

Interview with Kenneth Edwin Gummel
The Town of Chevy Chase Oral History Project
Interviewed by Bill Hudnut on November 25, 2003

BILL HUDNUT: This is Bill Hudnut and the date is November 25, 2003 and I am interviewing Kenneth Edwin Gummell, 4318 Leland Street. Mr. Gummell, you are one of our older residents in town. Tell me, do you remember what year you moved here?

KENNETH GUMMEL: 1926. My father built a house on what was then 4210 Leland Street.

BH: Is that where you live now?

KG: Yes.

BH: So you were born after he moved here?

KG: Yes.

BH: And you have lived here all your life?

KG: Well, I lived here until the war came in 1941. Then I went in the service and got out in 1945, and I got married and moved to Georgetown.

BH: Alright. Then when did you come back?

KG: 2001.

BH: 2001? So you were gone for quite a while. Where were you during that time?

KG: Well, I lived over in Oxon Hill, MD. My mother died at 104, and when my mother died, my sister took over the house. My sister was killed in an automobile accident; afterwards, I came back home.

BH: Oh, I see. Well, now going back to 1926, do you remember why your dad decided to move here?

KG: My father was in the Calvary over at Fort Myer, Virginia, and when he got out of the service he was what you called a packer. I think it was 1926, he was the first paid fireman, or one of four of the first paid firemen in Bethesda.

BH: Where was he stationed? At the corner?

KG: On Old Georgetown Road. At that time the fire department was on old Georgetown Road.

BH: Okay. And you were six years old when you moved here.

KG: No, I was born here.

BH: In Chevy Chase?

KG: Well, it was a question then in my mind whether it was called Chevy Chase or Bethesda. One side of the street, it seems to me, was Chevy Chase and one side was Bethesda, but I'm not sure of that. It was referred to, generally speaking, as Bethesda. But it could have been—Norwood Heights.

BH: Has the town changed much since then?

KG: Well, when I came back after my sister renovated the house and everything, I was lost.

BH: [Laughs] Well, probably a lot of homes in Chevy Chase had not been built yet, had they?

KG: Many of the older homes were built.

BH: They were?

KG: Yes. And Bethesda itself was nothing to speak of. The Hizer Theater, bowling alley--and a lot of people don't know it, there was a bowling alley on the corner of Wisconsin and Leland. On the west side of Leland, there was a bowling alley there. And the store on Wisconsin, between Leland and Curtis Road, was a butcher shop. Those are one of the few buildings that I remember identical to when I was a kid. 7100 Wisconsin Avenue was then an open field where we grazed horses and played baseball.

BH: It's just the same now as it was in the 1920's.

KG: Well, no. There's different stores in them. The only one that's the same is the paint store at Wisconsin and Leland. That was a paint store when I was a kid. The Offutt family lived in the large home on Leland Street.

BH: Tell me some of your early memories of Chevy Chase and Bethesda.

KG: Well, my early memories, we had horses, as many as eight at one time. We grazed horses and rode them around in the vacant lots near Wisconsin Avenue and Leland Street. The area now has a tall building on it, but then it was vacant. The lot, where the Farm Woman's Market is located, was vacant, too.

BH: Were there automobiles?

KG: Automobiles? Yes, and now and then you'd see an electric automobile, which is making a comeback. And even the milkman or the bread man came with a horse and wagon, which was dying out, but there were still a few around. The movies that I went to at the Hizer Theater still had captions as well as talkies, but they were combining—one was ending and the other beginning. I did a lot of things. I delivered newspapers, the *Washington Star*, and I think another newspaper, *The Herald Time*, I'm not sure of the name. I sold sawdust from Essinger's Lumber Mill to the butcher shops. At that time they oiled the floors, and put sawdust on them. I also made wreaths out of grapevines and sold them from the pony carts. I went around to the dumpsters and collected whiskey bottles. You may not want to hear that, but I got two cents for the half-pint bottles and a penny for the pint. And that was back in the days when the bootleggers were quite prominent.

BH: Well, yeah. That was the '20s. Prohibition. You just sold the empty bottles.

KG: Yes. Empty bottles. Yes. [Laughs]

BH: [Laughs] And where did you start school?

KG: I started at the school on Rosemary, and then I went to Leland—which was located where the Leland Center is today.

BH: When you say Rosemary you mean where the elementary school is?

KG: Elementary school. It's not the same—apparently they tore the building down.

BH: It's a different building?

