of my whole career, you could say, because it was just such a meaningful time and I can't . . . still talk about it.

That was on a Saturday night. Then Sunday we were free, I think, until in the afternoon. Then we were going to have kind of a cocktail hour held by some of the local brass, big generals and what have you. It was going to be a shoes-off experience, where you took off your shoes and you sat down in this big room. They had a fireplace and lots of drinks and the crown prince was there. The general was there and everybody was there. You were . . . I didn't know what was going to go on. So you just told stories about the war and about this and about that. Well, everybody was to tell a joke. They went around. Everybody had a funny joke.

I still remember the joke that the crown prince told because it was such a humorous one. He was speaking English and he was talking about a barkeep, a guy that ran a bar, whose name was Knute. Knute was well liked by the town people and a lot of people stopped there every night for a drink. They'd stop at Knute's bar. One night in came a Swedish organ grinder. Well, Knute liked everybody except he detested Swedes and everybody knew that. He couldn't stand a Swede . . . for whatever reason. Here comes a Swedish organ grinder and he's got a monkey and the monkey jumps up on the bar and has a cup and he goes down and people are putting coins and what have you in it. Way down the end of the bar is Knute and everybody is watching. They figured oh, when this monkey gets down there, Knute's going to go just crazy. Well, the Swedish organ grinder, he moves along and the monkey moves along. They get down to Knute and Knute reaches in his pocket and he pulls out a large kroner note. I don't know how many kroner he said it was. Anyway, it was like a twenty-dollar bill. Puts it in the cup. Everybody just say, holy smokes! So the Swedish organ grinder waves his hand and out they go. They all rushed down to Knute, and they say we knew how you feel about Swedes. Why did you put that large kroner note in the cup? And he says – now, this is the crown prince speaking in English – and he says, “Vell, I yus couldn't help myself,” he said. “Even the Swedes are cute when they're little.” [Chuckles] It just brought the place down. Just brought the place down.

My joke was the story about who discovered North America. One day this ship approaches North America and it's Columbus's ship. He sees in the distance a Native American standing up on a huge rock, and he's beautifully dressed with white headgear. He's the chief. Beautifully adorned. So Columbus gets a little closer and he calls out and he says, “Christopher Columbus.” He said, “I come in peace.” No response. So they get closer and Christopher Columbus says again, “I come in peace.” No response. Well, they get very close to the shore and the chief hasn't moved an eyebrow. So Columbus tries one more. He says, “Christopher Columbus. I come in peace.” Then the first words come from this great American native. He says, “Neimen, Columbo. Er da du som kommer hit idag?” [Speaking Norwegian] This is Norwegian for saying, “Columbus, is that you that's coming here today?” Well, in Norwegian this is funnier than hell, see, because the Native American is speaking Norwegian to Columbus. So that tells you who discovered America. You get it?

DB: Yes.

NM: It went over big. Well, then they went around again and then the crown prince says to me, “I understand you can give my speech.”

DB: He'd heard about it.

NM: Somebody had told him. I thought, “Oh, no.”

DB: Crawl under the table.

NM: Yes. I wanted to crawl under the table. I felt . . . you know. But he was such a warm guy and he encouraged me so I gave about half of what I could give and he slapped his thigh and he laughed because it really did sound a little bit like him. He was a very warm guy. On the trip one time he had lost his sunglasses or misplaced them and he needed sunglasses. I had an extra pair, so I gave him my sunglasses. At the end of the trip I remember they were Raybans, and I had paid a lot for them and I wanted my sunglasses back. I asked him through his attendant. I’d like to get my sunglasses back. So, eventually I got them back and I got a little treat with that. For getting them back. A lot of people said why did you ask the crown prince for the sunglasses? Anyway, I got to know him a little bit that way.

But on this trip they took pictures of all of the areas that we visited and some of the devastation. It was just terrible. I have a book of that. Jumping ahead of the crown prince – he came to the United States I think about 1958-59. He was the king then. His dad died in the early 1950s. He was now King Olaf and I hadn’t seen him since the war. But they were going to go from Seattle to Minneapolis. The first time he was going to fly on an airplane that was not SAS. Seattle to Minneapolis. They chartered a Northwest 720, and I was supposed to fly it. I went to Washington and was interrogated and all that stuff. So I was the pilot on that trip. I went out to Seattle for the banquet. The night before they had a big banquet for him and then we brought him into Minneapolis on that trip. That was what the story was about there. After we got out of Seattle I had sent back my scrapbook of pictures of that trip that we had together and he sat there and looked at it and after just . . . we were about over Spokane and one of the flight attendants came up and she said, “Boy, you’re in trouble.” I said, “What do you mean?” She says, “The Norwegian Secret Service is madder than hell at you because the king is back there crying and looking at the book that you gave him.” So I said it was a book that . . . and I told her what the book was about. So he was quite an emotional guy and he remembered those terrible days too. We had our picture taken in Minneapolis. My wife and kids came out so they got to see him and talk to him a little bit. He was at a big banquet in downtown Minneapolis that night and we were at the banquet. So that was fun.

But anyway, one time when I went to Norway, I called his adjutant, who had been with him on this trip. He was his personal attendant. I called him and said that I was in town and I’d like to see the king, and he said, “He’s still in bed. He’s got the flu or something, but let me check.” So he came back and said, “Well, why don’t you come out and come up to the palace and he said he thinks he’ll see you at such and such a time.” So I came and went in and he said, “He’s still in bed.” So he checked and he came back and he said, “You know, he’s not going to . . . he has the flu or a cold or something and he’s not going to make it out of bed. But we’re coming to Minneapolis next, whatever it was.” They had this trip planned. He said, “We’ve got a surprise for you. You’ll be happy with the surprise.” That’s when he brought that picture. That framed picture. They were staying at the time at the Radisson . . . or was it the Nicollet? I think it was the old Radisson Hotel. Anyway, I went down and I had to go through the American FBI, Secret Service, Norwegian Secret Service. Before that the American police and I finally got into the

room and saw the crown prince and he gave me that picture. So that's pretty special for me to have that picture. But he died. Probably twenty years ago now.

