

Answering The Call:
The History Of The
Port Washington Volunteer Fire Department

Transcript Of Oral History Interview With

George R. Mahoney
Protection Engine Company No. 1

conducted in association with the
Port Washington Public Library Local History Center

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pertaining to the subject being discussed

Q: ... 2004. This is an interview with George R. Mahoney. My name is Sally Olds. The interview is taking place in Mr. Mahoney's home at 59B Bayview Avenue, Port Washington. Can you please say your name.

George Mahoney: My name is George R. Mahoney, and I live at 59B Bayview Avenue, Port Washington. And I lived here since I come back out of the service.

Q: And which fire company are you a member of?

GM: Protection Engine Company.

Q: Thank you. Today is June 15th, 2004. How old were you when you joined the Port Washington Fire Department?

GM: Twenty. I had an application in when I was younger, but there were so many applications coming in it took a year for me to get in.

Q: And how long have you been a member?

GM: Sixty-seven years.

Q: So, how did you feel when you first were accepted to membership?

GM: I felt good, because I had two brothers in the same company. And they—the three of us
... [INTERRUPTION] ...

Q: I'm sorry. You were talking about your brothers.

GM: They had almost fifty years in. There was three of us. It was in the same company.
They had over fifty years in, and still active after fifty years.

Q: Were they older brothers?

GM: Older. Tom [Mahoney] was the first one in Protection. I guess he had about sixty years,
and my other brother had about fifty-nine, maybe sixty, too. And Oscar Petersen, he got
it from the State that they were the only three brothers that were in the same company
that had over fifty years and still active. I have the letter someplace, but I don't know
where it is now.

Q: So what kinds of things did your brothers tell you about being a firefighter before you
actually joined yourself?

GM: They told me it was a nice outfit to belong to. And, you see, now in them days, you

worked most of the time just during the summer and the fall. In the winter, you was off.

So this was our second home—the fire company.

Q: You worked—oh, you mean at your paid job?

GM: Yeah, it was mostly all those estate jobs you worked at. Everybody—it wasn't a steady job all year.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

GM: I done the farm work, like, oh, everything. I'm a jack-of-all-trades.

Q: You did farm work here in Port Washington?

GM: Yeah, my grandfather, he farmed over at Sands Point Golf Course. He was the Horseradish King, they called him. And then my uncles and my father, when they built Castle Gould, they worked on that building.

Q: Which building?

GM: Castle Gould. Guggenheim's.

Q: And ...

GM: Very powerful man.

Q: So you said you only worked in the summer and the fall on the farm, and ...

GM: Yeah, I mean, that's mostly everybody at that time.

Q: And so what did you do the rest of the time, when you were with the Fire Department?

GM: Well, we used to go up to the firehouse and we'd just play a little horseshoes and cards and—and then at night we'd go down to the bakery shop and buy the buns and that.

Q: And what was it like for you, those early days in the company?

GM: Well, there was a lot of grass fires in them days. There was all grass, you know, and then you used to burn off all the lots and stuff for people, too, and that's when you got rid of all the bugs and that. Today you can't burn nothing. And they had a number of firemen that—we had so many going to fires, we had to keep some of them off the truck. It's different today, but in them days, you—you put your heart and soul into it.

Q: Do you remember the first fire that you went to?

GM: No, I don't.

Q: How about the first big fire that was not a grass fire?

GM: Well, I was painting my house. We lived in Sands Point. That's where I was born. And the Foremans' house was on fire, got a fire. And I looked up from where I was painting, and I see a fire truck coming in. And it burned to the ground. And they had to go down to the pond and pump the water out of the pond, because the hydrants wasn't big enough down there.

Q: Because what was not big enough?

GM: The hydrants...The water line. Our pumper pulled it out of the ground when it pumped.

Q: So were you involved in fighting that fire?

GM: Yes. Right next door.

Q: What was your special job with the company?

GM: I was a jack-of-all-trades in the company. I was a fireman, you know. Like, now, when I

got out of the service, I was supposed to be foreman. And then I got on the Police Department, and you couldn't hold office, so I had to give it up.

