

## **Interview with Robert and John “Mac” Eads**

### **Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Program**

**August 8, 2010, Seward, Alaska**

**Interviewed by Rachel Mason, National Park Service  
Transcribed by Professional Transcripts**

*This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Robert and John “Mac” Eads was recorded with their permission on a digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.*

*The transcript has been lightly edited.*

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(The dictation starts out with dialogue before the interview starts.)

**Robert Eads:** ....for him, because he's got a hearing aid on.

**Rachel Mason:** I sure will. (Laughter.)

**Mac Eads:** I'm a little deaf. I've got a hearing aid here and I might have to turn it up a little bit.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:00:13.2] Okay. We are here in the home of Robert Eads and John “Mac” Eads and it is August 8, 2010. We're in Seward, Alaska. My name is Rachel Mason. With me here are Shannon Kovac and Karen Brewster. We're here to hear a little bit about the lives of Bob and Mac. I am going to start with Mac because he's the oldest, I understand.

**Mac Eads:** I will be 91 in November.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay. That was my first question. [0:00:46.3] When were you born? Where did you grow up?

**Mac Eads:** Born in Valentine, Nebraska. We grew up there and went through high school. Then I went to California after school. After I got out of school.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** But first I spent – did you ever hear of the CCCs? [0:01:01.8]

**Rachel Mason:** Yes.

**Mac Eads:** Well, I spent a year and a half in there and I was a truck driver and a cat skinner – Caterpillar operator.

**Rachel Mason:** Where did you work for the CCC?

**Mac Eads:** We had a camp at the migratory waterfowl refuge there in – south of Valentine about 30 miles. It was a large refuge and I spent a lot of time building firebreaks there because it's prairie country and they had to have firebreaks for prairie fires. I spent a lot of time on drag line digging potholes for ducks. I would dig holes in the marshes there that would be about 50 feet wide and 200 feet long and 4 feet deep and they would fill up with water. The ducks would nest around there.

**Rachel Mason:** Really?

**Mac Eads:** The government would feed them with corn.

**Rachel Mason:** Why did they want to feed those ducks?

**Mac Eads:** They wanted to increase the population.

**Rachel Mason:** For duck hunters?

**Mac Eads:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. You know, I was back there about five years ago and I went out to that refuge and I can still see those holes. They're still used by the ducks.

**Rachel Mason:** No kidding!

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Huh.

**Mac Eads:** Fifty years later.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh. Well that was a great service.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:02:29.7] So, why did you end up in California?

**Mac Eads:** When I went to California I got a job driving a bus and in my spare time I was a special officer in a fight arena and on the weekends I was a lifeguard at Muscle Beach in Santa Monica.

**Rachel Mason:** Really? Huh. What was that like?

**Mac Eads:** The worst fight there was fighting the girls off.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. (Laughter.) Off you.

**Robert Eads:** Tough duty, huh?

**Mac Eads:** There were lots of girls.

**Rachel Mason:** What an assignment, being a lifeguard.

**Mac Eads:** But you know, we were the first ones to instigate the real method of pulling a lifeguard in with a customer. We'd go out and get a customer and we used to just pull them in and swim them in. We rigged up a deal where the lifeguard would take a buoy out with him and make a little small line off of a reel on the beach that worked like this, you know.....

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** .....and then when we'd get a hold of somebody, the other lifeguard would just reel us in like a fish.

**Rachel Mason:** (Laughter.) How great. [0:03:36.3] Well, when did you go into the service?

**Mac Eads:** I was inducted into the service in Colorado. A friend of mine – me and a friend of mine went to Colorado to stay with his sister.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** He said, if they induct us in California they'll send us to New Jersey and we'll never see California again, but if we go to Colorado and get inducted here, they'll send us right back to California. That's exactly what they did.

**Rachel Mason:** Really.

**Mac Eads:** I was inducted the second day of December 1941, just a few days before Pearl Harbor, and was sent to Fort Bliss down in New Mexico, El Paso – El Paso, Texas, that's where it was. We were only there just until Pearl Harbor. Then we were immediately shipped to get back to California.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. [0:04:32.9] What – do you remember when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**Mac Eads:** Yes, I do.

**Rachel Mason:** What happened then?

**Mac Eads:** Well, I was – I was – it was Sunday, Sunday morning, and I was just getting dressed to go into town. Me and a friend were going to visit El Paso. The First Sergeant

came in the tent there where I was dressing. He said, you take all those civilian clothes and throw them away. He said, we're at war. I said, what happened. He told me about Pearl Harbor. I could hardly believe it, but it was true. From then on, I never saw a bit of civilian clothes until 1945 when I got out of the Army.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. Where did they send you?

**Karen Brewster:** Rachel, can we take a pause for a second?

**Rachel Mason:** Yes. (Pause and then restarting of recording.) I forgot where we were. Oh, you had just heard about Pearl Harbor, and where did they send you then?

**Mac Eads:** [0:05:27.3] They sent us out to Camp Roberts in California, which is near Paso Robles, California.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** Just north of San Francisco. Is it north of San Francisco? No, north of Santa Barbara, south of San Francisco, yeah, about midway between. Camp Roberts was a huge, huge training camp for inductees.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** I went through training there in a heavy weapons outfit for – I was a machine gunner on a 50-caliber machine gun.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** That's where I was when I was sent to the Aleutians. I was in that – I spent some time in Fort Lewis, Washington, and then after a few months there then we were shipped up to the Aleutian Islands.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay. [0:06:22.0] And where did you go in the Aleutians?

**Mac Eads:** An island called Umnak.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** And that's the next island out from Unalaska Island.

**Rachel Mason:** Yes.

**Mac Eads:** Past Dutch Harbor.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** There was a huge installation there. They had – there was a harbor there called Chernovsky Bay.....

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Mac Eads:** .....which is not far from Umnak, but it was a very sheltered harbor and that's where they unloaded all of the cargo to go to Umnak for 40,000 men. They pulled me out of the infantry there because I had my 201 file from the CCC camp following me through the Army and they saw that I had experience on Caterpillar engines.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Mac Eads:** Well, these boats had Caterpillar engines in them so I was put on there as a Chief Engineer on about a 100-foot boat and I immediately went from a buck Private to a Master Sergeant in one day.

**Rachel Mason:** Really.

**Mac Eads:** One day.

**Rachel Mason:** That's good.

**Mac Eads:** Because the job carried that rating. That's – then I spent the whole rest of my Army time in the Aleutians. I went around the North Pacific, even going to Seattle a couple of times on boat.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:07:42.2] How long did you stay at Chernovsky Bay?

**Mac Eads:** I was around Chernovsky Bay there two years.

**Rachel Mason:** Really? Oh, okay. Where did you stay while you were there?

**Mac Eads:** On my boat.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, you had a boat there.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, on the boat I was on. It had living quarters for nine men.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** I was not only the engineer. I was also the gunner. We had a 50-caliber machine gun up on top of the wheelhouse and I was also the gunner.

**Rachel Mason:** Did you ever have to shoot the gun?

**Mac Eads:** Oh we practiced every month. We had to – it was mandated that we go through the routine once a month, so that if you did have to use it, you knew what you were doing.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Mac Eads:** [0:08:27.5] Prior to my getting onto the boat I was still in the infantry on Umnak there and when the Japanese attacked they pulled us out of the infantry, all the gunners that had experience, and put us on 20 mm Oerlikon guns that they had taken off the liberty ships and installed around this runway. They had quite a squadron of P-40s there. When the Japanese attacked, with these Zeros off of the aircraft carriers, they were out south of the Aleutians there somewhere in the fog. I don't know how they found us, but they did. When they attacked there, they immediately sent up these P-40s after them. They were eager to get after them. They were flying around there firing at each other. Of course, we were infantry men. We didn't know one airplane from another, you know, we couldn't tell. Our pilots soon found out that they were outflown, outgunned and outmaneuvered by these Zeros and they couldn't do anything with them except get them on their tail and bring them down over the runway where we could shoot at them. We thought the Americans were chasing the Japanese.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** We didn't have any idea that an American would be running away from a Japanese.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh no! (Laughter.)

**Mac Eads:** So here they come down over the runway one right after another and we're shooting at this first airplane out there, but we're hitting the back – we were hitting the Zero. We didn't know that. We had no experience on shooting what they call deflection shooting, you know. We had no experience on that whatsoever. We had tracers and I could see – when I was firing that gun I could see those tracers going toward that airplane I was shooting at, but it seemed like they were curving off like this and going toward the back airplane. Then I thought, well, I'd better take a lead on these guys, but then I thought well, maybe we'd better find out which airplane's which (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, really (laughter). You were actually shooting at the Americans?

**Mac Eads:** [0:10:44.5] Well, what happened there that was of note, was the fact that we shot down the very first intact Zero that the U.S. got in World War II. The very first one.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh. That's good.

