

## Charles Ward

While serving as a soldier in WWII, he found the inspiration to become an award-winning architect.

### Chapter 01 - Introduction

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**Announcer:** Charles W. Ward is an award-winning architect who received the inspiration for his profession as a soldier in WWII while viewing the Reims Cathedral from a window in an attic. As an infantry officer with the 5th Division, he infiltrated the German-occupied city of Reims to confirm rumors that the enemy was evacuating. After the war, he received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Oklahoma and gained attention for his work on many public projects. Charles taught himself to sketch and became known for sketches of cathedrals and other houses of worship in Italy, England, Mexico and elsewhere. And he is known by OU alumni and friends for detailed pen and pencil drawings of many of the most historic and beautiful buildings on the Norman campus.

Listen to Charles Ward talk about the Normandy Invasion, the sounds of war, receiving the Silver Star from General George Patton, and his appreciation for architecture and the great cathedrals of the world on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 02 - 11:13 Canada to South America

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling and today's date is December 11, 2011.

Charles, state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age.

**Charles Ward:** Charles William Ward, born in Midwest Wyoming on September 11, 1924. And I am eighty-eight years old.

**JE:** Tell us where we're recording this interview.

**CW:** This is my drafting room where for many years I thought this was the most wonderful place in the world. I still like it, I like it so much I can't get rid of it.

**JE:** And the exact location?

**CW:** 2121 South Columbia, it's called the Parkland Plaza Building. Columbia being halfway between Lewis and Harvard on 21st Street.

**JE:** And we'll get into the buildings that you worked on but this is one of your designs, Parkland Plaza.

**CW:** Well, one of the early ones, yeah, uh-huh (affirmative). Had some famous people in here at one time. You may have known Buddy LaFortune—

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** . . . who was the mayor's brother. Homer Wilcox, big fellow in the oil business. Nice people.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Good people.

**JE:** Let's talk about your mother's name, her maiden name, where she came from.

**CW:** Well, I'll tell you what I know, and it's always been something that I wish I knew more about. Her name was Monetta Huckabay, born in Texas, moved to the southern part of Oklahoma in the early years. And in some fashion, moved from there to Tulsa, though I don't know why.

But she was a lovely lady, a school teacher by profession. One of those nice people that were dedicated to making her students the best they could be.

**JE:** What kind of personality would you describe her as having?

**CW:** A marvelous personality, played the piano in those early days, which was rare. Had a beautiful singing voice. Loved to teach Sunday school. Was a lady of ultimate compassion. She loved practically everyone.

**JE:** What church was that that she was involved in?

**CW:** Methodist. They were Methodist in the early days, and I was too, until Shirley and I were married, when I became a Presbyterian. But they were staunch Methodists and we moved around the country. Do you want to hear about that, John?

**JE:** Sure.

**CW:** Well, my father was a man of remarkable talents.

**JE:** What was his name?

**CW:** His name was Charles Wootson Ward. [laughing]

**JE:** Okay.

**CW:** Yeah, and I had a son Charles Ward III, and I've got a grandson Charles Ward IV. There's a bunch of Charleses, we haven't gotten a V yet, but maybe we will.

**JE:** [laughing]

**CW:** He was a remarkable guy. He was a rig builder in the early days of the oil fields when they built the drilling rigs out in the bare prairie. Where they got the lumber to build

them I don't know. But he had that remarkable ability. And that took us from Wyoming to Alberta, Canada, to another oil field. From there to Texas, building derricks. From there to Columbia, South America, where I was a teenager. And he was not only a man of limited formal education, which they both were in those days, but a man of remarkable intelligence. I don't know that I ever heard him make a grammatical error, for example. They were remarkable people, many of them in those days, very remarkable.

**JE:** Yeah. Did you have brothers, sisters?

**CW:** I had a sister who died early, which I never knew, but I'm the only child, the living child, yeah.

**JE:** Your first education would have come in elementary in what town?

**CW:** A little bit, I think, in Wyoming, but basically in the oil field out of Calgary, Alberta, called Turner Valley, which was a very prolific oil field in those days, right in the foothills of the Rockies. Beautiful area. Known today as being close to a place called Banff, Canada.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** And the most beautiful place I think I ever saw was Lake Louise, in the foothills of the Rockies—lovely place.

**JE:** How many years at a—

**CW:** We lived there from the time I was about six until I was about ten.

**JE:** So you had wonderful experiences playing in nature?

**CW:** [laughing] Yes, I had wonderful experiences playing hip-deep in snow. And then what would happen would be a wind from the Pacific would blow through the cracks in the Rockies and it would be called a schnook, and it would melt all the snow off the ground. And two days later, it would be back to two-feet deep again.

**JE:** This would have been in the '30s?

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** So the housing was good? You had plumbing and you had electricity?

**CW:** We had all of those things. Looking back on it, we must have lived in a very, very nice place. It was just originally a tarpaper shack, but it became a little better.

We lived in Canada until I went to school one day, when it was fifty-four degrees below zero, didn't think a whole lot about it, you know?

**JE:** [laughing]

**CW:** Fifty-four degrees wasn't a whole lot colder than forty-eight degrees, you know?

But Canada was a lovely place to live. I have a real affection for my memories of the Canadian people, English people.

**JE:** Did you go back ever and visit?

**CW:** Been back once. Hadn't changed a lot. [laughing]

**JE:** Which in some ways was good, wasn't it?

**CW:** I think it was good, yes.

**JE:** Right. So ten years old you leave, you move?

**CW:** Move to Columbia, South America, right in the jungle to an area where my father again was building not only derricks, he had advanced to where he was building practically everything that you needed for those early-day oil fields. He was a remarkable builder, he could do anything.

He used to tell the apocryphal story, which I guess is, well, I know it's true. He built those derricks in South America out of mahogany. You don't see oil derricks out of mahogany too often but that's what they had in South America, that's what you built them from.

**JE:** Were you real taken with his work? Or was it as a child—

**CW:** I thought as a smart aleck young kid, *Anybody can build those things*. I know differently now; it took some skill. Genuine skill, to out of the piece of bare ground put up this derrick that would drill oil wells, it took some skill. And he was a very skillful man.

**JE:** Maybe you inherited something from him in construction and building.

**CW:** I wondered about that, John. I wondered maybe, maybe.

**JE:** So financially your family was probably well off because of the kind of work he was doing.

**CW:** I think comparatively speaking, yes we were. I think comparatively, so yes. Not many people in those days were, at least in the oil fields, very well off. But I think we were, comparatively speaking, yes. We thought we lived well. We had maids and gardeners and things like that. But that was not thought to be too unusual.

**JE:** Columbia, South America, you go to school there then?

**CW:** Went to school there, uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Was that by that time junior high school?

**CW:** Well, strangely enough in the oil fields, until I was in the ninth grade, I went to one-room schoolhouses, from the first grade till the eighth grade, both in Turner Valley, Canada, and in Columbia, South America. They were just one room, which broadened your education, frankly.

**JE:** Because?

**CW:** Because you're in the fourth grade and they're talking about Egypt in the eighth grade and you get kind of interested in what's Egypt? You know? It was a remarkable education.

**JE:** It was an open design school, wasn't it?

**CW:** [both laughing] Yes it was that. For sure. But there were three of us in the eighth grade, finally, and maybe two in the seventh grade, one in the sixth grade, you know. But you could hear what they were talking about in the sixth grade, it was interesting. You know, you learn things, it was great.

**JE:** How long then are you there? Are you into high school there?

**CW:** Until the ninth grade, because the schools just went to the eighth grade. So when the ninth grade came and we were living in South America, and there was no school, my parents enrolled me in a military academy in Lebanon, Tennessee. Just outside Nashville, Castle Heights Military Academy. I went there ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, which was another excellent education.

**JE:** How did they choose that military academy?

**CW:** Through a magazine called *Boys' Life*, maybe you've heard of it?

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** There was an advertisement in *Boys' Life*. They were on contract for two years at a time. After two years it worked that they came out at that time and they went to some place in Virginia. Didn't like that. Went to this place in Tennessee and thought it was wonderful, and that's where I was. And I spent my four years there and it was a remarkable education.

**JE:** From the outset, you were happy that you were enrolled there?

**CW:** Oh, yes, I never felt differently. Thought it was very nice. Middle Tennessee is a very nice part of the world.

**JE:** So military, it was a structure then that was pretty strict?

**CW:** Yes and there is a sort of a feeling that grows up among people that military schools were correctional institutions. I never felt that at all. My closest friend, for example, my next door neighbor there in the barracks for a couple of years was the son of the ambassador from Venezuela, for example. They were good people there.

Another one was the son of the fellow who owned Maxwell House Coffee. Things like that. I'm sure there were some rascals there involved, but I made good friends. I thought they were good people. And the instruction was excellent.

**JE:** I've talked to several people here in Tulsa and you probably know many of them, also went to military academy in Tulsa.

**CW:** Oh, yeah, and some probably had different experiences, yeah.

**JE:** What did you excel in, in that academy?

**CW:** [laughing] Well, John, you'd be interested in this, I was the editor of the newspaper.

**JE:** Oh, of course. [both laughing] How did that happen?

**CW:** And it was an all-American newspaper. It was a very good newspaper. And I loved it. I loved being an unknowing kid in the media business and I liked it. I've always thought highly of the people in the media, really.

**JE:** So early on, were you fascinated, I guess, by the media? Enjoyed writing, did you?

**CW:** I loved to write, I loved to set type. You probably don't know but you used to have a little thing and you'd set type to set headlines, you know. I can set type, do all that goofy stuff. I loved it.