KG: Yes. And at the circle was a water tower, which was also torn down. Behind the house on Leland Street was another water tower, which was demolished or burned down years ago. And then I went over to Bethesda Chevy Chase High School on East-West Highway. After I graduated in 1938, I worked at various places. A grocery store, Griffin roofing business, and a country market off of Wisconsin at Stanford Street where the telephone company is now. I worked there as a kid. Anyway the war come, and I was drafted in 1941 and served until the war ended in 1945.

BH: Tell me about your experience in the service. Where did you serve? You were in the Army?

KG: I was in the Army. I went overseas in '41 with the 34th Infantry Division. When I was overseas, I joined a group that was accepted from the volunteers to train with the British Commandos. At that time we had no name, merely training with them, and during the process of training with them the name was chosen First Ranger Battalion and I was with the First Ranger Battalion for the rest of the war.

BH: As a commando?

KG: That was our equivalent to the commandos of the British Army. It was a copy basically from the British.

BH: Did you get on European soil?

KG: I left and went over to the—the outfit organized in Great Britain from the troops that were in the civil engineering, infantry divisions. And from the volunteers, those that were accepted, went on to invade Africa, and from Africa into Sicily and Italy.

BH: So you came up with General Clark through Italy.

KG: General Clark, yes.

BH: Yeah. You didn't go with the third army across Europe with Patton?

KG: Well, Patton was in Italy—and Africa, as a matter of fact.

BH: Yeah, and then he went to Sicily, and then up. Did you ever see Montgomery?

KG: I never saw him. No, I saw Patton a couple of times.

BH: Did you ever see the desert fox? Rommell?

KG: No.

BH: Or any of his tanks?

KG: Well, I've seen many of his tanks and many of his soldiers.

BH: Who were captured?

KG: Well, some of them were dead and some were captured.

BH: And then you were mustered out in '45?

KG: Yes in 1941, just a few months before going in the service, I had worked for Western Electric. When I came back after the war I continued to work with Western Electric until my retirement.

BH: But you didn't live in Chevy Chase during those years?

KG: No.

BH: They moved you around.

KG: When I left for the war, I never came back home.

BH: Well, as you look back tell me, can you remember some of your neighbors?

KG: I remember the McGruders. I remember the Ouffits. Both of the sisters were widowed, older widowed ladies when I was a kid. I only remember one of their names, Vida. I can't remember the other one's name. A young man whose last name was Geigerson lived on 46th Street. He was probably the most prominent Maryland athlete at the University of Maryland when he left high school. He was killed during the war and his mother, to the day she died, never accepted the fact that he wasn't alive. He was, I'm sure the history of Bethesda will tell, probably the best athlete. He went on to the University of Maryland and became known in football and—what do you call it—weight--?

BH: Weight lifting? Wrestling? Discus throwing? Track and field?

KG: Yes. track and field. And I'm sure they got plaques all over B-CC High School. I'm not sure. Then I went to school with Walter Johnson's lad.

BH: Oh really. The famous Walter Johnson.

KG: No. His son. However, I did play ball with Walter Johnson.

BH: Did you?

KG: Yes, but whoop. Wait a minute. Don't get excited. [Laughter] I played with him. At the time, the donkey baseball games were popular. And once or twice a year the fire department sponsored them, and Walter Johnson would come out. He'd get on the donkey, and then they would shock the donkey, and the donkey would—you'd head for first base. But he played—but I went with his son. He had three sons to my knowledge.

Two of them went to University of Maryland. They were older than me, but Bobby Johnson was the one I went to school with.

BH: Interesting. Was he a nice fellow?

KG: Yes. Yes.

BH: He wasn't stuck up because his father was so famous?

KG: No.

BH: And the Senators played here then, didn't they?

KG: Yes. In Griffith Stadium.

BH: Griffith Stadium. Right. Tell me, do you recollect were the streets in this town paved when you lived here in the '20s and '30s, or were they dirt streets?

KG: I think they were paved. Well, many of them weren't, but the major ones—Leland and so forth, they were paved.

BH: I was thinking of Curtis, Stanford, Maple, some of the side streets.

KG: As far as I can recall they were paved as well.

BH: Okay. Interesting. But there were horses and carriages on them, and carts as well as a few automobiles.

KG: Yes.

BH: Do you remember the Chevy Chase Railroad?

KG: Well, you call it the Chevy Chase Railroad. I remember the railroad.

BH: It went downtown.