**Mac Eads:** We shot that guy's oil line off of his engine and then his engine quit so he glided across Umnak Pass there and lit on the south end of Unalaska Island in a marsh there in the tundra. The plane landed and flipped over. It didn't damage the plane any, but it broke his neck so he couldn't destroy the airplane. It killed him.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

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**Mac Eads:** In three days the Navy had a barge in there and the Seabees took that airplane intact to Dutch Harbor, dismantled it and they either flew it or they shipped it back to Wright Field in Ohio and there it was reassembled. They had the first intact Zero that they could examine and find out what they were up against.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Mac Eads:** And they did find it. The first thing they found out was that this Zero had had no paint on it. So they painted it the same – with the same paint that they painted the American planes with, the OD paint. Found out that they lost about 15 miles an hour of air speed just from the paint.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** After that they never painted another fighter plane.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm. So they learned something from it.

**Mac Eads:** They found out real – right quick about that. They also flew that Zero from Wright Field to California and at that time they had all of these air raid wardens that would look up in the sky at every airplane. This plane flew all the way from Wright Field to California. Nobody ever identified it as a Japanese plane. Course, the Americans they put the white star and everything on it you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, now was that while you were at Umnak that you were shooting at those Zeros?

**Mac Eads:** Yes. Then after this attack I went back into my original company there and that's when they pulled me out of the infantry and put me on a boat over at Chernovsky.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** I was there for two years.

**Rachel Mason:** Was there a ranch operating in Chernovsky too? [0:13:04.5]

**Mac Eads:** There was.

**Rachel Mason:** What happened to the ranch during the war?

**Mac Eads:** It kept operating all the time and we supplied them. We'd put barges of feed and stuff in there. It was a sheep ranch. No cattle.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. I know some people from Kashega, a Native village, they worked at the ranch. They got sent to southeast Alaska during the war. So did you have much time on land at the ranch or anywhere around Chernovsky then?

**Mac Eads:** Well, we went ashore sometimes. We were also sent around to Makushin Bay. You know where that is?

**Rachel Mason:** Sure, yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Okay. [0:13:49.2] We were sent around there one time just to fish. The Captain of my boat was a Native Alaskan and he was a good fisherman.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, what was his name?

**Mac Eads:** His name was John Hoff. Johnny Hoff. He was a real experienced boatman. He's dead now, but he was really good. The military sent him around there to catch – the pink salmon were running. We caught tons and tons and tons of them and put them on our boat, took them to Chernovsky, put them on ice. They had ice machines there. We put them on ice and then took them to the installation at Umnak and they all had fresh fish.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:14:32.3] What did you usually eat at Umnak?

**Mac Eads:** Well, on our boat you mean?

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Mac Eads:** We had regular meals. We had a cook on board. He was a good cook. We lived just like you would in a house.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, good.

**Mac Eads:** So, the..... [0:14:56.3] Oh, at Chernovsky there was a flight of Canadian P-40s that were flying from – I believe they took off from Cold Bay. They were coming out to Umnak. They were all Canadian.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** There were four of them in this plane. They all few right into a ridge just right above Makushin Bay. Killed all the pilots. The planes bounced up, over and around. Tore them all up. We were sent over there to go and get the bodies and bring them back. As far as I know the planes are still laying there.

**Rachel Mason:** Really? Did you – did you find the bodies of the.....

**Mac Eads:** Oh, yeah. Found all of them. We had a grave crew with us who took care of them.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. Did you bury the dead?



**Mac Eads:** Oh no. We brought them into Umnak and they were shipped back. Their bodies were embalmed and shipped back to Canada. There was a real supply of cargo ships and liberty ships coming into Chernovsky. Lots of times we were unloading four ships at one time. There was one on – there was a dock on the west side of Chernovsky. There was a dock on the east side that would accommodate a liberty ship. We had anchorages out in the bay where we’d unload them. Everything that went from Chernovsky to Umnak went by barges. We towed those barges over. Hundreds and hundreds of barges. (Paused for cell phone ringing.)

**Robert Eads:** We’re back in business.

**Rachel Mason:** We’re back in business. So how many of you were on those boats?

**Mac Eads:** There was nine in the crew.

**Rachel Mason:** There was nine in the crew. [0:16:44.0] How did you get along with your fellow soldiers?

**Mac Eads:** Very well. Very well. Yeah, we were all pretty close. We depended on each other. Everybody in the crew had a job and they did it well. We had no complaints. Some of the boats had Captains on them that were not really qualified. I have had some experience being with those guys. They soon learned and got into the – just like anybody else would in a new job, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** What was your Captain like?

**Mac Eads:** My Captain was a Native and he had been on boats all of his life. Never did anything else but fish on boats, so he – he was boat wise.

**Rachel Mason:** That was that John Hoff that you mentioned.

**Mac Eads:** John Hoff, yes.

**Rachel Mason:** Where was he from anyway?

**Mac Eads:** King Cove.

**Rachel Mason:** King Cove. Oh, okay. That’s interesting.

**Mac Eads:** [0:17:40.9] He’s the one that introduced me to my wife.

**Rachel Mason:** That’s very interesting.

**Mac Eads:** She was here in Seward at the time and she was working on the dock as a longshoreman. She was also taking care of her younger brother and younger sister, so she was – she was a pretty competent person then.

**Karen Brewster:** She was a longshoreman?

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**Mac Eads:** Yeah, she was.

**Karen Brewster:** Your wife worked as a longshoreman?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, my wife worked as longshoreman.

**Rachel Mason:** Here in Seward.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Karen Brewster:** I didn't know women did those jobs back in those days.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. During the war they had a lot of women working on the dock. She was a jitney driver. They had little jitneys, like little four-wheel tractors, and they towed little cars behind them like a train. When you – they came onto the ship and the ship would unload cargo right onto these little carts and then take them into the warehouse. That's the way they handled cargo then. Everything's in containers now.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** You never saw a container then. The only container that was on those ships – remember those containers that had the liquor or something on them? They had a box that contained liquor.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** They guarded it very closely.

**Mac Eads:** The longshoremen were the best thieves you ever saw in your life.

**Rachel Mason:** Really?

**Mac Eads:** Oh, they could walk right by a – there could be like a case of whiskey sitting there. A guy could walk by there and slit that corner open and get a bottle out of that trunk and never miss a step (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** You didn't learn this from your wife did you? (Laughter.) That's pretty funny. [0:19:21.5] Yeah, I guess that's getting ahead of ourselves, but I'm very interested to know how you came to Seward. Did you come to visit John?

**Mac Eads:** The boat that John and I were on, we were sent around to the south side of Unalaska Island on a mission there that was pretty risky. We had to put the bow of our beach – the bow of our boat on the beach there and pump fuel to an outpost. I believe it was a weather station we had out there. That was Cape Prominence. Cape Prominence was the name. Okay. We had to set our boat on the beach and it was pounding from the surf all the time. These are wooden boats I'm talking about. We

damaged the underneath. About the first 30 feet of the planking were shattered. We were leaking like a sieve. John there had the Colonel on board. He was with us. He asked him to sign the log book to cover this operation. The Colonel did. So we damaged the boat so bad that when we got back to Chernovsky we could just barely keep up with the pump. Divers there went underneath and put a tarp and stuff on there, what they call a soft patch. It kept enough water out so we could come from there into Seward to the ship – they had the shipyard here, where they could haul that boat out. Well, when we got here we had to get in line. It took us six months before we ever got to the – we never even got to the shipyard.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh really?

**Mac Eads:** We were just laying in the harbor. So I asked the officer in charge here, Colonel Johnson, if I could get a job in town here doing something. He said sure. So, I got a job running a generator plant here. [0:21:23.9]

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** They had a water line run right by this house. It came down out of this canyon and right down to the shore there. They had 100 kilowatt generator there.

**Rachel Mason:** That was during the war?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Rachel Mason:** What year was that?

**Mac Eads:** That was during the war. That would be in 1943 I think.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, it must've been pretty wild here with all of the military stationed here too.

**Mac Eads:** Oh, it was. The riots were pretty common down at the – down at the Yukon Bar. (Laughter.) Anyway, I spent a lot of time – I was running that generator at night and I would – this company also owned the phone service in town here. There were 60 phones in town at the time. I was the night operator at the time. I was a phone operator.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** Sometimes I'd get three or four calls (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** Wow, you were pretty busy.

**Mac Eads:** Most of the time I was with the generator and they had a backup diesel generator there in case the wheel went down, which it did. This was a real bad water supply up here for generations of any kind because the water was so dirty. The spruce needles and the leaves and whatever they couldn't strain out would get into the nozzle and plug it up. We had to fight with it all the time, so we had to shut it down and clean it and start up the diesel generator. At that time there were two light companies in town. The one I worked for was Seward Light and Power, and the other one was Seward Electric. The one for the city was called Seward Electric. The other one was called Seward Light. They used the same poles and wires and stuff. They got along good. Neither one of them had enough generation to supply the whole town anyhow. Took about 300 kilowatts to supply the town. We could only supply 200 at the most. They worked well together and eventually the city bought this plant, but that was long after I left here.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:23:42.6] What were the other guys on your boat doing all those six months?

