

Interview with Paul Tarr

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, January 10, 2012. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm in the Library this afternoon with Paul Tarr. Good afternoon, Paul.

Tarr: Hi, Mark, how are you?

DePue: Good. And we're talking to Paul today because of your experiences during the Cold War. It's not typical that we get a chance to talk to somebody who wasn't in Korea, wasn't in Vietnam, but served in the military during that long period of time that we now refer to as the Cold War. But as an extra bonus we're going to talk about, not just you, but at the end of the interview we'll spend considerable time talking about your great-grandfather? And his name?

Tarr: Yes, Benjamin Franklin Tarr, better known as B.F. Tarr.

DePue: B.F. Tarr. And he served in the Civil War. So that will be fun. That's something to look forward to as we go through your own life. So let's start with when and where you were born.

Tarr: I was born in Pennsylvania, in a town called Upper Darby, and more specifically, Delaware County Hospital, which is still operational there.

DePue: When were you born?

- Tarr: Way back in February the twenty-seventh of 1933, right in the middle of the Depression.
- DePue: What was your father doing for a living, or was he?
- Tarr: Yes. He was working for the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, which was owned at the time, of course, by AT&T.
- DePue: Was he able to hold onto his job there during those dark days?
- Tarr: Yes, he did, for forty-six years, I believe, after which he retired.
- DePue: So he was loyal to the telephone company.
- Tarr: Beyond understanding.
- DePue: Well, tell us a little bit about growing up, then. I assume you grew up in Pennsylvania?
- Tarr: I grew up in a little town by the name of Morton, Pennsylvania. It's named for John Morton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. It's in Delaware County, not too far from the Philadelphia Airport area. And, oh, we had a great deal of people there, about twenty-one hundred. It's not too far from Swarthmore; I went to Swarthmore High School, where you're probably familiar with the Swarthmore College. It's pretty well known, small, good school.
- DePue: Swarthmore—what's it named after? Who's it named after?
- Tarr: Well, you just took me beyond my capability. I'm not sure I know the answer to that.
- DePue: But it's in Swarthmore?
- Tarr: It's in suburban Philadelphia. It's maybe, oh, twenty, thirty miles southeast of Philadelphia. Not too far, as I said, from the airport.
- DePue: OK. Well, tell us a little bit about growing up.
- Tarr: Growing up was interesting in that town because my family got there from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1916, when my grandfather, working for Westinghouse Corporation, was transferred. And they relocated by train, along with the kids. My dad was the oldest child, and he had at that time two brothers and a sister. And coming by train with two trunks. They had two steamer trunks to relocate the entire family by train. That's hard to understand. I did much better with a large Mayflower truck. (laughter)



Paul's Grandfather Paul C. Tarr, Sr.

Anyhow, they located in Morton because it was close to Essington, Pennsylvania, which is where the new Westinghouse facility was built, right on the area where the Philadelphia Airport is now. My grandfather was a supervisor of what they called the light shop. The light shop was a part of the Westinghouse Corporation that made small parts on metal lathes. All my uncles, either by marriage or by birth, worked for Westinghouse except my dad. And they mostly worked for my grandfather, but my younger uncle became chief electrician for the entire Westinghouse operation. That was later on down the line.

Well, my grandfather quit school after eight grades in Pittsburgh because he had to help raise the family, make money for the family. My dad went through the same thing, only since he was the oldest, he made it to tenth grade and left high school to get a job to help earn money. The rest of my aunts and uncles made it through high school. I was the first one to ever get a four-year college degree.

Now, my mom was a schoolteacher. She went to Westchester Normal Teacher's College in Pennsylvania, there. It was a two-year, normal school. Most schools that developed educators around the country, including Illinois State, I might add—



Paul Tarr's mother, Margaret Palmer Tarr.

DePue: In Normal, Illinois.

Tarr: —in Normal, Illinois, right—were known as normal schools. And she rode the train from Morton to Westchester and back every day for two years, got her teaching certificate, and taught school in Lester Pennsylvania, which was right down where the Westinghouse plant was located. And of course, when they got married in June of 1930, she taught a few years and then I came along.

Paul at age one with his mother

DePue: You have some brothers and sisters?

Tarr: Yes, I had a brother, and my brother was six years younger than I was. Unfortunately I was brought home from my military service in Germany because he was passing away at age sixteen and in the hospital; he had been sick since he was twelve. He had gone to school on and off but never had the chance to graduate from high school because he never lived that long. But what I believe he had was Crohn's Disease in today's world. My daughter has Crohn's Disease, and that's part of the reason why I'm sure that's what he had, but they didn't know it at the time.

*Paul and brother Harry ages eleven and seven.*

DePue: So he was basically undiagnosed?

Tarr: No. He was riding his bicycle, delivering papers, when he was twelve. He went over the railroad tracks on the bicycle and they're bumpy; he hit his rectum on the point of the bicycle seat and developed a fistula. And that caused, as we were told at the time, an infection that went up his intestinal tract. So the doctors removed his intestine one time after another after another. Finally his electrolytes got out of balance and they lost him while I was in Germany.



DePue: Well, something like that had to be incredibly difficult on the family.

Tarr: Unbelievably so, yes, not only from the family point of view, the cost, but also my parents were just devastated. And here I was, I'd been four years away to college, two years away to the Army, and I was in Germany. And boy, I'll tell you, the American Red Cross and the Service Club and the military, everybody jumped through hoops one day when that phone rang, and I was out of there. I was taken by jeep to Frankfurt, Germany and left immediately on a military flight to New Jersey.

DePue: Well, let's go back to your growing up days: I want to ask if you remember—would have been pretty young, maybe eight years old—when Pearl Harbor happened.

Tarr: I remember. In those days we had a floor model radio that sat about that high—

DePue: About four foot, three feet.

Tarr: About three or four foot, above this table level even. I can remember vividly, even to this day. I always listened to my radio shows. Just like kids watch their TV shows these days, I listened to my radio shows. But I can remember laying on the floor listening to President Roosevelt talk about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and going to war. The thing that's really interesting to tie that one together is, years later, when I was working for Horace Mann Insurance Company here in Springfield, we had an event for our agents in Washington, D.C. One of the agents invited my wife and I to come along and go through the White House because he had tickets. The first thing they showed us or talked to us about was, that's the place where President Roosevelt sat and made his radio address. And I went *click, click, click*. I got it. I got it. I was on the other end, and I saw where it came from.

DePue: That's pretty neat.

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. I'll never forget that.

DePue: Were you one of those kids who avidly followed what was going on in the war after that?

Tarr: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah, because as time went on, you know, at the age I was, I ended up going to Saturday afternoon matinees at the movie theater, so I saw all the war news on the newsreels. And I got this idea that when I grew up I was going to be a pilot. I mean, because all those airplanes went over our house all the time going to the Philadelphia airport, so it wasn't just the war, but even after the war there was a lot of air traffic, and still is. But that's what I wanted to do. Then the trouble was, somebody put glasses on me when I was a senior in high school, and that was the end of that.

DePue: Did you think that the military possibly was in your future when you were a young kid watching the war news?

Tarr: Not really. That didn't really enter my mind. I was still quite a few years until that was going to come along. Now I was interested, though, from another point of view. My uncle—he was known in the family as Zeke. (laughs) That wasn't his name. But Uncle Zeke was stationed—he was in the Army, and pre-World War II, guess where? Hawaii, Pearl Harbor, in the Army, on the beach, anti-aircraft. And I'll never forget him—he came home before the war started. He came home in 1939. And when he came home we all met him. He had been gone for a couple years, and he had a trunk. I was the oldest grandchild, and he was the youngest uncle, and so he and I got along real fine. He was good to me; he brought a bunch of stuff home for me. And I'll never forget, I can almost, you know, picture all the different things he brought me: kimono, you know, slippers. I have them still.

DePue: Was he at Pearl Harbor on the day of the attack?

Tarr: No, he was out of the service and home, thank goodness. Now, I had another uncle by marriage, my dad's sister's husband, who was in World War II, and he was in Melbourne, Australia. We did not know, of course, where he was; he couldn't tell us where he was. But there was a shopping area, what we called Sixty Ninth Street in Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia. There's an elevated/subway system that runs into the city, and one of the first stops, is Milbourn—not Melbourne—but Milbourn. He wrote a letter and said, "Well, I find it strange that Ben and Mary"—my other aunt and uncle—"have moved to Milbourn." And we thought, they didn't move there. They didn't move at all, as a matter of fact. What's he telling us? So everybody had the map out, and we found Australia with Melbourne, and it was, Okay, we got the message. (DePue laughs) Yeah. So he was never in any danger. He was in a repo depot, you know, a supply area in Australia for the balance of the war. So that's the only World War II veteran in our family.

DePue: Do you remember things like aluminum drives and rubber drives and...?

Tarr: Oh, yeah. And I can remember also the fact that my parents were very active in this little town, alright, politically and church-wise. And civil defense came along, and our front yard was the practice area for civil defense routines. Our basement was full of cots, water gallons, blackout curtains and everything. They would have fake bombing raids and we would have to take care of the people that were hurt in our front yard, you know. I mean, blackout curtains all the time on the windows. They were always afraid, on the East Coast, of German airplanes bombing us. And that was serious.

I can remember, we used to go for vacation to Ocean City and Atlantic City, New Jersey and all those different beachfront locations when I was a kid for vacation. You'd be on the boardwalk during World War II and all of the stores were blacked out. They couldn't have any lights on at night. They'd be open for business, but they had blackout curtains to hold back light and so on. So there were not any lights on the boardwalk. It was sort of dangerous. But we had armed Army guards, walking the beach with rifles on the shoulder all the time because they were afraid of saboteurs. They had found some—as you may remember some of the World War II stories—in Florida.

I can remember very precisely being on the boardwalk at night; you'd look out to the ocean and you would see flares go off. Tankers were being torpedoed. All right? The German submarines were out there aiming for the ships as they came out of the East Coast shipping lanes. At night, when the submarines needed to regenerate their power systems, they would come up. They weren't too smart, because we could see them, literally, because there'd be a moon out there on the Atlantic Ocean; you'd see the submarine outline sitting on the water out there. I mean, they were way out there, but if they got right so the silhouette was right behind that moon as it came up, you could see them.

DePue: Well, that brought the war a little bit closer to home.

Tarr: All those things did, you see. And I was just the right age. My brother wouldn't remember any of those things, but I was just the right age for all of that. Even when we cleared my mom's house after she passed away in 1993, we still had civil defense stuff, cots and that kind of stuff, that was in the attic that had just been put away. Nobody wanted them after World War II, you know. Just, we don't care what you do with them.

DePue: Were you still living in the same town once you got to high school?

Tarr: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. My whole life I lived in that area.

DePue: Was it the Swarthmore High School that you went to?

