

Transcription: Robert Pryor

Today is Wednesday, 14 July, 2010. The interviewer is Mike McReeken with the Texas Veterans Land Board and I'm at the home of Mr. Robert Pryor, 8562 Arial Street, Houston, Texas 77074. Mr. Pryor was a Staff Sergeant during World War II serving in the 2nd Armored Division with General Patton and we're here to listen to Mr. Pryor tell us about his combat experiences during World War II. Just to start off, where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Robert Pryor: In the Army.

OK, when had you enlisted?

Robert Pryor: February of '41.

OK, so you went in in early 1941.

Robert Pryor: What happened is this. Is it all right?

You talk.

Robert Pryor: My daddy when I finished high school, dad said what are you gonna be? Wanna race cars. There was no future in that.

Were you a moonshiner?

Robert Pryor: No, I actually raced with, I had a Buick up to 103 mph in 1938 on a two-lane highway, and another car beside me. Now I'm afraid to drive almost.

So I'm sitting here talking to a living daredevil.

Robert Pryor: No, so anyway my daddy was ___ World War I, and my daddy said we're gonna have a war. This is about November of '40, and I was just out of school, and I went down to the University of Illinois and I was starting school there, and the civics and music and stuff like that, and all they did was write on the blackboard, you said the rule and you copied it down. You've been to college, you know. And I said this is ridiculous. I want something...so my dad said you ought to get in the service. I said well, so we, my daddy was down in Mississippi in a lumber deal that he was working with and I was down there with him and I had a cousin down there who was in the Mississippi National Guard. They says we would like you to join the National Guard here because we're gonna go into the Army. You recall that the National Guard went into the Army about November of 1940. So I said OK, so I went down there to sign up. There were about 100 fellas there. The doctor says to me I'll be here a couple of three hours, like I get there first and if you just take off. Well I went to a movie, about two hours later I came back and my cousin was standing there and says the doctor looked in one ear and out the other and didn't see daylight, you were in. So I said what does that mean? He says we're gonna be, tonight we federalize, you know, you no more could go in. I felt bad. It was like a big gap. Then went to Guadalcanal and we wiped out. So you see, the luck of the draw, right? Or whatever.

Yes sir.

Robert Pryor: So I decided that I would go in the Army and I wanted to drive a tank. I was 6 foot 2 inches, about 170 some pounds, and the recruiting sergeant told me – my mother signed for me because I was under age – I'd go to Fort Ben in Georgia and I'd be driving a tank in a week. So I went to Fort Ben in Georgia, I found out I was in the Infantry. So about two months I was in the Infantry. I finally got permission to speak to the lieutenant who was a company commander, and I said sir, there's been a mistake. Well, of course he never looks up. The part of it is never to look up, and the more they look down, the more nervous you get. So what happened, I finally said sir, there's been a mistake. And he said what? I said when I joined up, the recruiting sergeant said I could drive a tank, and I'm in the Infantry. So he says to me well, I'll tell you, when you get out, look him up. Dismissed. That's all he said. Dismissed. Look him up. I had a high school education, 1940-41, if you know, a lot of the southern boys 4th-5th Grade, you know, back in those times that was a terrible Depression time. Next thing I know, I was sent up to go down to the 14th Field Artillery. I did not have a uniform for almost three weeks. I had two khaki shirts because not allowed to wear because we were wearing wool in the winter, so I couldn't wear the khaki shirts, but I could wear my civilian clothes. I marched every day in my civilian clothes and washed my clothes I had with me. I have pictures to show you. Can you believe it? And finally after about two or three weeks, I got some clothes. That's how bad off it was in those days. We had nothing. So that's my inauguration into it. Well, we didn't have any real stuff. All the equipment we had was World War I, French stuff, things like that. So we trained and we trained and we trained every hour of the day. What else was there to do?

How did you get into the Army Corps?

Robert Pryor: They decided I guess up there somewhere by looking at my record of schooling, even a high school education in those days was something.

