BEC: This is an interview with Emile Eugene Wickham at the Kearns Senior Recreation Center in Kearns, Utah. Today’s date is June 9, 2004. This is part of the “Saving the Legacy Project”. My name is Becky Lloyd. Emile, let’s start with when and where you were born.

EMI: I was born in Corvallis, Oregon, June 14, 1923.

BEC: Oh, you’ve got a birthday next week.

EMI: Next Monday.

BEC: That’s great. You said that you were born in 1923?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: What was your family doing in Corvallis, Oregon?

EMI: My mom and dad met while working on a chicken ranch and married. My dad did ranch work and my mother was a cook on the same ranch, I guess. She was the chief cook.

BEC: Your mom was also an employee?

EMI: Yes, before they married.

BEC: Were you their first child?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: So how long did they work at the ranch?

EMI: I don’t know. After I was born, they didn’t stay there too long because my next brother was born in Vale, Oregon. My brother was born in 1927.
BEC: I don’t know where Vale is.

EMI: It’s clear across the state from Corvallis. My other brother and sister were born in Alamosa, Colorado.

BEC: So your parents moved quite a bit during those early years?

EMI: Yes, my dad was a traveling salesman for Caterpillar Tractor Company in Colorado. He would travel all over the states of Utah and Colorado selling heavy equipment. He was also a Caterpillar mechanic. He overhauled them a lot. During the Depression, when these farmers didn’t have any way of overhauling their equipment, he did it for them.

BEC: That probably helped out a lot financially during those tight years of the Depression.

EMI: Yes.

BEC: So you said that you were the oldest. You have two brothers and a sister who are younger?

EMI: Yes, and none of them are alive today.

BEC: You’re the last?

EMI: I have one sister who lives down in Beaver, but we are the only ones of my family who are alive. My one brother’s plane exploded over Lake Mead. He was a pilot, my youngest brother. My other brother died in Grand Junction. He was on oxygen. He seemed to be doing better. His wife said, “I have to go do some grocery shopping.” She went down grocery shopping. When she came back, he was dead.

BEC: That’s sad.
EMI: My dad had a weird death too. My brother saw him right before he died. Dad said, "I'm a little tired. I'm going to bed early tonight." He went in his bedroom. He had a pill he had to take because he had a pacemaker. He had that pill in his hand and sat down in the chair, a rocking chair he had in his room. He was living in a retirement center. He sat in the rocking chair and died. The next morning, he didn't show up for breakfast. When he didn't show up for breakfast, they wanted to find out why. They went down there and there he was, still sitting in that chair.

BEC: With the pill in his hand?

EMI: With the pill in his hand.

BEC: That must have been a sudden thing.

EMI: He said he was feeling pretty good the night before, but, boy. The last time he saw us—he only saw us at Thanksgiving time—he said, "I'll never be back."

BEC: Is that right?

EMI: That was in '95. He said, "This is my last time here." That same year, he died.

BEC: He lived a good long life then if he just passed away in '95.

EMI: He was ninety-two.

BEC: Wow, so you have a long ways to go then, don't you?

EMI: My mother was just about eighty-five when she passed away.

BEC: Did you spend most of your childhood in Colorado?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: Is that where you were when you left for the war?

EMI: I went into the service in Pueblo, Colorado.

BEC: What elementary schools did you go to?
EMI: I can’t remember the names of them. There were too many of them. One was in Alamosa, Edgewater, and one was in Denver.

BEC: You moved around a lot?

EMI: Well, there was the Alamosa and a different place in Denver I went to elementary school, and Edgewater, too. I went to junior high in Denver. I went to one year of high school, tenth grade, at North High. I wanted to put my next two years in at North High, but my parents wouldn’t let me. They said, “No, you’ve got to go where we’re going.” They were going to Pueblo. So I went to Pueblo with them. I went to school there for a short time and quit school.

BEC: Is that right?

EMI: I didn’t like the school. I liked North High in Denver because I was in ROTC, which I enjoyed.

BEC: Your family went to Pueblo and they didn’t have ROTC?

EMI: They wouldn’t let me go to the North High School. They said, “No, you’ve got to go where we go.” So, I went. They insisted. Otherwise, I would have probably graduated but they wouldn’t let me go over there and I didn’t want to go to school if I couldn’t go there. I just quit going.