KG: The streetcars you mean?

BH: Yeah.

KG: Well I don't call that a railroad.

BH: Okay. Right. You're right. Yeah.

KG: Oh yes. The streetcars ran on Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues. It went down Connecticut Avenue from Washington into Chevy Chase Circle. No, I'm sorry to Chevy Chase Lake. There was a swimming pool at Chevy Chase Lake. I don't know if people realize there was a lake in Chevy Chase. A large lake. But this swimming pool—

BH: Where was the lake?

KG: Wisconsin—I mean Connecticut Avenue and—

BH: Beyond East-West Highway?

KG: Yes. Yes, about a mile beyond. Where Perry's is now.

BH: Perry's?

LINDA PRICE GUMMEL: TW Perry's.

BH: Oh, the lumber company.

KG: Yes, the swimming pool was on the west side of Connecticut, and the lake itself was over on the east side of Connecticut. The streetcars had to turn around there. That's as far as the streetcars went in Bethesda, I remember them very well, going into Washington. They went to Glen Echo from Washington, you know.

BH: But Chevy Chase was really a streetcar suburb, the way it got started. The houses here, many of them are very beautiful. Were they built during the '20s when you lived here?

KG: I assume they had to be built in the late 1890s and—yes. Some of them were built during the 1920s.

LPG: Were you going to tell about the cart?

KG: Well I had a couple incidents that would tie in with the history of the streetcar. I had a horse with kind of a wagon—wicker, wicker wagon. I was taking my sister and June Myers, who lived below us on Leland Street, down to Finley Circle to summer school. And on the way down I was racing a streetcar going towards the Circle. I was twelve years old I guess. Anyway, we thought we would race this streetcar, run parallel with it. And anyway, the horse decided to go across the tracks, and when it did the streetcar ran into it.

BH: And you were on top?

KG: Well, it hit the cart. My sister Cookie and the other girl got hurt. They got caught in the cowcatcher of the streetcar. That was big news around Town. Then a few years later my father bought a stagecoach. It was original stagecoach in Washington that ran from the Willard Hotel. One Christmas my father was going to take all the kids in the neighborhood around in the stagecoach for Christmas carols. So they loaded on—you could put about six inside the stagecoach, and about a dozen up on top of the stagecoach. We had a team of horses that would pull the stagecoach. On Leland Street where we live, there's a hill. When we started going off down the hill, the mothers and fathers of the children started tooting their car horns hollering and waving good-bye and when they did, it frightened the horses. The horses bolted down and the old stagecoach—the wheels were old, and they broke and it turned over. There were a few people hurt.

BH: But your dad was the stagecoach driver from the Willard Hotel out here?

KG: No. He bought the stagecoach, because it belonged before—

BH: Oh he bought the stagecoach. So he didn't run the line.

KG: No.

LPG: Kenneth's mother worked at the Willard.

BH: Your mother worked at the Willard? Back in the days of the lobbyists? That would have been in the time of Teddy Roosevelt.

KG: When people from the country were moving into Washington and getting jobs, I guess she got a job as a maid at the Willard Hotel.

BH: Well that's an interesting bit of history. The Willard's very famous. Tell me, you mentioned a couple of wrecks. What are any special events that you might remember from your days in Chevy Chase?

KG: Well, I remember the Madonna, when that statue on Wisconsin Avenue was put up. That was—you know what I'm talking about?

BH: The pioneer one?

KG: By the post office—Yes. Yes. I remember the dedication of that.

BH: Was that a big deal?

KG: Well, I don't know if it was a big deal. Everything was exciting—it seemed as big as anything you do today, but I guess it wouldn't be considered anything today.

BH: But it was then?

KG: Yes.

BH: What else do you remember? Were there any parades that you remember? Celebrations, like Fourth of July? Any competitions?

KG: No. I don't remember anything specific. Like I said, ballgames were important during that time between the fire department and Davisburg, and Bethesda and Chevy Chase.

BH: Linda mentioned that you use to play under the Air Rights building?

KG: Yes. The train—the tunnel that went under Wisconsin Avenue.

BH: Was there a train there?

KG: Yeah. The train ran—that's where they get the name Air Rights.

BH: Oh. Where did it go? From and to, the train?

KG: I don't know how far it went. As far as we were concerned, it went to Chevy Chase Lake, but where it went I couldn't tell you.

BH: Silver Spring?

KG: Oh, it went—I don't have any idea where it went.