It was like college today probably.

Robert Pryor: Yes, just about. So what happened, I went into the 14th Field and we had two artilleries and there were regiments in those days, and a gun. We had a professional French 75's, I learned to kind of near hop as they called it, and one day they told me about two months later that I was going to radio school. Well first, before that, the paratroopers were starting to have paratroopers, were just beginning, and they came into the barracks and they had permission to speak to find if we'd like to join the paratroopers. And I believe it was \$50 more a month. I was getting \$21 a month, and paying \$6 on insurance out of that. So I went down to see about joining the paratroopers. In those days, you did anything for a dollar. Well, when I got there you had to climb up this tower. They didn't have the deal ___ yet, you had to climb up that tower. I says no way I can climb it, the height. So I came back and I went to radio school at Fort Knox and learned Morse code. I came back to my outfit, three months, we were on maneuvers constantly for almost a year and a half, Carolina, Tennessee, and so forth that you know. So General Patton was very, very strict. If you were walking down the street, you said to this guy with you, how long you been in the Army? Two weeks. I been three weeks. What's your name? So when General Patton stopped you, you could tell him Private John Smith, Private Bob Carr, and then Patton would look at you and he'd tell you either straighten your tie or button your shirt or fix your leggings, but he always told you something derogatory about you, you know what I mean? Not in a mean way, to build you. You wore a cap a certain way. You didn't know that. We all wore 'em this, we wore 'em that, we had a patch, you know, on a thing. I have an old patch that they had, you know what they look like. And we got the name Hell on Wheels on maneuvers.

That name you earned.

Robert Pryor: But I understand originally some of the states did not want that name used because the word “hell.” So that is up to Pearl Harbor. We were there in Pearl Harbor virtually on Sunday. The sad part that we had two or three guys about 38 years old, and they were getting ready to go home that day. They were discharged. The lieutenant said we better see what this Pearl Harbor thing is. They never got out of the Army. They still stayed. That’s said because they were 38 years old, and that’s old. So we went to Africa, as you know. My battalion was really, well what we do, we took the 14th and 78th, divided them up and made the 92nd. We had three battalions. We had, the old stuff we had, we started getting some better guns and stuff. The original stuff was absolutely terrible. So we went from a four-gun battery to a six-gun battery. Then we finally got a half track with a cannon on it. Well, when you fired that thing, it darn near tore the vehicle. So we got the M-7’s. Are you familiar with them?

No sir.

Robert Pryor: I will show you a picture of it. They were a tank. There’s one up there.

Oh OK.

Robert Pryor: Now that’s what we had. Beautiful. It was a tank and we could go everywhere and anywhere with it.

That you got in Africa.

Robert Pryor: We got it in Africa, and we could go right up to the entry. We did. So anyway, so we went over there and Africa was not really for us a big deal due to the fact that we were primary with Casablanca, Oran and those places, to keep the Germans from coming through Spain into North Africa, because that’s what they figured, and see, the British were fighting on the east up there, did you know?

Yes sir.

Robert Pryor: So then later on, the 1st Armored Division fought with them, but they slaughtered the 1st Armored Division, which thank God taught us a lesson. We thought we were in pretty good shape. We didn’t know anything. You know, we thought we were big, big boys. We didn’t know anything. A whole new world. We were in Africa two years. Went to Sicily. Sicily was not a tremendous real war. It was a war, but I mean nothing like -

...what you were going to get into.

Robert Pryor: Yeah. So then we went from there to England in November of ’42 I guess or ’43, and we stayed there and we went to Tinworth Barracks in England, old Army barracks, and we practiced every day and trained on the Salisbury plains. That’s where the Stonehenge are. Are you familiar with those?

Yes sir.

Robert Pryor: They were right there, the stones. We trained every day. We knew D-day was coming. We didn’t know where. And so what we did, in my half track, I would send dummy

messages out in Morse code, made up messages because we knew the Germans were listening across the channel, just to give them the aggravation of having to decode all these messages to aggravate them. And we did that for about two weeks.