Tarr: I went to Swarthmore High School, right. Now, our town of Morton being as small as it was, you could go to any surrounding high school that would take you on a tuition basis. The town of Morton paid your tuition. But all my aunts and uncles went to all different high schools; no one had ever gone to Swarthmore before. The reason I went to Swarthmore: Swarthmore was a fairly wealthy town, and it was a small town with a college. It'd be like Jacksonville with Illinois College. And my parents were hell-bent to make sure that I went to college.

DePue: Why? I mean, they hadn't even graduated from high school for your dad's side.

Tarr: My dad hadn't; that was one reason why, all right? My mom had had two years and became a teacher; that was another big reason, because she not only ended up being a teacher, but during the World War II... I went to a three-room grade school from first grade to eighth grade, and so we had two to three grades in each room. There are only three teachers in the grade school, okay? My mother was secretary of the school district school board. She was the number one substitute teacher. When the young fellow who was the principal was drafted, she became the acting principal. So she spent many a day, not every day.

I can remember when I was in seventh grade. With multiple grades in one room, there were three of us that did two grades in one year. My mother had held me back because I was a February child, and so I started late, but I caught up by doing seventh and eighth grade, as did two other kids. I mean, after all, they had three kids in eighth grade; they needed more. (DePue laughs) My mom was the substitute teacher, up front, my brother was in the baby carriage beside her desk, and my dog was beside me on the floor. We lived only two blocks away from the school, so when it came time for recess, my dog wanted out of the house to go down where we were playing. Afterwards, the dog went home, came back for lunch, came back again to get me. One night it was raining and I went out the back door of the school. We

couldn't find the dog. Finally got smart and we went the school; the dog was sitting at the front door, soaking wet, still waiting for me to come out of the school door.

DePue: These are the kind of idyllic pictures that you can visualize: the boy and his dog.

Tarr: You didn't know all this was going to come out, did you?

DePue: No, this is great, though. But it's just impossible to imagine those kinds of scenarios today, isn't it?

Tarr: Well, yes. And the street, you know—the street that's two blocks to the school—the street wasn't paved. I mean, what they did in that little town was they took the ashes. You know, everybody's house was heated with coal, and you always had to shovel the ashes out away from the heater, put them out to be collected like the garbage, you know, and then they would take them and pour them on the unfinished streets, the ashes. So if you had a bicycle to ride to school, you better not fall off of it (DePue laughs) because you're going to skin your knees up really bad. I mean, you think concrete's bad?

DePue: Ew.

Tarr: Yeah. So it was very much undeveloped. I mean, I didn't even have any friends to speak of because there weren't too many houses around where I lived. Now, on the other hand, my grandparents were over here on one street behind us, so right across the field was our house, and then across the street was my aunt and uncle's house. So, you know, it wasn't as much Morton as it was Tarrville.

DePue: (laughs) When you got to high school, I assume there were more than two or three people in the class that you had to deal with.

Tarr: Not only that, you had to change rooms every hour.

DePue: Oh my gosh.

Tarr: I hadn't changed rooms for two and three years.

DePue: What did you start getting interested in once you got to high school?

Tarr: Girls. (laughs) Naw. No, no. Not right away, but eventually. Well, first of all I got interested in music because my mother was a piano player. She got me a little drum one Christmas, and I used to beat on the drum while she played hymns and so forth, you know. So then my uncle, the one that worked at Westinghouse with my grandfather—one of the ones—played in the Westinghouse band. They had a wonderful band during World War II. They had concerts and all, but the guys did it as a recreation. He played any and

every instrument. He'd pick it up—he'd never had any music training in his whole life. And, I mean, he could play a violin, he could play an organ, he could play a saxophone, he could play a clarinet, he could play a trumpet. I mean, he'd just pick it up and play it. There was a time where I wasn't even sure he could read music. It didn't make any difference; he didn't need it.

But he taught me to play saxophone and a friend of my dad's gave me a C melody saxophone when I was in eighth grade. So when I went to high school, I got into the band and I started taking lessons. The band director gave me a brand new tenor saxophone for my entire four years in high school; it was mine to use and give back when I graduated, as long as I took professional lessons apart from being in the band and the orchestra and the dance band. So I did all those things, right?

In addition, then, getting into sports. All right, loved playing sports out on the grade school playground; played workies-up, you know, in baseball, and football we'd throw it up in the air, and whoever caught it, everybody else would tackle him, you know. (laughs)

DePue: What was the name, Murphy's up?

Tarr: Workies-Up in baseball.

DePue: Workies-Up.

Tarr: Workies-Up. You put a player out at every position, all right, and then you have maybe three kids batting, and every time somebody got out, they had to go out to the left field, and everybody moved up, you worked up. So the pitcher became the catcher and the catcher became the batter and... So you got to play every position. And, you know, we had taped baseballs and broken bats, I mean, but we played. And we put out windows and all across the street from the school. (laughter) So when I got to ninth grade and I went to Swarthmore, I started playing serious baseball. Played American Legion baseball in the summer for I don't know how many years. It seemed like every year they would move the age range up and I'd just stay. You know, I thought, Well, this is my last year. Uh-uh, they moved it up one. Okay, this is my... No, they moved it up one.

DePue: What position in baseball were you playing?

Tarr: Well, I was a left-handed throwing, left-handed batting baseball player even though I was a right-handed writer. You know, I'm all screwed up. I kick left-footed and write right-handed and eat right-handed and throw and bat left-handed. You know, it depends. Play tennis right-handed. Play ping-pong right-handed. (laughter) You know, I'm messed up, okay? (laughs)

DePue: But in a talented way.

- Tarr: Well, somewhat talented, okay. So I ended up being a left-handed first baseman and a left-handed pitcher. In high school as a junior, you know, the biggest kid gets to pitch and I was the biggest kid. I taught myself to pitch because I used to like to eat Wheaties¹, you know, and some of these pro baseball players were using their name and their picture to put a little booklet in there to teach you how to throw a pitch. And so I taught myself. I'd throw against the brick wall of our house.
- DePue: Not just the fastball, but a curveball, a slider...?
- Tarr: A curveball, a split. I can still put a baseball down between those two fingers and throw a forkball. That's a forkball. They don't use the same terms anymore. You know, slider I never heard of. Curveball, yes. Fastball, yes. Forkball, yes.
- DePue: Did you play football or basketball?
- Tarr: I played football. Yeah, I liked football, because, you know, in that grade school yard, if you were playing football—we didn't have enough kids to play teams, so we just—if we had a football we were lucky, okay. So we always had a football. Somebody had a football. It didn't make any difference if we had three people or we had thirteen people. We'd throw the football up in the air, and whoever caught it ran with that ball no matter where, wherever he wanted to run, the rest of us tackled him. It was, you know, free-for-all was, is what we called it, free-for-all.
- DePue: I assume there's no helmets, no padding, no—
- Tarr: No helmets, no pad. We always had knickers. We wore knickers to school. You don't even know what knickers are, do you? (laughs)
- DePue: I do.
- Tarr: Well, the knickers and the kids all had leather patches on the knees. You know, nowadays they put them on their elbows; we had them on their knees.
- DePue: Because you needed them on your knees.
- Tarr: Well, because we had already gone through the damn things, (laughter) and our parents weren't going to buy us any new ones, so she sewed on a leather patch, you know. And yeah, in fifteen-minute recess, we'd get all banged up out there, and dirty and sweaty, and go home a mess. But some kids could play like that and go home looking just like they came out of the bathroom and just had a shower. You know—

¹ Wheaties, a popular breakfast cereal, regularly used an advertising line: "Wheaties, breakfast of champions."

DePue: Were you one of those kids?

Tarr: No, I wasn't one of... So that's why I ended up a lineman in football, a tackle, left tackle. And I happened to be very fortunate to get back to going to ninth grade. I started to play organized sports in ninth grade, in high school, and football was something else, because at Swarthmore, they had seventh, eighth, and ninth-grade football teams. But they played by weight, not by grade. Okay, you could be playing with other ninth-graders if you were big. So they had lightweights, middleweights, and heavyweights is what they called them. The group that I ended up just being inserted with were ninth-graders, of course, and lo and behold, these guys have been playing football for two years before that and they had never lost a game, either lightweight, heavyweight, or middleweight. So I go in in ninth grade, and it turns out the varsity that year and every year thereafter was undefeated, including our own. So I was on twenty-eight straight victories from ninth grade through the twelfth grade.



Paul at age sixteen and a left-foot punter.

DePue: Playing both ways?

Tarr: Oh, yes.

DePue: Everybody played both ways?

Tarr: Oh, yes. You didn't leave that damn field, okay. Don't ever ask to come out, and don't ever expect to have a water bucket brought on the field, because it didn't happen. You daren't have water during the game.

DePue: Which did you prefer, offense or defense?

Tarr: It didn't make any difference; you stayed in there. (laughter) So I never had the chance to pick one or the other, you know. And you end up pretty darn good at both, as a matter of fact. Yeah.

DePue: So you were into music, you played a lot of sports in high school, and you knew you had to go to college.

Tarr: Yeah. I ended up captain of the baseball team. By the way, as a left-handed pitcher in my junior year on the baseball, the first game of the season, I pitched a one-hitter. The only trouble with that was it should have been a no-hitter. We had a rookie left fielder. First pitch I threw was a nice pop fly to left

field, and this kid ran in to catch it, and it landed right where he left. That was a hit.

DePue: A stand-up home run?

Tarr: No, it was just a single, but it was a hit.

DePue: Okay. But you won the game?

Tarr: We won the game, yeah. And a gentleman who had played in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin was not only a high school baseball coach at Upper Darby High School, the place that I was born, but he was a scout for the Brooklyn Dodgers, and he was all over me after that game. And he knew my dad. They grew up together. But he said, "You know, I really want to talk to you more. You know, tell me more about your background and so on." And he said, "What grade are you in?" And I said, "I'm a junior." And he said, "I'm sorry, I can't talk to you." So then when I was a senior it was obvious I was going to college, not...

DePue: I'm still trying to get over—he played baseball in the 1936 World Olympics?

Tarr: Yes, Berlin. It was one game played by our USA team to demonstrate so all coaches would get some idea of the game.

DePue: In Berlin. There were many years after that they weren't playing baseball.

Tarr: That's correct, that's correct.

DePue: That's interesting.

Tarr: For a **long time**, yeah. Not until Korea, I think, when they had the Olympics in Korea. [1988 Summer Olympics]

DePue: Yeah, maybe so. Yeah, that's probably about right. Back in '88 I believe that was.

Tarr: Yeah, yeah, something like that, yeah.

DePue: So there was a big drought.

Tarr: Oh, a long time. Well, there weren't that many foreign countries playing baseball.

DePue: Were you able to go to college on an athletic scholarship, maybe?