**Mac Eads:** Oh they were – most of them would – were put on other boats.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, I see.

**Mac Eads:** The key personnel on the boats, the Captain and the two engineers and one mate they kept on that boat. The deckhands and the cooks and stuff they assigned to other boats.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** At one time in those six months they assigned me to another boat. The engineer wanted to take it to Seattle. I engineered the boat down to Seattle and they sent me back by steamship.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. You were busy during those times.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Was that when John Hoff introduced you to your future wife? During that time? [0:24:26.9]

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. He introduced me to her. We were married here in 1943 and lived here all the time.

**Rachel Mason:** Since then.

**Mac Eads:** We had three children and they all grew up here. My – well, one daughter is here now. My other daughter died a couple of years ago from a brain tumor. My son lives in Anchorage. So, the family is still around.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. So, you got married when you were still in the Army.

**Mac Eads:** In the service, yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** When you were still in the service.

**Mac Eads:** But I – when I did that I rented a house so I could come home and live at home while I was in the service. I was on this boat, but there was nothing to do on the boat because we hadn’t got into the shipyard. After we got the boat repaired we went back out to the Aleutian Islands.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. But, leaving your new bride.....

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, yeah. She was here working on the dock and I was out working on the boat.

**Rachel Mason:** That’s great. [0:25:31.2] So where did you go after you went back to the Aleutians?

**Mac Eads:** I went back out to the Aleutian Islands and then they assigned me to a larger boat and this larger boat was 150 footer and it was a freight – what they called an FP boat, freight and passenger boat. We went all over the North Pacific, down to Juneau and up to Nome and up all over with freight and passengers. Our main job was hauling USO troops around.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** USO troops were entertaining the troops you know. We towed those around and that was pretty good duty.

**Rachel Mason:** That must’ve been fun – yeah, what a great duty (laughter). First a lifeguard, then the USO.

**Mac Eads:** That was pretty good duty.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh. Who were some of the entertainers that came there?

**Mac Eads:** There was not a – no headliners that I can remember that were prominent at the moment. I know – I remember one time that Ingrid Bergman was here at Seward.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, gee.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. My wife talked to her.

**Rachel Mason:** Really?

**Mac Eads:** I wasn’t here at the time she was.

**Rachel Mason:** How did your wife encounter her?

**Mac Eads:** At a – some kind of a doings that she was raising money for the troops and my wife was working in the same – same project.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. I understand. So, were the USO entertainers, were they mostly singers or.....

**Mac Eads:** Mostly singers, yeah. Some of them were magicians.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh really?

**Mac Eads:** Some of them were acrobats.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Mac Eads:** Most of them were singers though. They were good singers. I thought they were excellent.

**Rachel Mason:** I bet.

**Mac Eads:** I was no judge (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** So, where all would you take them?

**Mac Eads:** I remember taking one to Juneau. One troop we took from here. We picked them up here in Seward, took them to Juneau first and brought them back to Yakutat, and then to Cordova, and then to Valdez, then Kodiak, back to Seward. And then they went away somewhere.

**Rachel Mason:** That's interesting. Did you ever take them out to Dutch Harbor or Adak, or.....

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, we had some out there too. I remember we took one troop to – one USO troop to Umnak.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Mac Eads:** That was after I'd left there.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. How long did you do that USO gig?

**Mac Eads:** Oh, I probably did that for six months, but then we were assigned to a burial unit. [0:28:22.0] We had a grave unit come on board and we went around to all of the installations and picked up the bodies of soldiers that had died or been shot or whatever.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, that must've been terrible.

**Mac Eads:** They were dead and we had to go like we picked them up in Kodiak and Cordova, Valdez, Middleton Island. I remember going out to Middleton Island and picking up two bodies.

**Rachel Mason:** So they weren't necessarily war casualties.

**Mac Eads:** No, they were just casualties.

**Rachel Mason:** They just died.

**Mac Eads:** They just died and some of them – had a lot of people commit suicide just like they do now. There's a lot of military suicides right now.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** And there was a lot then.

**Karen Brewster:** There were a lot then too, huh.

**Mac Eads:** There were some killed in arguments. Some of them drowned. Quite a few of them were drowned.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** [0:29:15.7] We had one of our crew drown at Kodiak one night.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh really!

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** How did that happen?

**Mac Eads:** He got drunk and didn't come back to the boat. We didn't know where he went, but the next morning at low tide he was hanging on one of the crossmembers of the docks.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. He fell into the boat.....

**Mac Eads:** Pretty sad.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. So how long did you do that?

**Mac Eads:** We were on that grave detail for I would say about at least four or five months.

**Rachel Mason:** So, after you picked up the bodies where would you take them?

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**Mac Eads:** The grave crew would – they were already embalmed. We would just take them and put them in hermetically-sealed caskets. We had the caskets in the hull and then we would take all of the caskets into Whittier and they were put on a train and sent to Anchorage, either buried in Anchorage or sent back home or whatever the Army did, you know. But, registration – the grave registration people are very accurate on keeping records of soldiers that died. They had their dog tags and they knew all of the particulars about them and they would – families would be notified. They were very particular about grave registration.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** They even do that in combat.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, that’s good.

**Karen Brewster:** Did you ever pick up any Japanese bodies?

**Mac Eads:** No. I missed that deal out in – the battle out in Attu, which was the biggest battle of the Aleutians. [0:30:58.0] The battle in Kiska, turned out to be the Japanese had all gone by the time the Americans and the Canadians landed on Kiska. That was a sad thing there too because the Americans landed on one side of Kiska and the Canadians landed on the other side and they were approaching each other. They thought they were approaching the enemy, both of them, and they got into a fight there and killed about 50.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** About 50 people were killed. There was a big plaque right at the end of the dock there on Kiska Island right now commemorating that thing.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Were you ever out there?

**Rachel Mason:** I’ve never been out there. I’m working on getting out to Attu because I’m working on a project out there.

**Mac Eads:** At Atka? We spent – Bob and I spent quite a bit of time there. [0:31:48.1] We spent another four years in the Aleutian Islands after the war.

**Rachel Mason:** You and Bob?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. On our own boat.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay. What were you doing there?

**Mac Eads:** We spent quite a bit of time around Atka.



**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** We had – after the war – this was like going to my own funeral coming back from Chernovsky Bay 20 years after the war was over. The moss was growing on the docks. The cables were hanging down and falling to pieces. The docks were kind of leaning a little bit. The Quonset huts were all caved in.

**Rachel Mason:** So there were some structures left over from World War II.

**Mac Eads:** Oh, yes. It was just like going to my own funeral when we went back to Chernovsky because Bob and I spent quite a bit of time in there with our own boat.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** We salvaged some winches and stuff there. At any case.....

**Rachel Mason:** So, just back to the grave detail.....

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Did you ever pick up anybody you knew or was there any time that.....

**Mac Eads:** Just our crew member is all.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, yeah.

**Mac Eads:** [0:32:54.2] The – getting back to the later time we went out to Kiska we had – we were working – had a charter with a scrap company that was scrapping out the Aleutian Islands.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, after the war.

**Mac Eads:** After the war. This was 20 years after, 1957. We were there 1957, '58, '59 and '60. Those four years we'd leave here in April and get back in December, so we spent quite a bit of time out there.

**Rachel Mason:** So this was a project to get rid of all of the scrap metal.....

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. But they were nonferrous. They were interested mainly in nonferrous like copper, brass, aluminum and stuff like that.

**Rachel Mason:** Salvaging it for.....

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Well, you wouldn't believe the amount of copper that was up in the Aleutian Islands.

**Rachel Mason:** Really?

**Mac Eads:** You’d take an installation of 40,000 men. They all had light poles with wires, generators, and this company would come in and saw those poles down just like forest and trees with chainsaws.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Haul them right over and then they would bust the insulators off, gather the wire together, wind it up into donuts and it would be about 900 pounds for each roll. Well, Bob and I hauled hundreds and hundreds of tons of that copper wire from different places into Adak where it was then shipped down to Tacoma where it was processed.

**Rachel Mason:** That’s right. Can I ask that – we get you out of the war first and then (laughter) I’ll hear Bob’s story of the war.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Then we’ll hear the story of the two of you. Okay, so you.....

**Mac Eads:** That’s about all I did.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, that’s all you did, okay.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, just run around on a boat.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:34:44.1] You got out of the service – how did you get out of the service?

**Mac Eads:** Like I told you, when the bomb hit Hiroshima.....

**Rachel Mason:** Yes.

**Mac Eads:** .....this Captain went right to Whittier, and we docked that boat. We all were just put on a train and sent to Anchorage and discharged.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, really, and then went home from there.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. You know that bomb was dropped in August of ’45 and on October the 2nd I was out of the Army.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Karen Brewster:** Did they just figure that was the end of the war?