Now were you in the area where the inflatable tanks and some of the -

Robert Pryor: There were, yes, there were fields out there that had false equipment in them, yes, you're right. And this Tinworth Barracks was an old British barracks and they had a fireplace at the far end of the room, and that was the heat. And the bathroom was down the road. So we stayed there. I have pictures of them if you ever want to see all that. So on the 9th of the 6th, we saw the planes going over us. We knew the invasion was there. I understand we were supposed to go on in the next morning, but the Omaha Beach had a lot of problems. I'm sure your boys have told you, paratroopers and all those boys. There was no way we could get tanks ashore. I landed on the 9th of, I was on an Infantry, this boat, one half track and one jeep was all I had, and we had one boy about 18 years old, a British boy, and he ran that ship. There's about eight of us on it, eight people. We ran aground on the beach. We ran over some vehicle that had been sunk, and we turned sideways under the big LST up there and had vehicles behind us coming in, and they told us if you don't get off there, we're gonna blow you out of the water. So we were jumping up and down, trying to get that ship -

Get your boat -

Robert Pryor: We turned sideways, and so we finally came ashore. I mean we got loose. And as we were coming ashore, the Canadians had an LST there - no, they were small ships. LST is the big ones. And they were coming ashore and the tide was coming up and they were drowning, and they were on the wrong beach. They were supposed to have been way down somewhere, so the American Navy boys had those ducks and they were trying to pick 'em up. And they had this officer standing there with his swagger stick, get ashore! Get ashore! And they were drowning. And the boys that saw that, that's still in our minds because you know, when they went ashore, the water comes up just like that.

Pretty fast.

Robert Pryor: The tide, yes, and so what happened when we landed there, we de-waterproofed our vehicle. We had 'em up so where it could come ashore in the water. Now most of them drowned out, but it helped some. So I sat there that day and that night. The Germans came over and bombed them straight to hell out of us, and one of my best buddies was the first man in our outfit to get hit and he got a piece of a nose cone of a shell, hit him on the leg and damaged him pretty bad. He told 'em he'd go back, they wanted to go back to England with him, take him back. He said I want to stay. So he was our first man. He stayed all the time. We finally went up to a place called Foristay Sorisi, about three days later, and my first real thing while I was going, we were going up there, we went away from the beach. There was a terrible condition of bodies and everything. And there was a body laying in the road. It was little narrow roads over there then. And I was in the first vehicle, and I got out and it was one of our boys. He had been shot right here, and we believe a sniper got him.

Right between the eyes.

Robert Pryor: They were probably guarding. And I drug him off the road. I put his rifle up and his helmet up so they could see him. That was my first real bad, close experience. Later on

I did it to a couple more, you know, later on. And so we went to that area and the 2nd Armored was not ready to go into battle because we were, the big boys had planned St. Lo was gonna be our first main battle area. I went over to this place and so my captain, now some of the boys were fighting in the hedge rows, the Infantry boys, not our boys. So I got to go over with him and we learned to be forward observers. I mean I learned to be the radio operator and he was a forward. We had practiced that in England, but it's a new world then.

When you got bullets coming at you.

Robert Pryor: So I did that for about two weeks I learned that. In fact even in Americans we brought up some tanks. We couldn't get through those hedge rows. You know what they were.

Yes sir.

Robert Pryor: And they brought us some up with rockets on them, about three rockets on them, and they fired those rockets to see if they could blast that hedge row. It's about 10 feet high and the rockets are not accurate, if you know that. And it cost a million dollars to move it with that rocket. So that was nothing. So somebody invented a thing to put on in front of the tanks like teeth, and they rammed into that hedge row with those tanks and it could eventually break it down. What was happening, they were going up and as their bodies was like this, it drove it, shooting through the bottom of the tanks and shooting the boys. Of course the hedge row was terrible. We'd make 100 yards a day. So finally we went to St. Lo. I think France in my mind was the worst of it because you never knew where the Germans were. They were in front of us, back of us, side of us, and with us, in those days. Eventually we got organized, you know. I mean we got lines. But then we had no lines. We were here and they were here and they were behind us and we're shooting in three directions.