Tarr: That's a good question. I told you I went to Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; we had about seven hundred students when I was there, from 1950 to '54. When I was a freshman was the last year that the national rule was that freshmen had to play freshman football; you could not play varsity

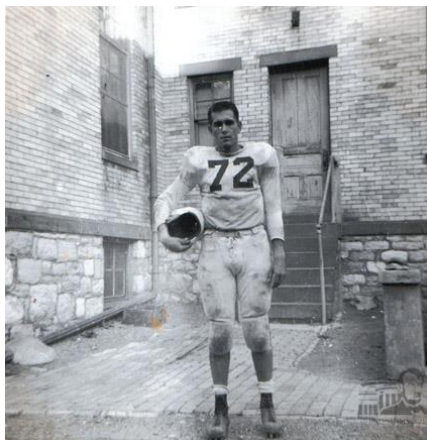
until I was a sophomore. We had our own freshman football team. So I had never played in a losing football game in my life until the second game of my freshman year in college, and I was devastated. Didn't know how to lose. (laughs) What do you mean? That doesn't exist! (laughter) It was funny, because the first game, we won, and the other tackle, the right tackle, was a big guy—Goldblatt,, Goldblatt his name was—was from Overbrook, Pennsylvania, right outside of Philadelphia also. He had never played in a winning game in high school. He was ecstatic that he won the game, you know, (DePue laughs) and I was completely depressed the next week because we lost a game. (laughs) So, you know, the world has a way of knocking you down. (laughs)

DePue: When you're getting too full of yourself, maybe?

Tarr: Well, Dickinson football was not that good. I mean... (laughs)



Senior year at Dickinson



Paul's last practice at Dickinson

DePue: For some reason I'm thinking that Jim Thorpe went to Carlisle.

Tarr: Jim Thorpe went to the Carlisle Indian School.

DePue: Okay. It's the same town.

Tarr: No, no, he's—

DePue: Carlisle, Oklahoma, maybe?

Tarr: No, no, Carlisle Indian School, right there in Carlisle, which is now the U.S. Army barracks. There is an Army officer training school.

DePue: Yeah, that's the Army War College.

Tarr: Yes, exactly. That's where it was. And we played baseball over there. I played baseball against the military guys there as a warm-up game. But yeah, he was way back in the '20's and early '30s. But Dickinson played Penn State at one time; well, we played them in baseball. We had no business doing that, but we played them. The first time I was ever—I don't know whether it was my junior year—I think it was my junior year—we were playing Penn State. We were scheduled to play Penn State, and we played Penn State in baseball. And it's sort of like these beginning of the season basketball games, you know. These little teams come in and get their heads knocked off of them. Well, we went to Penn State and had that happen to us (DePue laughs) in baseball. But the first thing I remember about going on that campus was it was the first year that, guess who, was coaching there? Joe Pa. Joe Paterno.

DePue: What year would this be?

Tarr: 1953.

DePue: That's when you got to college?

Tarr: No, no. That was my junior year.

DePue: Okay, so you started college in '51?

Tarr: Well, '50, September '50.

DePue: Okay.

Tarr: So when I was a junior, our baseball team played Penn State, and he was up there working on the football field with Rosey [Roosevelt] Grier.

DePue: Well, there's another name.

Tarr: Remember that name? All right, and I'll never forget it. And of course, he had been coached by the then Penn State head coach at Brown. He was a quarterback coach, or a championship quarterback at Brown, and a math major, I believe.

DePue: Paterno was?

Tarr: Paterno.

DePue: We should mention, just to kind of put a marker in here, that it's just within the last two months, maybe, that Joe Paterno, because of a sex scandal at Penn State, got fired after being coach forever.

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. And I don't want to get started on that, and you don't want me to get started either, because—well.²

DePue: Okay, so let's go back to your—

Tarr: You know what I read yesterday? I got to tell you one thing. He gave the college a hundred thousand dollars, because every year he does that. He would never go to the pros. He would always stay there. He always gave back a good deal, but he would never take a big salary from them like most of them would.

DePue: Does that mean that you were a Penn State fan even though they beat the crap out of you when you were in college?

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. If you come from Pennsylvania, you're a Penn State fan. And it's not much different than Oklahoma or Alabama or Louisiana or...

DePue: I don't know that you answered my question. Did you go to college on an athletic scholarship?

Tarr: Okay, let's go back to that. I digressed, yes. First of all, they didn't give scholarships, they gave "grants and aid", which meant they would give you X number of dollars per semester, and as long as you kept your grades up, you could count on having it for the next semester. You know, going to college in those days was really expensive, like it is now, only everything was relative. It was like five hundred dollars a year.

DePue: Well, you started off your story saying you'd moved the entire family in two trunks.

Tarr: Yeah, my grandfather came from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia in two trunks, yeah, but I was born after that. Yeah, so I got the equivalent as long as I kept my... I lost it one semester; I lost 250 dollars one semester. They gave me a job, washing dishes in the girls' dormitory, and I did that for four years. And after—

DePue: If you have to wash dishes, I can think of worse places to do it.

Tarr: Yes, yeah. But what I learned was if you're doing that in the kitchen, you're not seeing the girls. The rest of the football teams were waiters, and they were (DePue laughs) out there messing with the girls. Yeah. But anyhow, what I

² Tarr noted post-transcription: "This has changed in the two years since the interview was completed. As expected"

did though was, I made sure I did my laundry in the girls' laundry area while I was working in the kitchen.

After one year—I worked my butt off that first year—the guy that was the student head of the kitchen crew was a senior, and guess who got the job for three years? Me. And we made a lot of money, because there was no other catering firm in the town of Carlisle. But Carlisle Tire and Rubber and Masland Rug Company were the two big industries. They had no place to have their Christmas dinner for their employees other than in our gymnasium on the basketball court, which was on the second floor. So we had to tote all of the dishes and all of the food and all of the tables and all of the chairs to the second floor. This was after the students went home for Christmas. This is what we did until the day before Christmas. Then serve the meals: over a thousand people in ten minutes. I was head of the crew. I had to recruit extra people from the fraternity houses and so on to stay and be waiters and kitchen crew for that kind of an event. But compared to everything else, we made pretty good money for that time.

In the meantime, if you worked in the kitchen you got all your food free. So if I got my food free and I had my 250 dollars a semester... I had to pay for my books. That was a lot of money. And, you know, I wasn't the greatest student in the world, but I managed.

DePue: We managed to talk maybe ten, fifteen minutes about college and we haven't even mentioned what your major was.

Tarr: Economics.

DePue: What did you plan to do with economics?

Tarr: I had no idea, except my dad worked for Pennsylvania Bell Telephone Company and was a self-made stock investor. Eighth grade.

DePue: Now, he got into this after—you came along in '33, so well after the stock market crashed.³

Tarr: Oh, yeah. This was afterwards, right. But he's working for AT&T, and they would take money out of his paycheck for AT&T stock, and most of this occurred after 1945. But during the war—jump back—he taught me a lot about making money, because I had two businesses. Well, one business fed into the other. I arranged for everybody's garage and basement to be cleaned out of their newspapers and their magazines, weekly, monthly, whatever they wanted, and I carried away in my wagon. Put it in the garage, tie up the bundles of paper and so on, and when I'd get quite a load in the garage and my mother would be a little upset because she couldn't get in the car, (laughs)

³ The crash which started the Great Depression happened in October, 1929.

we'd put all that junk in the car and take it down to the junk man. And these scrap dealers were big time, because they were making money, you know, recycling in a big way because of World War II.

So then my dad bought U.S. savings bonds, or savings stamps. You could put the stamps in a book, and then you could then turn the book into savings bonds. When the war ended, we got rid of the savings bond and he bought AT&T stock for me with my money. Then as time went on, Dad got interested in buying stocks. After I got out of college and my brother's medical bills were paid, he got interested in buying other stocks; he did the research on his own and bought a little here and a little there. **He never sold anything.** So when he passed away I inherited a few shares of a few different stocks. Still have them. Can't part with them.

DePue: Well, it's probably a great lesson. I don't know enough about economics, but the rule of how the stocks build up value over time is important.

Tarr: Mm-hmm.

DePue: So, okay. We'll leave it at that. Let's go back to your college days.

Tarr: I took German too, by the way, in high school and college, which ties in later somewhat. Of course, I learned later that my high school German teacher was really Pennsylvania Dutch, and when I got to college I had a graduate of Heidelberg [University, Germany]. You know, he had all the scars from the duels on his face and so forth. And I didn't do too well in German in college. I started out with second-year German; you didn't have to take any more if you could pass the reading and comprehension test, so I took second year, and then I had real trouble because he hated me because—and I didn't know why, and it was because I didn't know how to properly pronounce the words. I was speaking in a dialect that (DePue laughs) was embarrassing to him. And, you know, he never explained that to me, and he never talked about it to find out. He just thought I was a stupid—how did I get through German in high school, you know. Well, anyhow, I passed the reading and comprehensive test. No more German.

DePue: You said you got to college in the fall of 1950?

Tarr: Yes.

DePue: So two months before you got to college, the Korean War started.

Tarr: Yes.

DePue: Do you remember anything about that? Do you remember thinking, This might have something to do with me?

Tarr: Ah, yes, in a big way. Because remember, I go back to that freshman football team. After our freshman year there weren't too many of us left; so many of us were gone to the draft, and/or the enlistment because their grades weren't that good. Left college, in other words, and went on. In fact, even one of my high school classmates died in December of 1950 within six months of completing high school.

DePue: That was the very worst month of the war, probably.

Tarr: Yeah, he—

DePue: That was when the Chinese flooded in.

Tarr: He went right into the service right out of high school. His name was Isadore Moore. We called him Hucklebuck because he always had zip—what'd they call those clothes, you know? The zip... The men's pants were—particularly the black boys—had zippers. (laughs) And we also called him Zip Moore Hucklebuck. (laughs)

DePue: But he didn't survive even the first year of the war.

Tarr: Oh, no.

DePue: Were you under some threat of being drafted yourself?

Tarr: Yes, yes. When I was—I don't know whether it was my sophomore year, it may have been—we took the military exam, and if you got a seventy or greater and you were in college—it had nothing to do with your college grades, it had to do with this military draft exam. And if you got seventy or greater, you could finish college if you could stay in school. One of my fraternity brothers, who has become a very prominent pediatrician in the United States, a very bright guy, he got a sixty-nine. Guess what I got? A sixty-nine. So the two of us did not pass the draft test. But our draft number didn't come up, either, until—his never came up—mine came up in January of 1954, my senior year. I was taking finals. And by that time I just had no trouble with grades and I was doing just fine, and here I am one semester away from graduation and I get my draft notice: Report in February, such-and-such a date.

DePue: This would have been February of 1953?

Tarr: '04.

DePue: '54. Which means the war was over by that time.

Tarr: Yeah, but the draft wasn't. Okay? So I came back from taking my finals for the first semester—I had still another final the next day—and I ran over to the college provost or whoever the big deal was in college. I had never talked to

the man, never saw him, but I knew who he was; I knew where his office was. I ran in there, knocked on the door and ran in there. I said, "I know you don't know me, but, you know, do something for me." He knew I was upset. He said, (laughs) "Sit down, calm down. Tell me your problem." And I said, "There it is," (laughter) and I threw it on his desk. He started asking me questions. He said, "Are you taking exams?" I says, "Yes, I got one tomorrow." He said, "Okay, I want you to go back and go back to studying; I want you to put this out of your mind, do well on that exam tomorrow, and just act like you'd never heard of this before." To this day, I don't know what in the hell he did. He was 120 miles away from my draft board in Lansdowne, and we were in Carlisle, but I wasn't drafted until September, 1954, after graduation. He took care of me. (laughs)

DePue: If the draft had not come along, what were you planning to once you did get that degree?