**Mac Eads:** Pardon?

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**Karen Brewster:** You were discharged because they – pack up, that’s it, the war is over?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, I was discharged in Anchorage. Then I came home to here. I came to Seward and I’ve been here ever since.

**Rachel Mason:** That was convenient for you that you were in Whittier when it happened.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** What were you doing in Whittier when.....

**Mac Eads:** Well, that’s where the boats all docked and then we went from Whittier to Anchorage on a train.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. I see. So.....

**Mac Eads:** But that was 1945 and then Bob came up in 1946 and married my wife’s sister. We went into business together and in ’52 we got our own boat.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay. Well, great. All right. **[0:36:01.5]** Now I want to start focusing on Bob and get your story from the war and maybe the two of you can tell me about what you did after the war.

**Robert Eads:** Okay.

**Rachel Mason:** So, Bob, I assume you grew up in Valentine, Nebraska as well.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** What year were you born? **[0:36:16.6]**

**Robert Eads:** 1921.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Robert Eads:** We were all – all of us children there were born at home. Home born.

**Rachel Mason:** What position were you in the family?

**Robert Eads:** I’m the tail end.

**Rachel Mason:** You’re the tail end? How many of you were there?

**Robert Eads:** There were three brothers and we had one sister, but, she’s gone now.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm. So, Mac’s the second child, or was there.....

**Robert Eads:** He’s the third.

**Rachel Mason:** He’s the third one, okay.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, our sister was the oldest. Our other brother is in Valentine there now.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay. Then – so you two are the youngest ones in the family.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**Rachel Mason:** All right. **[0:37:14.5]** So, what did you do when you – how did you get into the service, I guess is my question.

**Robert Eads:** Oh, in the military?

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Eads:** I volunteered. I was too young to join on my own. I had to get my parents’ permission to go down and join up. I did that. They signed the papers. That was in December of ’41.

**Rachel Mason:** Was that after Pearl Harbor?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, about two to three days (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay. So that – was that why you decided to join the service?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**Rachel Mason:** After Pearl Harbor, you enlisted.

**Robert Eads:** So, I got signed up for the Army. It was the Army Air Corps then. It was still the Army, but anyhow I was sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for induction, physical and an induction. Then from there I went to Sheppard Field, Texas.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Eads:** Which is a – it was pretty good – it was a brand new field and it was the home of around 50,000 on that one base there.

**Rachel Mason:** Was your brother already in the military?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, he was up here by that time.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Robert Eads:** [0:38:57.5] By the time I got inducted and went to Sheppard Field, Texas, I signed up for all – anything that had to do with an airplane. I signed up for waist gunner, for A&E mechanic, and pilot training and everything. I went through the A&E school, which is Aircraft Engine, and I graduated out of that quite a bit later and then just before I was assigned to go anyplace, they called me in for pilot training. Then I went through the pilot training and took about six months to do that. We were trained for twin engine, multi engine.

**Rachel Mason:** Was that training for fighting?

**Robert Eads:** Well, they didn’t say then. There was – they had single – if you went into single engine, you would almost surely be in fighters, but multiengine could be bombers or air transport or whatever. I got a multiengine certificate for that and then we were – we took training in twin engine, and after we got our wings we went to Kansas City, Kansas for transition into C-47s. That’s what I flew for the rest of the war there.

**Rachel Mason:** What are C-47s? What is that?

**Robert Eads:** Well, they’re a DC-3.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** They are air cargo and paratrooper carriers.

**Rachel Mason:** So, that was your – your job was to carry the paratroopers?

**Robert Eads:** Uh-huh and tow gliders and resupply the people that you took in. When we got done with the transition we spent I think two weeks to transition on the C-47s and then I went to Alliance, Nebraska, to an air base there that formed the group that I stayed in, the 436 group, and 81st squadron. Then from there we went to North Carolina, pretty close to Fort Bragg where the paratroopers were. We had a continual supply of them to haul around, jump every day, and tow glided. We went up to, I think it was around Lawrence, Massachusetts, some place up there where they built the gliders.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** We would go up there and take about every fifth or sixth one that they flew or assembled. Then we’d tow them back down to North Carolina. We would practice towing them in combat.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Robert Eads:** Scenarios, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Were you with the same group of guys as you traveled from one place to another in training for.....

**Robert Eads:** No we didn’t – not the paratroopers. No, they were – we never knew the first name of one paratrooper.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** We hauled thousands of them.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. [0:43:04.7]

**Karen Brewster:** But your – the flight crew you worked with, it was always the same guys in the flight crew?

**Robert Eads:** Not particularly. They switched them around. It wasn’t like a bomber group where they got – where the pilot and co-pilot and everybody knew everybody. Never – all are family and all that, you know. We didn’t do that.

**Rachel Mason:** What about your commanding officers? Were they the same all the time?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, the commanding officers were the same, medical officers and everything.

**Mac Eads:** Your pilot group was always the same.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, the pilot group stayed pretty much the same.

**Rachel Mason:** Did you get along with those guys?

**Robert Eads:** Oh yeah. Yeah, you had to.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh (laughter).

**Robert Eads:** But they didn’t last forever either.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. [0:44:02.2] So, where were you sent to?

**Robert Eads:** Well, from North Carolina we left the Continental United States on Christmas Day of ’43, and then we flew south down through South America, and then from South America we flew across the Atlantic to Africa and then from there we flew up from Africa full length up to Great Britain.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Robert Eads:** Then from there we were in training for the invasion.

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

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**Robert Eads:** We had – at that time we were just towing one glider and then for the invasion they rigged us up to tow two gliders.

**Rachel Mason:** And by the invasion you mean D-Day?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, Normandy.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Karen Brewster:** [0:45:07.2] Can you – can I interrupt and ask about the gliders and what the idea was behind those?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, they were CG-4 gliders. They were airborne infantry that we hauled and also hauled equipment and food and all that. Jeeps – we could put a Jeep in one of them.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Karen Brewster:** What were the gliders used for?

**Robert Eads:** Well mostly they were for resupply and paratroopers. Paratroopers also rode in our plane.

**Rachel Mason:** They would fly in more troops on the gliders?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Karen Brewster:** Was the idea of the glider that it was quieter than flying a plane in behind enemy lines?

**Robert Eads:** No, you could haul more with one airplane.

**Karen Brewster:** Did they go in behind enemy lines then?

**Robert Eads:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, they were – and we also carried eight parapack.

**Rachel Mason:** What's that?

**Robert Eads:** Well, they were under the wings. Dropped them like bombs, but they were full of ammo and.....

**Rachel Mason:** Food.

**Robert Eads:** Fuel and food. Rations. K-rations.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. Wow. Were you in communication with the troops on the ground. Did you know whether they got there okay?

**Robert Eads:** Well, yeah. You could see – we took the gliders in at 500 feet and when we got rid of them, then we pulled up to 1000 feet and then jumped the troopers out. Then we left.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, that.....

**Robert Eads:** Up in the – up in the lowlands, up in Netherlands we – our whole outfit there took in 38,000 paratroopers in there.

**Rachel Mason:** Did your plane ever get shot at?

**Robert Eads:** Oh yeah, all the time.

**Mac Eads:** Everybody was shooting at them.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, and did you lose any of the cargo planes?

**Robert Eads:** Oh, yeah. They – they never had bulletproof tanks or anything, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. Sounds pretty dangerous.

**Robert Eads:** When we went up in the lowlands up in the Netherlands there it was – we put, I think it was about 40,000 troops in there and 5000 gliders. It was a – one of the big airborne invasions there outside of Normandy.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:48:09.3] So you flew – you were based in Great Britain, but you flew to Normandy, you flew to the Netherlands. Did you fly to other places in Europe?

**Robert Eads:** Oh, yeah. We – right after we liberated Paris, that was in August, we flew back to England and got our act together there and flew down to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. And then we flew to Italy, and then from Italy we made the Southern France invasion.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** There was the same scenario. We took gliders in and paratroopers and wing drops and stuff like that, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:49:04.0] Do you have any memories of D-Day, what happened, and what you were doing on D-Day?

**Robert Eads:** Oh yeah.



**Rachel Mason:** What happened then?

**Robert Eads:** Well that was at night.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** But it was well lit up with explosions of all kinds. It was – we flew past Normandy and then turned around and came back this way, so we dropped a – dropped everybody in that area.

**Rachel Mason:** Could you see what was happening on the ground?

**Robert Eads:** Couldn't see anything.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** No, this was at midnight.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** This was midnight before the invasion.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Robert Eads:** The invasion happened the next morning. So, we had to put those paratroopers in there so they could secure certain installations, roads, bridges, and everything.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. And after you dropped them off did you have any way to know anything?

**Robert Eads:** No, we didn't linger.

**Rachel Mason:** (Laughter.)

**Robert Eads:** We left and came – went back to England.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay. And what did you do once you were back in England?

**Robert Eads:** Loaded up and went back the next day.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** And then the next day and the next day and the next day.