Because of the hedge rows and just the way the terrain was.

Robert Pryor: You couldn't make 100 yards sometimes all day. And poor boys that's getting killed was something terrible. Then so I was as I knew Morse code, and in those days our radios were not near the quality that they are later, so what happened was, we were using Morse code quite a bit because that FM radio, if you were behind an object, it didn't do any good. So I was a buck sergeant. My head man was a staff sergeant. He'd been in the Army about five years. Well he, emotionally, left us. We had that happen, you know, and so they brought me in because I was the only Morse code one we had and they didn't want me killed. Can you believe it? They told me we don't want you killed, a port observer _____. And I stayed with the battery mostly. I got a citation, you know. And so that was our St. Lo, and that was probably I think in my mind one of the hardest things. The next hardest thing in my mind was the cold in The Bulge. We had no overcoats. You didn't know that, did you? Armored people didn't have overcoats. How could we jump and out of the vehicles?

Oh, I never thought about that.

Robert Pryor: Miserable. We had 90 percent of our thing was counter artillery with us, and we did have the battle when we got the citation for it, with the Germans right in front of us, you know what I mean? And we got up with those vehicles it was wonderful, we could get up with the Infantry when they jumped off because we didn't want them to get too far ahead of us and in the old days, we would've had to unhook the vehicles from the cannon, bring the truck up, hook it up to the cannon, you know, then we'd have to go get the piece to carry the artillery shells, and

hook it up, and try to follow. This was more of, we carried about 60 rounds and every one of those things stayed right with 'em, right with 'em, and we had three batteries in our battalion, and what we did, they were like this. This guy here was far in, and this guy went ahead of him, you know, the moment they could, and then when this guy was far in, this guy here started coming up and he went ahead of this guy, but then these guys, see, and we kept always advancing with the tanks and the Infantry as much as we could.

Yes sir.

Robert Pryor: And we didn't want to get over 3,000 yards, which if you get too close, direct power, you've got too many obstacles in the way. But I mean you've got the line of power and you would hit a house. But if you use it as this type of a cell, you can go over the houses, see what I mean?

Yes sir.

Robert Pryor: You can't fire 100 yards over a house. You can't reach the weapon that high. So we had the book that the general wrote, we fired about 136,000 rounds, our battalion. Can you believe it? How much money it cost?

I would have no idea.

Robert Pryor: Can you believe it? Probably 14th fired more because they fired in Sissaymore and more in Africa. What they did, they formed two columns identical, two artillery tank, everything identical, and whenever they could they went down two roads. They went down this road and this road. And they had R if they could, which was another identical thing, and he went wherever the heavy load was.

Who's he?

Robert Pryor: The R, that's Reserve. We had three combat teams identical. So what happened, this team went down A, B, so the A ran into a hell of a time. Here comes R right up there with them. Or for this one, they went over to this side.

I gotcha.

Robert Pryor: The balance, which we did mostly that because my commanding officer was the youngest colonel in the division, you know, he was like 28 years old, lieutenant colonel. That's pretty good. Very brave man, died a few years ago. A Seal contacted his wife and anything you want to ask me any questions about?

Were you with Patton's group right up until into Berlin?

Robert Pryor: Yes, he left us in Africa, yes. Yes, Patton was with us I guess what, two years or better. Yes, we were with him and – see what happened, when we made the invasion of Africa, he was there at Sicily. But then when we went to France and we got ready to go there, he got moved up to, well he got in trouble as you know. Then he got to the 3rd Army, and it was a secret army so to speak. And they jumped in about August. We went in in June, and they, Patton got the credit.