He was well loved by the people. He was a very warm guy. A remarkable thing about him is that he drove his own car and would travel around Oslo. I saw him once in Trondheim. But he would travel on his own and you'd see him in the street and people knew who he was. Nobody ever bothered him. They would admire him and they'd see him and if their eyes met he would nod to them and, of course, the ladies would bow and the guys would fall down almost. But he never . . . we were just amazed by the fact that he was able to walk around and not be hampered in any way.

DB: The population respected his privacy.

NM: Really respected his privacy. Yes. I don't know if it would be that way today. I don't think it is. But this was thirty years ago. Thirty-five years ago or so that we saw him in Trondheim. He was at a flower shop there. He was opening . . . they had a music festival and we just happened to be in Norway at the time and went and saw him. Just such a warm individual. The people, the outpouring after he died . . . in front of the palace in Norway . . . it was in the wintertime and they had thousands of candles lit and they kept those lit for like a week. People came from all over to pay tribute to him. So he was a very special person.

DB: After you were done flying him around Norway, that lasted about a month, so I suppose you were done probably in August? Something like that?

NM: Well, at the end of July.

DB: July. Okay. How long did you stay in the Norwegian Air Force then after that?

NM: Well, I had a fun time. After this trip they had a military ball in Oslo. Maybe a week after the trip. And at the ball, they had a very fancy dinner and an orchestra and the crown princess, Martha, she had a list of . . . I don't know how many dances they had. Twelve, fifteen dances. Her attendant, of course, would have a list of who she was to dance with. Well, the crown prince danced with her the first time. It was supposed to do that. But he was not a good dancer and he'd rather be talking to the boys than dancing out there. Somehow, I sensed this. So he came around and I gestured in a manner could I cut in and yes. So I danced with Martha and we went around and we danced a waltz and I could do the waltz and she was just delighted.

DB: You got him off the hook.

NM: Yes. I got him off the hook and I danced with her three times that night. Just because we hit it off so well. She was a Swedish princess and she was a cousin to Queen Elizabeth. Interesting twist anyway. But she was a delightful lady and I got him off the hook. He didn't have to dance.

But I had plans at the time. Bernt Balchen was going to get me transferred to the American Air Force. Hap Arnold was a good buddy of his. He said, "I'll get you transferred to the American

Air Force.” So he had either written or called or done something in July and I was to be transferred. He thought I’d go in about a month or two. Well, they dropped the atomic bomb in August and that was the end of that. So there was no chance to transfer in. They were trying to release as many guys out of the service as they could. I think it was about in September that I then decided . . . they were starting an airline in Norway and they called it SAS. They were going to have Swedish, Norwegian and Danish pilots. Called Scandinavian Airlines System. I could have been in the top ten or whatever because of our squadron. The guys in my squadron almost all went with SAS.

But about that time I was still writing to this guy back in Minneapolis whose name was Mickey Lane. Mick and his wife had been customers of mine when I was in the meat market and because he had polio he was not in the service. Once a month he would write a letter to us and it was called *Mickey’s Missile*. Mickey would tell about everything that happened in Minneapolis. Like building something new or somebody being shot or something. And he would tell a lot of stories, and for guys who went home on leave, if they were not married, Mickey would fix them up with all kinds of pretty girls because he knew all the girls. He worked at the Northwest Bank Building in the insurance business. He was also a friend of the chief pilot of Northwest whose name was Johnny Woodhead. His family had Woodhead Motors on Lake Street, and they were the largest Ford dealer in the northwest. Anyway, Johnny Woodhead was chief pilot of Northwest and Mickey called him and said he had this friend in Norway. They were still looking for pilots at that time. So Woodhead sent me a letter saying, “If you come back to Minneapolis, I understand it’s your hometown, you can probably get a job with Northwest. We’re looking for pilots.” So I put in for my discharge as quick as I could and I got out in early December of 1945.

DB: How did you get back to the States?

NM: Came back on the *Queen Elizabeth*. Came back on the *Queen Elizabeth*, and it was her last trip. This is the first *Queen Elizabeth*, not the *QE2*.

DB: Did you have to go to England?

NM: Yes. I went to England.

DB: So the Norwegians got you to England.

NM: Went out of South Hampton, England, and wound up in St. Johns, Newfoundland and then took the train to Toronto and actually was discharged in Toronto and went from Toronto on a train back to Minneapolis. Then I went out to Northwest Airlines and applied. I was hired on a Friday and laid off on Saturday. So I had a short career with Northwest.

DB: Why was that? What happened?

NM: Well, during the night they had lost their transcontinental mail contract and they laid off seventy some pilots and I was right on the end of that. The last guy.

DB: You just picked a bad day.

NM: That was a bad day. Yes.

DB: Well, you came home and you're twenty-one years old?

NM: Yes.

DB: And you've had all these incredible experiences. You've dealt with people on the highest levels of European governments. You're a high school graduate. You've got the world in front of you. You're single. Did you think you had a lot of options? You'd had Northwest Airlines kind of slip through your fingers, you could say.

NM: Well, it did and it didn't. Being single, I really didn't need money.

DB: Were you living with your parents? Did you go home?

NM: I lived with my parents. Woodhead, the Northwest chief pilot, felt sorry that I was laid off. He knew that I was thinking about going with SAS and he was sorry that I hadn't done that. But he said, "We'll find you a job around here someplace if you want to stick around or if you want to wait until we hire pilots back again." So I opted for another job and drove the mail truck. My first job with Northwest was to drive the mail truck. They had a mail truck that went from the general office, which was on 1885 University Avenue, went from there. They stopped at the GOA which was an annex across from the Ford plant. From there over to the Minneapolis airport.

DB: What is GOA?

NM: General Office Annex. It was an annex to the GO. It was the building they used for training. Right on Ford Parkway.

DB: It was a Northwest Airlines office.

NM: Northwest Airlines office. Right. From there to the Minneapolis Airport. Then from there over to the St. Paul airport and from there to the St. Paul Post Office and from there back to the General Office. I did that maybe four times a day. I drove this beat up old station wagon, wooden wagon, and quite often I had people who, because they knew this route, would use me sort of as the company taxi. This was a beat up old station wagon that had one seat in front and two in the back and then behind that I could open the back trunk and throw in the mail sacks. I was really driving the mail from one place to another. That was an interesting time.