**Karen Brewster:** Each time you went back you dropped more paratroopers?

**Robert Eads:** No, it was resupplying them with ammo and gasoline and.....

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**Mac Eads:** He was in seven major invasions.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Mac Eads:** South Africa, Sicily, Italy, and came back around for the Normandy. He was in the Netherlands and he was in the Battle of the Bulge.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Mac Eads:** And he was in the Rhine invasion. He made seven different invasions without getting killed. It's amazing.

**Rachel Mason:** That is amazing. And he lived to tell the story.

**Karen Brewster:** So, you were always flying your plane over enemy territory?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Karen Brewster:** You always had to fly around into enemy territory?

**Robert Eads:** You just flew up and.....

**Mac Eads:** There was somebody shooting at him all the time.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. [0:51:35.6] Can you tell us about some of the close calls you had?

**Robert Eads:** Well, I got – there's so many of them that..... The main thing was I was never shot down.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, you managed to get.....

**Robert Eads:** Got shot up, but not down.

**Rachel Mason:** That's good.

**Mac Eads:** They would come back in tatters.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, oh, every time.

**Robert Eads:** (Laughter.)

**Karen Brewster:** But you always managed to get back to your home field, huh?

**Robert Eads:** Uh, we did. Our commanding officer went up in the lowlands as we called it up there.

**Rachel Mason:** In the Netherlands.

**Robert Eads:** They – he got shot up in the middle and knocked all of his control cables off and he had to fly into Brussels just with his engines.

**Mac Eads:** There's a book down there called the *Green Light*. [0:52:31.4]

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** That's all about him and his people.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, and the.....

**Mac Eads:** And the paratroopers.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** Bob is written up in that book.

**Rachel Mason:** There's a part about Bob. Oh, yeah, I see it's.....

**Shannon Kovac:** Can you hold it up again?

**Rachel Mason:** Oh sure. Yeah, I can see the author signed it and.....

**Karen Brewster:** Martin Wolfe.

**Rachel Mason:** Martin Wolfe.

**Mac Eads:** You see the picture of his airplane on the back.

**Rachel Mason:** That's your airplane?

**Robert Eads:** Well, it's similar.

**Rachel Mason:** That's great.

**Robert Eads:** They used them before the war for airliners.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** When we had them they were all gutted out inside and had a big door in the side of the ass end of the plane about half the size of that hole there. You could drive a.....

**Karen Brewster:** It is about six feet wide?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, you could drive a Jeep out. They would take a Jeep in and put ramps down and drive them out.

**Rachel Mason:** Why did they call it *Green Light*?

**Robert Eads:** When you turned the switch on in the cockpit it lit up a green light in the astrodome and also in the cargo plane that was the indication for all the paratroopers that were all hooked up to get the hell outta there.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Mac Eads:** Be ready to jump.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, gee.

**Mac Eads:** When the green light came on they were hooked up to the static line and ready to jump.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, wow. [0:54:15.6] Did you have any rituals that you went through every time you started out on one of these missions?

**Robert Eads:** Oh, yeah, we had to go to briefing early in the morning and go down and get briefed on where we were going to go and what we were going to go and what we were going to do and what we were going to haul.

**Mac Eads:** They flew in big groups, you know. It just wasn't – it just wasn't him. It was.....

**Rachel Mason:** Big, big groups.

**Mac Eads:** Hundreds of airplanes.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay, so all of you together would – every pilot would get together and get briefed?

**Robert Eads:** They would take sections of them, like the morning flight and noon flight and then the afternoon flight and the evening flight. They would all have their own briefings.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. And then did you have any superstitions about what – you know.....

**Karen Brewster:** For safety?

**Rachel Mason:** For safety, to protect you along the way.

**Robert Eads:** No. They.....

**Mac Eads:** You had to rely on yourself.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, just on yourself, huh?

**Mac Eads:** Your own skill.

**Robert Eads:** Like that operation, the one up in the lowlands up there. We took off in the morning about 7. It was just getting daylight and when we made our trip in there, dumped our stuff out, and came back with our – in our gliders and stuff, they were still taking off from that same airfield or around there.

**Mac Eads:** When he got back there were airplanes still taking off on that same mission.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, there was so many of them.

**Robert Eads:** Same – yeah, we had to.....

**Mac Eads:** Thousands of airplanes.

**Robert Eads:** Then we had to go to it again, for two weeks.

**Karen Brewster:** So you would just fly constantly, fly out, come back, resupply, go out again.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah. Time – by the time we got back they would have us loaded up and by the time they got back they would have done the same thing and then..... So, the – our sorties would be, probably in that one 24-hour period it would be probably 1200-1500 sorties.

**Rachel Mason:** You must have lost some friends among the pilots.....

**Robert Eads:** Oh yeah, yeah, there – we got pretty well decimated in that operation.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:56:56.3] What was your morale like?

**Robert Eads:** It was high.

**Rachel Mason:** It was?

**Robert Eads:** The barracks that I was in, we had 24 pilots and navigators and by the end of that mission there, which was about two weeks, there was 12 of us left. Half gone.

**Rachel Mason:** That's a lot, big loss.

**Robert Eads:** Just something you had to do.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. You just kept going. Were you writing letters home during this time?

**Robert Eads:** Once in a while.

**Mac Eads:** He wrote to me!

**Rachel Mason:** Not to you (laughter).

**Mac Eads:** He wrote to me.

**Rachel Mason:** He wrote to you?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, I would get letters from him when I was out in the Aleutian Islands.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:57:46.6] Yeah, what did you tell your family about what you were doing?

**Robert Eads:** Not very much. It was all censored.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** You couldn't tell anybody anything.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** They had censors that just cut – they had razors and they just cut – you would get a letter full of holes.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Mac Eads:** So you didn't say anything.

**Rachel Mason:** Was the same true for you? Did your letters get censored too?

**Robert Eads:** Same way.

**Rachel Mason:** Because they didn't want you to say where you were.

**Robert Eads:** Yep.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay, I think we've run out of tape on this one.

(Pause to start a new recording.)

**Rachel Mason:** [0:00:00.5] Okay, so, Bob was telling us about his.....

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**Robert Eads:** Where were we at on our story.....

**Rachel Mason:** Where were we at?

**Karen Brewster:** Flying all your sorties.

**Rachel Mason:** You'd been in seven major invasions and lived to tell the story and what happened after the – which one was the last invasion that you were in?

**Robert Eads:** Germany.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:00:27.0] Germany. So was that basically the end of the war? Where did you fly in Germany?

**Robert Eads:** Just across the Rhine.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay. Where were you flying from? Great Britain?

**Robert Eads:** France.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, from France.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Robert Eads:** I spent quite a bit of time in France.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:00:48.3] What part of France were you in?

**Robert Eads:** Well, it was down on the Riviera.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, nice.

**Robert Eads:** (Laughter.)

**Rachel Mason:** You guys have the beach experience here.

**Robert Eads:** When we had the – for the Southern France invasion that's where we dropped a lot of the paratroopers.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay.

**Robert Eads:** In Nice, down there.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay. And then you flew from Nice to Germany?

**Robert Eads:** After we got that done then we flew back to Great Britain and then back to France.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. Well.....

**Robert Eads:** We had to be there for the Northern France invasion and then we were there for Bastogne.

**Mac Eads:** They were in that Bastogne invasion there and they were supplying with gas and taking casualties back.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Mac Eads:** They were also flying – they had litter patients, litter capabilities in this airplane that they could fly.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, we carried – we had orders to go into the field hospitals quite frequently and we’d pick up standups. We could carry 16 of them, or we could carry 16 laydowns. We had the laydowns and we had either one or two nurses and a corpsman. If we had situps and we would just have two corpsmen.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Robert Eads:** They did not have any bottles on them or anything, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Where did you take them?

**Robert Eads:** Took them to the general hospital in London.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay. So that was the general – you were medevacing the casualties out.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**Karen Brewster:** Did the airstrips at those field hospitals – were they big enough for you to land?

**Robert Eads:** They made them as we needed them.

**Karen Brewster:** Because your planes were pretty big.

**Robert Eads:** They would lay white cloths down like this for the runways and fill up the bomb craters with – I don’t know where they got the machinery, but they got it from someplace. We would land there and taxi right up to the field hospital. Shut one engine off – shut the port engine down and they would back the ambulances right up and unload them.



**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** Of course there were squadrons of these planes waiting right there. They would make a circle and go back.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. [0:03:46.8] So, when did you find out the war was over?

**Robert Eads:** When they dropped that bomb I had just left Marseilles, France heading toward Rome and on a B-17G. I was just getting qualified dual in that plane at that time.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. You were in training?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah. I was on a training plane. We were just halfway to Rome when we got word on our radio that they had dropped a secret device, I think they called it. They didn't call it a bomb. It was a device.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh. Did they say where they had dropped it?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah. That was the very first one.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** Later they dropped one on Nagasaki later, about two or three days later. When they dropped that one, that's when it was.....