BEC: So you weren’t able to graduate from high school then?

EMI: Not then. I did graduate after I got out of the service. I went over here to West High and got my diploma.

BEC: That’s great. How was your family affected by the Depression?
EMI: My dad always had a job. The Depression never affected us that much. He always had a job and we always had food on the table, as I remember. I don’t remember it getting really that bad during that time.

BEC: You were really fortunate.

EMI: He had a good job working for Caterpillar Tractor Company. He was a salesman, traveling all over around the Colorado area.

BEC: Did your mother still work outside of your home?

EMI: Not really.

BEC: When you were born, she’d been the cook on the ranch, but after she had the children she never worked?

EMI: No, she never worked.

BEC: She just took care of the kids?

EMI: My dad was the one who worked out of the house and took care of us financially.

BEC: So you opted out of high school when your family moved to Pueblo. What did you do between then and the war?

EMI: I didn’t go to school. My dad leased a Conoco service station. I was in charge of it, but that didn’t work out for long.

BEC: Did you work?

EMI: Just at the Conoco station. The second job I had is when I went in the service.

BEC: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

EMI: I enlisted in 1942.

BEC: So that was after the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor in December of ’41.

EMI: Yes.
BEC: So you decided that you wanted to join the military.

EMI: I joined the Army Air Force. I had tried to enlist in the regular Army but I had a bad back and they wouldn’t take me. So I saw a chiropractor and was able to get into the Army Air Force. I figured that in the Air Force I wouldn’t have to worry as much about my back in these combat situations, which I didn’t want to do anyway. That way I could keep out of the combat and work on aircraft and things like that.

BEC: So you wanted to become an aircraft mechanic?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: You said that you joined in 1942?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: Where did you go for basic training?

EMI: Right here in Kearns. In Kearns, I did basic training. Then, they made me a drill instructor here. After that, I left for a while. I decided I wanted to go to school for aircraft anyway. They sent me down to Sheppard Field, Texas, for my first school.

BEC: That was aircraft mechanics’ school?

EMI: Yes. Then I went to Kansas City, Missouri, for advanced training. I don’t know where all. I went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for a short time and ended up…the last place I went was Reno, Nevada, for crew chief training. They wanted to make me an engineer on a plane. So I was an engineer on a plane. When I became a flight engineer, we went to Detroit to deliver aircraft, to Romulus Air Force Base in Detroit. We delivered aircraft out of there.

BEC: So you were delivering aircraft from Detroit to other places?
EMI: Yes. We delivered one of them from Detroit over across to India. We went down to Natal, Brazil, across the Ascension Island and over to Africa, across the Sahara Desert over to India, Karachi. At that time it was Karachi, India. Now, it’s Pakistan.

BEC: That’s something. You were delivering aircraft for other people to use?

EMI: Yes, at that time. That was a C-47. Then, when I came back, they sent me on another aircraft. They sent me on a C-46. I don’t know whether you know what that looked like or not. It’s a lot bigger than a C-47.

BEC: Is it?

EMI: Oh, yes, a lot bigger. It had two Pratt and Whitney R-2800 engines instead of R-1830s like the C-47, and it held a lot more passengers or cargo and everything else. But we left and went down to South America via the same route and landed at Belem, Brazil. When we left Belem, one engine cut out. So I knew what was wrong. We went back to Belem. We landed at Belem. I said, “We have a broken diaphragm in the carburetor.” The guys on the ground said, “Oh, you’re full of sh--. You don’t know what you’re talking about.” They bled the carburetor. We had just gotten off the ground and it cut out again. They should have had those guys flying it. Then they would have fixed it right. But they didn’t want to do it. So we took off and the pilot said, “Well, we won’t land here again.” We went down to another field down there, an emergency field. So we went there. We sent back to Belem to get a carburetor. So we were there in San Luis for ten days until we got a carburetor to put on the aircraft. We got it on the aircraft, fixed it up and we went on a flight, a test flight. We went up and were flying along the ocean there and he (the pilot) nosed it up and he saw a sailboat out there. He said, “You see that sailboat out there? Watch this.” He went right straight for the middle of that sailboat.
Those people on that sailboat thought they'd had it. RRRRR! Right over the top of them and up we went again. Another thing: We went to deliver that second aircraft. We went to the pilot's hometown. He was Flight Officer Bullwinkle. He was a nut. Before the war, he was a civilian pilot and flew small aircraft. He called his mother the night before and said, "I'm coming. I'm flying over the town so watch for me." He flew over at treetop level in a C-46. He was looking out the side waving at his mother. About that time I looked up and there was a big old yellow building sitting right in front of us. He just RRRRRRRRR! Right over the top of that (laughed). James, the other pilot, when he flew over his hometown, he flew up higher. He didn't go down that low. He wasn't that crazy (laughs). Bullwinkle, he was a crazy man.