**JE:** So, for most of your experience there, you did the newspaper there?

**CW:** Yeah, I loved it. That was great.

**JE:** Probably broke some big stories on campus.

**CW:** Oh boy, [both laughing].

### Chapter 03 - 7:40

December 7, 1941

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**John Erling:** It would have been then, while you were in high school, December 7, 1941, came along.

**Charles Ward:** Yes it did.

**JE:** I, I figure you to be about seventeen years old at that time.

**CW:** I was seventeen years old when it came along.

**JE:** What, what do you remember about that day?

**CW:** I remember being in the commandant's office. I was also the regimental adjutant, so I would come to the commandant's office for my instructions to read off at the various areas.

And the faculty officer broke in and said, "Major, the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor."

And I thought, *Pearl Harbor is in Alaska, I think*. You know, that was a remarkable day; it changed the life of everyone involved, certainly mine.

**JE:** Was there a nervousness or fear?

**CW:** My remembrance of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent months after that was one of excitement. By excitement, I mean that all of us had heard about World War I, and here was something that we were going to be involved in. I don't remember being intelligent enough to be apprehensive, frankly. It was an excitement.

**JE:** You did become leadership later on in the war days. But you must have displayed that in high school because of the positions you just talked about. You were selected—

**CW:** A little bit. There was others far more advanced and capable than I, far more. Many of them retired as generals that I knew.

**JE:** Um-hmm (agreement). You needed to be eighteen to enlist, but did many of the boys there say, "We're gung ho, we want to go right now"?

**CW:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** Yourself included, probably.

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** And probably would have if you'd been of age.

**CW:** Right, and some of them left school to enlist, yeah, those that were eighteen, yeah.

**JE:** Yeah, they could have been before they graduated.

**CW:** Some of them were older than I, uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Right. But then, ultimately, you did enlist.

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** In 1942.

**CW:** I was—

**JE:** And then you were eighteen. Was it upon your eighteenth birthday or was it that hasty?

**CW:** Many, many of the influential people in the oil fields were Oklahoma people, as you might imagine. And many of the engineers had gone to the University of Oklahoma. It somehow evolved that after I graduated from high school, I was not yet eighteen, I was enrolled in the University of Oklahoma, down in Norman, and thought it was wonderful. But, again, and this probably sounds screwy, but it's true, that the whole time I was at the university, until I became eighteen, I was anxious to go. Now what does that sound like? But it was true. Many, many people were.

**JE:** It was a patriotic call?

**CW:** I guess it was. You didn't think of it so much as patriotic, or I didn't, but as an adventure, you know? This was something that only happened to you once.

**JE:** What was going to be the focus of your studies at OU when you enrolled there?

**CW:** Engineering.

**JE:** So you were going to go into the oil field, perhaps?

**CW:** That was my father's hope, yes. And at eighteen years old, I didn't give it much thought.

**JE:** But it was—

**CW:** It was enrolled in engineering, yeah.

**JE:** It was a likely path?

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** What day did you enlist?

**CW:** I was called into the service on December 23rd, if you can picture that, two days before Christmas. Sent to Camp Walters, Texas, outside of Fort Worth, for basic training. Subsequently, left there for Fort Benning, Georgia, to Infantry Officer's Candidate School. Graduated from Officer's Candidate School as a second lieutenant in the Infantry and sent to Camp Swift, Texas. Ultimately, to a training division, 102nd. Subsequently, was sent overseas, first to England, and then to Northern Ireland, as a second lieutenant in the Fifth Infantry Division. It's hard to imagine troops in Northern Ireland, but there were a significant number of American soldiers in Northern Ireland. And we left there shortly after D-Day in Normandy, to go to Utah Beach.

There were two American beaches, Utah and Omaha, we went to Utah. Omaha is the famous one, but there was activity both places.

**JE:** And your parents were in South America.

**CW:** My parents were in South America, yeah.

**JE:** And they couldn't come back to the United States?

**CW:** Couldn't get out, no.

**JE:** So you hadn't seen your parents in a number of years?

**CW:** That's right.

**JE:** Did you write letters? Did you stay in touch with them?

**CW:** Yes, I wrote letters. They were called V-mail. It's a form here overseas now at this time. You'd write your letter on it and it would be microfilmed and sent back to the United States, I suppose. Then re-photographed into a larger format and sent wherever. The dilemma was that there was almost no correspondence between my parents in South America and the rest of the world. I mean, how would you send a letter through places that were invested with German U-boats, which the Caribbean was, you know.

So they maybe got a few letters, but not many.

**JE:** Many of them you saw—

**CW:** I never got, huh-uhn (negative).

**JE:** Nor were they returned to sender.

**CW:** [laughing] No, I don't think so. But, truthfully, intercourse between the United States and South America was minimal.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Minimal.

**JE:** So then you're part of the Fifth Infantry Division.

**CW:** Fifth Infantry Division.

**JE:** How did you come to Normandy?

**CW:** We boarded a ship in Belfast, Northern Ireland, sailed down the Irish Sea. I remember going around what's called Land's End in England. It's the very tip end of England out there. I remember seeing it off to my left, then went into Normandy. We thought we were going to Norway.

One of the really amazing things about World War II was how the Americans, who notoriously can't keep a secret, kept D-Day a secret. The Germans were amazed, flabbergasted, surprised that we kept it a secret, but we did. It was a case called Fortitude, but they persuaded the Germans that there was a whole new army building in Southern England that was going to invade one place, and we went to another place. It was a remarkable occurrence.

**JE:** June 6th was the Invasion of Normandy—

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** . . . of 1944. And you're on a ship. Did you know that Eisenhower and his troops were invading at that time? Or were you kept from that information? And also did you know the loss of life and how it didn't go all that well on June 6?

**CW:** No, no.

**JE:** You didn't know any of that?

**CW:** None of that, no, we didn't. When we left Belfast, Northern Ireland, army rumors are a wonderful thing. Our rumor was that we were going to Norway. We didn't know where we were going.

**JE:** Because?

**CW:** When we landed in France, we were surprised.

**JE:** Because the Germans had invaded Norway.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** That would have been logical for you to think—

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative), made some sense.

**JE:** . . . *We know why we're going to Norway.*

**CW:** [laughing] We didn't know why.

**JE:** Which my ancestors were living there at that time and experienced that invasion.

**CW:** Really? They did?

**JE:** That's why—right.

**CW:** They were there when the Germans invaded Norway?

**JE:** Right.

## Chapter 04 - 6:00

### Utah Beach

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**John Erling:** So D-Day plus three, as we call it, that's when you then came to Normandy.

**Charles Ward:** Yeah, I was one of the first out of the division that much of the division came a little bit later, but I was one of the first ones, yeah.

**JE:** Specifically them, how did you land on Utah Beach?

**CW:** You land on the beach in a landing craft, which is one of these things you've seen where the front goes down and you go charging off. It's an LCV, is what it's called, a Landing Craft Vehicle Personal.

**JE:** Right, which is what they used on June 6th.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And then the Germans were firing upon our troops and allies.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** But that didn't happen on the day you landed.

**CW:** No, the actual fighting on that day had moved inland a little bit. So it was not until we moved a little bit further in that we came under really heavy fire.

**JE:** The Fifth Division, who was that commanded by?

**CW:** General Leroy S. Irwin, l-r-w-i-n.

**JE:** Did General Patton come into play here somewhere?

**CW:** Yes he did, but now General Patton was part of this thing called Fortitude that I talked about. He was commanding this phantom army that didn't exist. And he didn't come to France until, I think it was, sometime around the first of August. We were commanded by General Omar Bradley. When it developed that we had made a successful landing and that it was okay to bring the rest of the troops in, that's when General Patton took over. And we became part of the Third Army.

And the Third Army is the one that raced across France. If you saw the movie, General Patton, I met him a couple times, a remarkable guy, a remarkable guy, was sure, of course, that he had been reincarnated. He had fought with Caesar, apparently, in North Africa, you know. And he'd fought with Lee at Gettysburg.

When Shirley, my wonderful wife, and I went to see the movie *Patton*, and George Scott came up on the screen, I turned to Shirley and I said, "That SOB did come back, you know." I thought that he had been reincarnated, that was General Patton, that was a good portrayal.

**JE:** Well, then, you must have had a fair amount of conversation with him. Did he speak that to you, that he had been reincarnated? Because what—

**CW:** [laughing] No, not to me, no.

**JE:** Okay.

**CW:** I was the second lieutenant.

**JE:** Are you saying—okay, but you said that you were observing him from afar then, is what you were doing.

**CW:** It's an interesting little side light, I'd received some very minor wounds and I was back at Division Headquarters, kind of as a liaison officer till I got a little bit of my strength back. And he visited the Division Headquarters there. He and General Irwin were great friends. So I would stand on the perimeter and listen to them. I shouldn't have been probably, but I was.

You'd be interested in his conversation. Not all of it is reproducible. He had [both laughing] an amazing vocabulary. But anyway, I observed him from afar. And then later on, I got a medal from him, what was called a Silver Star. So I saw him on a couple of occasions.

**JE:** So he handed you the Silver Star?

**CW:** Well, he put it right on my vest.

**JE:** Right. What was his physical appearance like?

**CW:** He was a big man. Big man, looked like a real football player, you know. And he loved the uniforms and he dressed immaculately. When we were all lined up there, he came riding up in his command car that had a siren on it. He loved that kind of thing. Showmanship, I guess, or ego.

**JE:** Yeah, right.

**CW:** What is it? Whatever it is. It's remarkable. The thing came up and here he came out of there. John, he looked like the guy that was in the movie, he really did. He's a beautiful guy.

**JE:** [laughing] You received the Silver Star.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** Was that for the wounds? You said you were wounded.