About that time there was a guy from the Minneapolis *Star Journal* whose name was Hjelmer Bjornson. Now, Hjelmer Bjornson's brother was the American ambassador to Iceland. Velmer Bjornson. Hjelmer Bjornson was a staff writer for the Minneapolis *Star Journal* and he was sent to Norway right after the war had ended where he interviewed people in Norway whose relatives were from the States. When he came back to Minneapolis, he was loaded with all these interviews. Well, I had these pictures of this trip with the crown prince and so after he was back here somehow we got together and we would go out and make presentations to groups. I would

show my pictures and give a little talk about my experiences and he would give us stories about his experiences. To different groups. They would then raise money and we'd send it to Norway for Norwegian relief. I think we raised a lot of money but I never kept track or knew how much.

One of the places that we visited was the St. Paul Women's Club and I remember sitting at the table and the president of the St. Paul Women's Club at the time was . . . I've forgotten her name now. An elderly Scandinavian lady, anyway. We were talking and after we gave our presentation she asked me what my plans were for my future. I told her that I was hoping to get onto Northwest Airlines and that I was now working there as a mail truck driver. She said, "Well, my son-in-law is with Northwest Airlines." I said, "Oh." She said, "Why don't you come home with me and have a cup of tea. Maybe my son-in-law will be coming home." So I don't know why I did. Her name was Floan – Mrs. Floan, whose son was the treasurer of Northwest Airlines at the time. Her daughter was married to the president of Northwest Airlines. So I'm sitting in the house having tea with this lady when her son-in-law comes home and walks into the room and I look at him. She introduces me and this is Croil Hunter. Hunter was the president of Northwest. She said I'd like to have you meet my son-in-law and I said, I *know* who Mr. Hunter is. So I stood up and shook hands.

About a week before . . . it was very embarrassing. About a week before that he was a passenger on one of my runs between the Minneapolis airport and the GO. I didn't know who he was. He was sitting there and of course at that time I'd been with the airline maybe six weeks or two months at the most. Of course I knew everything about everything. The fact that Woodhead, who had invited me to come with Northwest . . . I thought he was the greatest and he had gotten me this job as a mail truck driver. [Chuckles] So I was bragging about Johnny Woodhead. So we get back to the GO and he doesn't tell me who he is or what he does. We get to the GO and he said, "Come on. I'll buy you a cup of coffee and a roll or something like that." We had wonderful restaurant in the basement of the General Office over on University Avenue in St. Paul. The chief made fantastic caramel rolls and everybody had a caramel roll there. Anyway, I brought in the mail sacks. I said, "I'll see you in a little bit." I brought the mail sacks in, and then I went out and had a cup of coffee and a roll with this guy. We were talking there and I still didn't know who he was.

I happened to look over toward the mail room, where we had swinging doors. Bar room doors. My boss, and all the people that worked in the mail room, were looking out through that crack. And they're looking at us. I had no idea why they were looking at us. Anyway, after we have my coffee and roll I said, "Where do you work?" He says, "Upstairs." And I said "Well, they're going to teach me how to go around to the different places and pick up the mail next week or sometime. They promised to do that." He said, "Well, I'll see you then. Come on in when I run into you." So I didn't still know where I would find him. So I went back to the mail room and they said, "What did he say? What did he say?" I said, "What do you mean? What did who say?" "Mr. Hunter." I said, "You're kidding!" "No," they said. "That's Mr. Hunter. He's president of the airline." Then I was trying to think of all the things I said to him. [Chuckles]

DB: Hope you didn't say anything bad.

NM: Didn't say anything. Well, it turns out that I'm sitting there in his living room. His wife's mother lives with him and her name was Mrs. Floan. She invites me for tea and we're sitting there having tea and Croil Hunter walks in. We had a good laugh about that. He was president for probably another . . . that was 1946. He was president for another seven years and then they needed some huge changes and so he left. For six years he was president. Then they got a new president. General Harold Harris. He was there a year, and the airline was going to go to pot, and so then they got Don Nyrop, and he came in 1954.

DB: In 1945 when you were there, you were just starting out and the war had just ended. Had Northwest benefited from the war?

NM: In 1946. Yes. Oh, yes. During the war, Northwest made a tremendous amount of money because they had government contracts where you operate at cost plus ten percent. So no matter how much money you spent the contract gives you ten percent more. So the least efficient, you could say, made the most money or got the most. And Northwest was one of the leaders. Their stock was like fifty to sixty dollars a share until the end of the war. Then it went right on down. I don't know how low it got. Six, eight, nine, ten dollars, or something like that.

DB: So the lesson was that they made a lot of money during the war but they made themselves inefficient doing it.

NM: They made a lot of money during the war. Right. Yes. Croil Hunter got the job because of a good friend of his dad's . . . his name was Bill Stern, who was on the Board of Directors. Bill was president of First Bank in Fargo, North Dakota. Bill Stern knew Croil Hunter's dad, and so that's how Croil got the job. Really through one friend helping another. He became president of Northwest. Of course Don Nyrop came along about 1954.

DB: From your meeting, what happened out of your meeting in his home where you had tea with him?

NM: Oh. Nothing really. Nothing really happened about it. I'd run into him occasionally and we'd laugh about that because he knew that I hadn't known who he was at the time. Every time I saw him from then on I'd say, "Oh, I know who Mr. Hunter is."

DB: And he was forty-five, fifty years old. Something like that?

NM: Right. Yes. He got a big kick out of that. An interesting twist. I went from driving the mail truck and got a job in reservations. So I went to reservation school. I worked in operations. I worked for the guy in charge of accounting. I had lots of different jobs at Northwest.