**Mac Eads:** That's when it ended.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, that's when it ended right there.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. What did you guys do in the airplane when you heard about that?

**Robert Eads:** Well, we had a little hoo-ray. (Laughter.)

**Mac Eads:** Everybody went hoo-ray.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, we went – we finished our flight and we went into Rome and we stayed overnight there and then turned around and came back to Marseilles, and went back. I had flown down there from Nice, France. That was a – kind of a resort village. Flew back in there and I spent the rest of my time – clear up until I think it was about the 1st of October before they got us demilitarized to get us out of there.

**Rachel Mason:** But you figured your service was over after that?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, well no, they kept us on there after Germany collapsed first, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** That was in May.

**Rachel Mason:** Yes.

**Robert Eads:** About the first week in May. So they kept us there until they figured out that this A-bomb was gonna work, and when it did they still – we were all scheduled to go to Japan.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** They were scheduled. They were training for flying those B-29s.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Karen Brewster:** So, what did you do in Nice between August and October?

**Robert Eads:** Just drank wine. (Laughter.)

**Rachel Mason:** Celebrated.

**Mac Eads:** They tried to get a hold of the cognac factory. (Laughter.)

**Rachel Mason:** [0:06:46.3] When did you get to go home?

**Robert Eads:** We got – let’s see, that was in the latter part of October.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Robert Eads:** We came back on the SS Mariposa.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Robert Eads:** That big ship is still sailing. It’s a – it’s a cruise ship.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, I’ve heard about that.

**Mac Eads:** Goes to Hawaii.

**Robert Eads:** They go back and forth to Hawaii, I guess.

**Rachel Mason:** Where did you land in the Mariposa when you came back?

**Robert Eads:** Well, we started out for Boston and then halfway across there was a big hurricane that drifted up in the middle there and we had to go way south around that damn thing and up into Boston.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. And from there you made your way back to Alaska.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, that SS Mariposa cruised at 25 knots.

**Rachel Mason:** Is that fast or.....

**Robert Eads:** That's pretty fast for a big ship, you know.

**Karen Brewster:** [0:07:52.3] What did they do with all the airplanes in Europe that you guys had been flying?

**Robert Eads:** I think that most of the ones that we had, the B-17s and B-24s, were all martialed up in France in a great big clear area and they strafed them, burned them up there.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. They figured they wouldn't need them anymore, or they were in such bad shape?

**Robert Eads:** When Japan capitulated everything just canceled out.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** Destroyed everything.

**Karen Brewster:** But they couldn't salvage those planes and use them for something else?

**Mac Eads:** No. It cost more to get them home than it would to fly them. It took a lot of fuel just to get our planes from Florida down across the Atlantic and up into – we carried extra fuel, 800 gallons extra fuel.

**Karen Brewster:** When you were out flying a mission, did you go out by yourself or did you have a partner flying with you?

**Robert Eads:** We had a full crew.

**Karen Brewster:** Was there always a second – were there – was each plane solo, or you had other planes flying with you, together.

**Robert Eads:** No, there were thousands.

**Karen Brewster:** There were thousands, but did you partner with each other to keep an eye on each other?

**Robert Eads:** Well, we flew formation.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Karen Brewster:** How many in a formation?

**Robert Eads:** It – there’s like this, like this, and like that. Nine here, nine here, nine here, nine there, nine there, all the way back to England.

**Rachel Mason:** Was your position in the formation – was that part of your briefing, where you were going to be?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, that was.....

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, they had to – they had to stay there or otherwise they would get in a collision you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** They also debriefed you when you got back.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

**Robert Eads:** [0:10:04.6] When we went up the Zuiderzee, we went – it was a daylight operation. These big Dutch windmills, big ones that got the big blades on them like that, we would fly along there and the tops would open up with.....

**Rachel Mason:** It was a secret spy thing?

**Robert Eads:** They were flak towers.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Karen Brewster:** There were gunners in them?

**Rachel Mason:** They weren’t really windmills.

**Robert Eads:** Well, the blades were turning, but.....

**Mac Eads:** The Germans had huge machine guns set up and aircraft guns.

**Robert Eads:** When we got debriefed we would come back and tell them the exact position where these were and on the next flight over, why, they would be gone.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow, yeah.

**Robert Eads:** The fighters would get them.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. It's interesting.

**Karen Brewster:** Were most of your flights nighttime flights or daytime flights?

**Robert Eads:** About 50/50, except where you had to – like Bastogne that was in the daylight, and up in the lowlands up there it was daylight. Southern France was daylight.

**Karen Brewster:** Were daylight flights easier?

**Robert Eads:** They could see you better.

**Karen Brewster:** You'd get shot at more?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. They could see him better (laughter).

**Robert Eads:** We didn't fly high, you know. When we went up on any of those flights, it wasn't over a thousand feet.

**Karen Brewster:** [0:12:00:8] You mentioned Battle of the Bulge. What was your role in that?

**Robert Eads:** Well, that was Bastogne.

**Karen Brewster:** Oh, that's Bastogne.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, that was – there were rings all the way around with German tanks. You could look right down like that and see them winking at you.

**Rachel Mason:** Winking. Wow. Did you ever talk with any German soldiers or interact with them face to face?

**Mac Eads:** [0:12:31.0] You got that dagger from one of them, didn't you?

**Robert Eads:** Well, that was up in Germany.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. After the war, he got a nice, beautiful, beautiful dagger from a German officer.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, really?

**Mac Eads:** It's beautiful. Where is it? Where is that knife?

**Robert Eads:** I have got it in the.....

**Mac Eads:** Go show it off.

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**Robert Eads:** It's a souvenir.

**Rachel Mason:** You got that dagger from a German officer? How did you come to get that?

**Robert Eads:** In Dusseldorf.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Robert Eads:** The 17th Airborne at that time had Dusseldorf surrounded. That was the Ruhr, the German Ruhr they called it.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** The industrial area.

**Rachel Mason:** You want to hold it up so they can film it?

**Shannon Kovac:** Or take it out, yeah take it out.

**Robert Eads:** This. (Laughter.)

**Karen Brewster:** What's written on it?

**Rachel Mason:** It's something Deutschland.

**Robert Eads:** Something on it.

**Karen Brewster:** Alles Fur Deutschland. Uber Fur – no, Alles Fur Deutschland.

**Robert Eads:** Live for the Fatherland.

**Karen Brewster:** All is for Germany, yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, wow.

**Robert Eads:** That has the German Swastika they called it.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. Okay, so, just to move on from – you got back to Boston and then you went back to Nebraska?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, I took a train from Boston to Valentine.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:14:18.9] Uh-huh, and then how did you end up coming to Seward and finding your big brother here?

**Robert Eads:** Well, I met his wife's sister in California.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, and how did that happen?

**Robert Eads:** We got to chumming around and then we got – we drove up to San Francisco and got married there. Then we went to Seattle and I went to work there. I am a union carpenter.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. Now, was this sort of a setup that the wife's sister was down in California?

**Robert Eads:** Well, they – no, he took her along, the sister, for a babysitter.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay.

**Mac Eads:** A babysitter for our baby.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Karen Brewster:** So, you were on a vacation in California and you guys met up there?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. Went down to visit our older brother down there in Venice, California.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, and you had one child then.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** And needed a nanny.

**Mac Eads:** I had his wife with us as a babysitter. He met her there.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, that's great. You guys hit it off right away?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Rachel Mason:** That was her.....

**Robert Eads:** Anyhow, we got to Seattle, that was in the latter part of October. It snowed down there. I mean, about this much, and that.....

**Rachel Mason:** They're not used to that.

**Robert Eads:** That paralyzed them.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, it does. It always paralyzes them.

**Robert Eads:** It paralyzed the whole city.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** I wrote him a letter and told him what had happened and he wrote back and – couldn’t phone in those days up here. He said, well you’d better come up here and see where all that snow is coming from. I said, well..... That was in ’46. The Alcan Highway was – had been built, but you had to get a permit from the Canadian Government to travel it.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** I did. [0:16:35.2] I got a permit from the – I think it was in Edmonton. I got a permit to make a trip up the Alcan Highway. You had to have proof of so much money and so much spare parts and so much gasoline and so much food and all that. Once you got up to Dawson Creek up in Canada there, there was only a refuel station about every 500 miles.

**Rachel Mason:** Right.

**Robert Eads:** So you had to have enough to get from each one, to get up.

**Rachel Mason:** So, what kind of a vehicle did you have to drive?

**Robert Eads:** I had a 1940 Ford coupe.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** You wouldn’t believe that it was a convertible.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh no.

**Mac Eads:** They drove that up at 70 degrees below zero.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh brother.

**Robert Eads:** We couldn’t put any – couldn’t get any permanent-type antifreeze then because it was all taken up by the military, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh brother.

**Robert Eads:** The only other alternative was to use denatured alcohol for antifreeze.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** Which we did, but you had to take the thermostats out so it wouldn’t – otherwise it was a fire hazard.