**CW:** Well, yeah, I was. A couple times.

**JE:** Tell us about how you sustained those wounds.

**CW:** It was shrapnel. Do you know what that means?

**JE:** Explain it to our audience.

**CW:** Shrapnel comes from a variety of sources. Shrapnel can come from a hand grenade. Shrapnel means little pieces of metal that have exploded with terrific force, and tear the heck out of anything they come in contact with. They come from grenades, it can come from mortars, it can come from artillery, it can come from bombs. These are the little pieces of shrapnel. I think, uh, I've never seen any statistics, maybe the majority of wounds and deaths in the battlefield come from shrapnel. Rather than shooting a gun—

**JE:** Right.

**CW:** . . . though some of that too.

**JE:** You did come under fire from the Germans?

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** Was it a scene where bullets are coming at you and people around you are dying?

**CW:** No, oh, sure.

**JE:** And you had to wonder.

**CW:** John, I am one of the luckiest men you'll ever interview.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Ever. Yeah. I was a second lieutenant when I went into Normandy. I'm one of the few officers that was still alive at the end of the war, you know, from my battalion. Infantry casualties were staggering, particularly among officers. We ran out of officers, that's why I got promoted. [both laughing]

Silly, truly longevity.

**JE:** Did you carry that with you through life? That thought that, *Most of my comrades and leaders were dying and here I am alive today?* Or it couldn't have been every day, but certainly had to come several times in a year, or certainly during the anniversaries.

**CW:** Oh, it comes on all the time, oh, yeah.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Well, I hope I'm a good Presbyterian. I go to church, I enjoy it, all that.

**JE:** You've been—

**CW:** But still, you wonder, it goes through your mind, *Why me?*

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** You wonder that.

## Chapter 05 - 6:25

### Silver Star

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**John Erling:** It's an interesting story when you received the Silver Star from Patton himself. Tell us how you cleaned up for the ceremony.

**Charles Ward:** [laughing] Well, as I say, George liked his soldiers to be immaculate. Well, you can't imagine what an infantryman looks like after a few months in combat. We went into Normandy in June. I got this medal from General Patton in September. I was wearing the same shirt I wore when I went into Normandy.

**JE:** Wow.

**CW:** When you're out on night patrol, particularly, and you're hunting out the enemy, you smell them before you see them. And the Germans smelled differently from what we smelled like. They thought we smelled sweet, like candy. We thought they smelled like that strong tobacco that they smoked. Plus other smells too, because they smelled just as bad as we did. I don't know how to describe it. We said they smelled like kraut, that's what we called Germans, Krauts.

**JE:** So then—

**CW:** You were asking me about getting the medal.

**JE:** You needed to clean up?

**CW:** Yeah. So here we are, we're taken out of the line and sent back. Said, I think something to the effect, "Well, they're going to give you something back there."

We got back to headquarters and we were issued brand new wonderful uniforms. And we thought, *This is just great.*

**JE:** Plus a shower, maybe?

**CW:** No, I didn't get a shower. [both laughing] I didn't get a shower, but we got new uniforms and put those on and we really looked spiffy when George, as we sometimes called him, pinned that little medal on there and he'd slap you, you know. *You son of a bitch, you.*

He said, "I'm going to give you something," to the effect of, "I'm proud of you, you're a good man," or something like that.

But anyway, it was a great experience. We thought, *Boy, this is great, got new uniforms and a medal.*

But as soon as the ceremony was over, we gave back the clean uniforms and got our old dirty uniforms back.

**JE:** Oh man.

**CW:** But I still kept the medal.

**JE:** That had to be tough to put that back on again.

**CW:** [laughing hard] Oh, I don't know.

**JE:** Wasn't he obsessed with Metz?

**CW:** Metz?

**JE:** M-e-t-z.

**CW:** The forgotten battle?

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** The Forgotten Battle of Metz. We had been racing across France, truly. We had left everything that we couldn't carry with us. All I had on was that same uniform and my field jacket. Everything else that we had was stored back in Normandy because he wanted us to get to Germany as fast as we could. And we'd made remarkable progress. So did the first army, which was General Hodges, Courtney Hodges.

But we were stymied outside Metz from two occasions. We had come across France so quickly that the supplies couldn't keep up with us. They'd built a pipeline under the ocean to pump oil and I suppose any kinds of liquids from England to the continent. It was called Pluto Pipeline under the Ocean, Pluto.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**CW:** But Pluto couldn't keep up with things. And we had run out of practically everything outside Metz, which was our objective. We were pretty well stymied at Metz, we had a terrible time there, a terrible time.

Finally, surrounded it and it surrendered. It was a remarkable battle but there are other battles in the war that are just as remarkable, I'm sure, that we just don't read about. We read about some but not all.

**JE:** I just might mention here that this past summer, I and others took a trip and saw Normandy and Omaha Beach and Utah Beach.

**CW:** You did?

**JE:** So I can envision what you saw when you landed there. Then we settled in Bayeux, France.

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** And I don't think you visited there.

**CW:** No, that was the English zone.

**JE:** The English zone, right.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** I'll talk more about the cathedrals there—

**CW:** But it was very close.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Um-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** But you talked about battles that become famous. Then there's the Battle of the Bulge.

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** In which Patton was also involved.

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Can you talk about that?

**CW:** Yes sir, a little bit, I guess. I don't think it's still secret, is it? [both laughing] Anyway, after we had really become kind of decimated at Metz, finally another division had come from the north and we'd come from the south, one of those classic envelopments, and had fought our way into Germany, onto the Saar River, and thought we were going to rest and get replacements and so on.

And about three days later, the Germans invaded the Ardennes. But the Bulge was not a term that we used, strangely enough. It was always the Ardennes, that's the forest.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** We called it the Ardennes. We got word that the Germans had invaded the Ardennes. We thought, *Those crazy people, they won't have a chance.* They did pretty well.

My division, the Fifth Division, Patton selected them and what was called the Fourth Armored Division, which was his favorite, they say. Anyway, we're in the Twentieth Corps. We were sent from Germany, just outside of Metz, up to Luxemburg, to attack the south end of what became known as the Bulge, you know, it came out. And as I say, we called it the Ardennes, but Bulge was the name that stuck.

We attacked from the south end of the Bulge, toward a place called Bastogne. And the Fourth Armored, we were in the same corps, the Fourth Armored actually was given credit for relief of Bastogne. Though I personally never was there. I was on the outskirts but I never was there.

**JE:** During this time, you were given a promotion.

**CW:** Well, that was a little bit later, but in the Bulge I was a first lieutenant.

**JE:** Okay, that was your promotion from second to first lieutenant there.

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative). And then later I became a company commander.

## Chapter 06 - 6:53

### Company Commander

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**Charles Ward:** When, John, you say these things and you never can say them right. There were many men that deserved it far more than I did. I just was lucky enough to be alive, and I was made, ultimately, the company commander.

**John Erling:** As a first lieutenant, who were you leading? I mean, how many men were under your command at that point?

**CW:** The basic unit of an infantry outfit is the company, like Company A, Company B, Bugle Boy of Company B, that kind of thing, which nominally is about 150 men. I doubt that there was an infantry company in the American army at this time that had the full complement of men. So maybe there was a hundred men, maybe. Company commander would be in charge of a hundred men.

I have often thought that maybe one of the ultimate criteria, a company commander knows all of his officers. He knows most of his sergeants; he knows many of his enlisted men. He is very intimately involved with his men, he's with them. He makes level up to a battalion commander and he would know his company commanders, and that's all.

So the man that is most intimately connected with his men and with the world is an infantry company commander. I was very flattered to be one.

**JE:** And you knew all those people?

**CW:** I did. Um-hmm (affirmative), I did. Kept in touch with most of them.

**JE:** Even beyond the war?

**CW:** I kept in touch with my first sergeant who died about two years ago, but we'd stayed in touch all that time.

**JE:** Wow.

**CW:** Because I think the roles should have been reversed. I think he should have been the company commander and I should have been the sergeant. But it didn't work out that way.

**JE:** You, you were the officer though. But then when you'd come under fire and some of your men would die under fire—

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** . . . you lost them, that had to be emotionally tough for you.

**CW:** Oh, it is.

**JE:** To see those people because you got to know them and you knew where they were from.

**CW:** You make a good point. That's the hard part of being a company commander, yeah. You do remember them, don't forget them.

**JE:** Did you sustain many losses under your command?

**CW:** It's very difficult to visualize this thing but they tried to replace the casualties. Now I can't imagine what a replacement feels like when he knows he's going to be shoved into that line. Scared to death, scared out of his mind. But there was a continual turnover, so, I told you, I don't think any of the officers who went into Normandy stayed very long in that capacity. They were continually replaced. So I'm not answering your question, I don't know what to say.

The company commander, probably, I had a hundred men.

**JE:** Yeah. What weapons were you using and carrying?

**CW:** Rifles. Infantry, you know—

**JE:** Yeah. Say, M16s?

**CW:** No, M1s.

**JE:** M1s, 16s hadn't come along?

**CW:** Huh-uhn (negative). M1 was thought to be the ultimate weapon.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** They called it the Garand, G-a-r-a-n-d. They were M1s. We officers carried a .45, a pistol, and a carbine. Carbine is a very light weapon but a very effective weapon.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** Most of us carried carbines.

**JE:** You, yourself, killed a German, is that true?

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And the first time that happened to you, did you have any emotional experience with it? Or the rigors of war were, "I'm here to do what I'm supposed to do"?

**CW:** Well, if you really want to know, we all went into Normandy—I guess it's all right to say this—we were all virgin soldiers. And the virgin soldier in those days was someone who hadn't killed anybody, so we were all virgin soldiers. And in Normandy, after the invasion, after you got off the beach, there were the hedgerows. Have you heard of the hedgerows?