But you guys were there first.

Robert Pryor: But Patton was a very, you knew he was there. He wasn't a coward. He was brave. But he wanted everybody else -

To follow him.

Robert Pryor: Yeah, no once my colonel writes a story about our bird colonel, was so brave that he got himself killed in early July of the war because he was always up front. Well after all, there's a time and place to use this. If you've got artillery or tanks, don't you get a tank and go up there yourself. Isn't that right? Let them help you. And he always says come on.

So you went through the Battle of the Bulge and what happened after that?

Robert Pryor: Well, after the Battle of the Bulge, the cold, then we went back to the Ror River and had to cross that and all the rivers. See, we were up there at Gally Kurkin and places on the Ror River when the Bulge happened. We drove all night in the snow and misery down to where the battle was. On Christmas Day, we took on two German armor divisions and whipped them.

After driving all night.

Robert Pryor: Well, we got a half a day rest, and we went in Christmas Day and fought for two days or three days there constantly, and destroyed two divisions.

Wow. Did you get wounded at all during any of this?

Robert Pryor: All right, I got hit once near Acken in the hand, and a little old blood dropped out and this friend said you'll get a Purple Heart. I said if you mention that - I got my helmet shot off, and at the Ror River I got my helmet shot off. I was with the Infantry, and it went ping, and it went off. We didn't know where it was trapped at, and that guy said where are you hit? I said I don't know. I wore the helmet and when we got ready to go to Berlin, Captain Kerry said for God sake Pryor, get rid of that helmet. I went into supply and gave me a new helmet. I wish I'd brought it home. It had a big, old streak right across it. Could you believe it?

Oh yeah, I do.

Robert Pryor: That close.

So you went in to Berlin, too.

Robert Pryor: Yes.

What did you do while you were in Berlin?

Robert Pryor: I had about 150 men to _____. When Churchill and all them were speaking, I had 'em as a guard detail. You couldn't control 'em. After getting free, and they were free, you couldn't do it. Have you ever seen pictures of us - we bought watches and sold them to the Russians. Did you know that?

No sir.

Robert Pryor: For about \$600 or \$800. I sold my GI watch that cost about \$7 for about \$450. Of course you know, once I show you some pictures you're going to, I played poker every, we played poker, and when the shells came in, we were playing on a raincoat, and at night we had a handkerchief with a damn flashlight, and when we got ready to move in the hole, the first word was don't touch the cards. We'd leave the cards there, believe it, and we went in our hole and came back when it was over with and continued our game. Can you believe it?

Yes sir, you are living proof to tell me. I do believe it.

Robert Pryor: I can show you pictures. I gambled. Blackjack all the time.

I'd like to see some of the pictures that you had when we get ready.

Robert Pryor: I have lots of them if you want to see some, but the thing about it is, we had a man wounded.

Was this in Berlin?

Robert Pryor: No, all through, we had a lot of wounded, lots of wounded. None of them wanted to leave. They went to the hospital. A jet plane at Alsgarth, Germany in the Ror River, hit my half track, it got battered up something bad. Had the bed roll shot off. I had my antenna shot off. So anyway, this jet, believe it or not, first jet we ever saw, came over and dropped a bomb and he dropped it on a building we were in. I have pictures of the church where we lost about six or eight guys there. But anyway he dropped a bomb. The building that we were in sleeping was derelict, the building, so the bomb finished it. But what happened, the walls fell in and this friend of mine, the ____, was sleeping here and the wall looked like it was on him, and he was screaming to get it off, and we were lifting the wall. My God, what happened, the ____, he was slumped like that and the wall was just short of his legs, but he thought that was it. One man was hit with a hole this big in his shoulder, and I rode to the hospital with him in the ambulance, and he was one of my men, and I went up there and they says this sight I still see, we go back about three or four miles and there's an old building there like a warehouse, and there must've been 100 men laying out there in the rural, they all got a tag on their foot, and that tag tells what's happened. This doctor and a couple of doctors or people went down, gave him his shot, bring him in, can't do anything for him. My God, did that man heard that? Can't do anything for him? And they left him there. That really, you know, and anyway, my band came back three months later. Yes, see they all wanted to come back, the ____. The thing about it when I was riding in the ambulance, there were cobblestone roads over there, and the damn thing was just bouncing like hell, and we had three wounded guys in the ambulance. So I said to the driver, for God sakes, slow down. The guys were bleeding out the mouth. Oh, they'll be all right. Well see, he was so used to it. It's a new world.