Q: Port Washington Police Department?

GM: Yes.

Q: So, was that a rule of the Police Department, or the Fire Department that you couldn't ...

GM: That was the Police Department. Nowadays, now you can become Chief and everything else if you want to.

Q: Who was it who nominated you to become foreman?

GM: Well, I just got out of the service, and I don't know who. They were all good friends, I mean, you know, in the fire company.

Q: Who were some of your friends back then?

GM: Oh, all the men, like Carpenter—the Carpenters [Burt, Herbie, Jean], and Walt Crooker, Jimmy Dickerson. Oh, they were all—they were all good guys. We played baseball together and everything else, you know. We had a Monday Night Club. Everybody

chipped in a dime, and by the end of the month we could go have hot dogs and some beer amongst ourselves.

Q: You'd chip in a dime every Monday night?

GM: Yeah, and then when we got enough, we'd have a hot dog and beer at the game.

Q: Did you play in a team for your company? For Protection?

GM: Oh, yeah, we did. We did play softball. But this is, you know, to get together, the members, ourselves.

Q: And you would play, or you would go to see the baseball games ...

GM: Oh, we were playing the games.

Q: ... with the Monday Night Club? You played?

GM: Yeah, sure.

Q: Where did you play?

GM: We played in the high school field, and then up in Beacon Hill. There was a baseball field up there.

Q: How long did you play in the softball league for the firefighters?

GM: I guess I played till I went in the service.

Q: What position did you play? What position?

GM: Pitch. I pitched. I was not too good at it, but I done all right, I guess.

Q: When did you go into the service?

GM: February 9th, 1942. There's my medals and stuff up on the wall.

Q: Can you tell me what those medals are?

GM: The Arrowhead is for landing on D-Day at Utah Beach. Good Conduct Medal. Oh, I got a list, and I can go in and get it for you. It'll tell you all what they're about.

Q: Okay. Well, I'd appreciate that. But maybe when we're finished talking.

GM: Yeah.

Q: And then you'll give me the list.

GM: And the dog tags, too, that I had.

Q: And so you were there on D-Day?

GM: Yes.

Q: And what were your World War II experiences relating to the fire company?

GM: Well, that—the fire, every month, they would send us two dollars for cigarettes. Our company did. And I got one of them dollar bills. I wrote on it all the places I went in Europe and part of—we was the first—we were the first troops in Paris, and we took Cherbourg the first ... [afternoon] ... St. Lo, there was only one building standing when we got finished. And I got up in Saint Viet in Belgium, I got hurt, and then I was flown to England. So I was in the hospital there.

Q: Were there other places that you went to in Europe?

GM: I didn't—Germany really was first. Belgium, Austria. Northern France.

Q: And you wrote down all those places ...

GM: Yeah.

Q: ... on that dollar bill. Do you still have that dollar bill?

GM: I sure—I sure do. But you can't read it too good, now, where the sun hit it. I can show it to you. I know where it is.

Q: Good. How do you think your service in the military influenced your firefighting service?

GM: Well, I guess that's a hard question to answer, because on D-Day you went in there and you never saw so many dead animals—horses and people laying up there. Oh, it was, it was terrible! And then our guns was going, shooting and all. You could be deafened. Sainte Mere Eglise, that's where the parachute was, up on the steeple of the church ... and they all went crazy every time the bell rang.

Q: Wait, where was that?

GM: Sainte Mere Eglise.

Q: And the para...,you said ...

GM: The paratroopers jumped that night. A lot of them got drowned, and, you know, they flooded the meadows, and when they ran with the parachute, it was over top of them.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about Smokey?

GM: Smokey, yeah. Well, I have a book someplace, story about him.

Q: Okay, I'll look at that later, but ...

GM: I don't know where it is. What's-his-name wrote a story about Smokey.

Q: Who?

GM: Russ Kent.

Q: Russ Kent?

GM: Kent.

Q: Who was he?

GM: He's a fireman, and he writes stories.

Q: Were you especially close with Smokey? Was he ...

GM: I was the one that got him.

Q: Where did you get him?

GM: I got him from a city fireman as a pup. I got permission from the trustees to have him.