**Rachel Mason:** What month was it that you were driving up?



**Robert Eads:** This was in November.

**Rachel Mason:** Of what year?

**Robert Eads:** '46.

**Rachel Mason:** '46.

**Karen Brewster:** And it was already 70 below in November?

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. In the interior.

**Robert Eads:** In Canada.

**Karen Brewster:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** I think at Deadhorse up there it was colder than that.

**Karen Brewster:** So what was the road like?

**Robert Eads:** It was hard to tell because it was terrible (laughter).

**Mac Eads:** Pretty bad.

**Robert Eads:** We got – we got our permit and we drove the convertible up. When we got to Liard or Laird or whatever you want.....

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, the hot spring.

**Robert Eads:** You know where that's at?

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** Well, the ice had taken the bridge out.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh no.

**Robert Eads:** We had to cross – they had barrels positioned around like this, two of them, that they fell on to cross the river. They said if you see any (laughter) anything that's black out there it's – it's open water so don't – go around that.

**Rachel Mason:** Don't go in it.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, don't go in it. Follow these barrels around. You stay inside of them. So, that's how we crossed the Liard River.

**Rachel Mason:** Because Liard is a hot springs, so there would be some water.

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**Robert Eads:** Yeah, there's a (laughter) – it was a – it didn't make you feel good, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, that would be – that would be terrible.

**Robert Eads:** Of course they didn't help it any either to say, well a truck just fell in there the other day too, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** (Laughter.) So you made it past.....

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, we got – made it all the way up to Anchorage and then we had to put our car on the flat bed of the train. There was no road there – here to Anchorage.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Robert Eads:** So we came down by train with our – and our car came down a week later. That's how I got here.

**Karen Brewster:** How long did the drive take you?

**Robert Eads:** Huh?

**Karen Brewster:** How long did the drive from Seattle to here take you?

**Robert Eads:** It took us about two and a half weeks.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow, all together. Where did you stay at night?

**Robert Eads:** There was lodging.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Eads:** Wherever – most of the places that sold gasoline had some kind of lodging.

**Rachel Mason:** Right. That was a long trip.

**Robert Eads:** Of course – that was in the wintertime. Of course it got dark mighty quick, you know.

**Rachel Mason:** Right.

**Robert Eads:** And stayed dark.

**Rachel Mason:** Yes.

**Robert Eads:** We had to – my wife took – she’d wear a pair of gloves and when my hands got hold she’d give me hers and then she’d keep warm like this and we’d trade back and forth. It was 15 below in the car most of the time.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, you must’ve been freezing.

**Robert Eads:** We were dressed good for the weather.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. Well, once you got to Seward then did you stay at your brother’s house first?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Right across the street.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay. And then when did you get this house? Did you start building this.....

**Robert Eads:** Built this in ’49-’50.

**Rachel Mason:** Okay.

**Mac Eads:** Bob and I built this house.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay.

**Karen Brewster:** Why did you – you came to Seward to visit your brother, but you obviously stayed. [0:22:16.0] Why did you decide to stay?

**Robert Eads:** Well we got.....

**Mac Eads:** Family.

**Robert Eads:** .....into business here in Seward. Operated a garage down here.

**Rachel Mason:** Did you start right away operating the garage?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. Operated a repair shop.

**Robert Eads:** He was in the garage when I came up here.

**Rachel Mason:** The two of you together ran the garage?

**Mac Eads:** [0:22:41.1] In ’47 and ’48 we did a – had a logging business and we logged logs. Later I asked Bob about getting a boat. [0:22:54.2] We salvaged a boat out at Thumb Cove. We bought a boat from the military. It was just like the ones I was on in the Army. We rebuilt that boat and we just went all over.

**Rachel Mason:** So, did you continue the car business while you first with the logging and then.....

**Mac Eads:** Then I went into the police business after that and then after that we went into boat business.

**Rachel Mason:** I see. Well, where were you logging? Was that right around here?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, out at mile seven.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay.

**Karen Brewster:** Up by Bear Lake?

**Mac Eads:** We had a guy.....

**Robert Eads:** We sold our logs to Bear Lake (laughter). To Bear Lake Saw Mill.

**Mac Eads:** The guy that owned that property was a real smart man. He knew that the old trees had to be taken out and new growth could come in. He'd go and mark every tree he wanted us to log, and that was a lot of them. We thinned out the area and it really grew up nice and there are really nice logs out there right now.

**Rachel Mason:** So, did you quit logging when you started being on the boat?

**Mac Eads:** Yes.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:24:05.9] And what did you do on the boat?

**Robert Eads:** Haul salmon mostly.

**Mac Eads:** Hauled salmon most of the time.

**Rachel Mason:** Tendering?

**Mac Eads:** Salmon Tender.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh.

**Mac Eads:** We could get, you know, \$350-\$400 a day for the charter on the boat and in those days that was pretty good money, back in the '40s.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Karen Brewster:** What size – how big was your boat?

**Robert Eads:** About 90 feet long. It's still running.

**Rachel Mason:** Really?

**Mac Eads:** Still here.

**Rachel Mason:** What’s the name of the boat?

**Mac Eads:** The Barwell.

**Rachel Mason:** Barwell.

**Robert Eads:** We named it after Barwell Island, which lays just off of Cape Resurrection.

**Rachel Mason:** Why did you name it after that?

**Mac Eads:** Well, you always name a boat after something.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah, that’s right (laughter).

**Robert Eads:** Something or somebody.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** After somebody, yeah. But in all of this process of boats through the 40 years, I acquired a Captain’s license for 200-ton vessels and up to 1600-ton vessels, a 3000-horsepower Chief Engineer’s license, a towing license, so we were licensed to do anything.

**Rachel Mason:** Uh-huh. [0:25:12.6] Well, how did you get into that salvage operation after World War II in the Aleutians?

**Mac Eads:** They contacted us. The salvage company came up from – the General Metals Company from Tacoma came up here looking for a boat. They knew they had to have a boat out there. They came here and looked around and they just hired us right off the bat.

**Rachel Mason:** What year was that?

**Mac Eads:** ’57.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay. So you had been in the boat business for quite a while.....

**Mac Eads:** Oh, yeah. Yeah

**Rachel Mason:** .....and acquired some licenses and so forth by that time. So, tell me about that operation. What was your mission and what did you encounter when you were out there?

**Mac Eads:** In the Aleutians?

**Rachel Mason:** Mm-hmm.

**Mac Eads:** We were hired just – they had a big cruise out there salvaging this cooper wire, shell casings, radiators, anything that was nonferrous.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Of course they would send us – they were based at Adak and they would send us on the outgoing trip from Adak to Attu. That’s 500 miles, so we had a 500-mile trip out, 500-mile trip back. We were supplying crews on different islands with food and fuel and whatever they needed. Then on the way back we would pick up their cargo. We would pick up 100 tons of copper and bring it in to Adak. Then we’d turn around and go back and do the same thing. Did that for four years.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. Why didn’t they want the ferrous materials?

**Mac Eads:** Iron was not.....

**Rachel Mason:** Not very valuable?

**Mac Eads:** No value to it. They gave us all the iron we wanted.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Caterpillar tractors, cranes, trucks, Jeeps, anything we wanted. They just gave it to us. We brought it back and sorted it all – we had land out at Lowell Point, out south of here, and we stored all that stuff out there, 100 tons every trip. Lost it all in the earthquake. Tidal wave took everything.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** [0:27:16.3] With that road that goes to Lowell Point, if you’ve been out there, Bob and I built that road too.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, really?

**Mac Eads:** That was – everybody said it was impossible to build a road out there, so we built it. (Laughter.)

**Rachel Mason:** What was so hard about it?

**Mac Eads:** It was just – come right down from mountains to rocks to the ocean, just like that. We had to get a shelf in there to build a road on. It was difficult. Shot up a lot of dynamite, I’ll tell you.

**Rachel Mason:** Did you bring in a lot of fill material to make the bench?

**Mac Eads:** Pardon?

**Robert Eads:** Yeah, it.....

**Rachel Mason:** Did you haul in a lot of fill?

**Mac Eads:** No, we shot it off with dynamite and then spread it out. We fired off a couple of carloads of dynamite. We didn't know anything about dynamite to start with, but we knew a lot about it when we got done.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** But you know, we come up – we got near town about the last quarter mile of road we had to put in, Bob was driving the Cat. We had a D-8 Cat and he was driving the Cat and he was looking up at the rocks up there, about 400 or 500 feet up there. He was afraid the Cat was going to shake them down on him.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, wow.

**Mac Eads:** He climbs up there with about 10 or 15 sticks of dynamite wrapped up and a cap in it and a fuse, and he puts this under that rock. He wants to blow the rocks off so they wouldn't be a danger, you know. He put a five-minute fuse on it. We walked back down, took the Cat back down the road and then when that baby went off it was just like a bomb went off in midair because it blew every window out of the south end of town. There wasn't one window left any place.