You told me that before.

Robert Pryor: Yes, and I went to Berlin and I went to the Russians' area. What happened, we were selling watches and stuff like that, and it was getting to the point where the Russians were starting to print their money and our government wasn't starting to take any more of it. They falsified, they cheated us again, see, even then. So what happened, I went over to the town, it's the best part of Berlin and the Russians lived there, so I went with this Jewish boy who spoke Polish and Russian, and I had a watch, one watch left, and you had to hold it in your hand and

what you did, I held it like this and I showed it to him and I went like this when he wasn't looking, like this see, to keep it. Otherwise, a minute later it would stop running. So we wanted \$500 for it, and this Russian kept saying cylinder, cylinder. I found out later it meant cheap, crappy. It was. So finally we got \$500 for it. Now we're in a barracks with all Russian officers in this town separated from everybody. To walk from here to that wall out of that building, it was just like this but we couldn't run. We walked fast and got out. The minute we hit the door, we started running. We must've got about 50 or 75 yards and we heard somebody hollering and looked up, burp, burp, he was shooting at us.

They figured out you screwed 'em.

Robert Pryor: Might be. We made turn after turn after turn. We'd have lost 'em. We didn't care. We wanted to get away from him before he went back and got a car. He would've shot us.

He was pretty angry.

Robert Pryor: Well yeah.

So your unit then, you did guard duty in Berlin.

Robert Pryor: In Berlin.

And then what happened, when was that over with? What took place?

Robert Pryor: Well, we stayed over there. Originally we went over there according to what I understand, we were probably the strongest division in Europe, the 2nd Army was probably the most powerful. We were the largest, strongest, most active fighting as ever. The artillery, I mean the Infantry units, the paratroopers, they were all good, but they didn't have what we had.

You had the fire power.

Robert Pryor: Fire power and those things. So what happened, we stayed in Berlin and we had some little problems with the Russians, but we were sent there by according to Eisenhower because we knew the Russians were going to give us trouble. See, they kept us from coming there for about a month. By the time, every time we'd start to go into Berlin, they'd tear up their bridges so we couldn't get across the bridge, and they said they were repairing them. So our engineer said we'll help you. No, we'll do it. So they kept us. But what was happened, they were afraid, they say that they were such a crummy outfit, they told, there for broke with every ___ they told it, they hung another vehicle. They had a bunch of people, I think they were Mongolians up in, and they said they were rather limited knowledge but they're cannon fodder. You know what I mean?

Yeah, I think so.

Robert Pryor: They said that April 1st, give us the Germans, and when they got shot, they sent another group of them to pick up the rifles of the guys that got shot and keep on going. And finally overwhelmed them, and then the real guys could come in.

Wow. How long were you in Berlin after the war was over?

Robert Pryor: I think about two months. And I came home, I was ready to come home on points then, but I was still the only guy who could take Morse code in my outfit, so they offered me Warrant Officer. You know what Warrant Officer is?

No, tell me.

Robert Pryor: It's a Mister, called a Mister. And but stayed one more year in the Army. I said no. I started to go over to CS in the States. My Captain's pass said how good are you in math? I said I'm fair. This is about the time the war broke out. I said I'm fair. He said well I'll tell you, they want you to go up to artillery school in Oklahoma. They said about three weeks before you graduate, they're going to say Mr. Pryor, you're doing very well. You're a little light in math, but we're gonna put you in the Infantry. He said that's all they wanted in the first place was Infantry officers, they'd lose so many of them. He said you're foolish to go.