BEC: Did you fly with him on other trips?

EMI: No.

BEC: Just that once?

EMI: Just that one time I flew with him. I went over, on the second trip, I went over to Casablanca. I was stationed there for eighteen months working on aircraft.

BEC: So you delivered that plane to Casablanca, and then stayed?

EMI: Then I stayed. They kept me there for eighteen months.

BEC: So on that first trip to India, did you stay there very long?

EMI: No, just one day. Then we came back to the States the next day.

BEC: How did you get back?

EMI: On a C-47.

BEC: So you flew one there and brought one back.
EMI: We flew back on one. That was the most miserable trip I ever took, was on that one.

BEC: Why was that?

EMI: I was flying across the Sahara Desert, sitting in the back seat of an aircraft right next to the door and that danged plane didn’t know how to fly level. It was this way, that way, this way, that way, every which direction and I got airsick. The only time I’ve been airsick in my life was that one time. I’ve been seasick. Boy, coming back from Casablanca, we left the harbor there and we hit a storm for ten days. I couldn’t even get down in the bottom hold where I was supposed to sleep. I headed for sleep but instead I headed for the rail. Oh, it was miserable.

BEC: The whole time?

EMI: The whole time.

BEC: Oh that’s awful.

EMI: The trip took ten days and I was sick for ten days.

BEC: That just sounds miserable.

EMI: Have you ever been seasick?

BEC: Yes, but not for ten days.

EMI: Ten days straight.

BEC: But otherwise, that trip over to India was uneventful?

EMI: Yes, it was a pretty good trip.

BEC: Except for that trip back.

EMI: Well, we were loaded with cargo clear to the roof all the way down the middle of the fuselage and had passengers on each side. There was one seat left where I had to sit,
right in the very back. If I was a crewmember, I would have been up in the front and it wouldn’t have bothered me. But sitting in the back, that’s a whole different ride.

BEC: Were you stopping at places on the way back and dropping off cargo?

EMI: No.

BEC: Where did you eventually arrive when you came back? Was it back to Detroit?

EMI: Probably it was down in Miami or down in Florida some place. That’s where we left from. We left from Detroit and went down to Miami, Florida, then we went on over to Natal, Brazil. I think we landed at Guyana first, British Guyana. Then down to Belem, then Natal, then the Ascension Islands, then Accra, or someplace over there in Africa.

BEC: That was a long trip wasn’t it? So the second trip then was a little more exciting and you wound up in Casablanca where you were stationed for eighteen months.

EMI: Yes.

BEC: What were you doing in Casablanca for those eighteen months?

EMI: I was a mechanic on aircraft.

BEC: So you didn’t fly anymore?

EMI: No.

BEC: What do you remember about your time in Casablanca?

EMI: Well, I never drank. I never smoked. Well, I smoked a little bit. A pack of cigarettes would last me ten days. That’s how much I smoked. One cigarette a day was about my limit. I didn’t drink coffee. I’ve never tasted coffee. How many people can say they never drank coffee, being in the service. I never have tasted it. Today I haven’t tasted it.

BEC: So what did you drink?
EMI: I'd drink water. I drank soda pop some of the time.

BEC: They had soda there? That's kind of a military pastime isn't it, drinking and smoking.

EMI: Yes. I never believed in alcohol. My brother drank. Both my brothers did, but not me. I said, "That wasn't for me."

BEC: Right. So what unit were you with when you were in the Air Force?

EMI: It wasn't any group. It was just the Army Air Force.

BEC: So you weren't assigned to say, the Fourteenth Air Force or any of those?

EMI: No.

BEC: So you didn't have a unit number or anything?

EMI: As far as I know, we didn't.

BEC: What did they call your group?

EMI: I was just a mechanic in the Air Force.