Tarr: Couldn't get a job. No male graduating college who was not a 4-F, had some deferment for some reason, no male could get a job.

DePue: Is that because American businesses knew better than to hire some people who might end up in the military?

Tarr: Absolutely. That's the first question they asked you: "Well, what's your draft status?" "Well, I'm 1-A," you know, or whatever it was. I think my memory's all right on that. How could I forget? So I went back to my summer job. I worked six or seven years in the summer from high school on, for the Bell Telephone Company. I had an understanding with the personnel department that with my degree in economics and interest in business, and my dad having worked for the telephone company, and if I complete my military service, I come back, you know, will you consider hiring me? Oh yeah, look at all this summer help that you've done, all these things you've had experience with. Sure. So I knew them. I mean, I'd been coming back to the same people (laughs) every summer, right? And they had put me in different jobs every summer. So I thought I had that made. Well, so I went to work, just like it was between college summer, you know. And I worked as soon as I graduated until the draft notice came along. In about mid-September, I had to report to Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

DePue: You'd managed to work a long time cleaning dishes and doing other things in the girls' dormitory. Were there any women in your life?

Tarr: Be careful how you say that. (laughs)

DePue: Were there any women in your life by the time you went in the military?

Tarr: Oh, yeah. (laughter) In high school there were women in my life. I lost them as soon as they went to college, though. No, yeah, I went with a girl for a couple years in high school and I went with a girl a couple years in college, and she dumped me after I went to Germany. (laughter) And the other girl had dumped me when she went to college. Yeah, a lot of bumps along the road.

DePue: So you got a Dear Paul letter over in Germany, did you?

Tarr: Yes, I did. Well, no, not really. Not really. I just didn't get any letters for a long time.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Tarr: And then when I got home I learned what the reality was.

DePue: Well, tell me about the early days in the service, then. Is this the Army you went into?

Tarr: Went into the Army, yeah, Fort Jackson for basic training, went through the first eight, as I said, airborne without the jumping. That meant we ran everywhere all the time.



Paul and Sally Alden
Senior High School Ball, 1950



Fort Jackson basic training, 1954

DePue: Did you have any choice at all in what you were going to do once you got to the Army?

Tarr: No. No, no. No. (laughs) Didn't even have any choice about my haircut, as you know. (laughs) No, we didn't have any choice of anything. The only choice we had was when they gave us free time; guess what we did? We played touch football in the sand with our combat boots on after running all day. (laughs) What a stupid bunch we were. (laughs) But most of the guys from college were drafted at the same time, a lot of them athletes, and one of the things I wanted to do was get on that football team at Fort



U.S. Army basic training, 1954

Jackson. I was doing pretty good because they asked after the first eight, they lined us up and gave us our orders for the next assignment: we were going home for two weeks and then we were coming back someplace. And the biggest guys got to go to clerk typing, so I fit in as a clerk-typist. The little guys went to the infantry.

DePue: Did you want to be on the football team for...

Tarr: Yeah.

DePue: For what reason, though?

Tarr: To stay away from all of this other chicken stuff that's going on.

DePue: You had figured out, if I get on the football team, I might get a cushier job?

Tarr: Well, yeah. Who wouldn't like to stay at Fort Jackson for the...? (laughs) And my buddy from high school, all right, ended up taking my bunk in the clerk-typing school. The day I left, he came in, took my bunk, took my locker, and stayed and played football. I'd played with him all through high school. He's in my class. He was co-captain of our high school team.

DePue: You say that with just a tinge of bitterness. If only you could stay there!

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. He took my bunk and my locker, and yes, and all the cadre were the football players in the clerk-typing school. We never saw them, but that's where they were assigned. They were taking up the slot.

DePue: This is why we do these interviews, because who would think that if you do well in football at Fort Jackson that you could end up being a clerk-typist?

Tarr: Well, the story when I got to Germany was another one, all right?

DePue: Well, do you have any other memories about basic training? For a lot of people, that was a difficult experience for them. It's supposed to be tough. Was it for you?

Tarr: It was tough, yes. It was tough. And I'll tell you, it would have been a lot tougher if I hadn't been an athlete. There were a lot of athletes from different schools, and as I said, we were dumb enough to go play football after going through that training routine. But there were a lot of kids who were younger and not physically up to where we were. And boy, the Army, as you know, can break you down and build you up again. And those kids, they really benefited from the Army, whether they were overweight or they were underfed or whatever. The Army had their way of making something out of you, you know? I've always said that I think the worst thing we ever did was get rid of the draft. I really believe that. I mean, I went through it and I didn't like it. I didn't like the idea of somebody else telling me that I got to spend two

years of my life... It was not my choice. I didn't like that. But I saw an awful lot of young men really benefit, and I was fortunate to have gone to college, because I was able to handle it a lot better.

DePue: Okay. Well, I normally would think that becoming a clerk typist had a lot more to do with the fact that you went through college, you graduated from college, and you majored in economics. Well, what did you do with kids like that? Well, they can help out in the orderly room, something like that.

Tarr: Yeah, well, that's... So I get to Germany, and going through the repo depot after being on the North Atlantic for ten days on a pigboat, which was another whole story.

DePue: The pigboat?

Tarr: I called it a pigboat. They had six thousand troops on a small troop ship, and they could only feed us two meals a day. The North Atlantic in February, and you had to be outside on deck all day long; you could not be down in the bowels of the ship.

DePue: Would this be 1955 by now?

Tarr: 1955, yes, February. Colder than hell. Just awful cold.

DePue: And rough seas, I'm guessing.

Tarr: Oh, rough seas. I didn't have any seasickness problems other than the first night on board it was still tied up to the dock, and I was squeamish. You know, talk about mental. (laughs)

DePue: But my guess is that there were a few who did have some seasickness problems.

Tarr: Oh, yeah. And not only that, but they wanted us to do PT [physical training] on the fantail. Now, have you ever done PT on the fantail of one of those ships?

DePue: No.

Tarr: Yeah. Well, you know, what I mean by jumping jacks. You jump up in the air in the North Atlantic (DePue laughs) in February, the ship goes down, and you went... All of a sudden you can't just jump this far off the ground anymore, you can jump this far off the ground. You know? And people got hurt. One kid came down—when he had that big fall, he lost his footing, he hit his head on the big metal pylons that they used to tie up the ship, you know, and split his head open. And that was the end of PT on the fantail. Everybody was really glad about that, because it was dangerous. It was really dangerous.

DePue: Did you go over as a unit or as an individual replacement?

Tarr: Individual replacement. Went through Fort Dix up through—or what’s it called? Anyhow. On board ship the first night I was squeamish, but after that I volunteered to wash dishes in the officers’ mess. I can do that, all right.

DePue: You had plenty of skill at that time.

Tarr: I said to my buddy, “Come on.” He said, “What are you doing?” I said, “We’re going to volunteer.” He said, “In the Army you don’t volunteer.” I said, “Yes, you do. In this case you do. We’re getting inside where it’s warm, and we can stay all day, we can write letters, we don’t have to go out in the cold. We are great heroes for our buddies because of all the extra food we can take down to the bowels of the ship when we go down at night. All we have to do is wash dishes for thirty or forty people, you know, and then we can play cards or whatever we want. Had it made.

So then they started a dance band. I mean, we’re on the North Atlantic for ten days. The *USS United States*, the big new cruise ship of the world, made its first maiden voyage. We went out the day before they did. They passed us at sea—“bye, see you.” They passed us coming back, too. (laughter) You talk about getting into your head. Ten days on the North Atlantic. That’s girl goofy. So anyhow, I played in a dance band on board ship. They gave me the saxophone, and I volunteered for that too. So I learned to work the system, work the system. So. That’s what I’ve been doing as a volunteer, working the system. (laughter)

DePue: Well, apparently you learned that even in basic training. You figure, Well, I’ll play football, then I can get to the right kind of school and...

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. Well, yeah. I don’t remember doing much to get to the right kind of school. They lined up the whole company, and they picked us out and said, You’re going to clerk-typist. You know, we didn’t have a say. And the little guys ended up going to the infantry, and the big guys ended up—now, the big guys may have ended up going to clerk-typist because we were going to get decided on more than we were going to play football or not by somebody else. You know, nobody ever interviewed me about that or said anything to me about that.



*Clerk typing school in Jackson, SC.
Paul is on the left with the “big guys.”*

DePue: Okay, let’s talk about getting to Germany. Where did you land?

Tarr: Bremerhaven, and then we went to a repo depot which was down in southern Germany near France, on the France border.

DePue: Repo depot means replacement depot, where they sort you out and figure out where you're going to end up.

Tarr: Yeah, you know all these terms. Make sure everybody else does, right? (laughs)

DePue: Right.

Tarr: Yeah. So then I went all the way from—which was in the northern, North Sea kind of thing, Bremerhaven, all the way down to—I can't remember the name, but down by the French border, and then all the way back to Frankfurt, Germany, and Hanau, which is about, oh, fifteen, seventeen kilometers from Hanau, and 30th Field Artillery Group.

DePue: Okay. Thirtieth Artillery Group, you said?

Tarr: Thirtieth Field Artillery Group. They were just in the process of shifting, I guess is the word, from the typical artillery to rockets. And so I was in a small casern, which was in battalion headquarters. And the other, the active unit that was with us was the rocket-launching group. So it was sort of a mixed... You know, the field artillery was often another casern and so I didn't see too much of that. I was never trained in artillery or anything like that. I worked for the S-2 major as an S-2 clerk because I got my secret clearance.

DePue: So your official military specialty was clerk-typist?

Tarr: Yeah, mm-hmm.

DePue: Okay.

Tarr: And boy were they picky about that. I can't type worth a hoot. (laughter) You couldn't erase anything; you had to start over. I don't know whether they still do that or not.

DePue: But where was I? You were talking earlier about being in the 101st.

Tarr: That was my basic training.

DePue: Okay, but normally you're not assigned to a line division during basic training.

Tarr: No, it wasn't—they were inactive. They were 101st Airborne Division, but they were not active jump operation at that time. They were at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The whole 101st was there.