Q: Permission from whom? Who did you get the permission from?

GM: The trustees of the company. And that's—that dog wouldn't let nobody get on the truck that didn't belong to Protection. When we sold the truck, the old truck going away, they stopped for a traffic light. Smokey jumped up on it and chased the drivers off. They couldn't get back on the truck, so they were lucky. One of the firemen, Poole, Poole was there, so he got Smokey so they couldn't go, get on the truck.

Q: He was going to protect the truck?

GM: Yeah, as soon as the fire horn went on, no matter where he was. Zoom! He was on the truck, going.

Q: Did he live at the firehouse or ...

GM: He lived at the firehouse.

Q: How old did he live to be?

GM: Before he died? Oh, I guess he must have been—we must have had him about ten years.

Q: And he was at the fire company all that time?

GM: Yeah. Well, they put him in a home for a while, because he was getting nasty and we were scared he would bite the children when they'd go down and look at the trucks. So that almost killed him. So, they had to go back and get him. They all felt so sorry for him.

Q: He had to go back where?

GM: The firemen went back to get him.

Q: Oh. And then did he stop biting...

GM: They had to, they had him spayed.

Q: And that made him less aggressive?

GM: Right. Then he never was right since. He died. I mean ...

Q: How often would you go to see him? How often did you go to see him?

GM: Oh, I saw him every day. What's-his-name took care of him---Kelly [Arnold]. He was the one that mostly took care of him. Fed him. He'd be out on the ice when they was eeling [catching eels] and stuff on the Bay. Soon as the firemen were ready, he'd be gone.

Q: There was what on the Bay, I'm sorry?

GM: Oh, so, they would go out there and eel, you know. And the dog would go with them, clamming and stuff.

Q: So would he jump into the water when they were eeling?

GM: Well, this was frozen at that time. Chilly to go in the water.

Q: But, if it was frozen, how did they, how did they catch the eel?

GM: They cut a hole in the ice and then spear them.

Q: Did you do that yourself?

GM: I ...wouldn't eat 'em.

Q: Did you take part in any of the drill or tack competitions?

GM: The racing team?

Q: Uh huh.

GM: Oh, yes. The three brothers—the three brothers was in. We won the Nassau County Championship.

Q: What were the races like? Were they foot races or ...

GM: No, jumping off a truck. Big truck. It's—you got a brand new pair of shoes and the heels would come off, you know, but they never stopped. No brakes. Today, they are right on

the ground. I mean, they do the boots they got today, we use our own trucks. You got to take all the hose off it. Then, when you come back, you got to put the hose back in. It's a lot of work.

Q: So that was all part of the drill that you would have to go through ...

GM: Yeah.

Q: ... because of the racing team? And you and your brothers, did you work together?

GM: Oh, yeah. I was supposed to jump off the back and pull the hose off, and you were holding the hose and you'd fall down. And my one brother, he was up in the front with the nozzle.

Q: And when was that that you won the championship?

GM: Oh, I forget now. It was before the war.

Q: Do you remember where the games were held?

GM: Nassau County?

Q: Where? Here in Port Washington or ...

GM: I got—I'm not sure where it was.

Q: Okay. How active were you in the parades? The Fire Department parades?

GM: Well, I paraded all the time that I could with the firemen, but when I became a policeman, I was riding a motorcycle, and I was the policeman back off (?)...

Q: So, you rode as part of your job, then?

GM: Yes.

Q: Yes, with the Police Department. How did that work out, working for the Police Department and being a volunteer fireman? Was it—you know, did you have conflicts between what you were going to do?

GM: No. You knew what you were going to do. What you couldn't do and what you should do.

Q: Well, what happened if you were on the job as a police officer and you heard the horns, the signal for a fire?

Q: You worked as a policeman. I mean, you might be assigned to the fire to get all the data and stuff.

Q: But you couldn't leave ...

GM: You couldn't—you couldn't use hose or anything.

Q: And you were involved with the Police Athletic League?

GM: I started it.

Q: You started it. How did you start it?