BEC: Okay. What do you remember about your work in Casablanca? Were planes flying in and out of there regularly?

EMI: Oh, yes. They were flying in regularly. If they had a problem, we would fix that. I had an advantage over other people. I could get places on the aircraft other people couldn't get because I was so thin. How many people could curl up into a ball and fit in some place? I was about six feet tall and weighed 129 pounds.

BEC: Wow.

EMI: They called me beanpole. I could crawl in small places and could do anything.

BEC: Being six feet tall, that was still quite a trick to fit into those small places?
EMI: Yes, but how many people could stand flat on their feet and then squat all the way down and then get right back up after squatting for a long time?

BEC: So it was because you were so thin that you could just fold up your whole body?

EMI: And fit in places.

BEC: Yes. So were you given a lot of the tight jobs, the really difficult ones?

EMI: When they came up. I don’t know. We never cared for the war. It was just something that had to be done so we’d do it. Like when I went and re-enlisted and went up to Alaska.

BEC: That was after?

EMI: After I came back and was discharged out of the service. I re-enlisted and went up to Alaska.

BEC: What were you doing up there?

EMI: I was an aircraft mechanic or I was supposed to be. They put me on a flight crew there too. We were in the rescue squadron.

BEC: You were still in the military?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: But it was after the war had ended?

EMI: Yes. The funny thing there was, if I had stayed up there I would have went out and bought myself 160 acres of ground at fifteen cents an acre. But I didn’t do it.

BEC: You didn’t stay up there?

EMI: No, but I could have. But this other guy, he wanted to. I think I would have made staff if I’d have stayed there, but he wanted to get my rank if he could, so he talked me into getting out. I just got married. I got married up there.
BEC: Up there in Alaska?

EMI: I called Theda down here in Salt Lake and asked her to come up there and we would get married. Her dad said, "No, she won’t." Her mother said, "Yes." So she came on up there. She flew up and a short time later we were married on the fourteenth of September.

BEC: What year was that?

EMI: ‘46.

BEC: So that was just right after the war had ended?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: What year was it that you flew over and spent that time in Casablanca? Did you stay there until the war in Europe was over, in May of ‘45?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: So if you were over there for eighteen months, you would have gotten there in the fall of ‘43.

EMI: It might have been the later part of ‘43. I know I’ve been in Cairo. I took a trip over to Cairo. I bought a beautiful necklace over in Cairo. I think that’s where I got it. No, I bought a couple of vases in Cairo, brass vases. I bought the necklace in Karachi. It was made out of ivory.

BEC: Do you still have that?

EMI: Oh, my daughter has it, but she broke the string on it. She hasn’t gotten around to putting it back together. It had little tiny elephants. A funny thing, those elephants. I had the necklace sitting some place in a jewelry case for a long time. It turned yellow. Do you know what they said to do? Sit it in the sunshine. I put it up there in the sunshine in
the windowsill. It turned white. The sun bleached it right out. It was really yellow before.

**BEC:** You were just living in barracks in Casablanca?

**EMI:** Yes, we were just living on the base. We’d go to town and do whatever we wanted to do, but I never had any special things I wanted to do there.

**BEC:** I was going to ask if there was much to do there if you didn’t drink.

**EMI:** Not a heck of a lot, if you didn’t drink or that, there wasn’t that much to do.

**BEC:** It was probably nice to get away from the base though.

**EMI:** Yes.

**BEC:** When you were working then, did you have like an eight to five shift or was it just when the planes came in? How did that work?

**EMI:** I don’t remember. I don’t recall a lot of my time I was in the service. I was in there about four or four and a half years.

**BEC:** Right. Let me just ask you if there is anything else that you remember about your time in Casablanca, that you remember, that we haven’t talked about?

**EMI:** I don’t know of anything. I might have been around a lot, traveled around a lot, but I didn’t do it. I just stayed put in one spot.

**BEC:** While you were over there, do you wish that you had traveled more?

**EMI:** Yes. I went to Cairo.

**BEC:** Right. So when you did do that, was that a leave you went on?

**EMI:** It may have been. I don’t remember what that was. I went to Cairo. I went to the Pyramids. The only thing I wish I had done was to ride a camel.

**BEC:** Oh?
EMI: I didn’t do that. I wish that I’d talked somebody into letting me ride a camel.

BEC: Yes, that would have been an experience.