And you relied on his advice.

Robert Pryor: And I think it's smart because I was fair in math. I finally graduated in math because that's what I took, but at that time I was just a high school boy in math.

So after you came back from Berlin, you were there for two months in Berlin and came back to the States?

Robert Pryor: Just a short time to go home. I could've gone home before, but they asked me to stay to do the job. I had the whole radio section. I had about 9-12 guys of my men that were under me, and so, see and we lost a guy I told you. The guy, I lost him at St. Lo.

Oh, the fellow you picked up –

Robert Pryor: Yeah, I wouldn't name names.

No, well OK. What did you do after you got out?

Robert Pryor: I came home and I had about two months to start school. My sister introduced me to a girl. I went with her. Then I decided I only had \$100, we got paid \$100 approximately three months I think, and so I decided to go to work and my folks had moved to Detroit due to a job that my father had, a job my father worked for the government. Well in those days you couldn't fly home on weekends, in 1944, '43, you know that. So what happened, the family had to move and they were there probably a year. They had to just rent their house out and move to a state where they could see him once in a while. So what happened, I went down to Chrysler to join a job there for about two months until I started school. When I went in, they wanted me to join the union, and I said well, I'm only gonna be here two months and I hated to spend the money to join the union. Well the guy said, you know what we did for you? I said what? He said we got you \$1.60 a hour, something like that, you know. I said you know what I did for you?

Kept you from having to speak German.

Robert Pryor: What the guy told me. If I didn't join, he says, now we don't like this, but somebody's gonna stick a knife in your tires. So I joined the union. I hope that doesn't ever be a reflection on any union would slaughter me, and I had no hate for them. But that was wrong.

That was a requirement at that time and it probably still is.

Robert Pryor: I mean to tell me what they did for me.

Oh yeah, you did it all.

Robert Pryor: Well we.

That's what I mean, you, your generation.

Robert Pryor: Anyway it hurt me to think that they cared more for that money, and I had the worst job. You know what time my job was? From 4:00 in the afternoon til 2:00 in the morning. What I did, the car that went down the line, I was only there two months, and when the bodies come together, here's a top and here's a side, they go together and they put solder about this wide and joined the two, and so rough solder. You had to have a thick file and as that moves along, you're smoothing that down.

So you were the file guy.

Robert Pryor: Oh, I'll tell you a funny thing. One day there was a big piece of brown paper there. We were walking along and I stepped on it, so I reached down and I picked up the piece

of paper and I walked from here to there and I put it in the barrel. Dan Stuart came over and said what the hell are you trying to do? I said why? You trying to shut us down? I said why? You're supposed to go push that bell, button right there, I would come over and say what's your problem? You would tell me this paper is here. I would get a guy whose job it is to put that paper in that barrel.

You were there two months, you went to college. What was your career after graduation?

Robert Pryor: I went to Admiral Corporation and I was head of the north side of Chicago.

And that's Admiral Radio –

Robert Pryor: Corporate Radio TV.

Radio and TV, right.

Robert Pryor: Yes.

You and I know what it is, but people listening to this won't know.

Robert Pryor: Then I moved my mother, my daddy passed away and my mother fell and broke her hip and I took my mother in, to her house, you know, and I went, she couldn't stand the weather up there. So I told the Admiral people I had to move somewhere warm for my mother. My mother lived to be 99. And they empowered me.

So it's really in your genes, because you're 90.

Robert Pryor: I will be in November.

In November, and you look great.

Robert Pryor: And so anyway, so what I did, ___ hired me, distributor hired me here, and I came down here at \$105 a week, too.

What year was that?

Robert Pryor: '47 or '48. Can you believe that? Wasn't that real money?

Well it probably was real money.