GM: 1946. The kids was going crazy. This was Chief, Captain [James] Salerno at that time. They would turn—knocking tombstones up in the cemetery and everything else. The parents wasn't home when the kids got out of school. So we started it in 1946. And I and Andy Jessum, the first way we done it, we sold all the five hundred tickets for the movies and were sitting down in the police station . So that day we went out and sold them all for that night . I think that's the time Babe Ruth came to the movie house.

Q: Where was the movie house?

GM: Beacon. Beacon. Beacon Theater on Main Street. So, I worked on it with the P.A.L. [Police Athletic League]. We had an old city truck there that was falling apart, you know, and then I started the baseball team and that. And one day I was going to take the team out and play, and they told me I got to go back and put my uniform on, because they showed up people today. They said that Tom Brown would take over for me for the day. That's how Tom got in there. He took over. And then, in 1958, I done it all over again. I took the old police station and I built it up. Knocked everything but the roof off. And we done it for nothing.

Q: So, when you say you did it all over again, you mean in terms of the ...

GM: We put all new sides, all new floors, and everything in it. Before, it was falling apart.

Q: Was this at all related to your firefighting activities?

GM: Well, they had a Drum and Bugle Corps, and I used to have to march with the firemen. That was when I was a kid. We won a couple of trophies upstate for first place and that. We won a lot of trophies, I mean, that Drum and Bugle Corps. They were just getting good when I got out.

Q: When did you get out?

GM: '79. Out of the Police Department. I retired.

Q: So the Drum and Bugle Corps was with the Police Department or the Fire—the Fire Department?

GM: Yeah, it was the P.A.L. but they used to hire us to march. It was a hard getting bands. They can't get a band today.

Q: Well, how about the high school band?

GM: Yeah, but they don't go out and march.

Q: Which fires or other emergencies stand out in your mind? Which ones do you remember?

GM: Oh, I had, there's North Maryland Avenue. There was a house fire, and two of the kids got burned. And then, there was a fire right down here on the corner. I was painting the house there that I was raised up before with my father and mother. And I didn't know where the fire was at that time, but the truck and I heard the back-up turn the corner, and here was a woman who committed suicide. And she, you know, turned the gas on, and it exploded. And she come out and she grabbed me, and all her skin went all over my

clothes and everything. Then, you had the Berg fire.

Q: Which one was that? Berg?

GM: Berg. When the people got killed in the tanks.

Q: What kind of tanks?

GM: The oil tanks. They was cleaning them out when a spark exploded. Oh, there was all kinds of fires. There was—I wasn't a fireman at the time, but a barn down there, one of Guggenheim's, somebody set it on fire and it burned the horses up.

Q: How did you get over like an initial fear of fire? When you first started with the Department, how did you get over being afraid of what a fire could do?

GM: You went through training in schools, and everything, I mean, you got to use your head. You can't, you know, jump through this, and go do this and do that.

Q: Was the training hard?

GM: No. No harder than going to school.

Q: Do you think the training has changed over the years?

GM: Oh, yeah, everything's changed today with OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] and that. We had hats and stuff that you had to buy with OSHA. Say our hats was no good, and their hats that they had... You had to turn around and buy all new ones. Then theirs was no good. I mean, there are a lot of people who do things, put things in the book. When they're going to do things, they can't do it.

Q: They put what in the books?

GM: Oh, some people, you know, go by the book.

Q: Oh.

GM: And they read the book, and they take—but then they go out and do the actual work, they can't do it.

Q: What was wrong with the OSHA hats?

GM: I don't know. They were no good.

Q: Well, what do you mean, no good? They didn't protect you or ...

GM: They didn't protect you. They'd fall apart.

Q: And so then you had to buy others. Did you have to buy them yourself?

GM: No, the company. No, in them days, a lot of times, we had to buy a lot of stuff for ourselves, you know. But today, I mean, you got different ...

Q: Were you involved with the Port Washington Yacht Club fire?

GM: I was the one that turned it in.

Q: How did you happen to know?

GM: I got a call up at headquarters. A baker's van coming—he says they smelled smoke coming up Plandome Road. So I went down to look at it. And zoom! It went through the roof, and just like, you know, a grass fire going. Zoom! so fast. So I called in for a general alarm.