**JE:** I saw those.

**CW:** Awful, awful situation.

**JE:** Right.

**CW:** An awful situation. I'm carrying the carbine, these hedgerows, you know, they're way up here, but there are gaps in them, artillery's torn some gaps in them. My men and I were going along this side of it. Off the other side, a German showed up. Well, I pulled my carbine around to shoot him and I noticed he had field glasses.

Well, we had always heard, or I had always heard what marvelous equipment the Germans had as far as field glasses and cameras and things like that. And I noticed he had these field glasses on. Instinctively, I pulled up the gun and I didn't want to hit those field glasses. This is a true story. I didn't want to hit those field glasses and I pulled it up and got him in the head. So I was no longer a virgin soldier. [laughing]

We kept jockeying back and forth and I finally found this guy that I'd killed and one of those field glasses, and I looked at them and the damn things weren't worth a darn. The lenses were cracked.

John, you did funny things. Your first time in combat it's kind of like Hollywood, it's just going to be just like the movies. Well, of course, it's not like the movies at all. We wanted souvenirs, everybody wanted this, that, and the other. And I wanted those damn field glasses until I looked at them and they were worthless. I lost my virginity. [laughing]

**JE:** Yeah. And did you deal with that later? Or how did that bother you?

**CW:** Well, it really didn't bother me.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** And there were other cases too.

**JE:** I'm sure.

**CW:** Maybe three or four. Well, that'd go through your mind, I mean, it never leaves your mind, you remember it.

**JE:** But if it weren't him it could have been you.

**CW:** Oh, sure.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Oh, sure, he had a gun too.

**JE:** Right.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** When I was there, I was so taken with the bunkers the Germans had built because they had been there for a number of years, hadn't they? On the coast of France.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And we walked into those bunkers and go down in and saw where they slept and all. It wasn't just above ground, they were below ground as well.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** They were, it was like a little apartment.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** In a way, where they were dug in and waiting for the attack.

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** That they thought would come eventually.

**CW:** You were at Omaha?

**JE:** Yes. So you, no doubt, saw those and you went right past them, of course. And you would have been—

**CW:** Well, yeah.

**JE:** Those kind of things.

**CW:** I don't know that I was ever in one, like you were, for example.

**JE:** Okay.

**CW:** I've been in them but not to see them.

## Chapter 07 - 2:18

### A Deserter

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**John Erling:** This was an interesting story. A strange incident took place at the Battle of the Bulge. Some civilians in Luxemburg. And you came upon this middle-aged American.

**Charles Ward:** Oh, that guy, General Patton pulled us out to attack the southern edge of the Bulge, along with lots and lots of other people, of course. But in the process of going up there, God, it was snowy, it was cold, it was unbearable. And as I say, none of us had overcoats because we'd left them all back in Normandy. We couldn't take them with us so I was in a field jacket and it must have been ten to fifteen below. I know that now.

The convoy pulled off the side of the road in this snowstorm and we all made for a little farmhouse not too far off the road. And went in there just to get out of the weather, if we could. We uncovered the owner of the farmhouse, I guess, and he could barely speak English. But we didn't care who the hell he was.

Anyway, he saw our patching. We were identified by the patch on your shoulder. Ours is the red diamond and it had been part of the American forces in World War I. He saw that patch and he remembered it. And in his very broken English, he probably hadn't spoken English since 1918, it had finally developed that he had deserted from the American army, from our outfit in World War I, and had lived in Luxemburg ever since that time. And he wasn't a Phi Beta Kappa, he was not very smart. But he thought we had come to arrest him after twenty years for being a deserter.

Well, we finally persuaded him we weren't going to take him and gave him some cigarettes and a D-Bar, which is a kind of inedible chocolate bar that we were issued, and assured him that he was okay, we weren't going to take him in.

Yeah, it was funny to think that somebody had lived in that mindset of being a deserter for twenty years, and finally thinking they're coming to get him.

**JE:** And relieved then that he was okay.

**CW:** [laughing] I guess, I guess, I don't know what happened to him.

**Chapter 08 - 5:37****Screams of the Wounded**

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**John Erling:** The sounds of war.

**Charles Ward:** The sounds of war?

**JE:** Yeah. You can't create it here but it must be loud and quiet and then firing again. Talk about the sound.

**CW:** The sounds of war, that's interesting. Well, it is interesting. Do you remember there was a movie that got significant publicity, *Saving Private Ryan*?

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** You remember that?

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** Well, some friends of mine, it had gotten so much publicity we went to see it. And the opening scenes of that were at Omaha where you were. I was not, but they caught hell at Omaha. And we were thinking to ourselves as we sat there in the movie theater out here at South Roads Mall, I think, was sitting there in the movie theater and thinking, *This is a pretty good representation, visually, and the sounds of the artillery and that kind of thing was pretty darn good.*

The other sounds of something at Normandy, for example, were the screams of the wounded, which they don't show much of in the movie. You don't want to see that, but the screams of the wounded is significant.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**CW:** And we also thought if they could ever recreate the feeling in that movie theater of the convulsion, you know, each time that artillery goes off it shakes you up, you know, and you don't get that feeling. To the person who has been there, the sound of the artillery is about right and so on, but the wounded, you can't create that. And you can't create the convulsion, convulsion is the word I'm looking for, of each time that artillery comes in. It sometimes throws a guy twenty feet in the air. You can't recreate that. Though that's part of the sound.

**JE:** Have you ever heard anybody talk like that about the sounds of the injured? Obviously, somebody's injured and they're probably had the horrifying—

**CW:** That's an, that's an awful feeling.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**CW:** That's an awful sound.

**JE:** I interviewed Rex Calvert, he's a veteran. He made several beach landings. Not what we're talking about but he was with the marines.

**CW:** Uh-huh.

**JE:** He said, "We were real rough marines until we had a beach landing." And then he said, "These tough marines, some of them would just be crying and they'd be saying, 'Momma, Momma, Momma,'" crying for their mother."

**CW:** Well, yeah.

**JE:** While they were under fire.

**CW:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I would go along with him on that. Yeah.

**JE:** There were those who just couldn't take it.

**CW:** That's right.

**JE:** Did you have some of them that would develop mental problems?

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** While they were there, and you could tell that they were off in another world?

**CW:** Well, yeah, to a degree. You know, you read a lot here lately about these fellows coming back from Iraq and Iran and Afghanistan and they have post-traumatic stress.

**JE:** Syndrome, right.

**CW:** Well, I'm sure we had that too.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** I don't think it was this critical. I don't remember that. I do remember they used to have that syndrome that the men would shoot themselves, you know, called self-inflicted wounds. Here I am, a nineteen-year-old guy, trying to counsel somebody or trying to put my arms around him and keep him from doing something really stupid. I've done that, and I don't think there were ever self-inflicted wounds in my men. That didn't mean it didn't happen.

That was kind of a serious thing because you cannot [laugh], you cannot make a self-inflicted wound without it being obvious. But I guess some people did reach a point where they couldn't take it anymore. It just seemed like the way out.

**JE:** So they wouldn't want to kill themselves, they just want a wound so they can be taken out of battle.

**CW:** Right. If you were right-handed, they would always shoot yourself in the left foot, you know, and goofy things like this. It was obvious what it was. Nobody ever gets shot in the foot—unless you do it yourself. [laughing] It was traumatic, yeah, it was traumatic.

**JE:** When they were suspected of self-infliction like that, did the military deal with them in any certain manner?

**CW:** Well, if they shot themselves in the foot they were somehow evacuated back to the hospital. And then the medics took care of them. I don't know what happened to them then. But they were charged with SIW, self-inflicted wound. And I don't know what they did.

But as I say, luckily, none of my men did that, none of them. One of them was close, I know.

- JE:** And you were able to talk him out of it?
- CW:** Well, yeah, probably, probably.
- JE:** Yeah.
- CW:** You just put your arm around the guy and talk to him. He'll come around, maybe, you hope. You hope.
- JE:** And his family could thank you for that.
- CW:** Well, maybe, yeah.
- JE:** Today.
- CW:** I hope so.
- JE:** So it's very, very cold, you're shivering, you're shaking, no overcoats, as you've already indicated.
- CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative). I liberated an overcoat from a German soldier.
- JE:** And you wore it. [both laughing]
- CW:** I shouldn't have done that, shouldn't have done that.
- JE:** Didn't you become a target immediately?
- CW:** No, but if you got captured, that was the end of you. You know, if you're in German uniform they wouldn't hesitate to pllak (sound he made).
- JE:** How long did you wear this German overcoat?
- CW:** [laughing] I don't know, not very long, but it disappeared one day.
- JE:** [laughing]
- CW:** Somebody else got it. I don't know what happened to it.

## Chapter 09 - 6:56

### Crossing the Rhine

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- John Erling:** So there are trips here that you took. You made an assault across the Rhine?
- Charles Ward:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** A story that would go along with that, that would have been in 1945, I believe.
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** January?
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** You went across the Siegfried Line.
- CW:** There's good stories about crossing the Rhine, nothing specific about the Siegfried, it was pretty well decimated and didn't have many troops in it.

There was a very famous occurrence when other troops captured the Bridge at Remagen. They captured this bridge, which was theoretically supposed to have been destroyed, but that didn't work. And the Americans ran across it and made that assault crossing of the Rhine. I don't think I could have done that. It was an amazing thing.