In 1947, Northwest decided to fly to the Orient. On these trips, DC-4s that went all the way to Tokyo needed pursers. I had a passport and I was a pilot. My boss at the time was Don Hardesty, who later became the treasurer of Northwest. Hardesty told me, why don't you apply for this job as a purser? You'd make more money. I think I was making a hundred and fifty bucks a month, or not even that. Maybe a hundred. He said, the purser's job is going to pay a hundred and seventy-five. Something like that. It was pretty good pay. So I applied and I was one of the first

two pursers that Northwest had. There were two of us and we flew the initial trips from Minneapolis all the way to Tokyo when Northwest was setting up their Orient schedule. We'd fly personnel and material over and then the airplane would come back empty to Minneapolis and they would do it over again. So either myself or another guy was on these trips. We'd go maybe once a week or so. I became one of the first two pursers and then, around that time, there was an expansion. Anyway, I was called back as a copilot. I got on as a copilot, and then in 1948, I was thinking about this commitment that I made to do something with my life and I don't know that flying was the answer. Even though I enjoyed flying very much. I hadn't been to college and I really wondered, is this really what I want to do? So I decided that maybe I would take a leave of absence and go to college. I did that. I applied for a leave, and Northwest gave me a leave.

DB: Was there any kind of financial assistance from the airline?

NM: No.

DB: You're on your own.

NM: You're on your own. Yes.

DB: And because you'd been in the Norwegian military, you had no GI benefits.

NM: No. But I saved. I saved quite a bit of money, and I had the money. My parents didn't have it. So I had the money. And in those days I think it cost five hundred and seventy-five dollars a year to go to college. It was a pretty good deal. So I applied. I went down to St. Olaf a week or two before the fall of 1948 and went in and asked if I could get in. I forget who I talked to. The acceptance people. They said, "Oh, no." Someone had told me to see Dr. Granskou, who was the president of St. Olaf at the time. I guess I had said could I talk to Dr. Granskou. Anyway, I went in to see the president, who had been a medical missionary to China. A real nice guy. We got talking and I told him that I'd been in the Norwegian Air Force. Of course being a Norwegian at St. Olaf . . . I mean, you're in. So he called in the Dean of Admissions and he said we've got to find a place for this guy. So they eventually got a house off campus where I had a room, and got admitted to the class of 1948. I went down and started St. Olaf. I was the oldest freshman on the campus. Twenty-four years old.

DB: Even after the war with all the returning servicemen you were still the oldest?

NM: There were guys who were older than I was, but nobody was older as a freshman. The guys who were older had been students there one or two years and then had gone into service. They were back. There were guys . . . I don't know. I can't remember how old. But they were older than I. But I was the oldest freshman at twenty-four. I remember that. So I started in the fall of 1948. Well, then in December of 1948 I got a call from the chief pilot and he said Northwest had given me a leave of absence and he said, "I'm sorry but we have to cancel your leave." "Why?" "Well," he said, "Uncle Sam has called and Northwest is to be a prime operator in flying troops and supplies to Korea." He said, "We're being given airplanes." Like a couple from Delta, a couple from TWA, a couple from American through this process where the airlines

promise to give Uncle Sam planes for defense. So they gave the airplanes and we had to supply the pilots. They needed to expand our operation tremendously and so my leave of absence was cancelled in December of 1945. Well, we took our first semester exams in January. I was just studying for that. I took my exams and I was able to stay for that. Then I went around and saw my professors and told them what I had to do. I explained that I would be flying from Minneapolis to Tokyo and back. That I'd be gone . . . initially, when we flew to the Orient we were gone fifteen, seventeen or nineteen days on an Orient trip. But now with these extra airplanes we'd be over and back in about eight days.

DB: How many times a month would you be expected to make this trip?

NM: Once and a half. I'd be gone a maximum of twelve days a month. A couple of the professors said, "Well, why don't you try staying on? You don't have any lab courses. Try staying on." I was a sociology and business major at the time. I hadn't decided what I wanted to do. So that's what I did. I tried staying on, and because of my wanting to be at St. Olaf during the school year, I would fly all the holidays. If we had a trip leaving on Friday, I would be at St. Olaf until Friday afternoon. Then I'd drive up and jump on the airplane and go back eight days later. I had only missed five days of school. Because I was gone Saturday and Sunday, Saturday and Sunday. It worked. I stayed there as a freshman while I flew with Northwest to the Orient. Let's see. That was 1947-48, 1948-49, 1949-50, and then in 1951-52, I was a senior and things had calmed down.

DB: Korea was cranking up in 1950-51. 1952-53 was the Korean War.

NM: Well, as far as our weekly number of airplanes, Northwest was able to reduce the number of flights that they had to Korea. They had a reduction in the number and some leaves were available. When I was a senior I thought I'd like to take another leave and just stay at school. Full time on the campus. And so I was able to do that. They granted me a leave for my last year.

So I graduated with my class in June of 1952. Well, somewhere along the way . . . I think it was about January of 1952, things changed again and again they cancelled my leave, and I had to go back and fly.

DB: You're a pilot at this time.

NM: Yes.

DB: They just gave you a plane? Back in 1948 when they called you back in, did they just give you a plane? You didn't have to recertify?

NM: Oh, sure. Then I had to go back and get . . . I was copilot. You have to have three bounces in an airplane every ninety days. Otherwise you lose your qualifications.

DB: What's a bounce?

NM: Well, three take offs and landings.

DB: Okay.

NM: It can be touch and go. You can come down, touch and take off. That's one. You can do it all at one time. You have to do that once every ninety days. Otherwise you lose your qualifications.

DB: They called you back and recertified you to fly.

NM: What I would do is I would come back and do that on my own so that I didn't lose my qualifications. I didn't cost them any extra money and they appreciated that.

DB: But I mean when you first started flying with them you'd been flying PBYs for the Norwegian Air Force.

NM: Oh, yes.

DB: Then you had a couple years break. You'd driven the mail station wagon.

NM: Right. Right.

DB: But what kind of a recertification or training process did you have to go through?

NM: Then we had a couple of test flights in DC-3s and eventually I took my type rating, which is your certification to be a captain of an airplane that provides service to public. Paying public. It's called air transport rating - ATR. You get your certification as an airline pilot and you have to be certified by the FAA. So I did that on the DC-3, which was the first airplane that I flew for NWA as a captain.

DB: Was it easy to get back into flying after a couple years away?

NM: I think it was. I don't remember it being a problem.

DB: Like riding a bicycle. You just get back into it.