Q: And then did you go out? You went to the fire also after that?

GM: Well, I was there, yes.

Q: Yes.

GM: Oh, there was a lot of tension. And in them days, right down on the golf course at the Sands Point Golf Course, you had nice polo games every Sunday. They used to have the firemen work there to direct traffic. I mean, everything changed.

Q: Did you do that? Did you work on Sundays at the ...

GM: No.

Q: ... golf club?

GM: I wasn't a fireman at that time. I used to walk up and see the games.

Q: And what about the Plaza Bowling Alley fire? Did you go to that one? Were you involved with that?

GM: You mean the one up in the Plaza building?

Q: I'm not sure what building it was. It was in 1950.

GM: That's up in the Main Street, I think, the Plaza Building. I don't know if I was there or not.

Q: And did you ever get injured?

GM: Well, on the racing team, when I jumped off the truck, everybody was supposed to stay on and I jumped off it. I ran into the truck and I bent the bar, and they told me I couldn't race no more that day, but I still raced.

Q: What happened to you?

GM: Well, I had my two legs like grapefruits on 'em and all red, but them days, you didn't think much. When you're young and healthy ... [INAUDIBLE-AIRPLANE NOISE] ... the school that I went to, Main Street School.

Q: Yes.

GM: That's the school I went to.

Q: You went to Main Street School?

GM: And then Sands Point School, the one up on the hill. That was the one that--and then the

Daly ... But that was the little white building up on top of the hill.

Q: What are you proudest of in your firefighting career? What are you proudest of?

GM: What did I do what?

Q: When you think about the things that you did as a firefighter, what do you feel the most proud about?

GM: Well, we helped people. I mean, everything is volunteer. You don't get paid for nothing. You take your time.

Q: What was your best day as a firefighter?

GM: Every day was my best day when you're alive.

Q: And how about your worst day? Your worst day?

GM: Well, when you see people get killed. That's not too good.

Q: Did you ever dream about fires?

GM: No, but I dreamt when I come home from the war. That was a horror. And the whole ceiling come down on top of me one night.

Q: What?

GM: The ceiling come down on top of me, I thought...in '88.

Q: In your own home, the ceiling came down?

GM: Yeah. Right over here.

Q: So what did you do? Did you call the Fire Department then?

GM: No, I just lay there. I don't know what the hell made the ceiling come down.

Q: Did you ever do anything for good luck?

GM: Good luck?

Q: Have a special charm, or wear special clothes?

GM: Oh you'd find a four-leaf clover now and then, and you stick it in a book or something.

In fact, there's one in the Bible there. That's before, before I went to war, I guess.

Q: And did you have any special nickname in the Department?

GM: Well, they called me "Moses." But that's my nephew. And then my brother Tom used to call me "Ginger." But I did not have no nickname.

Q: Why did they call you "Moses"?

GM: I don't know why. I was in the hospital, and he came into the hospital. "Hi, Moses," he says, "How're you doing?" And there was a Jewish guy in there, he says, "Moses. Why do you got that name Moses for?" (laughs).

Q: Did you ever save a life yourself?

GM: No, I don't think so. I might, but I don't know.

Q: What would go through your mind as you were racing to a fire? What would you think about?

GM: When you're young, you don't think too much about it. You just want to get there. I was coming from Sands Point. That's where I lived before I went into the service.

Q: Were you ever involved in an investigation for arson? Did you ...

GM: Yes. Just—a little kid was trying to burn the Catholic church up there, the Christmas scene. And I have a little letter from the Fire Marshal that I took good care of the job. I don't know where it is now. Someone was going to make a movie, and he took a lot of my stories, and he died. [Joe] McMichael's. He was going to make a—Joe McMichael, he was going to make a movie of ...

Q: Of what?

GM: About me.

Q: Well, what happened there when the kid tried to burn the Christmas scene? Did you catch him in the act or ...

GM: I talked to him. No, I didn't catch him in the act.

Q: Well, how did you find out ...

GM: I had to find out who done it ... [INAUDIBLE] ...