BH: Did it go down the Crescent Trail? That was a rail—you know the bike trail and the walking trail over there.

KG: No. It went under Wisconsin Avenue, and there was an area called The Flats. I don't know if it was Bethesda Avenue, or—there was a bridge. A bridge, and it went

underneath the bridge at Wisconsin Avenue. I have no idea. But we played underneath. They had a hole dug underneath the bridge where they call Air Rights now.

BH: Was the building there? The Air Rights building?

KG: No, nothing was there. There was feed storage, a hardware store. A famous hardware store that I read eight or ten years ago it was a landmark that was torn down.

BH: Not Strosnidars?

KG: No. I can't remember the name—there was a feed store where you bought feed for horses, and—

BH: Was there any welcome home celebration when you came back from the Army and from overseas?

KG: No, because I didn't come home. I guess there was none that I knew of. There was a send off. There were only about four of us, but a small group, roughly from Wisconsin and Leland Street, had a little sendoff. I can remember I got a pen and pencil set. Most of the activities were in Washington at the President's inauguration, and the parades for the military and so forth.

BH: Well, they at least said good-bye to you before you went overseas. Were you a Private, or did you climb up through the ranks?

KG: I was a Private. I was a Corporal. I was a Sergeant. Then I went back to Corporal, then I went back to Private. I went up and down, because I lived the way I wanted to live and I didn't completely accept everything they said. Well, when you're in a combat outfit you don't always live according to the way you should since life and survival was so uncertain. But when they needed you they'd make you a higher rank. I ended up as a Tech Sergeant.

BH: Did you? Good. Well we certainly appreciate your service to the country. That was World War II?

KG: Yes.

BH: You weren't in Korea, or any of those?

KG: No. No.

BH: Tell me, when you came back did you go to the same house? Did you live in the same house that you lived in the '20s?

KG: When I came back home I must have lived at home for—I'm sure I did for a few months. And then I got married and I—

BH: That's what I mean. But you came back here a few years ago. And are you living in—

KG: Yes. Same house.

BH: And you're living in the same house that you lived in the '20s.

KG: Yes. The house is basically the same except my sister renovated the house and added to it like they're doing to so many houses now.

BH: So while you were gone, it was your sister who lived in it.

KG: No, my mother.

BH: Oh, your mother and father. Your mother?

KG: And father.

BH: Did your father build the house?

KG: Yes.

BH: So it was new when you all moved in.

KG: Yes.

BH: And so it's really been occupied by your family this whole time.

KG: And ever since.

BH: Okay. I see. So you told me a little bit about your neighbors—

LPG: You didn't tell Bill about your aunt.

BH: Oh. Who are your aunt and uncle who lived across the street?

KG: Royers. That was my mother's sister that lived across the street.

BH: Were there any improvements made to your house, or does it still--?

KG: Yes.

BH: But it doesn't look the same way it did in 1920?

KG: The front looks the same, but it was added on in the back.

BH: I see. And modernized a little bit? What was your first experience, if you can remember, of town government? Were you aware that there was a town council here? Did you ever participate in any of the elections or anything?

KG: No. No. As I said, I left when I was twenty-one. I wasn't involved in any of the elections.

BH: Were you ever involved in any—I don't think fights is the right word in the town, but disagreements over public policies, or petition drives, or anything like that?

KG: No. No. I can remember discussions on the fire department with my father from time to time. But I knew the Bogleys and the Tuckermans.

BH: Tuckerman had a street named after him. Did the Bogleys?

KG: Well, Mr. Bogley was the President of the Bank of Bethesda as I recall.

BH: What bank was that?

KG: Well, it was Bank of Bethesda at the time.

LPG: Is it Sandy Springs?

KG: Right in the heart of Bethesda at the triangle.

BH: Sure. But there was just one bank at the time?

KG: Just one bank.

BH: Where was the grocery store?

KG: Well, I worked at the DGS near the bank. There was a People's Drugstore at Wisconsin Avenue and Alavista. And the other grocery store was a Piggly Wiggly in the shopping center. Later it became a Safeway, I think.

BH: I see. But you said that the milk and the bread were delivered to your door by horse and buggy?

KG: Well, the milkman—a little history on the milkman—It was raw milk at the time, and the farm for the milk, for the dairy, was where the Bethesda Naval Hospital is today. I don't believe they owned the land. They might have been tenants on it. I'm not sure. But they ran the dairy farm.

BH: And Bladensburg's probably named after them.