NM: Yes. No, it wasn't a problem. My Norwegian Air Force experience was so good – it was one of the reasons that I was a good pilot. This is going back to Bernt Balchen. When I'd fly with Balchen he would say heading, altitude, air speed. You know. Those three things. Then he would be after me all the time to make sure I would make minute corrections so that I was as close as you could be as being right on. I remember one time he said, "Do you think you could do this for four or five hours without stopping?" And I said I thought I could. He said, "Maybe we'll have to do that." Or something like that. I never was able to . . . he didn't explain what he meant. But he had a plan during the war . . . he did not reveal his plan until the war was over. He had a plan where he was going to fly a PBY and land it outside of Oslo in the snow and they were going to kidnap the chief of police, the German chief of police in Oslo, who was a really bad guy, and fly him out and take him back to England. Balchen had that in his head as something he wanted to do and he may have asked

me if I would go along and I probably would have. We maybe wouldn't have made it, but I don't know. I remember thinking about that later when he said, "Do you think you could do this for four hours?" I didn't know . . . what does he mean? But the fact that he was such a master at instrument flying meant that got a lot of experience in instrument flying.

DB: He taught you a lot.

NM: He taught me a tremendous amount. Well, when I came with the airline, I was a good instrument pilot. Northwest at that time had such a bad safety record. Don Nyrop might talk about that. They had this committee from the Civil Aeronautics Board and Nyrop was the chairman of the committee who came to Minneapolis and looked at the overall operation. They could have torn up the certificate. That would have been the end of Northwest. But they decided not to. They made positive changes. All the pilots, all the captains, had to be recertified with an FAA inspector observing. The copilots had to have a special flight. There were certain things they wanted done. We had to standardize our whole operation and I was one of the first copilots to be checked out in that deal. Eventually, they didn't require all the copilots to go through this, but they required all the captains. To get some of the captains who were a little shaky through this, my services were used because I knew what they were insisting on. We had an FAA guy ride with us and he'd be asking us about certain things. The fact that I knew what was going to happen meant that I would help the captain, not that he was deficient. But I would help him. So we did a lot of I.L.S.s. The first time we had been checked out in the I.L.S.

DB: I.L.S. is?

NM: Instrument Landing System. Or we'd do GCA approaches which is Grand Controlled Approach, where you fly the airplane and the ground controller gives flying direction. He says lower your speed, go to such and such a heading, and descend five hundred feet a minute on a certain heading. Your approach is controlled by the guy on the ground because he has you on radar. We did some of this. This is all instrument flying. And because I was very good at instruments, I got a chance to get in there and do some – I wouldn't say instructing – but some safety pilot time. That's when I was a copilot. So that helped me later to get a job as an instructor, and I eventually became an engineering pilot for Northwest.

I had a trip one time from Tokyo to Anchorage and I had Jimmy Doolittle on board. He was a great American. He was the guy that bombed Tokyo.

DB: Right.

NM: Jimmy Doolittle was on board and he had just come out of Tokyo where they had a reunion of the guys that were still around from his squadron; he was going to Washington, D.C. Well, I knew that he was on board and I thought I'd just like to see him. So during the night as we were going from Tokyo to Anchorage, about halfway through the flight, I went back. It was dark but I knew where he was sitting. I saw him. Not a very big guy. It was dark at night and I got to get up close to him and here he was awake. I apologized. I said, "I just wanted to see you." So I got down next to his seat and we talked a little bit. He asked me about my flying and I said I'd been in the Norwegian Air Force. He says, "Do you know Bernt Balchen?" [Chuckles] I said,

“Do I know Bernt Balchen!” So we talked for about five minutes and he said Bernt was his best friend. Balchen had died just the year or so before that. He said we’re going to get him his star. He died as a colonel. Many times they had put his name up to be a general and he should have made general. All of the things that he did and his responsibilities were so great at the end of the war that he should have been a general. Every time his name would come up in the committee there would be a guy that would vote it down and the guy that would vote it down was a Byrd. On his deathbed, Admiral Byrd said, “Make sure Balchen doesn’t get a star.” So to this day – this was thirty years ago now when I saw Doolittle and he said, “We’re going to get him his star.” But Doolittle died before they were ever able to get Balchen a star. So he’ll never be a general.

Balchen was born in 1898. In 1998, he had been gone for about fifteen years. I got a call from the Bernt Balchen Sons of Norway in Washington, D.C. and the president of the club said, “We’re going to have a celebration – a commemoration of his one hundredth year of birth.” He asked if it was true that I knew him. I said, “Yes.” “Would you come to Washington and would you like to attend this celebration?” “Oh,” I said, “I’d be delighted to.” So on the particular day that it was set up – Balchen’s one hundredth birthday - I flew down to Arlington Cemetery where the service was to be held and at about eleven o’clock it started. There were six generals present. There was a British general, a Norwegian general, a Swedish general and there were three American generals. There were six generals present, and they sat in a row.

Mrs. Balchen was also there, and there were other people that knew Bernt Balchen. They got up and they talked about what a great man he was and what he had contributed to the airline business and aviation generally. And they mentioned the fact that he was a pioneer in instrument navigation. Jimmy Doolittle told me that the only guy who was a better navigator than he was, and a better instrument flyer, was Bernt Balchen. So he was considered among the very, very best. Well, they had this wonderful ceremony, talking about his life and the things he had done. His tombstone is probably about eight feet tall, and the ceremony took place beside his tombstone. Right at noon overhead was a flight of jets that came and did their slow pass. Then they came by real fast in tribute to Balchen. Well, the sun came out and the sun was shining. Balchen’s tombstone is here and next to it is Byrd’s. Byrd’s is about half the size of Balchen’s and the shadow from Balchen’s tombstone made Byrd’s look like it was in the dark. These generals remarked on that.

DB: They all knew the story.

NM: It was supposed to be this way. It finally is told.

DB: Balchen got his revenge.

NM: Yes. Because everybody now knows that Byrd fabricated being over the North Pole.

That was a fun occasion. Then they had a big banquet that night in Washington. It started at about seven and was supposed to be over at ten. They had two or three guys that got up and talked who knew him in the military and one of them knew him in the Norwegian underground. But nobody really talked about what a character he was. I had talked to the president of the club.

I told him a couple things and I said I knew Balchen very well. I thought the world of him. He said, "Would you be willing to share?" So I said, "Sure." I got up and I started talking – I think I had fifteen minutes. Well, my fifteen minutes were up and they started asking questions and an hour later we were still talking about Balchen. It was way past the time when the program was supposed to be over.