But we made the first assault crossing at the Rhine. In other words, we got in boats and went across the Rhine near Frankfurt, Darmstadt. Went across the Rhine, established a bridgehead across the Rhine. Then the engineers built a bridge across there and that was an assault crossing there, just like at Normandy. That was where the famous picture of George Patton relieving himself on the Rhine, you know, that famous picture. I could see that from a distance. I didn't know it was the General. I knew it was some smart aleck guy out there doing that, but it was George, it was the General. [both laughing]

That guy, what a guy, what a guy.

**JE:** What did you think of the Germans as soldiers, as fighters?

**CW:** There is again a case that individuals will remember things differently. And I have no quarrel with anybody who remembers things differently from what I do. But I've said more than once that I remember them as wonderful soldiers. I hold them in great respect.

We continued across Germany, we wound up in Czechoslovakia. My outfit did. We weren't supposed to be there, we now know, but we didn't then. And we came face-to-face with the Russians, who were supposed to be.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** They were supposed to be there. But the experience with the Russians was difficult. As soon as we disentangled ourselves from the Russians, which left a remarkable experience in your mind, we were taken back into Germany itself. And the chaos after the war in Germany is hard to describe. There were the so-called slave laborers in Germany, you know, they come from all over. They brought them in to work in factories and things like this.

After the war, they just went wherever they wanted to go. There were returning soldiers, German soldiers there. There were an amalgamation of all kinds of people, starving to death. And it became a chaotic situation.

Someone, I presume, Eisenhower or General Clay, whomever it was, organized the thing of Burgermeisters. These were American, usually lower grade officers, who were established as the authority in this little village. The idea was not to wreak any havoc on the Germans but to try to bring some sort of coherence out of this chaos. People running around stealing, murdering, and so on. So it became a Burgermeister. We all did.

**JE:** So that's like the mayor then?

**CW:** The mayor is the Burgermeister.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** We had authority and not only did we have the authority we had the troops to back it up. And I think we did a good job bringing some kind of coherence out of that chaos. I was very proud of what little I did as a Burgermeister in Germany.

Again, there was no problem with German civilians, they knew that they were in real trouble. They didn't know what they were going to eat. They didn't know what the coming winter would bring, and they were extremely cooperative. I gained a great respect for them. I said, "Here these people have been beaten to death and yet their whole idea is to rebuild their country."

It was interesting, I received a letter not too long ago. You know, I'd been back to the D-Day fiftieth anniversary.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** [laughs] We got into conversation with some guys that were obviously old German soldiers. Now the French wouldn't allow the German soldiers to come to the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, but they did anyway. So this must have been where I'd gotten to know these soldiers. We yakked around like old soldiers do, whether they're Americans or Germans.

Sometime after that I got a letter from this fellow and it was written in pretty good English, far better English than I write in German. And the sense of it was, "I saw you in Normandy and we had a conversation and it was good to see you. And I want you to know that I hold no animosity, I'm not angry, I want us to be friends."

So I thought that was pretty good. I showed it to some people of the German American Society here. Down in El Reno, Oklahoma, there was a POW camp. Many of the German soldiers who died in captivity are buried there, there's a German cemetery. And each year the German American Society has a Memorial Day down there. So they asked me to be the speaker down there at the Memorial Day.

I was very honored.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** So my recollection of the Germans is good. Now you can say, "What about the awful things that we read about at Dachau and Ohrdruf and so on?" I don't argue that, but the experience I had was one of me fighting you, not any of this other thing. And I have great respect for them.

**JE:** Well—

**CW:** They didn't have military.

**JE:** You were soldiers taking direction and that was your job.

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** It's like you didn't have any animosity because of them individually, it was an overall country that had invaded and you were trying to push them out and push them back.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** And so, I can see that.

**CW:** Well—

**JE:** The soldiers—

**CW:** Good.

**JE:** . . . wouldn't be mad but this is what we do, as barbaric as we are.

**CW:** It's barbaric. But, John, I don't want to mislead you. There are other soldiers that came away with different feelings.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** I think I speak for the majority but not everyone.

**JE:** Well, there were those who fought because of Japan and their invasion and some veterans—

**CW:** Well, that would be a different story.

**JE:** . . . will, will not buy anything if they can that comes from Japan.

**CW:** Right, oh, I understand that.

**JE:** Right.

**CW:** I don't argue.

## Chapter 10 - 5:25

### Bronze Star-Purple Heart

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**John Erling:** Speaking of Japan, I believe it was in 1945, of July, the Fifth Division returned here to the United States to prepare for the invasion of Japan.

**Charles Ward:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And so, you thought you were going to be invading Japan, at one point.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And you've been through all this war already. What were your thoughts then that here comes another invasion I'm going to have to be a part of?

**CW:** To be candid with you, I said, "I don't think I can live through another one." And I didn't say that in a feel-sorry-for-myself thing, I just didn't think you could do it. Luckily, that didn't happen, but those are my thoughts, *I don't think I can do it again.*

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** I didn't think I could live through it, I thought I could do it but I didn't think—

**JE:** You didn't think you'd survive it.

**CW:** Uh-uhn, uh-uhn (negatives), really didn't, no. Because as I say, I felt I'd been incredibly lucky all along.

- JE:** How long was it you were really in battle?
- CW:** Technically the army has figured it out a little over three hundred days. Not quite a year. June '44 to May '45 was the ETO, European Theater. And I was there, they say, something like three hundred days. That's not a record, it's significant but it's not a record.
- JE:** For your time in battle, as you said, you won a Silver Star. You were awarded a Bronze Star for valor. Is there a story behind that Bronze Star?
- CW:** Oh, well, yes.
- JE:** What is it?
- CW:** Nothing except that in that battle for Metz, the Germans were desperate to get out of the enclosure that we were putting around them. And it just, by coincidence, I didn't do anything to do it at all, I was the company commander by that time, and the Germans were trying to escape from a place called Sanry, near Metz. They were desperately trying to get out of there and they attacked us and beat us up pretty badly. And I got the recognition for what I did.
- JE:** What did you do?
- CW:** Held it, didn't let them get out.
- JE:** Yeah.
- CW:** They ultimately did get out but at a terrible cost. I think we inflicted significant casualties on them.
- JE:** Okay, so that was it.
- CW:** That's why I got it.
- JE:** Yeah. And then you received a Purple Heart.
- CW:** Yeah.
- JE:** And what was that for?
- CW:** Well, it's for the shrapnel that you talked about.
- JE:** Okay.
- CW:** A Purple Heart is given for combat casualties.
- JE:** I think you called it a minor wound.
- CW:** Well, yes, they were, they were, yeah, uh-huh (affirmative). Just in my legs and my knees. They were called million-dollar-wounds, John. [laughing]
- JE:** But I'm sure they weren't minor. You have scars today to show us, don't you?
- CW:** A little bit, yeah.
- JE:** Yeah.
- CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** And probably even arthritis and pain coming from that?
- CW:** No.
- JE:** No?

**CW:** Not really, John, I'm in pretty good shape. The thing that was so devastating right after the war was we all that had been in the Bulge had frozen feet, you know. And my frozen feet stayed with me a long time. But none of the other stuff did, and they're gone now too. I'm in good shape. [laughing]

**JE:** So all that happened by the time you were how old, twenty-one years old?

**CW:** No, twenty. [laughing]

**JE:** Twenty years old, okay. That's pretty remarkable, isn't it?

**CW:** Yeah it is. I think it is. And as I say, every now and then, you think, *Why me?* You'll drive yourself crazy thinking that because there isn't an answer, is there?

**JE:** I'll never forget the cemetery there at Normandy that I visited and all those white crosses.

**CW:** You were at the one at Omaha?

**JE:** Yes.

**CW:** Oh, that is something to see.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** Yes it is.

**JE:** And so beautifully displayed as only the military could. You could look at one but you were really looking at maybe a thousand of those crosses.

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** And when you would stand in those cemeteries, it had to be an emotional experience for you.

**CW:** It is, it is emotional, yeah, it's very emotional, oh, yes. Yeah. Very.

**JE:** You're thinking, *I could have been a white cross.*

**CW:** Oh, sure, you think that, *Why me?* That's why I'm saying you keep thinking, *Why me?* and there's the answer.

**JE:** And then those who receive medals, you received medals, but there were those who never got credit—

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... for having a medal—

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... because they were lost at sea or whatever.

**CW:** And the chaos of combat. Many who deserved medals far more than I never got them.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** I got one from the French too, doesn't matter, doesn't matter, what you get.

**JE:** So when you went back, did you recognize anything as you went back for D-Day?

**CW:** [laughing]

**JE:** The fiftieth anniversary.

**CW:** Not really. Combat is so chaotic, so much of it happens at night you have no idea where you are. I did see the place where we crossed the Rhine and recognized it, but not much really.

**JE:** Do you remember the fiftieth anniversary council for the Battle of Normandy?

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** You helped plan and celebrate the anniversary—is that true?

**CW:** Well, I didn't do much [laughing]. I think I made a couple remarks and maybe a letter or so but that was about it. Strom Thurmond was the guy—

**JE:** Senator Strom Thurmond?

**CW:** Remember the senator, Strom Thurmond?

**JE:** Right.

## Chapter 11 - 5:07

### French Underground

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**John Erling:** By the time you were twenty you grew up in a hurry.

**Charles Ward:** Yeah.

**JE:** But while in Germany, in battle, and in France, you saw these cathedrals. Isn't there a story that you were in the attic of a house?

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Tell us about that experience.

**CW:** It's in Reims, Reims, France. They call it Ray-em, but it is the most magnificent cathedral in the world.

The Germans, we were pushing them back pretty effectively at that time and they were in this town of Reims.

Incidentally, just by coincidence, that's where the Germans surrendered in Reims. But at that time, they were still fighting pretty effectively in the city and the high command, I guess, of the American army needed information. "Are we going to attack? Are we going to do this? Are we going to surround? Are we going to stay where we are?"