KG: The Naval Hospital was a farm. And we used to have parties, you know like equivalent to a watermelon feast or whatever.

BH: Hayrides or whatever?

KG: Yes.

BH: Do you remember any Halloweens or Christmases here?

KG: Other than sticking my head down the stairways and watching my mother and father decorate the tree, I don't remember.

BH: [Laughs] Let me ask you this: Do you think people were more neighborly in those days than they are now?

KG: They were. Quite obviously because during those days I guess the reason was you needed more help from one another than you do today. You know times have changed. We go down in Virginia now to a variable area, and if you stop and have a flat tire, somebody will stop and help you. Well you have a flat tire here, you better call AAA or—you know what I mean? But when you lived in a time where you had to help one another, people were more friendly. Yes.

BH: Were there a lot of front porches where people would sit out and sort of watch the world go by?

KG: Yes. Front porches were popular. They're making a comeback now.

BH: Now there's television. Television draws people inside, and video games for the kids, other than a few cars.

KG: But we had to improvise. The bread wagon would come by. That was a horse and wagon. As I said, horse and wagon was just about it when I was a kid.

BH: Who was the milkman? Do you remember?

KG: Bladen. Mr. Bladen.

BH: He was the milkman. Okay. Yeah, I'm sorry.

KG: He delivered the milk, and he—yeah. Then you had Jewel.

LPG: You had Jewel Tea.

KG: Jewel Tea would come by and take orders for future delivery.

BH: There is a knife sharpener that still lives around.

KG: I'll come back a little bit, if I may interrupt you. Two things that you don't hear today, when heavyweight boxing or something important happened, within ten minutes you'd hear the paperboy running down the streets hollering "Extra Paper! Extra Paper! Extra Paper!" I can remember the second Dempsey-Cooney fight, and we heard it on a crystal set across the street. We didn't have a radio. We didn't have a telephone. And we didn't have a refrigerator at the time. We had an icebox. But it was so important there was an extra paper. During different seasons, you'd hear them singing "Strawberries. Strawberries." They'd go around the streets with a horse and cart or an old car selling strawberries. Then you had, seemed to me we called it an organ grinder but I may be wrong, but he had a big knife sharpener on his back and he'd walk around the streets singing a song, "Sharpen scissors, sharpen knives," whatever.

BH: Yes. What about the ice? How did you get the ice for your icebox?

KG: American Ice Company. They were up on Wisconsin Avenue, not too far from where the Bank of Bethesda was at the time. They had a truck and they'd come by. You placed a sign in the window if you wanted fifty pounds or twenty-five pounds, and they'd have blocks of ice on the truck and come over to your house to deliver.

BH: Was it horse drawn?

KG: No.

BH: It was a mechanized truck?

KG: Yeah.

BH: Did they have sawdust on the ice? Did you have to wash it off before you put it in the ice bucket?

KG: No. No.

BH: What was your favorite place when you lived here as a boy? Did you have one, or a special outdoors spot that you liked to go to play?

KG: I didn't have to go very far to find a vacant lot to play. I don't remember anything particular. I think we had a ball diamond down on Wisconsin and Leland Street where that big building is now. Yes, and you know—

BH: Wait a minute. Let me get this straight. Back in those days there were commercial operations inside the Town of Chevy Chase? It wasn't just residential?

KG: No. This was quite a large building right next to our house on Leland. And what was it? Meadow Brook they let us--?

LPG: Thornapple.

KG: Thornapple and Leland. Yes. The front of it would be on what's Thornapple now, but it joined our lot on Leland Street. The old trucks he had, the old trucks with the hard tires, you know no—no—

BH: No air.

KG: Right. Yeah.

BH: Well maybe that was property annexed into the town, but now you don't have any commercial operations inside the town.

KG: That's the only thing that I know of.

BH: I see. Were there any parks to play in inside the Town of Chevy Chase, like over by the school?

KG: On the school playground at Rosemary, and here at Leland Street. All this was open.

BH: The Leland Center is located on the site where the school that you went to was located? The middle school, or whatever you call it? Leland Junior High?

KG: Yes.

BH: Do you have any favorite memories of the town, or of an outdoor spot in the town, or something special? Were there any creeks running through the town?

KG: Well, yes. The creek ran down Leland Street across East-West Highway. We'd go down to Chevy Chase Lake as a kid. We'd catch frogs or turtles. We brought them back and sold them to people that had the ponds. Chevy Chase Lake was—there was a pavilion at Chevy Chase Lake. That was before my time, but the pavilion was still there, and it was quite a Mecca for people from Washington to ride the streetcar. We used to play up in it. It was a huge wooden structure, but it was in my father's day more than mine.