EMI: But that pyramid was something, too.

BEC: I imagine.

EMI: You go inside of that. There are some passages, then you walk into the upper passageway, going into the tomb. There’s a big shiny wall, all engraved on it. It’s really something the way they’ve got it fixed up there. They only let so many people down in there in a day. They used to let everybody in there. They don’t do that now.

BEC: They have it limited?

EMI: It’s limited to just so many because so many wanted to see it. That’s quite a pyramid, that biggest one.

BEC: That’s great that you took advantage of that opportunity, anyway, to see some of the sights that you could see.

EMI: Yes.

BEC: So you finished up that eighteen months in Casablanca and the war in Europe was ended in May of ’45. So you probably came back sometime in the summer of ’45. Then you were reassigned to Alaska.

EMI: I re-enlisted to Alaska.

BEC: You re-enlisted? So you had enough points to get out?

EMI: I had my discharge. I just re-enlisted.

BEC: Why did you do that?

EMI: Because I wanted to go to Alaska.

BEC: Oh, you knew that if you re-enlisted, you could go to Alaska?
EMI: Yes, because you could choose where you wanted to go.

BEC: Oh, I see. So you signed up for how long?

EMI: For three years.

BEC: A three-year enlistment?

EMI: Yes, then they stationed me out here (in Kearns). I stayed here until I got my orders to go to Alaska.

BEC: So you came back to Kearns, again. Is that when you met your wife?

EMI: When I was here, I did.

BEC: The first time or the second time you were here?

EMI: The second time. I was down in the Coconut Grove. I don’t know if you know where the Coconut Grove was. I was dancing with a girl there and I saw Theda sitting on the sideline. So I said, “I’ll ask her next.” So as soon as I got rid of the one girl, I went over and asked Theda to dance. I’ve been dancing with her ever since.

BEC: Oh, that’s nice.

EMI: It’s been fifty-eight years now.

BEC: So then your orders came through and you went to Alaska. Were you doing the same job in Alaska?

EMI: Well, I was a mechanic. They wanted to make me a radio operator on a PBY, one of those flying boats. I went one time on a flying boat. That didn’t work out too good so I still stayed a mechanic.

BEC: Was that your choice to stay a mechanic?

EMI: If I could have learned the radio, the way I should have done, being a radio operator would have been wonderful.
BEC: So you would have liked that job but it just didn’t work out. Where were they flying when they were flying those planes?

EMI: It was a rescue squadron.

BEC: I see.

EMI: We did rescue or whatever had to be done. We got out there and chased moose.

BEC: (Laughs)

EMI: We did.

BEC: Were you trying to rescue the moose (laughs)?

EMI: Well, we sure did chase them. He came down and he’d see a moose there. He said, “Watch this.” He’d come right down and away the moose would go just a fast as he could go on that ice.

BEC: I’ll bet. So you probably saw a lot of wildlife up there.

EMI: Oh, yes. We drove up there later on. In ‘95 we drove up to Alaska on the Alaskan highway in a Toyota van pulling a sixteen-foot trailer.

BEC: That’s a long drive.

EMI: It’s a long drive and the Alaskan highway that year was the roughest road in the world.

BEC: Oh, was it?

EMI: Coming back, I was still pulling the sixteen-foot trailer with the van that I had. Coming back along the coast, the road was a lot better. That road in Alaska is actually in from the coast. That was a fabulous trip.

BEC: So how long were you stationed in Alaska?

EMI: I was only there about six months.
BEC: Then as, you said, you got married during that time. Was your wife able to live up there and stay up there with you?

EMI: I had a house up there for a short time but when she found out that I was going to get out, she came back. She wished she’d have stayed up there. I was supposed to come back shortly after I was more or less discharged, but they didn’t let me come back until February of the next year. So I waited until February and got on a boat and came back down the Inside Passage, which was wonderful. That Inside Passage! We stopped in St. Petersburg, in Alaska and loaded thirty-three thousand cases of salmon on the boat. They couldn’t label it up there. They canned it but they couldn’t label it.

BEC: That was some law?

EMI: Alaska wasn’t a state yet. When they became a state, they could. Until they became a state, they weren’t allowed to label it. So we loaded all of that salmon. I helped them do that. I got paid for doing that.