Q: How did you do that?

GM: Oh, by talking. You know, the funny thing. Down at P.A.L. I would stay with the kids, be around the fence. And then, all of a sudden, the kids, you know, "Sarge, you know more about the kids than we do. How do you know all this?" I'm sitting and I hear all of them talking. I knew everything that was going on. I had, up at the movies one night, the guys came up, two cops came up to get me. They had two of the kids from the city. Well, you never saw such kids. They would kill you. If they had a knife they would stick you. So I took them over to the Children's Shelter for the night. And that poor woman went crazy. She had to get the county cops in there. So, she said, "Thank God you're coming." The kids—I wouldn't take no guff from them. When we went to court, you know, the judge threw the kids in what you call bone-up (?) they were so bad.

Q: These were kids from Port Washington?

GM: No, no. They came from the city. They were shooting staples at some people in the train, and I guess they had money, stole money and stuff. I don't know. See, I was off that time, when they come and got me. You used to do all that stuff on your own time. You went to court on your own time. You were sure every Sunday you'd be in court.

Q: Well, what about in your firefighting career, what surprised you about being a firefighter?

GM: My brothers. And it was a nice group of people. I mean, there was—it's just like you'd be going to an outfit. They was nice, all nice, group of people. In them days, you didn't have too much things to do.

Q: So, did you make friends ...

GM: Oh, you ...

Q: ... in the Department?

GM: ... you was all friends.

Q: And ...

GM: But we used to always clean up, like we went down there. We'd have corned beef and cabbage. I'd bring the cabbage and potatoes for that. So I mean, I brought them down there. We had good times.

Q: Were you married at that time?

GM: Never married.

Q: How about your brothers? Did they marry?

GM: Yes, they were married. And my sister lived next door.

Q: And so, well, how did their families feel about their involvement in the Fire Department?

GM: Same as. they was all firemen always had firemen.

Q: Who do you think you influenced? You say your brothers were strong influences in your life to go into the Department. Who would you say you influenced in your career?

GM: I don't know. Everybody knows me, you know, an old-timer. Like now that I'm getting a little older, they get worried about me. The night of the black-out, at night, I'm sitting here, I had my flashlight. They came up to see that I was okay and that.

Q: Who did?

GM: The firemen. The young ones. They look after you.

Q: Do you ever get over to the meetings?

GM: Oh, I go to all the meetings. And I drive a car yet. But my knees is going on me.

Q: Were you in the Memorial Day parade this year?

GM: This is the first time I wasn't there. I didn't figure it's worth going there. It used to be nice when you had the Polish little kids all dressed in their uniforms and that, but today it just—they just bounce around. They don't march.

Q: Do you remember any of the funny jokes or pranks that the firemen would play on each other?

GM: Oh, yeah, they would call you and they'd be upstairs, and they'd open the window and they'd dump a bucket of water on you.

Q: While you were all dressed?

GM: Yeah.

Q: And then did people get mad, or ...

GM: No, no.

Q: Were there any special jokes that you would tell to each other?

GM: Yeah, well, I never heard too many. They used to play cribbage, and I watched them for a year.

Q: There was what?

GM: Playing cribbage.

Q: Oh, cribbage.

GM: But I didn't know how to play, and I was watching them. It took me a year to learn how to do it.

Q: And then you liked playing it?

GM: Yes.

Q: Do you ever play now?

GM: No. I used to play cards. Euchre, with my father and all of them. And in them days, you were never left home with a babysitter. You—if you went to somebody's house, you went

with your parents.

Q: So that was when you were still ...

GM: So your children ...

Q: ... [here in Port] ...

GM: I got a picture of my brothers and myself ... [that I was playing in the ??] ... It's hanging out there on the wall.

Q: Of the various things you've learned as a firefighter or experienced, which of those do you think helped you in your other life? In your social life, in your life as a police officer?

GM: Well, getting around with people. I mean, it's just like being in the service. You depend upon people. They're like your brothers and sisters.

Q: Excuse me. I have to turn the tape over ... [END OF SIDE A; BEGIN SIDE B] ... So, you were saying that they were like your brothers and sisters. Now, I guess you were in the Fire Department when the first woman joined the force.