- DePue: Okay. They weren't going to stay there very long, were they?
- Tarr: No, no. They were inactive at the time. They were strictly a training operation. But the Screaming Eagle was—
- DePue: Oh, that's interesting. So they must have activated the unit a couple years later.
- Tarr: Later, yeah. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.
- DePue: Okay, let's get you back to Germany, then.
- Tarr: Well, you've been bringing me back and forth on that pigboat. (laughs) Okay. So I spent my entire time in that little same place; it was a former German barracks. It was better than my freshman college dorm, as a matter of fact. Two to a room, you know, and that type of thing. So we had pretty good living. I had to pull guard duty periodically. But I had an experience as soon as I arrived that was interesting. The captain, the commander of the headquarters battery, was short a company clerk. So I came in with clerk typing school behind me and economics degree and all that kind of good stuff, which meant no never mind. And he said, "Fine, let's get you working. I need your help. You know, we haven't had anyone in this role, and I've been hurting." And somehow, I don't remember how, but I somehow got the word, or read on the bulletin board, that the athletic officer was beginning to look for recruits for the baseball team. So I made an arrangement to see him and talk to him almost as soon as I could get my butt out of that other captain's authority.
- DePue: Is this the athletics officer for the 30th Field Artillery Group athletics?
- Tarr: Correct. Captain.
- DePue: Okay.
- Tarr: So I went to see him. He's recruiting for baseball, because it's February. It's time for spring training, you know. (laughter) Turns out, long story short, he wants me on the team based on my background in athletics. He calls up the captain of the headquarters company, and they get into an argument because the captain said, "You know, look, I've been short and now I've got the clerk I need and you're saying he's going to play baseball." So I'm sitting there in front of the athletic captain (laughs) and they're getting into this heated discussion on the telephone.

Finally it got down to rank. They were both captains, and the athletic officer had one week's rank on the other. And so they started negotiating from that point of view. And they made the deal that, okay, the athletic officer would have my afternoons, and my butt would be somebody else's (laughs) during the morning. And it turns out—I don't know how it happened—but the S-2 officer got me instead of the company commander, because the

commander had to supply the S-2 officer with clerical manpower. So he got rank pulled on him (laughs) every which way, and I had the ability to get a clearance, and so I ended up working for the S-2 major in the mornings, and then in the afternoon I went to practice or played baseball.

Then I made a really big mistake. Everybody, after baseball season, whether they—well, actually I went from baseball to football on the same deal, and after football season, a lot of the guys decided they were going to be ball boys for basketball or officials for boxing or wrestling or (laughs) something. They were going to stay on TDY [Temporary Duty], okay. I didn't get the chance to go on TDY. I went to the Black Forest, driving the Jeep and the S-2 van. (laughs) So I was out in the middle of the cold in the Bavarian Alps.



*In Hanau, Germany, 1956
Second year playing baseball.
Heading to practice.*

DePue: But everything you've talked about before this, you get to the impression that, okay, this isn't just a sidelight, being on the baseball or the football team; this can be the main thing you're doing in the military, or at least one of the main things.

Tarr: Yeah, I was trying to make it the full thing, but I—

DePue: There were guys that made it the full thing?

Tarr: Oh, yeah. Everybody else in the team. Everybody.

DePue: That was all they did?

Tarr: All TDY, yes.

DePue: Explain TDY for those of us—

Tarr: Temporary duty, it stands for, right? And that meant that they had nothing else to do but practice sport and play the sport.

DePue: That allowed you to travel around as well?

Tarr: We traveled. We had our own buses; we had our own drum and bugle corps. And they didn't travel with us, but they played at every home game. There were sixty-four Army teams—baseball, now, I'm talking—sixty-four Army baseball teams in Germany when I was there. All right? So there were eight leagues, eight teams in each league. That didn't count the Air Force teams. So when we had our spring training, we played the Air Force teams and the Army

teams that weren't in our league in advance of the schedule, or in addition to the schedule during the season to keep in shape.

So we played seventy-two games per year. That's a lot of baseball. We got pretty good. And a lot of these guys were Pacific Coast League, Class A, Class B at the time. They had different than we have now. Pro baseball teams, a lot of them. We had the captain of the Princeton baseball team as the catcher; we had the shortstop from Michigan State; we had an Ohio State outfielder. Yeah. We had a good team. We won the doggone thing.

DePue: You were the best of your division, your league, or of the sixty-four teams?

Tarr: Of the sixty-four teams. The first year.

DePue: Did that there officers that were consumed by putting together these teams?

Tarr: Oh, you mean like the colonel? (laughter) The colonel and his baseball team—of course.

DePue: Well, that makes you think that there were chances for quicker promotion, that this was good for your career in the military.



1955. Paul at bat.

Tarr: No, no. No, no. If you were playing ball, you know—

DePue: I meant for the officer. They have a team that was winning.

Tarr: Oh, oh, yeah, yeah, sure. Oh, okay, yeah. But for the players (laughs) it didn't mean squat. We ate the same food, we slept in the same barracks. (laughs)

DePue: But Paul, the theory is that you're in the Army in Germany because there's this huge communist horde across the border...

Tarr: That's right.

DePue: ...that you're defending democracy.

Tarr: We could throw baseballs at them. We can throw baseballs at them, (laughter) or hit them on a long pass in football.

DePue: This wasn't what most people would think about when they're thinking about being in the military during the Cold War.

Tarr: Well, that's true. Well, you know, and I—there were times when you weren't so sure what was going to happen, next, you know? I mean, yeah. But we didn't pay too much attention (laughs) to that.

DePue: Were you introducing baseball to the German people as well?

Tarr: No, no. Oh, no, no. No, they didn't even get to see us. No, we played on base. The only ones that may have gotten to see us were the people that were doing the KP work. You know, in Germany they paid... Well, our barracks was next to housing for misplaced families from other countries who were living in barracks and so forth, and they worked in the mess halls. They did the KP duties.

DePue: Mm-hmm. Well, this is just ten years after this devastating war in Germany.

Tarr: And it was still devastating.

DePue: Well, tell me more about your impressions of Germany at that time.

Tarr: Oh, well, the rubble. I was in a lot of towns in Germany playing baseball, (laughs) but you know, traveling through, we got to see a lot of things. I played baseball both years and football once en route to Berlin, and we had to travel through the Russian sector on trains. That was an experience. When we got to Berlin, we got to go into the Russian sector. I was standing right next to some of the Russian military.

DePue: They let you go into East Berlin?

Tarr: Oh, yes, an Army bus, took us into East Berlin—this is before the wall, okay—but you dasn't go across this exit here. But they'd take us on the bus and they'd take us to their memorial garden where all of the Russian soldiers are buried from the Battle of Berlin in Germany. And they had Russian guards on some of Berlin, in their sector, on some of their buildings and so on, and we were standing right beside them. But if you went out on the town as a GI in Berlin, you had to be very careful that the taxicab driver didn't take you across the border and leave you in the Russian sector, because you were going to be in trouble then.

DePue: Were you on some kind of a tour, then, when you went over to East Berlin?

Tarr: We were on an Army bus, yes, the whole team, as a group. That was part of our trip.

DePue: Did you see a big difference between West Berlin and East Berlin?

Tarr: Oh, of course. East Berlin was a façade. It was like seeing a movie—what do you call those, where they make the movies? It was just a front. The buildings were two or three stories or more high, but if you went around the corner, it

was just the façade; there wasn't any building there. It was just the front. (laughs) So you have this beautiful street, you know, with all these big buildings, and they take you down that street, but get your eyes around the corner there and it's all fake. It's all fake. We saw where Hitler died in the bunker. We saw that. It was a field. It was an area. There wasn't much to see, but they told us about it. And then they let us off in their memorial gardens. I've got pictures of standing right beside Russian soldiers up in their monuments and so forth that have their star in the ceiling and this kind of thing. It was an interesting experience.

DePue: It sounds like the Russians were happy to show you that, because of your respect for what they did during the war, or...?

Tarr: I think yes. Yeah. There wasn't any animosity going on at that time, but they weren't intermixing at all. (laughs) I mean, it was, You can do this, but you can't do anything else.

DePue: What were your impressions of the German people that you did encounter?

Tarr: Oh, I liked the German people. I liked them a lot. People in Berlin were extremely friendly, and people in Frankfurt, Germany. In our little town of Hanau, we didn't get out in that town very much. I visited a little beer garden kind of place. I was sent there by friends of my parents; these people were their relatives. They couldn't speak any English, and I couldn't speak German enough in their dialect or anything. But we went one Sunday and sat in the beer garden outside, and it was interesting—my buddy and I. Talked to them a little bit, but that was my only experience of interacting with Germans in Hanau.

But in Frankfurt, you know, we took the boat trips up and down the Rhine. I met a little girl on the boat trip and ended up spending New Year's 1950—1955?—yes—in Hamburg with her and her mother and her brother. Her dad was a German soldier killed by the Russians in World War II. I stayed there New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and then came back. It was a nice experience. They still had their decorations for Christmas, and they sort of celebrated their way New Year's Eve and so on.

DePue: The immediate time period after the end of World War II there were strict rules about non-fraternization with the German people. I assume by the time you got there ten years later that had changed?

Tarr: Yeah, there wasn't any problem with that. There was a lot of fraternization. Not sure how to characterize this, but some of the German people were under the impression that our black troops were night fighters because that's what they said they were.

DePue: That's what the black troops said they were?

- Tarr: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we were night fighters. And so it was a lot of that fraternization.
- DePue: Well, that is one of the questions I normally ask people in this time period. This is a few years after the integration of the military. From where you were, playing baseball and football, how well do you think the integration was going?
- Tarr: Well, my whole experience with it, all the way through basic as well as, you know, going to Germany and playing ball, we were totally integrated. Now, the numbers were not significant. For example, on the baseball team our first year, we just had one. He was the Ohio State outfielder. Really neat guy. He also played football, but there were a lot on the football team, many of which, by the way, were not college graduates like he was, and that made it difficult for him, because he was buddies with all of us who had played baseball, were also playing football, and now he finds himself with other blacks on the team and they're not of the same caliber educationally like he was—nor athletically, for that matter.
- DePue: So who did he associate with on the football team?
- Tarr: Them. We had to have a little talk with him.
- DePue: Was that his choice to associate with them, or...?
- Tarr: Well, it was his choice, but he didn't realize that he had changed his ways. I mean, we didn't mind that he was associating with them. He wasn't the same person; he didn't act the same way. He acted like they acted, and when he was with us in baseball, he acted just like all the rest of us.
- DePue: Well, to put you on the spot here, how did they act that was so different from the way that the rest of you did?
- Tarr: Well, first of all, you have to understand football was such a different experience. Baseball, everybody was there to win. Football, they weren't all college graduates or more, okay; they were a bunch of high school kids that were out to hurt somebody—and not just the blacks either, I might add. They just weren't as sophisticated in the sport, and they didn't care about winning. What they cared about was banging around, you know, hitting somebody and hurting them, and winning was—they were on TDY. They were interested in TDY, and it wasn't a competitive thing, you know; they were just putting in time. And that was a whole different attitude, and I didn't like that at all. I didn't like that.
- DePue: Well, going back to your baseball career in the military, what position were you playing then?