So the G-2 Intelligence—some people say it's an oxymoron but I think it's pretty effective. The G-2 of my division sent down the word, "We would like to make an infiltration of Reims to try to determine what the Germans are doing."

Here I am, I'm nineteen or twenty, I don't remember what, at that point, so through a series of things I foolishly volunteered. Now that's one of the most stupid things you could possibly do but I did.

And they were, “Oh, well, you again, huh?”

So they said, “We want to infiltrate into the city and see if we can determine what the Germans are doing. Are they retreating? Are they putting up a fight? Are they building barricades? Have they moved artillery in? What have they done?”

I had a sergeant, Bennie Baillargeon, he spoke French. We thought, *Hell, let's do it*. We were introduced to some members of the French Underground. Bennie spoke French fluently, the plan was evolved that we, Bennie Baillargeon and, would infiltrate into Reims and see what we could see.

The French Underground was going to lead us in there, which they did. It was kind of interesting, kind of like the movies. We would hide here in this little alcove, and this guy would hit the ground with his gun. A few minutes later, another sound would come from down the way, somebody else had hit that. We would proceed a little bit further and we'd get into another place.

Obviously the Germans weren't there, I mean, we were on the edge of Reims and we were on the interior. We were coming into Reims and he'd strike a match and it would be gone like that, but down the way, here'd come another light.

Ultimately, we got into the heart of the city, realizing that the Germans were evacuating. The Underground eventually took us to, I guess, what they call safe houses. It was on the area where you could look out over the cathedral. So we're right in the heart of the city. And we were taken up to the attic of this house and given a place where we could look out there and we could see the Germans leaving.

Now that sounds like Hollywood, but in this case, that's really what it did.

So Bennie, who could work the radio, sent back this word that the Germans were leaving. It was good news, apparently. Now there surely were other people besides me doing this, but this was our little part. And I could look out and see that magnificent cathedral.

You know, growing up in the oil fields, if you've never seen anything like that it's pretty remarkable.

Anyway, it became obvious that the Germans were leaving. We spent the night there and went down from the attic to the ground floor and into the cathedral. I guess I was the first American in that cathedral.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**CW:** But it made a profound impression on me.

**JE:** Life changing?

**CW:** Oh, it was, it was.

**JE:** In Bayeux, I visited that cathedral.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

- JE:** And went inside. I'm kind of envisioning a little bit what you might have seen.
- CW:** Uh-huh, uh-huh (affirmatives).
- JE:** A very gothic Notre Dame cathedral in Bayeux.
- CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** We'd just stand in awe and there you did, but you didn't know what you were going to do with that picture, did you, at the moment?
- CW:** Um-umm (negative). At Bayeux, they saw the tapestry, didn't you?
- JE:** We did.
- CW:** Yeah, I've been there since then.
- JE:** Which was made to commemorate the events in the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. That's how old that was.
- CW:** Right, right. It's quite remarkable, really.
- JE:** It is very, right.
- CW:** Umm (thoughtful sound), right.
- JE:** It was made by the wife of William the Conqueror.
- CW:** I didn't know that.
- JE:** Yeah, according to legend.
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative), yeah, yeah.
- JE:** [laughing]

## Chapter 12 - 6:45

### View from the Attic

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- John Erling:** Can we come then to the point where eventually you are then discharged from the army?
- Charles Ward:** Well, now I told you that I had gone into the service December 23, 1942. We'd been brought back from Germany to prepare and train for the invasion of Japan, which everybody thought was going to happen. While we were there, Shirley and I got married. And while we were on our honeymoon, the bomb was dropped, and that, ultimately, was the end of the war. I think the war ended September 2nd.
- Then I was discharged from the American army on, believe it or not, December 24, 1945. So I was in three years and one day. [laughing]
- JE:** How did you meet Shirley?
- CW:** Well, as I say, I'd grown up in the oil fields and moved from here to there and so on. My father was unemployed for one semester and didn't know what to do and he sent me

to live with his uncle in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and I, for one semester, went to Horace Mann Junior High School.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**CW:** And that's where I met Betty Hawthorne. Did you know Betty?

**JE:** No.

**CW:** Betty is Elaine's mother.

**JE:** Yes I did know her.

**CW:** Shirley was her younger sister. During the war, Shirley and I had exchanged letters and that kind of thing, nothing too serious. But I came home from the war and we had a date. That was on Tuesday. We decided to get married, and we were married on Saturday.

And one of the embarrassing things of my military career, John, if you want to know about it, I was twenty years old, and in those days, maybe still, when Shirley and I went down to the get the marriage license, down at the courthouse, the lady said, "You can't get married, you aren't twenty-one." Men couldn't get married until they were twenty-one.

By this time, my parents had been able to get out of South America, and my mother had to go down—here I am a wounded war hero—and my mother has to go down and sign for me so that I can get married. Now you talk about embarrassment.

**JE:** [laughing] Again, that would have been in 194-?

**CW:** Five.

**JE:** Five, yeah.

**CW:** Nineteen forty-five, yeah. [both laughing] I was twenty years old. Ah, we could buy drinks and we could smoke cigarettes and we could do all kinds of things but we couldn't get married. [laughing]

**JE:** Isn't that something? But that view from the attic—

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** . . . when you decided to enroll at the University of Oklahoma, that view from the attic determined your course of study.

**CW:** Well, yeah, it did. I'd seen something that I'd never known before. There was another incident of a Cathedral of Chartres, which is marvelous cathedral, and we were the first Americans there. When I went back to the university, I knew I was not smart enough to be an engineer, so I looked around and I saw these drawings of the architecture school. And I thought, *I'll try*. I think that's what did it, yeah.

**JE:** Did you take to it, like as we say, "ducks to water"? You absorbed it easy or . . . ?

**CW:** No I didn't absorb it. I'll tell you one thing, in the old days, in public high schools, kids took a lot of art. And many of the fellows that were in architecture school with me could draw pretty well. And the hardest thing I had to do, not the hardest thing, but one of the hard things was learn to draw. And so I taught myself to draw. That's what all this stuff is around here. I just like to make those little drawings.

**JE:** I remember, now that you say that, in high school, a tool called the protractor comes to mind. [both laughing]

**CW:** I've got a protractor somewhere around here, yeah, I remember protractors.

**JE:** I couldn't say that word if I hadn't been introduced to it, probably a junior in high school.

**CW:** [laughing] How about, how about hypotenuse? Can you say hypotenuse?

**JE:** [laughing] Yes I can. So it's interesting, we were introduced to those things back then.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** And most of us didn't go into architecture as a result of it.

**CW:** No.

**JE:** But at any rate, you had to become a real student and you excelled at it in Oklahoma.

**CW:** John, you're putting words in my mouth. No I didn't excel at it, no.

**JE:** Really?

**CW:** No, I was not a good student, uh-huh (negative).

**JE:** Well, what happened?

**CW:** Well, to be candid with you, part of it was that by training in these little one-room schools and the military school didn't prepare me for architecture in any sense of the word. I was not a good student. I'm not being modest about it, I just wasn't. I was, as I was going through school, married and I had two children, no money, and, you know, the normal thing. I had other things on my mind.

Except I thought one of the nice things about World War II was what we call the GI Bill. I think that really worked. I think you had whatever time you had in the service plus one year or something like that. It was a really good deal. But as I was about to graduate, I was about to run out of GI time and I thought that was the end of it.

There was a thing called an incomplete; that meant that in one semester or something you hadn't completed your work for that semester. Here it was, I was coming down, supposedly, to graduate in May or June of 1950. And I knew that I was not going to make up that incomplete.

So with tears in my eyes, really, I went to see my professor and I said, "Mr. Cumin, I'm not going to be able to make up that incomplete." I literally was crying because I knew that was the end of my career.

And he said, "Oh, Chuck, I got a card from bursar, (or somebody, whoever it is) and so I just marked on that incomplete, I just put down a B and sent it back in."

Well, that developed my love for the University of Oklahoma.

**JE:** [laughing]

**CW:** That must be the most wonderful place there ever was. That really happened.

**JE:** And so you graduated?

**CW:** And so I graduated.

- JE:** Well, here you had lamented what a poor student you were, and I was thinking, *Surely he must not have dropped out.* But I mean, you did the work.
- CW:** No I didn't, but I was not a Phi Beta Kappa, no, I was not a Phi Beta Kappa. [both laughing]
- JE:** But you went on—
- CW:** Shirley was but I wasn't.
- JE:** But you went on to do Phi Beta Kappa work, let's put it, let's put it that way.
- CW:** Well, I like to think so.

### Chapter 13 - 7:30

#### Tulsa City-County Library

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- John Erling:** We will not have time to discuss everything, nor do I have time to read everything here. But we do want to talk about some of the buildings you were central to. But the Central Library in Tulsa, the Rudisill Regional Library, the Moody Wing of the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, Texas, the Buckley Public Library of Poteau, the Allie Beth Martin Regional Library in Tulsa.
- Charles Ward:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Master plan for the Oklahoma State Library of Oklahoma City. Also the Southminster Presbyterian Church, your church.
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Remodeling of the sanctuary, what happens to be my church, First Methodist Church.
- CW:** Okay.
- JE:** And the Tyler Memorial Chapel in Tulsa. We can go on. LaFortune Football Stadium for Memorial High School. We have those and the rest of them will be listed on our website.
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** But let's take us to the Central Library because we've all been there, it still stands today. Over fifty years ago, you actually designed that library.
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Bring us to the year that you were involved in that.
- CW:** The year that is memorable is 1965. Now in about three years, I hope we have a fiftieth anniversary. There was a famous guy here named Joe Koberling, and for years the City of Tulsa had been trying to build a new library and they had finally decided maybe the thing we want to do is use the old courthouse. We had just built the new courthouse and let's take the old courthouse and convert that to a library.