Another fun time I had was when I was at St. Olaf. I just thought of it. We had ROTC at St. Olaf and Balchen was at the Pentagon in Washington. I had asked the guy in charge, the colonel in charge of ROTC at St. Olaf, would they be interested in having Balchen come down and talk to the ROTC students? He said, "Well, gosh, yes. How in the world will you ever get him?" I said, "Well, I know the guy and if I invite him, he might come." So he said, "Well, sure. They'd be delighted."

And so I called Balchen and invited him to come to St. Olaf and he said that he would. We set up the time and he flew into Minneapolis in a DC-4. Military transport. I drove up. I had a car at St. Olaf and I drove up and picked him up at the airport and brought him down to St. Olaf. Of course, I had promised Larry Gould that I'd bring him over to Larry Gould's house. I did. I'll never forget that occasion because it was so special.

We got to Larry's house at probably about ten or ten thirty. If you haven't heard of Larry Gould, I can tell you he was a very intelligent gentleman. He was a geologist and, as I said, the second in command on Byrd's trip to the South Pole. He was also president of Carleton College, a very prestigious college. He also taught geology at Carleton, and his courses were filled up first. A lot of professors from St. Olaf wanted to go over and listen to Dr. Gould. Anyway, Larry met us at the door and we walked in and Mrs. Gould was there. And without saying anything, Balchen takes his cap off, and he was all dressed in military uniform. Full colonel. He took his coat off and took his tie off, and Gould took his jacket off. He always wore a red tie. That was his trademark. And he took his red tie off and then they stepped forward and they put their arms around each other and Gould said to Balchen, he said, "You big bear." He said, "*Jeg elsker deg*," which means, "I love you" in Norwegian.

Balchen was pounding Gould on the back and saying nice things to him. Well, next they go into the living room and here on the table they had a bottle of Canadian Club, which I guess they both enjoyed very much. So they got some glasses and started pouring the Canadian Club. They offered some to me and I said no. I knew I was seeing something there that I probably shouldn't see or didn't want to remember because Gould was thought of as impeccable.

I said to Mrs. Gould, "I'll pick him up in the morning." He was going to speak at St. Olaf at convocation. "I'll pick him up in the morning." Whatever time it was. Eight thirty or nine o'clock. He was to speak at eleven or ten. So she saw me to the door and I left. When I came back the next day when I said I would, she met me and she shook her head and said, "You wouldn't believe it. Those guys were just like a couple of kids. They laughed and hollered." She said, "I finally went to sleep probably around two or three. They drank that full bottle of Canadian Club and then they had some more and they were still going until I don't know what time. But anyway," she said, "I just served them breakfast and they're both alive." [Chuckles]. So I picked Balchen up and he's had about two or three hours of sleep.

DB: Guys like that don't need sleep.

NM: I think he's half in the bag yet or something. But we go to St. Olaf and he stands up there and he's talking to all these students and professors. The Goulds came over for the address, for the ceremony, too. They were happy to be there. But that was so special to see those two guys who had spent two years at the South Pole together and how much affection they had for one another. Gould did tell me on one occasion about how crazy Admiral Byrd became and how much he resented Balchen.

DB: He was probably afraid of him.

NM: He was afraid of what he might say.

DB: Sure.

NM: And he resented the fact that all the guys thought the world of Balchen and they didn't like him. He was paranoid about that.

DB: Yes. Command insecurity.

NM: Yes.

DB: Think about the tremendous change that took place in the airline industry and the whole world, really, between 1939 and 1940 . . . starting in 1945 with the rebuilding after the war. You're coming back and you're part of the ground level of this rebuilding now and working with the airlines. Did working in the airlines, being a pilot, did this seem like it was going to be a promising career? Did you plan this was going to be your career? Did Northwest seem like it was an airline that was going to go somewhere and this was going to be a good career path for you?

NM: Well, I thought so at the time. When I finished St. Olaf in 1952, I seriously thought about entering the ministry because of my promise that I was going to do something that was worthwhile. I remember when I was a senior, I was student body president. We had what they call spiritual emphasis week where we had outstanding religious leaders from different areas come to the campus and speak. We had a fellow by the name of O.P. Kretzman. O.P. was president of Valparaiso University, and was an outstanding theologian and a great speaker, and just such a warm, wonderful guy. Because I was the student body president, and he was there for two or three days, he had a room in our dorm and I spent a lot of time with him. I told him about trying to figure out what I should do with my life. I remember him saying, "Do you really enjoy flying?" "Oh, yes. I do." He convinced me that I didn't have to leave something I really enjoyed to do something that was worthwhile to keep my promise. So that's what I did.

But at that time, 1952-1953, we were having terrible days in the airline. Croil Hunter bought the Stratocruiser. Bought ten of them. It was a huge mistake. PanAm bought some. SAS bought some. United bought some. I think United cancelled their Stratocruiser orders because it was supposed to be a high altitude, long-range airplane and it was not. They had changed the engines.

They had tremendous engine problems with it. We wound up . . . we were flying the Orient and flying to Hawaii, but some of the flights barely made it. We continued to lose engines. You had to shut the engine for some reason. Hunter also bought the Martin 202s. Most airlines bought the Convairs, which was a much better airplane. So we bought twenty-five Martin 202s and had five fatal accidents. Five accidents in about two years by Northwest. As a result of those accidents, and the result of a couple of others, the Civil Aeronautics Board decided to take a look at Northwest and shut them down or tear up their certificate. That's when they had that investigation here in 1952, I think it was. So I wasn't so sure if this is really what I wanted to do.

Well, Nyrop came in 1954, and just from the way the guy handled himself, we started getting hope. I completely forgot about doing something else. I just wanted to work for this guy. He really inspired our group. One pilot at Northwest, whose name was Paul Soderland, was a self-taught aeronautical engineer in addition to being a great pilot. When he was about twelve years old he lived in Billings, outside of Billings, Montana. He would hang around the airport and learn how to fly, and he came on Northwest very young. He was known as an excellent pilot. He was brought into our operations program. When Northwest had to do something to correct their accident prone operations, they decided they would have to standardize the operation and bring in an expert. So they brought in Paul Soderland. So his job started the same day that Don Nyrop began as president. They really clicked.