BEC: So was that a military ship you were coming down on or was that a private cargo ship?

EMI: It was a cargo ship.

BEC: I forgot to ask you what town or city you were in while you were in Alaska.

EMI: Anchorage.

BEC: So you came down with thirty thousand pounds of salmon. Where did you land?

EMI: In Seattle.

BEC: You were discharged by that time?

EMI: I got discharged before I came down.

BEC: After you completed the three years enlistment?
EMI: No, I got out ahead of time.

BEC: You had that option and could get discharged when you wanted?

EMI: Yes.

BEC: So that was about when, the second time?

EMI: It must have been '47, probably, February of '47, something like that.

BEC: You were out of the service. Where did you and your wife go after that?

EMI: Well, right down here. I went to work for Salt Lake City Bus Lines for a while, a year. Then I went to school for a year, refrigeration school in Denver and Golden, Colorado. Then I came back from there and had a job in a refrigeration shop in Glenwood Springs. That didn’t work out. Then I came back to Salt Lake and I wanted a job real bad, so I went down to employment services. “Oh, you can have a job down at the laundry.” So I went down and worked for Super State Laundry for a year, down on State Street. Then I worked for Commercial Distributing Company selling refrigeration parts. Then I saw an advertisement to work at Hill Field. I put in for that. They were paying more than what I was making anyway. I went into that and stayed in there for twenty-eight and a half years. I got on at Hill Field and I stayed there.

BEC: That must have been a good job. Was that in mechanics or some other work?

EMI: I started out as a mechanic. I had a couple of jobs I didn’t care about, people who I didn’t like to work for. I worked with one guy modifying mock-ups. There wasn’t one thing bad except his dang language. He couldn’t say two words without one of them being a swear word. He was taking the Lord’s name in vain every other word, one way or the other. I was so glad to get out of that. The best job I had was working out on
flight test, getting an aircraft prepared for flight. That was working outside all the time
all year round, winter, summer, whatever. It was still the best job.

BEC: Because of the work or the people?

EMI: All of it. People were just better there, it seemed like. I always did like that kind
of thing, working on aircraft. It was just the idea. I worked on the F-84, the F-102, the
TF-102, then the F-4. After I left, that’s when they got the F-16.

BEC: Did you ever get a chance to go up and fly in one of those jets?

EMI: I didn’t get a chance. I went out on a high-speed taxi check.

BEC: Is that right?

EMI: Zero to 145 knots, back down to zero in eleven seconds. That’s moving. You
could start it up, pull that throttle over and hit the after-burner to get its speed up in a
hurry to get the wheel off the ground to see if they had nose wheel shimmy. He’d get the
nose wheel off the ground. Then he brought it back down and pulled the drag chute to
stop it before he hit the end of the runway.

BEC: That must have been a thrill.

EMI: He asked me if I wanted to go and I said, “Yes, I sure do.” I would have liked to
have gone up in one, but I never went that far.

BEC: That’s too bad.

EMI: My brother, Robert, was a pilot and he loved that. He went to Las Vegas to pick
up a lieutenant commander. He left Las Vegas headed for Amarillo, Texas, and his plane
exploded over Lake Mead.

BEC: Did they ever figure out what happened?
EMI: They didn’t figure out how, no. They figure it might have been sabotage. The guy he picked up, the lieutenant commander, had been with the atomic bomb blasts there in Nevada and had a lot of secret information to take back to Olathe, Kansas. They figured that might have been what happened. Anyway he was flying up there and switched over to Olathe and everything went dead. Some truck driver, coming down the road there, the highway there by Lake Mead, said he saw a big flash over Lake Mead about that time. They figured it must have been him because they never found any part of him, the aircraft, or anything.

BEC: Is that right?

EMI: They searched and everything and never could find anything. They figure that’s where he is, down on the bottom of Lake Mead.

BEC: That’s a sad thing. So, you finished up your career at Hill. You said you were there for twenty-eight years?

EMI: Twenty-eight and a half years.

BEC: And then you retired?

EMI: Yes, Then I went to work for the Hotel Utah.

BEC: Is that right?