Well, there were those far-seeing people who said, "That's not what we want to do."

The Civic Center was just an entity, which had just been created. They're going to change it now, as you know. We had a terrible time closing 5th Street but now they're going to reopen 5th Street, which is fine.

Anyway, Mr. Koberling had been working for years to do something with the old courthouse to recreate it as a library, until people said, "No, this isn't going to work."

So they said, "Joe, we've got to look at this differently."

Well, I was just a young guy, I'd just gotten my license, just beginning life as a professional. What persuaded him, I don't know, and we never talked about it. But he said, "Why don't you see if you can come up with a different scheme? We're at loggerheads here."

I did and we had a wonderful relationship. There was a lady there named Allie Beth Martin, prominent lady, very important in Tulsa. She and I, I guess, had somewhat the same vision. And many of the things that happened in that library were because of her thoughts and my thoughts.

And any rate, we came together and put together the Central Library and it became well thought of. It was on the front page of the *New York Times* once. Many of the things that were interesting were her ideas. The idea of open stacks, low stacks where you could come in and pull something off the wall and go read it if you wanted to, or put it back, or leave it. A very loose arrangement compared to what libraries used to be.

So when it became a reality, after some discussions, when it became a reality in 1965, it opened in 1965, and people actually saw it, then librarians across the country, said, "This is something we ought to see." And people came from all over the country, primarily to see the library, but also to see Mrs. Martin, Allie Beth, who was a really great wonderful person.

So it became famous across the country.

**JE:** I'm thinking about libraries before and as I remember, the stacks was always a mystery. You go back in the stacks. Is that true?

**CW:** Yes.

**JE:** And here you brought them out into the open.

**CW:** Well, yes.

**JE:** Is that what happened?

**CW:** We did, but, of course, I wouldn't have done it without her thinking it was a good idea.

**JE:** No, but then you designed for that idea.

**CW:** Yeah. It created a different atmosphere—

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** . . . throughout the whole library.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** It was different.

**JE:** You did something about the furniture too. They had old heavy—

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** . . . furniture, and what did you do about that?

**CW:** Well, we thought there was nice furniture out there. There was Ames Furniture, there was Noel Furniture, there was new furniture coming on the market too, let's do that.

One of the reporters for the *Tulsa World*, sat on one of those chairs. He said, "It's like sitting on a polished log."

I've never forgotten that, I didn't think it was like sitting on a polished log.

It was good, we got good reviews, people liked it.

**JE:** Yeah. And now we know of the internet, which you couldn't have conceived of back then.

**CW:** Um-umm (negative).

**JE:** But according to a brochure of 1965 for the library, they bragged about their sixteen millimeter films.

**CW:** [laughing]

**JE:** Long-playing records.

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Ceiling projectors and microfilm.

**CW:** Right, right, good for you.

**JE:** And we thought we were really in.

**CW:** Yeah, yeah.

**JE:** We were really in.

**CW:** We thought that was a breakthrough. [both laughing] No, I kinda knew, I think everybody knew, yeah, something's happened, but it's just the beginning. Had we really pursued it we would have designed bigger space for it. We had to go back and adapt for some of these new things. But basically, we knew it was going to happen, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** For downtown Tulsa, it was a jewel, it was certainly something that all Tulsans could be proud of. But weren't librarians and all coming in from other parts of the country then, to view what's going on in Tulsa?

**CW:** Yes, it became news when it was published in the *New York Times* and people came from all over the country to look at it. Primarily to talk to Mrs. Martin, because it was such a revolution in the way a library was handled. And partially to talk to me too.

**JE:** Well, of course.

**CW:** I was very gratified, yeah.

**JE:** Because you could have been of the mindset that thought, *Oh, surely, you're not going to be talking this way or do.*

**CW:** [laughing]

**JE:** You seem to be very open-minded about it and bought in on what she did.

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** So you'd have to have that kind of a relationship.

**CW:** I knew it was good.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** I knew it was good. Yeah, sure was.

**JE:** Yeah. So of all these buildings, certainly that has to be one of your proudest legacies that you have in your career.

**CW:** I liked it, yeah, I'm proud of it. I think it worked, yeah, I think it's good. People liked it.

**JE:** The renovations to it, even now that we're talking, here we're in 2012.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Did they finish a project or are they beginning one, at the library?

**CW:** Both.

**JE:** Okay, all right.

**CW:** Both, you're right on target.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**CW:** Apparently, a problem has always been and will be exasperated by the fact that the old City Hall is becoming a hotel and that they're opening 5th Street again, which changes lots of things. I've talked to the people, they've asked me, I've sat in with them several times, about things where I might be able to be helpful. They're going to do something to the library itself, not much, but they're going to build a new parking garage and do lots of other little things. I hope it all materializes.

## Chapter 14 - 5:15

### Cathedrals

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**John Erling:** Let's just jump here to LaFortune Football Stadium, which is such an iconic piece of our town.

**Charles Ward:** [laughing]

**JE:** We'll all seen great football games there. Were you called upon to be the lead architect on that?

**CW:** Yes.

**JE:** And design it?

**CW:** Yeah, yeah I did that.

**JE:** Why do you think you got that job? And what was your concept? Where did it come from?

**CW:** I don't know where I got the job. I had done some things for the school board and apparently they thought, *Well, your niche is a football stadiums.* It was interesting, Mr. LaFortune himself, he gave the money. The mayor's father, Joe LaFortune.

**JE:** Yes.

**CW:** He and Mr. Warren were primary partners in the early days of the oil business and Mr. LaFortune made a lot of money. So he was a sports-minded fellow and he founded the thing.

It was interesting after it was done and I thought it went well, and he did too. I had a picture made and I got it framed and was taking it down to Mr. LaFortune. I said, "Mr. LaFortune, I would like you to have this. You did a wonderful thing here," and so on.

But I could sense, John, and I'll bet you've encountered this before, Mr. LaFortune, in the back of his mind, is thinking, *What does this guy want?* [both laughing]

I really didn't want anything. But I kept thinking, *He's thinking,* He's here for something. [laughing] It was great, I loved it.

**JE:** Here we are, talking to the man who designed the Central Library and I picked LaFortune Football Stadium, but you have others. The Thornton Family Y was your design?

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** As is the Parkland Plaza, of the office building where we are now. I'm interested in the remodeling of the sanctuary at First Methodist Church. When was that remodeled?

**CW:** Well, Jim Buskirk was the minister, you remember him?

**JE:** Yeah. Was that when they brought in marble to the platform?

**CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative), that's when they did. I don't know all of the story. Donald McCormick had been the original architect for that. I had worked for Donald McCormick. Somehow, somebody put those two things together and thought, well, maybe I know something about it.

Behind, we call it the narthex, there was vacant space back there. Maybe you didn't know that, John. But we converted that into a pastor's study and various things. Recreated the choir loft, brought in the marble, as you say, and did some other things to the sanctuary. It was a very pleasant experience for me, I enjoyed it very much. I think it's a splendid building.

**JE:** Well, you think it's splendid because it fits your love of cathedrals.

**CW:** Well, that's true. Yeah, I agree with that.

**JE:** When an organ rings out in a cathedral setting—

**CW:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** . . . it is just . . .

**CW:** Yeah it is. [laughing]

- JE:** And we sat in a choir concert in France in a cathedral. It was fun to hear all that.
- CW:** Oh, it's—
- JE:** You appreciate all that, and so much so, that when you said you taught yourself to draw, you began drawing these great cathedrals of the world.
- CW:** Well, those are things around here, yeah, yeah.
- JE:** Yeah. What was the first cathedral that you said, *You know what? I think I can put my pen to this?*
- CW:** The first one?
- JE:** Yeah.
- CW:** Well, now—
- JE:** He's, he's looking, I should say, he's looking around—
- CW:** I'm going to, I'm going to guess.
- JE:** . . . because we are in—
- CW:** I guess it's the dome of the Cathedral of Florence.
- JE:** I see it there, right.
- CW:** You see it?
- JE:** Yeah.
- CW:** Well, it was the first dome built since the Roman days. They'd forgotten how to do it and that always intrigued me. I've climbed to the top of that thing and I think that's the first one I did.
- JE:** And where was that actually located?
- CW:** In Florence, Florence, Italy.
- JE:** And you, and you climbed to the top of that?
- CW:** Well, yeah, there's a way to do it. John, it takes forever but you can do it. And you get up to the very top. If you could see to the very top of there—
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative), I see it.
- CW:** . . . there's a little place you can get out and look over Florence. In those days, people weren't quite as big, I guess, as we are now. But the handrail around there that just protects you from falling into space, is about that high, you know. I'm over there looking out at everything, scared to death.
- JE:** But that was your first drawing?
- CW:** I think it is. It's either that or the Cathedral of Chartres, up above it there?
- JE:** Yes, it's beautiful.
- CW:** The north tower there.
- JE:** The intricacy from your pencil and pen too, is it both that you've got there?
- CW:** There's not any pen on those. On many of these others, some of the darker things, the blacker things, are ink, but most of them are pencil.

- JE:** They look like pictures actually taken of the buildings and that you were so attention to detail to draw those is truly amazing.
- CW:** [laughs] Well, I wasn't always very busy practicing architecture, you know, unfortunately.
- JE:** [laughing]
- CW:** [laughing] Unfortunately. I've enjoyed doing it. One of the art professors say, "You draw nice straight lines." That was his critique. [laughs]
- JE:** [laughs] And I think you brought many of these for display for Southminster Presbyterian Church.
- CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative). John, you'd enjoy seeing that. You'd be amazed at how they were beautifully matted and framed and they looked pretty good.