- Tarr: First base. I did not pitch. When I got to college, I never told them I could pitch.
- DePue: Why?
- Tarr: Well, several reasons. In high school you got to play every game. If you were a pitcher and then a first baseman, when you weren't pitching, you went to first base or whatever; that was my case, okay? Because there weren't that many proficient kids, okay. But in college you're not going to be a pitcher and then play any other position. You're going to be a pitcher, you're going to be in the bullpen, and that's all you're going to do. You're going to maybe pitch one game. They only play a few games, I mean, comparatively speaking. So I never told them. I just didn't tell them I could pitch. And my fraternity brother was a left-handed pitcher—that was another reason—and he was good too; he had played with me in the summer leagues in high school. And he didn't play any other position.
- DePue: What was your batting average when you were on the Army team?
- Tarr: Over three hundred. I hit a grand slam home run in the championship game in Gelnhausen.
- DePue: Did that mean you get written up in the *Stars and Stripes*?
- Tarr: The newspaper, yeah. I don't know whether it was the *Stars and Stripes* or not. Well, I was lucky. I was lucky. I got a line drive going into center field, and they had no fence. And the outfield was like baked hard, right. And once that ball hit the ground and that outfielder wasn't there to stop it... As slow as I run, (laughter) I made it. Yeah.
- DePue: Did you have one of the better batting averages on the team, then?
- Tarr: Yeah, yeah. I wasn't a lot over three hundred, but as a left-handed batter—and I wasn't a big home-run hitter either. I had one kid go over the fence and catch one on me over the fence, back one-handed, and then he caught one when it was out of the park, and he snared it. And then I had another one; we played an Air Force team, and interestingly enough, the right fielder was a kid that I had played against at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, and he's playing right field. They had a fence about as tall as this table, and it went over that fence. He couldn't catch it. There wasn't any way. But when the inning was over, he jumped the fence and brought me the ball. To this day I have that ball. (DePue laughs) Because he knew me. He knew that I had played for Dickinson because we had played against each other.
- DePue: What about football? What position did you play in...?
- Tarr: Left tackle.

DePue: Both directions?

Tarr: Both directions. I was a co-captain in my senior year, and in high school I was captain of the baseball team.

DePue: Which sport did you like best?

Tarr: I have to say overall, baseball, but I loved being undefeated, I mean, in football.

DePue: (laughs) Took you a while to get over that first defeat, huh?

Tarr: Yeah, a lot.

DePue: Well, what other impressions do you have about your time in the service, in Germany especially?

Tarr: Well, I got some opportunity. For example, the baseball team had a weekend that we went as a team on leave to Holland.

DePue: To where?

Tarr: To Holland.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Tarr: So I've been to Amsterdam. I've been all around different places in Holland. That was an interesting experience. And then another time we had a week in there, and two of us got a train out of Frankfurt and went to Rome and the Isle of Capri. We met some young ladies there from Ohio, and we ended up detouring our travel plans and went back to Switzerland where they were staying on one of the lakes there. One of the girls had come over to marry a Swiss doctor and got there and changed her mind. Her maid of honor was with her from Ohio, so they were on a lark because... (laughter) But they were nice, very nice gals, and they showed us all over Switzerland in the couple days that we had there. So we were gone for a week. We spent a night on the Isle of Capri. Never had a drink in my life until I got to the Isle of Capri, not even in college. And I had one of those dome covered pizzas in an open hearth, you know, along with a glass of Chianti. That's my first drink.

DePue: Well, if you're going to start drinking, that's a pretty sophisticated way to start, I think.

Tarr: Yeah, well, it was good. (laughs)

DePue: You mean you didn't have any German beer before that time?

Tarr: No, never, never. I still don't drink beer. Never, never. I can't stand it.

DePue: But certainly you had plenty of opportunities to do it.

Tarr: Well, fraternity houses, yeah. I used to get in—

DePue: Well, I mean even in Germany when you're traveling around.

Tarr: Well, yeah, when we went to Berlin and—you know, otherwise we were in a military vehicle, bus and whatever, on the Autobahn going from one game to the next and that kind of stuff, playing in Frankfurt and behind WAC's circle [U.S. Post Exchange].

DePue: Did you have the same barracks as the rest of the team, or did you have the barracks with your guys in the 30th group?

Tarr: 30th group.

DePue: Were you an anomaly in that respect? Most of the guys were—

Tarr: Yes, yes. The other guys were housed together. In a different building, that's all. I mean, same—

DePue: Did they have their own mess hall as well, the team?

Tarr: Man, you know—no, they didn't have their own mess hall. Just they ate the same thing as everybody.

DePue: Okay. What was your impression of the officers that you saw over there?

Tarr: Well, we had a couple officers that were the coaches of the baseball team, all right, but they were just guys like us. I mean, they were lieutenants because they went through ROTC or something like that, and they were just recent graduates from college, Princeton or Michigan State or someplace. And because they had played ball, sometimes they were players as well as coaches, and other times they weren't. One time we had a guy who he didn't know much of anything about baseball, but he listened to us. He was smart. (laughs) We didn't take advantage of him in any way, shape, or form. We were a pretty good close-knit group, and people didn't, you know, get into squabbles over who should play the game. I mean, it was pretty well established based on our record as to who was going to play. So I didn't have any trouble with the officers. I enjoyed the S-2 officer that I worked for particularly.

And (laughs) I had a little... When we were out on maneuvers in the winter and I was driving the Jeep, I had a lieutenant that I was driving around in the southern Alps, I guess it is, of



Germany. It was snow-covered; it was terrible weather. And I'm taking him up a mountainous area, following this trail on this Jeep, and all of the sudden we slide over the side. Now, it's a long way down. But the Jeep tilts this way, and we hit the tree, but it was the hood of the Jeep that hit the tree, and that hood of that Jeep had a nice convex (laughter) and because it hit it and then it just bounced back and stopped. That tree kept us from going down that mountain. And that lieutenant didn't want to ride with me anymore. So pretty soon we're out on the highway and we were rolling, and all of a sudden my front left tire is going faster down the road than we are. It came off! And I'm watching it go down the road lickety-split, (makes noise). (laughter) I had to walk all the way down there and bring that wheel and that tire back. That lieutenant said, "I don't think I'm ever going to ride with you again." (laughter) But they were good about it, yeah.

DePue: How about some of the NCOs, especially the more senior NCOs, because these guys would have been Korean War veterans, maybe World War II veterans. They'd seen all this action, they're probably in it for a lifer, and then they've got all these kids who are draftees who are off playing football, basketball, or baseball all the time.

Tarr: We were sort of insulated from any trouble there because the colonel liked his sports, (laughs) even to the point where he brought his cousin off of a team that we used to play one season; the next season this fellow is on our team. (laughs) He's cousins with the colonel. And the colonel liked his baseball. Like you say, he was jabbing the other colonels about his team, you know. So I think these other NCOs knew you don't screw around with the colonel's teams. (laughter) And we didn't press our luck either. You know, I mean, we just didn't. We were pretty professional about what we were doing. We were so happy to be doing what we were doing instead of what these other guys were doing, all right?

DePue: Well, it sounds like you really enjoyed your experience, but did you or anybody else—

Tarr: No, I was very lonely. (laughs)

DePue: Oh, were you?

Tarr: Yeah. I loved baseball. I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for the baseball and the football. But I didn't—well, my brother was so sick, okay, and my parents were trying to deal with that, and I just felt—well, I didn't sign up to be shipped out, but you know, when you're in the Army and you don't have any choice, you get shipped out, you get shipped out. So I was trying to make the best of it, but like I said, I didn't drink, so I didn't go out on the town. And I didn't sort of do things like that to make the nights go by or anything like that, so I was writing letters and reading and that kind of thing. I spent a lot of time at the USO, which was in a different casern right across the

street. And those gals that worked in those places, they were very good. They were nice.

DePue: Were these Americans or Germans?

Tarr: No, American. American girls that were living on the economy and working as USO hostesses.

DePue: Did your service in Germany during that timeframe make sense to you from a national defense standpoint, why you were there and why the United States needed you there?

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you get torn between what you understand is necessary and appropriate under the circumstances and then you have to deal in your mind with what's going on with the family at home, with the brother, you know, having so much trouble, and the fact that you were going steady for two years and now you've been ripped away from the girl that you thought you were going to marry, and that's gone south on you. That's happened I guess to just about every GI that ever lived. So yeah, there was a lot to balance there. And as I said, the sports kept me going, because when I was playing sports I wasn't thinking about the other stuff.

DePue: Well, tell us about this situation that brought you back home. Did you complete your tour over there?

Tarr: No. Well, in July, we're in the middle of baseball season; we've got a good team going again, and we're in the hunt for winning it again. I get a phone call; in those days you didn't get a phone call. You couldn't call across the Atlantic, or, you know, your parents couldn't afford to call across the Atlantic. Best you could do was write letters. But I did get a phone call: American Red Cross was calling, and my mother was on the other line. She was telling me that my brother wasn't going to make it; he was still alive, but he wasn't going to make it, and that they wanted me to come home. With that, I was gone. I mean, I didn't pack. I just went and got on a plane in Frankfurt. A Jeep came and took me to Frankfurt.

DePue: When was that?

Tarr: July of 1955. He died on July sixteenth, I think. My first airplane flight was from Frankfurt—

DePue: For a kid who wanted to fly airplanes at one time.

Tarr: Yeah, yeah. First time ever had an airplane flight. It was a MATS, Military Air Transport Service, four-engine prop. You sat facing the tail. It was loaded with GI families, and I guess others like myself that were headed home for some particular reason. Some were officers and their families. But they got me to Frankfurt in the Jeep and I got on the plane—I had never been on a plane in

my life before—and we took off. We had a seventeen-hour flight with two stops en route, one in Scotland, and then Goose Bay, Labrador. And then right into New Jersey to the Air Force base there at—I forget what they call it.

DePue: It's not Dover, I think that's in Maine.

Tarr: No, that's in Delaware. Dover, Delaware. That's where the dead bodies are brought. No, this was—oh, I forget—Fort Dix is the Army base, and the Air Force base is called something else, but they're right together.⁴

DePue: Okay. We can figure that out later.

Tarr: Yeah. So then I had to get a bus from that location. Goose Bay, Labrador, by the way, was a desolate place of nothing. At both stops, we didn't get to see anything. I mean, we got a trip to the restroom and got maybe something to eat and stretch our legs, and they refueled the plane and then off we went again, seventeen hours. So then I got a bus that took me to downtown Philadelphia and got on the train. My parents met me at the train station, and then we went right to the hospital.

DePue: And it sounds like just within the week or two after that, your brother passed away?

Tarr: Couple days.

DePue: Did you have any more military service after that, or you—

Tarr: No. They gave me thirty days' leave, and then I heard from them that I had to report back to Fort Dix on a particular date, which was short of my two-year tour. And what they had done was made a decision, well, it didn't make any sense. September sixteenth would be my date to get out, maximum, so they just let me out. By September fifth I was working for the Insurance Company of North America in downtown Philadelphia.

DePue: Well, it didn't take you long to land a job after you had the military behind you.

Tarr: Well, I'll tell you, there's a story there, too, and it—

DePue: Well, go ahead, dive into it.