GM: Yes.

Q: Right?

GM: Yes.

Q: And so how did the men feel about that?

GM: They didn't say anything different. Proud to have them. You know, it's hard to get good people now to be firemen.

Q: Why do you think that is?

GM: Now, you know, to live in this town, when you have to pay taxes and stuff, you've got to have two or three jobs. And if you own a house, every year the taxes go up, up, up, up. God forbid, I don't know what the school tax will be next year. So, you're retired, money don't go up, pension don't go up.

Q: And so the younger people, they have to hold extra jobs?

GM: Oh, yeah. They have to—the young guys, they got to. In order to live in this town, you got to.

Q: Do you think the Port Washington Fire Department is going to remain a volunteer department?

GM: Well, I don't really think so, because it's hard to get members. But then they will have to pay through the nose. You just can't get—you have to have a wonderful vacation and all this.

Q: How do you think the entry people from other minority groups or ethnic groups affected the Fire Department? I know at first it was all white men and mostly people whose family had been in there.

GM: Well, we have the different ones in our company. But they didn't want to join, but there was one guy all the time hollering, but we asked him to join and he wouldn't join.

Q: Just didn't want to?

GM: It was just a big mouth hollering all the time, you know.

Q: Uh huh.

GM: But ...

Q: Did you ever think about becoming a paid firefighter yourself?

GM: No. I went to—I was going to become a city cop. But I didn't go take the test.

Q: What do you think is the most important lesson you learned in firefighting?

GM: Buddyship.

Q: And what does that mean to you?

GM: Well, you take the risk ... like when Walter got killed. Bobby [Zwerlein]. He was home on a furlough and he was down at the factory all the time. So then he went back on the ship and then he got burned to death.

Q: This is someone that you served in the service with?

GM: He was a fireman, too. In fact, he was—I think he was the best man for my nephew when he got married. Nice young kid. Billy Zwerlein. I don't know if you know him. He'd be Peter's ...

Q: Peter Zwerlein?

GM: ... nephew.

Q: Oh, yes.

GM: In fact, I got a picture of him here someplace.

Q: How would you like to be remembered?

GM: Well, they remember me down there. They put my name up on the P.A.L. building that I done. And I guess I'm the only one that's not dead that got my name up on something. Now, like my brother, they got his name up on the firehouse there. He used to take care of all the grounds, and take—I done it too. We started the Police and everything else and knew how to do it.

Q: What was your brother's name?

GM: Tom and John. Let me get the picture and show you.

Q: Okay. ... [INTERRUPTION] ... I see that you have a plaque up there honoring your sixty-five years of service.

GM: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me about the ceremony when you got that?

GM: Oh, that was—the company did it.

Q: And were you the only one who had served that long?

GM: Yes.

Q: And this is the dollar bill. Can you tell me about this dollar bill and read what it says?

GM: You got to turn it that way.

Q: If you could read it for me so that we'll have it on the tape in your own voice.

GM: The Famous Fourth. Fourth Armored Division. Now, you could see up there is the patch, it's, the Germans called us “the men with green crosses”, the United States.

Q: Would you ... [INTERRUPTION] ... So you carried this dollar bill with you all through the war?

GM: Yeah, this dollar bill is almost sixty years old. It's one that Protection sent.

Q: And you didn't buy cigarettes with it.

GM: No. You know, a funny thing. When we got to Cherbourg, we got bales and bales of brand new money. You was burning it to keep warm. What'd we get paid with? The same money. It was French money or German money.

Q: Is there anything else that you think we should talk about that we didn't talk about in terms of your many years of service in the Fire Department?

GM: No. I guess we've gotten most of the stuff.

Q: What do you think of this project? Of doing the oral history?

GM: Well, you know, they've done it before down there. I think it was on Castle Gould. I had done it, and my two brothers done it, too. We went down there to the library down there. And then, I think Elsie, [Elly Shodell] was the one that done it, too, that worked there.

Q: Okay. Well, thank you very much for a wonderful interview.

GM: How'd the tape come out?