## Chapter 15 - 7:07

### Cathedral Drawings

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- John Erling:** Then of course, you have your love for OU.
- Charles Ward:** Yeah, because of—
- JE:** Because of that professor.
- CW:** That professor, that wonderful professor, yeah.
- JE:** Who gave you a B.
- CW:** [laughing] He said, "Chuck, I've been meaning to tell you, I made it a B and sent the damn thing back in," you know.
- JE:** [laughing] That's one of those, "And then one day . . ." happened to you.
- CW:** [laughing]
- JE:** Which changed the course of your life, as a matter of fact.
- CW:** It did.
- JE:** You were back going to OU in the Bud Wilkinson day.
- CW:** Uh-huh (affirmative).
- JE:** Coach Wilkinson, I don't know if you ever saw him? Some memories that you would have of that era when he went for forty-seven games without a loss.
- CW:** Oh, yeah. Well, everyone has alluded onto what a wonderful gentleman he was. He epitomized what most of us thought the real man of the world was. I think the thing that I have always remembered—this was right after the war—we'd had one coach there, his name was Jim Tatum. And he had gone and they were going to promote Bud Wilkinson, his assistant.

But now, John, they were going to pay him fifteen thousand dollars a year. And the state of Oklahoma went berserk. That's more than the president of the university gets! This was just a short lifetime ago, he was going to get fifteen thousand dollars a year. You cannot imagine the chaos.

Well, he, in my opinion, earned it.

**JE:** Oh, yes. [both laughing] Yeah.

**CW:** What do they get now? I think of Bob Stoops down there at OU gets up in the millions.

**JE:** Three, three, four million, yeah.

**CW:** But he's not necessarily the highest paid. They're all like that.

**JE:** Right, right.

**CW:** Gosh, isn't it something? That's one of the things I remember about Bud. And then, course, he'd walk around the campus. You could walk up to Mr. Wilkinson and say, "How do you do, sir?" This kind of thing and he's very gracious, very much a gentleman, a very nice guy.

**JE:** You had tickets on the fifty-yard line, did you?

**CW:** [laughing] No, the students were over in the section, you know.

**JE:** Right.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** But you have great memories of attending those games?

**CW:** Oh, absolutely. Yes. I'll tell you what I love, and you don't get it on television, I love to hear the band play at halftime.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**CW:** I like that, [laughs] I like it all but I like that too, for sure.

**JE:** Yeah. Because of your love then for OU, you took this talent you have for drawing, and you drew some of those famous buildings, of course, on the campus of Oklahoma University.

**CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative), yeah. Some of them.

**JE:** Tell us, what drew you to that? And which building you may have drawn first. What—

**CW:** Which building I drew first.

**JE:** Well, you put them all on the calendar for 2002.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** Adams Hall and Boyd House and all of them.

**CW:** I think it was this one right here, Adams Hall, right down there.

**JE:** And you know what? That's the first one of January of 2002 is Adams Hall.

**CW:** Maybe that's true, I don't remember it if that's the case.

**JE:** So your work came to their attention because they clearly appreciated what you did. President David Boren, I believe, has a couple on his wall—

**CW:** Yeah.

- JE:** . . . in his office, as a matter of fact.
- CW:** Yeah, yeah, he does.
- JE:** Of these great old buildings.
- CW:** [laughing] Yeah he does, it's very nice.
- JE:** So who publishes it?
- CW:** The university publishes that each year.
- JE:** This calendar?
- CW:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Oh, every year they put this out?
- CW:** Not this one, it's a different one.
- JE:** Oh, it's a different calendar. But this was—
- CW:** But that was their 2002 calendar.
- JE:** So what a great honor to have all your work.
- CW:** Yeah, I like it. I'm very pleased, yes, [laughing].
- JE:** For a struggling—
- CW:** Very proud.
- JE:** For a struggling architect, a student.
- CW:** For a guy with a number two pencil, yeah.
- JE:** Then also you became so taken with football that you put out this Fearsome Forecaster.
- CW:** [laughing] Yeah.
- JE:** Tell us about that, what was it?
- CW:** Every year I used to put out the Fearsome Football Forecast. I got a drawing and then the roster and my prognostication and all kinds of miscellaneous screwy stuff. But it was limited to two hundred people. It went from San Diego to Bangor, Maine. I'm just being silly but people like it.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). What was your record of prognostication?
- CW:** Ah, I was always undefeated, John.
- JE:** [laughs] Is that true?
- CW:** I never lost a game. [both laughing]
- JE:** And then you took this fine art into card making as well.
- CW:** Yeah.
- JE:** So you have sent out Christmas cards with your drawings for how many years?
- CW:** Seventy-three, maybe.
- JE:** Wow. And have they all been of cathedrals?
- CW:** Yeah, well, of course, there's Florence, there's Chartres, there's Salisbury, there's the thing over there, maybe you can see it with the minarets? Sent as a Christmas card, that was originally a Christian cathedral.

- JE:** Oh.
- CW:** But when the Turks took over Constantinople, they, of course, made it into a mosque with the minarets.
- JE:** Huh.
- CW:** Then that one below it was a cathedral in Normandy that was destroyed in World War II. Everybody goes to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa—
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- CW:** And they don't get to know what a wonderful cathedral is there. And then Westminster Abbey, just things like that. That blue thing there is St. Mark's in Venice.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- CW:** Just things that I think are significant.
- JE:** Well, these Christmas cards have become collector's items.
- CW:** Yeah.
- JE:** People would—
- CW:** For a month. [laughing]
- JE:** . . . hold them. No, no, no, for years and years and years. And people look forward to them.
- CW:** Well, maybe. Thank you, thank you.
- JE:** Here we are in 2012, you're eighty-eight years old. Are you still doing any drawing today? Pencil drawing?
- CW:** Well, the Christmas card today, this time, yeah.
- JE:** What is it?
- CW:** It is a little bit different. There is a huge cathedral in Seville, Spain. It's not architecturally very significant, but the surroundings are spectacular. So I've drawn the drawing of the gardens around the Cathedral of Seville. I'll send you one, you and Margaret.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- CW:** Sure, if you'd like.
- JE:** I would love that. Because you're an architect and then you see all these great cathedrals that go back to . . . ?
- CW:** Eleven hundred.
- JE:** And you just have to marvel. Today we have all these pieces of equipment to build large buildings. And to think of how those were built.
- CW:** I know it, unbelievable. Yeah. You sense the same thing I did. For example, at Cathedral Chartres, built in the 1100s, and you see the stonework, perfectly carved stonework. Did it with bronze chisels and things like that. How did they do it? Is it inspired by something beyond us? Is it? I don't know. I don't know.
- JE:** You have to wonder.

**CW:** Yeah, I do, I wonder, I wonder.

**JE:** Yeah.

**CW:** I sure do.

**JE:** Wow.

## Chapter 16 - 2:35

### Admonition

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**John Erling:** Well, you've received many awards. We've been talking about the OU Regents Alumni Award.

**Charles Ward:** Yeah.

**JE:** Governor's Arts Award was most recent.

**CW:** Yeah.

**JE:** You've been honored in many, many ways, and you should be.

**CW:** Oh, too much.

**JE:** There's no question.

**CW:** Too much.

**JE:** No, it's not, but you should be.

**CW:** Too much.

**JE:** Students will be listening to all this and they'll draw from it. Advice to students who are seeking their new life, going to school, or whatever? Do you have any advice for students?

**CW:** Umm, gosh, well, I hope they're as lucky as I. Advice for students? I think they're the good years of your life. I think those are the years that live with you forever. Make the most of them. [laughing]

**JE:** Yeah. How would you like to be remembered?

**CW:** Gosh, I don't know. Good citizen. My admonition to everyone is after we have our last drink at the bar I always say to people now, "When you leave here, do something to improve society."

**JE:** [laughing]

**CW:** You think that's a good admonition for bar talk? [laughs]

**JE:** That's good.

**CW:** That's my admonition. Improve society, if you can.

**JE:** Yeah. Wherever you've been, you've been a leader, including in your church. You've been an elder there for many years.

**CW:** Elder, yeah.

**JE:** Leadership has come to you and you have improved lives and society because of that.

**CW:** I hope so, I hope so.

**JE:** And I want to thank you.

**CW:** Oh, John, I, I—

**JE:** For what we did here. But I want to thank you for your service, and all veterans, for their service. I've come to now realize that if you see somebody that you sense is a serviceman, maybe he wears a cap or something, and he indicates he's a vet of World War II or whatever, I tell people, "Just walk up to them and say, 'Thank you.' You don't have to read a paragraph or go on and on, just say, 'Thank you.' "

And so I say that to you, thank you for what you did.

**CW:** John, I thank you in return. That's very nice of you, very kind of you.

**JE:** All right.

**CW:** I'll try to be worthy of your admonition. [laughing]

**JE:** Have we said it all? Is there anything you'd like to say that I didn't ask?

**CW:** I had no idea it would go on like this. I'm too verbose, aren't I?

**JE:** [laughing] No, you're perfect for it.

**CW:** Thank you. I just go on and on, I'm afraid. [laughing]

**JE:** No. Well, we have to have storytellers so that the generations to come can know the way it was and for many of them, why we have the freedoms today.

**CW:** Well, you're very kind. You're doing a great service yourself.

**JE:** Thank you.

**CW:** Great service.

**JE:** Thank you.

## Chapter 17 - 0:33

### Conclusion

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience.

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