Robert Pryor: I told them I had to have \$105. That's what I got in Chicago. Said we can't pay like that. And I'm head of the circuits department. That's the kind of money. And so anyway I went down here and I had taken electronics. If you see up there, I have a diploma, and I'll tell you about that thing. I went to University of Illinois and I told you it was ridiculous – music, civics – I said I'm 25 years old. I don't need music and civics and gym. I need a job, a business to get into to get math to live with. But you had to take all those other stupid subjects. I went three straight years and no vacation, went three straight years and got my degree.

That's great.

Robert Pryor: But I bought a business, never used it.

What kind of a business was it?

Robert Pryor: TV, sales and service, electronics.

How interesting.

Robert Pryor: Made a good living. You couldn't do it today. You couldn't make a living in television today.

Not like you did.

Robert Pryor: We fixed 'em in those days.

My dad was a radio man in the Navy and when he got out, he ended up buying a television repair store, sales and service, and you're right. You can't do it. Then he went to work for Varian Associates, and he went to work for an electronics firm out in the Bay Area of California, and so you're right. It's not the same as it was.

Robert Pryor: I had my own business. I had 6 to 10 men working for me at times, did a curly little business, but today you can't, you wouldn't really fix that set.

No, you'd throw it away.

Robert Pryor: Now you wouldn't. If it's \$500, you're not going to fix it. They argued back in those days a \$5 service call, and they argued about \$10-\$15 repairs. You'd be surprised. Ask your daddy.

I can't anymore, but yeah. Well I'll tell you Mr. Pryor, I've enjoyed sitting here and listening to your combat experience and looking at the plaques and the information on the wall, and I'd like to look at some photographs.

Robert Pryor: I'll show you some stuff.

But before we sign off of this, is there anything that you'd like to, any advice or -?

Robert Pryor: Well, I have a couple of friends. I have a friend, I'm gonna show you a book that's unbelievable. He just sent me a, up a radio school, went to school with him, he was in the engineers. He drove the colonel through the war, which is a plus job, you know, and he wrote a book which is in a museum in New Orleans. I'm gonna show you a copy of it. He also just wrote me another letter about a ____, he has such recall on names and places it's unbelievable. He's a year older than I am, and he came out of this, none of us had a pot to pee in, and he said he bought a car dealership. I said how the hell did you buy a car dealership? Good credit.

Now is he here in Texas?

Robert Pryor: No, he's in Carolina. And I've got, I had a lots of lots of friends, but they're all dead, all of them. I have three or four friends left, and most of them can't travel. We're having a

reunion in September in New Orleans, and God willing my wife and I are gonna go. I've got a friend that talked to you the other day, Jack Sleddery -

You probably talked to James Crabtree.

Robert Pryor: All right, then Jack talked to him. Jack Sleddery is our editor of our bulletin which I'll show you. So anyway, he can drive for me.

That's probably how I got your name because James interviewed one of your friends that was in the 2nd Armored and he gave James your name and that's how James sent it down. James is up in Austin.

Robert Pryor: All right.

Well I'm gonna sign this off. I'm gonna ask you, if a young man or woman that's going in the service today came to you to get advice, maybe one of your grandchildren or great grandchildren, what would you tell them about service to the country?

Robert Pryor: I would tell 'em that you get out of it what you put in it. I never was sorry I was in the service. I think it's the greatest thing that happened to me in five years. You learn people. You learn a lot about people as you know, good, bad, and indifferent. It's nice to have done something right and I'll tell you what, we, I have a book here if you read his book, you'll remind that every time he had a chance, morale was absolutely 100 percent, we never had, we had griping of course. We went for a month with C-rations and coffee and no sleep, a month. We were so tired that guns were firing and we still fell asleep. You can't believe it. Those men were exhausted. We fought three and four, five days and we had no, we little pup tents if you put one down, another one together, we'd never use it. We just laid on the ground. We laid in the snow. Those boys went, well I'll show you.

Well let me go ahead and put this off...

[End of recording]