Then they brought in a guy named Dan Sowa, who was the chief meteorologist. And Sowa came up with several things that were the industry pathfinders as far as safety in meteorology. So together they created the safest operation. The first two, three, four years were kind of rocky, but then it settled down to where we had wonderful operations. No matter who you flew with you used the same standard procedure. If you were the copilot, the engineer, or the pilot, you always operated the same. Another thing. If you were in a Northwest DC-6, all of the airplanes were the same. That wasn't true at every airline. You think well, gee, all the airlines must operate that way. No. They don't. Like PanAm and some of the others we've looked at. They would have their instruments here on this airplane and it would be up here on another airplane. It would be down here on another. Its incredible how they would have a mishmash, instead of standardization. And especially with the operation in the cockpit, with the need for communication between three guys. It would depend on the captain usually, because he's the captain of the airplane, as to how you operate it. Now, at Northwest, you operated the same on every crew, the same on every airplane and the instruments would always be found in the same place. That standardization saved us from many accidents.

At one time, we had twenty-four years of accident free operation, where we did not have a single fatality. That was a result of Nyrop's operation. When he came, we had the most dilapidated fleet in the business and within about ten years he had gotten rid of all the old dilapidated airplanes. His plan was to have only American-made planes. He wouldn't buy foreign-made plane or a foreign engine. I remember one time I was in training as an instructor on a DC-4, and a British company came to town. They were selling the Viscount. That was a pretty nice new airplane. They wanted to demonstrate the Viscount to Northwest, and so Nyrop, with about twenty-five of us, went for a breakfast ride in the Viscount. They took us around and served a beautiful breakfast. It was a very nice, classy airplane. When we got back he thanked the people and said we'll consider it. I'll let you know our decision.

After they left, several of us thought that he probably was thinking about buying them. He said, how many of you guys have foreign cars? And of course, about half of the group held up their hands. They had foreign cars. He shook his head. At the time he drove a Ford, but he later went to Cadillacs. He said, "I'll only buy an American car." He said, "I might buy a foreign car, but I'll only buy American airplanes." And he talked about his experience. During the war, during the time he was on the Civil Aeronautics Board, his experience was that American aviation products were vastly superior to anything that the British or anything that the Europeans would come up with. And the same with the engines. He would only buy Pratt and Whitney engines at that time. When the DC-10 came up for possible purchase, the Lockheed 1011 came out about the same time. Almost the same performance. Same size. They almost looked alike. One was built by Lockheed. One was built by Douglas. Northwest considered either one. Both of them. Then Nyrop decided . . . it got down to a point where he said whoever can put the Pratt and Whitney engine on that airplane, I'll buy it. But neither one of them had Pratt and Whitney engines. Douglas finally relented and had to reshape the wing to put the Pratt and Whitney engine on but we bought it, and then the Japanese bought it because they saw that we bought it. There were so many things that he did that made it a safe operation. It was just amazing.

DB: How were you affiliated with Northwest when it was bought out by Checchi and those people?

NM: Oh. Thank God I had retired. I retired in 1984 and, at that time, they were negotiating. You have to retire as an airline pilot when you're sixty. So I retired in 1984. They were negotiating with Republic at the time. To merge Republic and Northwest together. Nyrop was no longer on the Board of Directors, unfortunately, for Northwest. Had he been, that merger would never have taken place. The Republic people think they rescued Northwest, and Northwest really rescued Republic because Republic had a bunch of junky airplanes. I mean they had Convairs and DC-9s and we did not have a twin engine airplane at Northwest. Nyrop wouldn't buy a twin engine airplane. One time we were talking about it and he said, "How many of you guys were fighter pilots during the war?" There were a few. He said, "Think about flying a twin engine airplane over the mountains – and think of all the mountains between Billings and Seattle. There's a lot of mountains out there. If you lose an engine," he said, "you're down to one engine with a load of passengers. I don't think you'd like that." Of course, we all thought, he's absolutely right. We wouldn't want to do that.

The reliability of the engines has vastly improved now . . . and now they go across the pond with two engines, which is scary to me yet. But he would only buy a multi-engine airplane. At least three or more. Three or four. So there were so many safety devices put into effect when he was president that it was just amazing. This merger between Republic and Northwest was taking place and then Checchi and Wilson came along. Wilson was on the Board of Directors of Northwest. When he first came on the board . . . and I forget the date . . . I think Nyrop was still chairman of the board. He was put on the board by Joe Lapensky, who was then president. Nyrop, for some reason, didn't get the right vibes with this guy Wilson. And after a while, Wilson left. Well, he left and then he went to find his buddy . . . the other scoundrel.

DB: Checchi.

NM: Checci. And told him about Northwest. They owned all their own airplanes.

DB: He got all the inside information on them.

NM: Their total debt was only a hundred million dollars. NWA owned more 747s than any other American carrier. They owned all their own airplanes. They owned property. In Tokyo, they had property that they had bought for pennies that was worth hundreds of millions of dollars. They owned it all. Paid for. They had property in Manila. Property in different places. They looked at our pension plan. I helped negotiate the pension in 1956, so I know. Our pension was over funded, you could say, and the reason it was was that at the beginning, in negotiations with Nyrop, the actuary at the time said that Northwest had a hundred thousand dollars in the pot. A hundred thousand. They knew the earnings of the individual pilots and so forth . . . and so many dollars would go in there. That was setting it up for future retirement benefits.

Well, this pot was supposed to grow at a certain rate and the assumption that that pot would grow at a certain rate . . . it was called the assumption rate . . . most airlines had set it at anywhere from five to eight percent. At Northwest, Don Nyrop said, that's pretty high. Let's set it at three and a half percent. In other words, ninety-six and a half dollars had to go into the pot if the pot is going to earn three and a half percent. To get a hundred dollars. So he put more money in the pot every year than he really had to. One year when I was on the board the IRS came along and said you're hiding money in the pension plan. It just happened that one year he was able to show that instead of the pot earning three point five minimum, in some years it earned four, five, or six percent. That year it earned three point four, which was less than it was supposed to. So he insisted that they be permitted to put more in, in anticipation of the bad years. And they allowed that.