BH: I see. What did you sell a turtle for? A quarter?

KG: Not much. A nickel or—it only cost ten cents to go to the movie.

BH: Did you paint their shells?

KG: Well I raised a hundred and fifty of them.

BH: No kidding. You raised turtles?

KG: I got too many and they started to look poorly, and weren't looking very healthy, so I let them all go. I carved initials in them, and painted them, and for ten years you'd find one now and then.

BH: [Laughs] That said KEG on the top?

KG: Yes.

BH: Oh dear. What are some of your favorite places around here? Are there certain places you loved to go?

KG: I don't know of anything particular because, like I said, I had the freedom to run and go. Well I was practically born on horses, ponies. And I rode as far as Davisburg to ballgames with the fire department.

BH: The ponies were kept on your property?

KG: My father would buy and sell them, and old carriages and so forth. I remember when the stagecoach was hit by the streetcar, Art McDonald was on the radio and it was a big deal. I made money by taking the ponies around the neighborhood. Families would pay to take pictures of them with their children. That was a business too.

BH: Did you rent them out?

KG: I rented them out just for, you know, for fifty cents for an hour or whatever.

BH: How far did you ride to the ballgame?

KG: Gaithersburg.

BH: Gaithersburg. That's a pretty hefty ride.

KG: Well, yes. And in Rockville there was—it's in Davisburg now. The fairground was in Rockville. And I rode horses at the races in Rockville. That was also where the schools participated in gym class and so forth, for field events.

BH: How would you describe—this is the last question I'm going to ask you. Next to the last. How would you describe the changes that you've seen take place since you were a boy in the 1920s here in this area?

KG: To me the difference was from when I left in 1941, and then it was five or six years, maybe even seven or eight years ago when I come back here to visit my mother and my sister then living on Leland Street. To me it was like New York City. The buildings—there was no big buildings when I left.

BH: No high-rises.

KG: Three stories at the most.

BH: More houses?

KG: Stores. Like I've said feed stores, hardware stores, grocery stores and lumber yards. There were two lumber yards, one was west of Wisconsin Avenue.

BH: So was the Town of Chevy Chase more built out when you got back, or were most of the houses already in existence?

KG: When I got back from the service?

BH: No. When you came back here in 2000. A lot more houses?

KG: There's not too much room to put any houses in Chevy Chase really. But what they've done, they've torn down what would be bungalows where plumbers and mechanics lived with their families. You know, middle class income. And these houses, as we sit here now, are being destroyed or totally renovated. Some have been torn down completely. Others have been ballooned up. And I assume they pay lots of money to buy a lot with a house on it to tear it down to build a bigger one.

BH: Yeah, that's right. That's what's happening. Are you in favor of that?

KG: No, but life goes on.

BH: [Laughs] Yeah, life goes on. That's right. Well, my last question is, is there anything else you would like to share with the people who will be reading the transcript of your comments?

KG: Well, there's a few things as we've been talking to be polite I didn't butt in, and I've forgotten to bring it up.

BH: Well bring it up now.

KG: Well I can't think of them. That's why I—if I hadn't—

BH: [Laughs] Well I'm sorry if I talk too much.

KG: No, no, no. That's why you're interviewing.

LPG: He does that with me too, Bill. We each lose our thoughts.

KG: Well everybody—

BH: Well I want you know I find you to be a very fine gentleman and I'm proud to be a citizen of the town you live in.

KG: Well I thank you. I appreciate it. It's good to be back home. It's different and we have to live with it.

BH: Yeah. That's right.

KG: Traffic is—when I was a kid you could get on a sled and you could go down any of these hills and you wouldn't worry about being run over. Now I don't think you could go down any of these hills on a sled.

LPG: Did you want to want to mention anything about your siblings?

BH: Well who are they? Evelyn and Cookie?

KG: My sisters, and—

LPG: His sisters, then he had a brother.

BH: So there were four of you? What were their names?

KG: George was my brother. Evelyn and Mildred (Cookie) were my sisters.

LPG: Mildred is better known as Cookie in the neighborhood. She was the one that—

KG: She got killed in an automobile accident. She's the one that took care of my mother in the later years, and then later lived in the house on Leland. Then when she got killed, I moved back to Leland Street.