**Robert Eads:** It went down to Homebrew Alley.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, yeah. I know about Homebrew Alley.

**Mac Eads:** And all of the houses that you were inspecting on the line.....

**Rachel Mason:** Yes.

**Mac Eads:** Blew all the windows out of them.

**Rachel Mason:** Really?

**Mac Eads:** Oh, every window. Even the railroad dock, we blew all the windows out of.

**Rachel Mason:** What year was that?

**Mac Eads:** That was in 1961.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, okay.

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**Mac Eads:** And I'll tell you what, there was a lot of people got angry over that. I remember one ole' boy whose name was..... What was his name? Red Snyder. Red Snyder. He said, "you guys are gonna kill somebody someday." He said, "I was sitting there eating my corn flakes and pretty soon I'm eating ground glass", he says. (Laughter). Blew his window right in on the kitchen table. (Laughter.)

**Rachel Mason:** Oh, wow. Yeah, that's terrible.

**Mac Eads:** It's just a good thing we had some liability insurance or we'd still be in prison.

**Rachel Mason:** (Laughter.) So, that was a few years before the earthquake.  
[0:29:57.2] Were you here when the earthquake happened?

**Mac Eads:** Oh, wow. We nearly got killed in that one.

**Rachel Mason:** What happened?

**Mac Eads:** We were at our property down at Lowell Point when the earthquake occurred and when that occurred there was 3 million cubic yards of dirt went into and around the perimeter of Seward that fell in the ocean all at once.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** Three million cubic yards of water came up in a big wave every direction. It came right down on top of us.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. You were both out at Lowell Point when that happened?

**Mac Eads:** We were both there, and our brother-in-law Carl. We're the only three survivors of the tidal wave in Seward. Seventeen other people we never did even see. Never found.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Mac Eads:** When that wave came down on us we saw it coming. He's taking pictures of it with a damn movie camera (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** Did you save the movie?

**Mac Eads:** He's taking pictures and here's this big wave coming right down, white water just peeling off the top of it like that (laughter)..... Carl said, we'd better get the hell outta here, so he and Carl jumped in the car out ahead of me and I jumped in a four-wheel drive Army pickup that we had there. Of course they were pretty fast. They went in – there weren't much road out there then. They went in this way and then the road paralleled the beach. Well, they were going down the beach and here's this wave



coming right in like this. Bob turned the car this way and put it – and they just went like a surfboard up through the trees that big around. If they would have hit a tree it would've killed them. They went up there a quarter of a mile through those trees like – the tidal wave just sent them along like that.

**Robert Eads:** Squeezed the car down a little though (laughter).

**Mac Eads:** It had a 50-foot boat right behind them. When they grounded out that 50-foot boat landed right on top of that car, popped the windshield out, they went out through the windshield and they never even got wet.

**Rachel Mason:** Your piloting experience must've helped you there (laughter).

**Mac Eads:** I'm behind them in this pickup going end over end like this. It caught up with me and that old pickup and it just went end over end like that.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow. What was Carl doing?

**Mac Eads:** Carl, he was with Bob.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** I was by myself.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** And I was drowning in this pickup about four different times. I didn't dare get out of it because we had it stuck on a huge pile of 12 x 12 timber. They were all 20-feet long. They each weighed 1000 pounds. They were going right with me and they were just hammering that pickup to a pulp, you know. I knew I couldn't get out of it or I would be dead in just one shot, but I had to get out of it because I was drowning, so I didn't have much choice (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** Did you have the windows open or.....

**Mac Eads:** It had no windows in it. Finally the pickup landed on its side, but I couldn't tell which way was up. I couldn't tell which way was down. I couldn't tell anything. I was so full of sand and mud and crap that I finally climbed – the pickup grounded out and stopped, but the water just kept on going and I jumped – crawled up out of the pickup and jumped over the side. About that time, one of them logs did hit me.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

**Mac Eads:** It hit me flatways the full length of my body and it turned me, bleeder black and blue the full length of my ankle clear to my shoulder, but also disabled my leg where I couldn't walk.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh.

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**Mac Eads:** So, the best I could do after I got out of there was try to keep from going back into the ocean. The water went back to the ocean about as fast as it came out of it. So I'm around washing back toward the damn ocean and I grabbed a hold of an alder and just held on to it until the water drained away and there I was just laying there unable to walk or talk or anything else. [0:33:45.0] Bob and Carl, they got in – they were way out this way and they came back and got on high ground over here and came down back to where I was. They heard me grunting and groaning down there. They came down and helped pick me up and got me out of there. It's a good thing they did because another wave would've killed me.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Mac Eads:** They got me out of there just before another one came in.

**Rachel Mason:** So they saw you and picked you up?

**Mac Eads:** They heard me. They carried me up the steep slope up to high ground out of the water. But you know, we walked – we went inland then. I waited around there until my feeling came back in my leg where I could walk a little bit. We walked inland to a lady's house there and that lady didn't have a house, she just had a basement with a floor over it. We went in there for – we were scared. The ground was just really jumping around then with aftershocks and really bad ones, 7 and 8 point shocks. We stayed there until 10 o'clock. We thought we'd better get back to town and see if we had anything left in town. So we had to walk over that icy road. That was really pretty hard.

**Robert Eads:** This whole bay was full of – was on fire.

**Rachel Mason:** Wow.

**Robert Eads:** They were all ringed around.

**Rachel Mason:** Were you concerned about your families?

**Robert Eads:** Oh, yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah. Well, I lived up on 1st Avenue then. Bob lived here. [0:35:15.0] When we came in we came right up 2nd Avenue and there was nobody in town. We were the only ones except one guy we met and he was drunk walking down the street wondering where everybody went.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh gee!

**Mac Eads:** We were – we were the only people he'd seen. Everybody had gone. There was nobody here. It was just like going into a ghost town. We came to Bob's place first. Nobody here. Went up to my place. Nobody there. No – don't know where anybody is. They had all gone out of town. They had orders to evacuate.

**Rachel Mason:** Oh. Where did they go?

**Mac Eads:** They went out north of town where it was safe. There were houses and stuff out there, but it wasn't very safe there either because the ground had split open and gushers flying out of it all over and the bridges had fallen in. All of those bridges had fallen in. The road was closed. The railroad was closed. It was pretty bad.

**Karen Brewster:** So you – the tsunami didn't take out your Lowell Point Road?

**Robert Eads:** No, we built that after.

**Karen Brewster:** Oh, that was after the earthquake.

**Mac Eads:** No, we built that before.

**Robert Eads:** We built that before, but we rebuilt it.

**Mac Eads:** We had to walk back on it, but it was frozen and it was icy. It was real difficult. It damaged it a lot. We had our Cat sitting out there about halfway and it hit the Cat so hard it slammed it up against the rocks there and just destroyed the D-8 Cat. Destroyed the Cat right where it was.

**Rachel Mason:** But you could still get back on that road? You walked back on that road.

**Robert Eads:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** Yeah.

**Robert Eads:** There was a lot – there were a lot of rocks on it. Big damn rocks.

**Mac Eads:** There were rocks as big as cars come rolling out off of that mountain. That's why when we first saw this wave coming down on us, that's the reason we didn't go up the mountainside because the big rocks were rolling down and it was dangerous. We thought it would be easier to get in the cars and escape it, but you can't escape those tidal waves.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah.

**Mac Eads:** They're traveling really fast.

**Rachel Mason:** So did you originally build the road because of your property out at Lowell Point?

**Mac Eads:** Yeah, we had a ship ways out there.

**Rachel Mason:** I see.

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**Mac Eads:** Yeah, we built a ship ways. That’s the reason we needed the road, so we could get to work.

**Rachel Mason:** Yeah. [0:37:32.3] So were your homes – were they damaged at all in the.....

**Mac Eads:** Well, Bob’s was pretty good, but mine was an old house and it had separated. It was a two-story house and up where the roof met the walls up there it sheared all of the nails. You could get a hold of a windowsill in my house and do this like this and pretty soon the whole house was going like this. I did that to the inspector that was – I had applied for a loan for a new house. (Laughter.) He was sitting on the couch – I’ll never forget that. He was sitting on the couch there and I grabbed the windowsill just right beside the couch and started shaking the house and he just got up, turned white, and just ran right out of the house (laughter). He said, “I’ll give you the loan” (laughter).

**Rachel Mason:** That’s great! I’ll give you the loan. I’ll give you the loan.

**Mac Eads:** He was frightened. He thought it was coming down, but it never did. Finally built a new house.

**Rachel Mason:** [0:38:31.9] I can tell you guys have a lot of stories and I’m going to have to interview you again. (Laughter.) I think we had better draw this to a close this time with the earthquake and then take up again with your later life if that’s okay with you.

**Mac Eads:** Okay. This doesn’t have anything to do with the National Park.

**Rachel Mason:** Well, the National Park Service is interested – the park that’s here, the Kenai Fjords National Park, they’re interested in documenting local history.....

**Dictation ended abruptly at 0:39:03.9.**