Tarr: (makes noise, laughs) This one just tears me apart still after all these years. You know, I had worked six or seven years and had this arrangement: I was going to go back to the telephone company, right? So all I have to do is call them up and go in there. So I called them up and I go in there, take the train, go in, talk to these people in personnel. Yep, we got an appointment all set for

⁴ McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey

you. You go over to this building over here, talk to this guy, all right. He's vice president of something, some region or something. So I do. First thing he says to me, sitting across like this, "And why should I hire you?" So I tell him why, you know. What I'm thinking is, what's the matter, man? Can't you read? Didn't I send you any material that showed what I've done, you know, working for the telephone company? And it was really evident right from his whole attitude—this was a big, big office. I mean, he was a big, big shot, all right. And that was another thing I thought was sort of strange. Why am I seeing this guy who's this high up to have an office like this, you know? There's something wrong here. It was pretty obvious he didn't want to give me a job. Didn't have anything to do with what I had to say or what my background was or anything.

But he finally said, "Well, we have an opening; we have one opening, in north central Pennsylvania." Now, if you know anything about—and I knew something about north central Pennsylvania: there's nothing there, okay? (laughs) I'm telling you, there was nothing there back in 1955. Probably not much there yet. I was so fit to be tied. I mean, I was really mad, because that meant leaving home—I had just been gone for two years—leaving home when my parents needed—you know, they were still really having a difficult time, having lost my brother. I wasn't going to go. And I didn't want to go to that particular location because I knew that he didn't want to hire me. He was acting that way. He got his message across to me. I think he was hoping that I knew what I knew, that I didn't want to go there for a number of reasons.

So I was walking back to the train station, and I went past a very big building which, in Philadelphia, was the twin to the Suburban Station, another big building just like it, all right. I looked up there and I couldn't find a name on that building, a big fourteen-, fifteen-story building. Said, I'm going in here; it's a big company. It said Insurance Company of North America. Went to the second floor, the personnel department, and three days later I was working. And they're the ones that sent me to Springfield, Illinois, because they bought out Horace Mann. I was eighteen years with them and twenty-two years with Horace Mann.

DePue: So was this a good thing that you got sent to the door at AT&T?

Tarr: I didn't know what I wanted to do when I got out of college, but I knew what I didn't want to do: I didn't want anything to do with insurance. I said that to a lot of people. And they forced me into it. (laughter)

DePue: But you stayed with it, so it must have turned out okay for you.

Tarr: Yeah, and you know what? It turns out—I didn't know this at the time, but later I learned that I went to work for what they called at the time the Accident

and Health Insurance Department, and the head officer at INA of that department was from Swarthmore.

DePue: That kind of stuff makes you think this was meant to be.

Tarr: And I'm sure he knew who I was from playing football.

DePue: Okay. Well, we're almost to the second part here, and we need to get there because we're running out of time. But tell us when you got married as well, and then we'll move on to your great-grandfather.

Tarr: Okay, well, the interesting thing about that is when I knew I was losing the girl I went through college with, I was communicating with a gal that I knew from high school. She didn't go to our high school, but I knew her from what we called dancing class. (laughs) She came to our town for dancing class, and I had met her there. But it turns out she was the girlfriend of my fraternity brother, my class and all, same fraternity. She went to Bucknell; she was frequently coming to Dickinson from Bucknell because when the fraternity had dances or the school had dances, my fraternity brother would have his girlfriend down, all right? So I knew her, and I knew her before then, and I knew her because she went with him. We were good friends, very good friends. He was an athlete; he was the best basketball player. She was an athlete; she was the girls' basketball player at her high school par excellence. She came from a little town close to Morton and Swarthmore called Media. She was writing to me just as a friend back and forth while I was in the service; she was engaged at this point in time with the guy, who was in the service, who was in flight training and was down in Texas. She was engaged to him; they were going to be married after he finished his flight training. She was down there for his final flight. He was the squadron leader, and he came in and crashed on his last flight and was killed. She was there; she saw it.

So I'm fighting the problem, you know, my brother's dying; she's fighting the problem she lost her fiancé. We knew each other and we were friends to each other. So that continued as a natural kind of thing: got in touch with her when I got home. And so one thing led to another and we ended up getting married. She was the mother of my three girls that are still back in Pennsylvania. She moved out here with me when we moved the whole family out here in 1973, but she didn't like it. By this time she had developed some psychiatric problems, so she wanted to go home. So I said, Well, I can understand that. So she took my two younger girls; my older girl was starting Augustana College at that point, and she stayed here. Then I remarried. Since then she's passed away.

DePue: You didn't mention her name.

Tarr: Anne, with an *E*.

DePue: What was her maiden?

Tarr: Tuckerman. Her dad was a dentist, basketball player from Brown University, 1925 captain. Dentist.

DePue: Sports is woven into this whole story.

Tarr: Can't get away from it.

DePue: Well, maybe this will take us in a different direction. Let's talk about part two of the story now. One of the things that we've been toying around with here at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is interviewing people who know that they had ancestors in the Civil War. So I think I'll just turn it over to you at that point.

Tarr: Okay. Benjamin Franklin Tarr was born and raised in Maryland, and as a sixteen-year-old he enlisted in the Navy at Baltimore. After several assignments in and around the Baltimore/Washington area with the Navy, when he was eighteen he was put on board a ship from Baltimore that to the best of my knowledge was headed to try to resupply the fort in South Carolina.

DePue: Charleston?

Tarr: Charleston, right. Now, there's a whole question here about—I don't believe that it was the resupply of the fort before it was taken over by the Southern...

DePue: You're talking about Fort Sumter?

Tarr: Fort Sumter. But there was a point in time when we recaptured, I believe, Fort Sumter, or we were in the process of recapturing Fort Sumter. And I believe it was at that time that the resupply was going on, okay? In my studies on this, that's the only way that timing would work out. Anyhow, when his ship gets there by the fort, there's a Southern ship that's known as a ram—that's what they call it, a ram—rams his boat and sinks it. He's taken prisoner, he and his other sailors, and are marched across all of South Carolina and Georgia. In marching them across, they spent nights in Libby Prison, and there's named one prison after another—every night was a different prison.

DePue: Well, Libby Prison was in Richmond, so I don't know that he was heading—he wouldn't have gotten—

Tarr: Wasn't there two Libbys, though?

DePue: Well, there might be, but the one that's most famous, I think, is Richmond.

Tarr: Yes, I've heard that, okay. All I'm—but I've read this other, so...

DePue: Okay, okay.

Tarr: I think there is one in South Carolina, or there was one in South Carolina. I haven't researched that issue. But I am aware of that issue. But it was a different prison almost every night as they marched them across, because it was a long hike. (laughs) So he gets to Andersonville. To the best of my knowledge he was about five months in Andersonville. During that period of time, Sherman's march to the sea was getting rather close to that area. As horrendous as it was there at that location for the prisoners, there was a lot of internal fighting going on between primarily the captives who were from the state of New York and the others that were from other states.

That's where this Leroy Keyes comes into play, because Leroy Keyes, who wrote this book about his period of time in Andersonville, talks in there about being head of the faction within the prison that was against the New York faction. The New York faction, they were just terrible, you know. They just wanted to pick a fight, apparently, just for the sake of hurting people, the sake of stealing whatever food they had. The conditions were so bad, but this just added further competition to their trying to maintain some reasonableness and survive. So he took it upon himself to organize the group that was against the New York group.

While all this was going on, there was a lot of planted information among the prisoners; prisoners were disappearing, and they were being told they were being put on trains and released, little by little, because these prisoners were disappearing. Well, what they were really doing was putting them on trains and moving them further south in different directions because Sherman was getting too close and they didn't want them to find how overcrowded they were and what the conditions were and so on. But they didn't know that; they thought they were being swapped. They thought these people who were disappearing were being swapped for southern prisoners. That's the story that they were being told.

DePue: Now, did you get this from the book that Keyes—

Tarr: From the book, yes, from the book.

DePue: Okay, so this isn't from your own great-grandfather's ear.

Tarr: No, no. This is from the book, and great detail about this. This Leroy Keyes tells all about what was going on in there and how they were being misled. The people that were still in prison saw these people leaving and they had no feedback for what was really happening to them, and it kept happening, so they were upbeat about, well, pretty soon, one of these days, we'll be on that train going north. (laughs) And they weren't, okay?

He was a young man; he was only eighteen. He was only there five months. Well, most of them weren't there too long, but the conditions were so bad, if they had any medical problems or age or any kind of a sickness—

which a lot of them did from the food and the conditions, sanitary problems that they had—they were dying left and right, thousands. But he found his way out, and finished his military service time back in Washington area. And how he ends up in Pittsburgh—I don't know the answer to that. There is a Tarr house in Maryland, even to this day—it's a bed-and-breakfast—that's been there since the 1400 and something, you know. Yeah.

DePue: Sixteen hundred and something.

Tarr: Sixteen hundred and something, yeah. Excuse me.

DePue: Even that would be astounding.

Tarr: No, 1660s or something like that, yeah.

DePue: And this was where, again?

Tarr: Along the Eastern Shore, near Baltimore, as you get down. Okay? This house predates... I have not been able to say that he lived in that house. But I have pictures of that place. My daughter's been there. My uncle has been there. The place is not owned by Tarrs anymore, hasn't been for some time, but it still has a sign out, (laughs) The Tarr House. Anyhow, somehow that ties back to his family, and I don't know. I've not been able to get back beyond the early eighteen, 1809 or something like that, with his ancestors. Okay? And it's really—spent a lot of time years ago, but I can't fill in the blanks very well back into that period.

DePue: What's the connection, then, between Benjamin Franklin Tarr and you?

Tarr: Okay. Benjamin Franklin Tarr has thirteen children—the survivor of the Civil War—thirteen children living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area; Washington, PA, is the name of the town. His last child is a son, thirteenth child. The names of the kids are just incredibly different (laughs)—but the last one is Paul Cresson Tarr Sr.

DePue: Crescent?

Tarr: Cresson. No *T. C-r-e-s-s-o-n*.

DePue: Cresson, okay.

Tarr: Cresson Tarr. Now, the Cresson comes from a friend of his by the name of Paul Cresson. Now, there is a town a little bit up from Pittsburgh where the train tracks go down along a riverbed and come to a town, and it's a terminal, like, years ago for the trains going east and west, before they get over the mountains and so on. And the name of the town is Cresson, Pennsylvania. I don't know if that has anything to do (laughs) with his—I haven't gotten that answer either. But I suspect that this friend, you know, if you get that Cresson

name and they're both in that area out there, they're connected somehow. But anyhow, Paul Cresson Tarr Sr., thirteenth child, last child, has his first son, Paul Cresson Tarr Jr., who ends up being my father. I'm the third, my son's the fourth, and he disappointed me a year ago when Benjamin Paul was born.

DePue: Uh-oh, going all the way back to his great-great-grandfather, then.