BH: Well Linda, it's nice you could join us too.

LPG: Well thank you, Bill. I was hoping that I wanted to say something about Cookie's husband.

BH: Well I'd like to hear that. Cookie was your sister Mildred. And who did she marry?

LPG: She married Boudreau.

KG: Arthur Boudreau.

BH: And they lived in your house?

LPG: Yes.

KG: Yes, and he was instrumental in picking the sight for the Air Force Academy.

BH: In Colorado?

KG: Yes. He was—what would you call it? He was in the service, but in the education field—

LPG: He was the principal at one of the schools in New England.

BH: He was a pilot?

LPG: No. He went with Lindberg to escort members of Congress to select a sight for the academy.

BH: Charles Lindberg?

KG: No, let me explain. The Air Force was selecting a site to build the Air Force Academy. So what they did, they took the important people in Congress and different companies around to many states, because all the states were vying for the Air Force Academy. It was now United States Air Force. During the war, it had been the Army Air Corps, part of the Army. They went to Georgia to look for a site. They picked some New England

states, but they knew there wasn't going to be any Air Force Academy in New England. They were looking for wide-open spaces. But they had to fly all the dignitaries to different places, but they already knew it was going to be located in Georgia or Colorado. So they were flying people around. Lindberg was one, and all the dignitaries, you know. He was instrumental in picking the site, and then he set up the curriculum for the Air Force Academy. So at one time he told me, "If you have any money, it appears that the Air Force Academy is going to be in Denver." This was long before it was ever known. There was a time when they knew where it was going to be but they were still flying people around to different parts of the country to avoid any criticism that may pop up for whatever reasons later.

BH: What was his name? His full name?

KG: Arthur Boudreau.

BH: Arthur Boudreau. And he achieved the rank of Colonel in the Air Force?

KG: Yes. He was in the service—

KG: During the war he was in the service, and then he got out. Then they called him back for educational purposes.

BH: I see. And he lived at 4318 Leland Street all during the time you were gone. Like from '45 to—

KG: Oh, no.

LPG: This was more from the '60s.

BH: Now I was asking you about your brother-in-law who was a colonel in the Air Force. And then we got off on who had lived in your house. And your mother lived there after you went to war—

KG: My mother and father.

BH: Your mother and father. And they stayed in the house, and then eventually Cookie moved back in with her husband.

KG: Moved back in with her husband, and they stayed there. Of course then he was transferred to different places, and they would leave. But they ended up, after the site for the Air Force Academy was chosen, going to Colorado. As I understand it, he set the curriculum for the—not West Point, but the Air Force Academy. Then after that he went to Maxwell Field. That was during the time when after the war all the German scientists were down at Maxwell Field. You know, after the sputnik thing. He went with the service, transferred, and he lived wherever he had to accordingly.

BH: Now this is rather interesting to me. Linda was saying, while I was changing the tape, that you have in your attic the original plans of the Air Force Academy out in Colorado Springs. Is that correct?

BH: Colorado Springs is a proposal. And you have that in your attic?

LPG: He has it, yes. And he also has the abridged notes that outline the different areas they were supposedly considering.

BH: Well that's a very interesting piece of history.

KG: Linda could get the documents together, if you want to see it, you're welcome.

BH: Well I think the history committee might like to see that.

LPG: He also founded Kindercare.

BH: He founded the kindergarten care here?

LPG: The Kindercare. The national—

KG: Nationwide.

BH: Your brother-in-law—

KG: After he got out of the service.

BH: Mr. Boudreau, he founded the first Kindercare in the United States?

LPG: He's one of, I think, three. One of three founding members.

KG: Well he worked for the people that had the money. He's the one that, here again, set up the curriculum and the structure. He set up the standards that you would have and all the legal requirements for it, for children.

BH: That's very interesting. On the ground floor of daycare. Well you've got quite an interesting family. Is there anything special you can tell me about George or Evelyn?

KG: Well my brother was killed in 1936 in an automobile, so he didn't live—

BH: Oh. Oh, I'm sorry.

LPG: What was he, twenty-one?

KG: Twenty-one. I think it was his twenty-first birthday, as a matter of fact. And my father was on the fire department at that time which answered the call for the accident. So it's just, you know, sort of hard.

BH: Awful. Your father was a volunteer fireman? Or was he paid?

KG: No. He was the first paid fireman in Bethesda. One of four. Before that it was volunteer.

BH: What year do you think he started?