EMI: The funny thing was, I got out of working at Hill Field and I saw an ad in the paper. It said, “Come down to the Hotel Utah for six weeks work.” I went down and put in for that. I put in for it. They had heaters in the rooms and they wanted deflectors for all the heaters. They gave me the pack of them and I had them all put on in two weeks. They’d given me six weeks to do it in and I had it done in two weeks. So I went down and told them and they said, “Oh, we’ve got something else for you to do.” They gave
me a whole mess of jobs for me to do. Finally, old Bob Baumgartner, my foreman, called down in the basement and said, “Hey, Wick, come to 223; I got a job for you.” I went up there and he said, “I want these put on the wall like this.” It was grab bars for the bathtubs. I put every one in the hotel on. Then I was going to quit. I was going to go to England. I’d signed up and bought tickets and had our passport and everything to go to England in June. “Oh, no you’re not going to quit. We’ll give you a leave of absence. When you want to go to work, come down and see us.” So I was off work. We went over to England and toured England and different places. We saw the Queen and that. My daughter was over there, stationed over there, she and her husband at the time.

BEC: She was in the military or her husband was at the time?

EMI: Both of them were in the military. She was in for seventeen years before she got a medical discharge. She’s out right now on the medical. Anyway, after I came back, I’d been home for a while in the middle of August and I said, “Hey, I’m going back to work.” I went down to the Hotel Utah and got my job back and started doing general maintenance work all over the whole hotel.

BEC: How long did you end up doing that?

EMI: Eight and a half years.

BEC: Is that right? You had a whole other career.

EMI: When they locked the doors to make it the Joseph Smith Building, that’s when I got laid off and quit. That’s when I got retirement out of it. So I was retired.

BEC: Good for you. Did you take up another career after that?

EMI: That was it. I was sixty-five then.

BEC: You were ready to retire then?
EMI: Yes. We did a lot of traveling different places. We never went anywhere very far though. We just mainly stayed close. I had a brother in Grand Junction and my Dad was in Denver a long time and then in Grand Junction. That’s where he died. He was in a rest home in Grand Junction.

BEC: So how many children do you have?

EMI: We have six and one adopted one.

BEC: So seven then, all together. Do any of them live around here?

EMI: All of them.

BEC: Oh, that’s great.

EMI: There aren’t any of them out of state.

BEC: That’s nice. How many grandchildren do you have?

EMI: Don’t ask.

BEC: Okay, so don’t even bother asking about great-grandchildren.

EMI: Great-grandchildren, I know I have…[counting]…we must have fifteen grandchildren and great-grandchildren; we just had seven more this year.

BEC: Really? In one year, you had seven?

EMI: Yes. We’re just having them all at the same time. Some of them are just a week apart.

BEC: That must be exciting to see your family growing like that. So what do you do now?

EMI: Well, we work in the temple regularly. My wife was working over here [at the senior center]. She was doing the Tai Chi. She’s going to start that again, I guess.

BEC: Oh is she? She teaches it?
EMI: No, she doesn’t teach it. She does it along with the rest of them. They wanted her to teach it but she wouldn’t do it. She said, “No I won’t teach it. I’ll go along with the rest of them doing it. But I won’t teach.” She won’t teach anything, but she did take care of setting up for Tai Chi.

BEC: So you come over to the center here and spend time visiting and eating lunch?

EMI: And meet the people and that.

BEC: That’s great. How do you think that your World War II experience affected your life?

EMI: Well, I got around a lot, a lot more than I would have otherwise. I wasn’t one for traveling that much. I got married and lived a fairly happy life. I can’t tell you that everything has been the best in the world, but it hasn’t been the worst either.

BEC: So it got you out to places you would never have gone otherwise?

EMI: Yes, places where I would never have been.

BEC: Well, is there anything else you’d like to say or add on to this before I turn the tapes off?

EMI: No. We had a good time when we went over to England. We got our passports and went over to see my daughter. We spent about a month over there and we saw the place where David O. McKay was born, the house where he was born. We went over to see the queen and saw the queen in her carriage and that. That was another thing.

BEC: Did you actually see the queen in person?

EMI: We saw her at a distance. She was in her carriage. They always have a lot of guards around her.

BEC: Oh, yes.
EMI: I saw her palace where she lives.

BEC: But you saw her in her carriage while she was out. That sounds like a great trip.

EMI: That was in the summer of 1975.

BEC: Well, okay. I sure thank you for your story and your time. It’s been interesting.

I’ll go ahead and turn the tapes off then.

END OF INTERVIEW