Tarr: Well, I suspect—I haven't had this discussion with anybody, but I suspect that my daughter-in-law had this problem of whether we name him after my dad or after your dad and the way they settled it was neither. (laughter) But I got second choice. (laughs)

DePue: Tell us how the story—

Tarr: But the Benjamin is in there.

DePue: There you go.

Tarr: And there's lots of Benjamins, because Benjamin Franklin Tarr was frequently named as children under his children.

DePue: Is there a story connected to how the story of your great-grandfather passed down from generation to generation? How was that preserved?

Tarr: All right. I have a Bible that is about that thick and that big around.

DePue: It's a big Bible, the twelve-inch-thick Bible.

Tarr: Big. Big, thick, typical Bible. When my grandfather and my grandmother were married, and it was in 1890-something, okay, and I had that. I *had*—my daughter has that Bible right now—I had that Bible, and I have all the pages filled in with all these names of kids. Not only that, of their two families, but their wedding date and all that's in this Bible. A lot of this information came from that. My Uncle Zeke, the guy that was in the Army in Hawaii, did a lot of research before I got into it. He was my dad's youngest brother, and he has four boys, and all of his boys go by their middle names, and one of them is a Benjamin (laughs) first name. First name is Benjamin—never has used it. My uncle, who is my dad's brother, was Benjamin first name. So the Paul and the Benjamin go all the way back to B.F., Benjamin Franklin, who has Paul. So they've kept that name going. They dropped the George Washingtons. (laughter) And the women's names, I can't even remember. Zetta and... I mean, they're wild.

DePue: Women's names go through fashions much more than men's names do.

Tarr: Oh, yeah. Oh, I can't even pronounce some of them. Yeah.

DePue: Do you remember when you first heard about the story of your great-grandfather?

Tarr: No, you know, I don't remember. I've always had an interest because being the third, it was unusual at my age when I was born to be a third. I mean, a lot of people did use that, but it was still unusual. A lot of juniors, senior and juniors, but not too many got to the third. Now, we got to the fourth, by golly. (laughs) So anyhow.

DePue: Well, maybe you can still make it to the fifth.

Tarr: It won't be right, though. It's always the first—

DePue: Oh, okay.

Tarr: Time is, you know, (claps) that was it. (laughs)

DePue: Okay. Anything else you can tell us about Benjamin Franklin Tarr?

Tarr: Well, yes. After he got out of the service and he moved to Pittsburgh, he was very much involved—his occupation was associated with coal, coal mining. I'll give you some materials here, a picture that shows him with his associates that were coal miners. He was given credit for developing the first—and I don't know the right terminology. But when they sink a shaft, he came up with at the time some unique shaft concept. He developed the first shaft of its kind, okay, for coal mining, and was recognized for it, and it even says something about it in his obituary.



B. F. Tarr is on the left; the handwriting above identifies him.
This photo of the Civil War Veterans Group in
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was taken before 1900.

DePue: Something about the ventilation system for it?

Tarr: I don't know. It never goes into the detail about that. I'd have to talk to somebody that knows something about coal mining; it talks about tipping or something like that.

DePue: Okay.

Tarr: Yeah.

DePue: Are there any particular stories that were passed down from generation to generation about—

Tarr: No, not that I'm aware of.

DePue: So it's primarily because you have the Bible and just knowing the connections and knowing where he was?

Tarr: Well, I also have his military records—I wrote to Washington, and I can show you that, too—that gave me all the information about the ships he was on, name of them, when he was on it, when he entered, when he left. He even borrowed money from the government. (laughs)

DePue: He was in the Navy, then.

Tarr: Navy.

DePue: Was he in the United States Navy?

Tarr: Yes.

DePue: So different from if you're in the Army, you're associated to a particular infantry regiment from a particular state.

Tarr: Right, right.

DePue: That was not his case, then.

Tarr: No, he was not. He was a sailor, and the ships that he was assigned to—that's the way they kept track of you, what ships you were assigned to—all that information is in there. I also have a copy of a piece of what looks like adding machine tape that someone went in to Andersonville when they freed the prisoners. Somebody was in there making notes on each and every one of the people that were in there, that were ever in there. It was like a piece of adding machine tape; it's just about this big. It's got about four names on it, and the first four are deceased, deceased, deceased, then it says B.F. Tarr, survived. And I got that. And other than that, he borrowed some money from the

government (laughs) after he got out of the service, and then he paid it back, of course, but that's in his file.

DePue: Did he have any medical conditions?

Tarr: No, there's none; his record was very thin. The biggest part of it is the fact that he was in that prison, where he was taken prisoner. It doesn't talk too much about the conditions except you knew he was on this ship and you knew what happened to him was sinking by a ram, and they marched him over to Andersonville; you know that he was freed when they freed everybody. He went in at sixteen and he wasn't taken prisoner till he was eighteen, so there were two years that he was on different ships.

DePue: It sounds like he would have enlisted—

Tarr: They were training ships.

DePue: —and joined the Navy in '62, 1862, perhaps?

Tarr: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

DePue: And my guess is he was captured in '64, then.

Tarr: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

DePue: Yeah, and that's during the—it was a pretty extensive operation that the Navy and the Army had against Charleston Harbor and Fort Sumter and Fort Wagner.

Tarr: That's right there, too, yeah. Mm-hmm.

DePue: There was some pretty brutal combat associated with that campaign. Okay. Since your grandfather was the thirteenth—

Tarr: Child, mm-hmm.

DePue: —child, did your father ever know your great-grandfather? Was there were too much distance there in time?

Tarr: The answer I think is yes, he did. I'd have to refresh my memory on his death date, but I think it was in the '20s.

DePue: Well, I'm just curious how the story passes from generation to generation, though there would have been a big difference in age by that time.

Tarr: Well, it would have come down, you know. I knew my grandfather quite well, being the oldest grandchild, and my dad was the oldest child.

DePue: Were you hearing stories from your grandfather about his dad?

Tarr: Not much, no. Since our house was right behind my grandparents' house, we had many visitors from the Pittsburgh area, both my grandmother's relatives and my grandfather's relatives. Most of them were cousins of my grandfather. So I don't remember—no, I wasn't alive when he—he had passed away, but I think my dad may have known him.

DePue: Okay. But essentially, the story that you know is from official records and from that Bible.

Tarr: That Bible, yeah, and my uncle, yeah, my Uncle Zeke looking into the Tarr House down there. He went digging. Oh, we had another funny thing. My parents grew up in the Methodist church, and I did too, in Morton, very active. Dad was superintendent of the Sunday School at seventeen. (laughs) When we'd go to church, people would say, well, where are Mom and Pop, because everybody in the town knew my grandfather and my grandmother as Mom and Pop. It wasn't Mom and Pop Tarr, it was Mom and Pop. You know, (laughs) they were Mom and Pop to everybody in that town. So "Where's Mom and Pop today? They're not at the church." They always sat in the same pew, you know, like we always do in church.

But the Methodists, you may know, change pastors—ministers, they call them—very frequently, about every two years (laughs) at least, right? They keep stirring the pot, right, so you just get used to either liking or disliking the one you have, and here comes another one. If you dislike, don't worry about it, just put in some time; you're going to get a fresh one. Right? (laughs)

Well, it was when I was, I think, in the service they got a new pastor, they got a new minister; he was from Maryland, and his last name was Tarr, and he's the splitting image of my father. I mean to tell you, you'd swear they were twins, or at least brothers, right? Looked just like him, just like him, just really spooky, you know. But all we know—well, what they knew was he's part of the Tarr family from Maryland, and your Tarr family came from Maryland originally too, so we're connected somewhere. But they didn't go into digging into it. That's what got Zeke started on digging into it, but by that time he and his family weren't attending our church, they were attending another church. But that caused him to really start to look into it.

DePue: Tarr—what nationality is that name?

Tarr: English. I got a histography here [heraldic chart?], it's called, and there's the English coat of arms. There were four English brothers by the last name of Tarr; they migrated through New York—I'm not sure exactly what year—but the story goes when they arrived in New York they went in four different directions. One in New England has got a lot of Tarrs, and California's got a lot of Tarrs. But these four boys went this way, different directions.

- DePue: Do you have roughly an idea when they got to the United States, or was that even before the United States?
- Tarr: I know that, for example, as I told you, I got back to the early 1800s, and that was still in the United States, and that was before these Tarr boys came, but—
- DePue: Before the Tarr boys came?
- Tarr: No, no, excuse me.
- DePue: That was after.
- Tarr: After. Excuse me, after. So, you know, I don't know, and this doesn't tell you anything about that; it just gives you the history of the name and the coat of arms.
- DePue: Well, and people make a nice living developing those things.
- Tarr: Yeah. I got one of those books, too. I didn't learn much from that.
- DePue: Okay. Well, this has been fun. It's been interesting to hear about your own personal career and about the role of sports in the Army in the 1950s.
- Tarr: You know too much about me now. I'm afraid— (laughter) what do they say about that? I'm going to have to shoot you now. (laughs)
- DePue: I know all your secrets. But it's also fun to hear about your great-grandfather and to hear those connections. I guess one or two other questions, then. When did you really get interested in following his story and tracking that down?
- Tarr: Not until after I was out here, and my Uncle Zeke had done the work that he did, and he was sharing it with me. I got some time on my own computer. I got a computer and I got the Family Tree Maker software and started spending some time digging back. I got a lot of disks and information. I filled in as much as I could possibly fill in on that Family Tree Maker software. By the way, since I talked to you the other day, I found out that I did get my Family Tree Maker system over to my old computer. In fact—I don't know how this happened—but it's not only over there, it's over there in a more current version than it is over here.
- DePue: Oh, that's interesting.
- Tarr: And I don't remember buying that. You know, usually you have to—
- DePue: Get an upgrade of the software.
- Tarr: Yeah, yeah. Well, there's an upgrade. I must have done that, but I did not know—I've had this new computer for about fourteen months, so fourteen

months ago my brother, my son and I were working on moving all my data over, and there were some things we couldn't move over because the software wouldn't work on this Windows 7. It was working on XP, but there was one in between that... Oh, what a terrible mess that was for me.

DePue: We don't need to talk about that, but—

Tarr: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: That's a different story for a different day, perhaps.

Tarr: That's a different story, yeah. So I've got all the data all the way back that I can dig out. I obviously have spent some time and money way back then going back into CDs that you could buy. I think the best thing you can do is go out to Salt Lake City and dig into the Mormon database. And I've been in touch with people in Ohio years ago that were doing this kind of thing and wanting to share information, and people in New England. There's a lot of emails going around. But I never could get any further; I was hitting one stone wall after another, and then I changed computers and lost interest.

DePue: But the whole genealogical search sounds like it started with the interest in your own great-grandfather's period.

Tarr: Yes, yeah.

DePue: And did you also see an increase in your interest in history in general and Civil War history in particular?

Tarr: Yes. Oh, yeah. And when this opened up here, I've been a volunteer ever since. (laughter)

DePue: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Paul. It's been a lot of fun, and we'll see where this goes.

Tarr: All righty.

(end of interview)