KG: 19—around 19—we have the article in the paper, and it was local at the time. I would guess it was 1926.

BH: You've got the article in a scrapbook? Of your father being hired as one of the first four firemen?

KG: Yes. The history of the Bogleys, and the Tuckermans that donated the land, and you know, that set up the—oh, maybe that's when—the Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad. That was founded by a friend of mine named Donald Dunnington. They called him the duck. He was one of the four or five that left in 1941 with the group that I was with. Before the war, he'd bought an old fire engine. I believe he bought it from the Chevy Chase Fire Department. Junk that was—you know. From that—he lived on Riley Boulevard. And from that he got interested in the rescue business, and that was the beginning—I'm almost positive that what I'm saying is true. Somebody may differ with me, but I don't think so. And that was the beginning of the Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, which as years went by has become prominent world-wide, which you're probably well aware of.

BH: Well tell me about it.

KG: Well, from that, that one engine that he bought, then he went in the service like I did. After the service he had this ranger—they got into all kinds of things after the war. Army and Navy stores that he owned in Silver Spring and Bethesda. But he continued in the rescue business. Then he became prominent. And they drove boats, what do you call them? Racing boats, you know Budweiser. But that was the beginning of the Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad.

BH: And that became world-wide? In it's fame?

KG: Fame, yes. Yes.

LPG: And that's what other rescue squads used as a model nationwide.

KG: From what I have heard, other rescue squads did use them as a model. The squad became know through many magazines, newspaper articles, you know. I don't think any body could doubt it probably is considered one of the best, if not the best, you know.

BH: That's amazing. What about Evelyn? Did she stay in town?

KG: No. She married a—?

LPG: Commander.

KG: Commander, and they were married over at the Naval Hospital.

BH: But they'd moved away?

LPG: They moved to San Diego.

BH: Did she live here most of here life?

KG: She lived here during the war. Up until—

BH: In your home. But then she married and moved away?

KG: Yes. Yes.

LPG: But her daughter Onica stayed with Kenny's family.

BH: What was the granddaughter's name?

LPG: Onica.

BH: And what was her last name?

LPG: Gilmore. But Evelyn was married before.

BH: I see. Okay. Well we've got your family history down here pretty well, Mr. Gummel. Anything else you want to add?

LPG: Well, Evelyn was quite involved with USO functions while she lived here. So she would go to the dances and volunteer to assist with the event.

BH: Was this during World War II, or after?

LPG: During World War II. And Kenny forgot to tell you when he came back home he came down with malaria. As he got off the boat, it struck him.

BH: So he went to the hospital instead, huh?

LPG: Well then—did you come on home from Virginia?

KG: I came back from overseas, all the way back across the Atlantic Ocean. The boat pulled into Baltimore, and even let some of the sailors off duty. And we were looking down over the wharf, and I felt like I could jump off and walk home from Baltimore to Washington.

BH: But you had malaria.

KG: No. No, I—well, at that time I didn't have it. Anyway, the boat—for some reason or other they was clamoring around calling the sailors back to duty, and the boat pulled out and went down somewhere down in Virginia. I don't know where it was. A little town. Often rack my brain trying to think where it was, but anyway, as soon as we got into the barracks they said, "Well now, don't do anything. Wait until you get clean clothes, then we'll take you into town." So we did, and they took us into this town, and we all said, "Well, how many sandwiches can we eat? How much beer can we drink?" Well I got into the town, ready to do all this stuff, then I developed malaria. So I didn't drink many beers and I didn't eat. I received twenty days leave, but I didn't say I was sick. I wanted to get home. So instead of telling them that I was sick, I went home. Took my leave. Of course I lost all my leave because the malaria got worse to a point where I couldn't do anything. Evelyn took me over to the Naval Hospital and they wouldn't take me. That was being built during the war. The Naval Hospital I'm sure wasn't here during the war.

BH: Walter Reed's?

KG: No, the Naval Hospital. Then she took me over to Walter Reed, which was the Army hospital. I had to wait in line with about twenty-five or thirty pregnant women. I was too sick to stand in line so finally my sister went up to the front of the line and raised hell, and they took me in, and I stayed at Walter Reed for a while.

BH: Well I'm glad they took you in, and I'm glad you got well. It's been a pleasure sir. And Linda, tell me your last name Linda.

LPG: Price Gummel.

BH: Linda Price Gummel. Okay. Well, thank you for coming over.

END OF INTERVIEW