When Checci and Wilson got looking at it there were hundreds of millions of dollars that they didn't have to put in. So they stopped putting money in the pension plan for pilots. Didn't have to for five or six years. It was fully funded. They did so many things like that. With the regular employees as well. So I think they had . . . what was it? Ninety-four cents of borrowed money. They went to the banks and said, "We want to borrow two billion dollars. We have six cents of their money for every ninety-four cents that they wanted to borrow. If you borrow this money to us we will sell you a 747 at such and such a rate. Then we will lease that airplane back from you at an interest rate that you can't afford to turn down. A high interest rate on the value of that airplane." Great. So the banks did it. They gave them all this money. They took the airline private. They sold the airplanes to banks or someplace else. So now they don't own any equipment. They sold the property. They paid off their two billion dollars loan and they each wound up with a billion or more in profit.

DB: They sold off the assets to pay off the debt for buying the company.

NM: Sold the assets to pay off themselves. So the fact that the shape that the airline is in today is so bad is a result of those terrible actions.

DB: Let's just briefly go in and we'll talk about more of the personal side of your life. We talked a lot about before the war and your life then. Let's talk a little about making a comparison now to the post-war years. You came home from the war. You lived with your parents for a few

years. Went to St. Olaf. Had a small apartment there. I think you said you lived in the dorm your senior year. While there you met the woman who would become your wife, and you're working for the airlines. Pick it up from there.

NM: Okay. We rented during our first year of marriage and we lived at Casco Point here on Lake Minnetonka. My wife loves the lake, so we stayed there a year.

DB: Rented a house?

NM: In a rented house. Yes. It was a honeymoon cottage that was built by the people that owned the big house for their daughter. It was actually like a little fish house right on the shore, and they renovated it and put in knotty pine and had a kitchen and a bedroom and a little living room with a fireplace. It was just a cozy spot. They did that for their daughter who got married. So she lived there for a year or two. I heard about it, that it was for rent, and looked at it and knew that my wife would love it. So we lived there for about a year. Then she decided to go back to the University of Minnesota and get a special teacher's license.

DB: Special education?

NM: Special education teacher, and so she did. She went to the University for that and we then rented in town, in Minneapolis, during the time that she was there. Then she became pregnant and we bought a house over on Lake Nokomis Parkway. Not on the Parkway, but right on the lake.

DB: Back in the Roosevelt neighborhood.

NM: Yes. Right. It was. So we had three kids there. We had a nice little house. Three bedroom house. We had the three kids and we had the fourth one coming up. Next to us there was a vacant lot. A couple of old University professors were living there with this vacant lot. Anyway, after much negotiation . . . it was too small to build on unless you take off the screen porch that we had on our house. Way back when the professors had sold that to this party just to avoid anybody ever building next to them. So we bought it from the professors. After they died, we bought that house and took our porch off and we put the old lot back together and built a new house. At one time I owned all three spots. We built a house with five bedrooms. Big enough for our family.

We lived there until I retired. I retired in 1984 and in 1985 all the kids were gone except my daughter, and my wife really wanted to get back out to Minnetonka. So we bought a place in Heathcoat, which is about a mile from here. She kept thinking it would be fun to be on the lake, and property was so expensive. But we found this place. It was in December. We heard it was for sale and the couple was getting a divorce. So they had to sell the house. The guy was still living in the house. We came over and looked at it and I remember looking . . . sitting here looking at the dock just like this. And here it is the middle of December. I know that ice wipes all the docks out in the winter and I thought gee, that's terrible not to take care of it. Well, this bay is called Quiet Bay, and everybody leaves their dock up. You can do that here, although you can't do it on practically any other part of the lake. The ice will wipe your docks out. So they're all out. That's one of the advantages of this bay. Plus the fact that it's just such a great location.

So we bought this then and we have been here ever since. My wife loves to garden and the gardens are getting bigger and bigger and bigger and I keep saying we've got to cut down. But she likes to garden. So we have more and more gardens. I play tennis with a group of guys. Eighteen guys. I don't know if I mentioned that the youngest is seventy-six, and the oldest is eighty-eight. What a great group of guys they are! All their doctors say, "What are you doing? Don't stop playing tennis. Keep that tennis up." So we play three times a week. It's just wonderful to be able to do that. Among them is a very interesting guy . . . he was born in Shanghai. Went to Japan when he was fairly young. Came over and eventually became a Honeywell engineer.

DB: Is he Chinese?

NM: Chinese. Honeywell engineer. The second oldest guy in our group. He's eighty-eight. Just a wonderful guy. Charming and wonderful. He might be somebody that you'd want to interview because his background and his accomplishments are fantastic. To have come to Minnesota from China and to have done what he has done. Maybe ten years ago he was one of the best tennis players in our group. He's still good. But he was a natural left hander and he got a torn rotator cuff, and they said they had to operate. He said, not at my age. I think he was seventy-five at the time. He said that's too old. So he started playing with his right hand. Well, now he plays with his right hand all the time. His favorite shot is a lob. So if you're playing up to the net he'll lob it over your head. Only he puts it right on the back line. So then you play back and now he dribbles it over the net so that you have to play it in the middle and you're lucky if you can get him. That's called a "Bart." His name is Bart. And he'll put that ball over your head and put it way on the back line time and time and time. It just drives guys crazy. He is one of the nicest guys, though. [Chuckles]

DB: Think for a minute. When you were telling me earlier about the time in the Depression and you had to go to the store with your dad and your dad couldn't get any credit anymore. Times were so tough and you were hungry and you didn't know what you were going to do. Did you ever imagine you would be sitting on Lake Minnetonka?

NM: [Chuckles] Oh! No. I had no idea. But I think that whole experience has made me – well, I'm not known as a spendthrift, even among my kids. They kind of razz me because I've got a car that's a 1994. It's twelve years old now. My wife and everybody say, "Oh, you've got to get a different car. That's an old man's car." I said, "That's right and I'm an old man." [Chuckles] But as long as it works that's all that matters to me. The important things, I think, are not money or what you have. The important things to me are my kids and their health and their well being. It's just wonderful to see.

DB: Thank you for a great interview!