

**Oral History Interview of
Kent Elliott**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
March 6, 2017
Tahoka, Texas**

**Part of the:
*World War II Interviews***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Kent Elliot and Karen Elliott Nichols as they discuss their father and his involvement in World War II. The siblings describe their father and explain some of his thoughts during the war that they discovered in his diary and postcards.

Length of Interview: 00:18:50

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Father's information	05	00:00:00
Entering the service	07	00:03:45
What his father looked like and his personality	09	00:05:55
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Anecdotes that Kent and Karen remember	18	00:16:53
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David Marshall (DM):

The date is March 6th of 2017. This is David Marshall interviewing Kent Elliot and Karen Elliot Nichols in Tahoka, Texas. We're talking about your dad. Can you give me your dad's name, his full name if you can.

Kent Elliott (KE):

It's Onie Crow Elliot Junior but he went by OC because he didn't Crow, he didn't like that name. Evidently, Onie Crow, or Onie, was a real common name back in the twenties when he was born.

DM:

Okay. How did he spell that?

KE:

O-n-i-e and Crow just c-r-o-w.

DM:

Tell me his date of birth and place of birth as far as you know.

KE:

January the 20th of '21 and what's his birthday, it's where Karen?

Karen Elliot Nichols (KEN):

He was born in Jean.

KE:

Born in Jean, yeah.

DM:

Born in Jean.

KE:

That's pretty cool. We went back to Jean and there's nothing there but a building, and busted out windows in the building there. There's nothing left.

DM:

Must've been born at home, there's no—

KE:

Probably so.

DM:

—probably never was a medical clinic or anything like that.

KE:

Probably not.

DM:

It's such a small town. It's always amazing to hear about these guys who were out in little bitty towns in Texas, and then they were in Europe or in the Pacific.

KE:

Well, he had hay fever so he couldn't really work on the farm. Unfortunately, when the war broke out, that was his opportunity to get out of Jean and get out of Young County, and he's been all—military was his life. It really gave him the stark and proper mechanics to—proper manners, and stuff like that, and to be real sharp. I don't know how he was with his clothes before the military, but when he came out everything was ironed, and pressed, creased in the slacks. I never saw him in shorts until I saw him in Ruidoso probably back in about 1995 because he was always wearing slacks. Slacks and I never—blue jeans the same way. It was always slacks. He always had a tie on, always immaculately dressed.

KEN:

Part of that was because he grew up very poor, and they didn't have anything. He had holes in his clothes and holes in his shoes. I remember him telling us that he was bound and determined that he would not grow up like that.

KE:

He grew up like that but he said he's not going to live like that. [Kent and Karen talk at once]

KEN:

I mean, he would not stay like that. He was very obsessed with shoes, and clothes, and money and anything—

KE:

Anything that had monetary value.

KEN:

Yes.

DM:

Did he ever talk about his early education? Did he go to schools in Jean?

KEN:

[Karen and Kent speak at once] He went to Jean.

KE:

Yeah, went to Jean. I don't know how, as far as—back then they only graduated in the eleventh grade, so I don't know if he completed all the way through.

KEN:

I do know—

KE:

I guess he probably would because he was born in '21 and you'd go to school when you're about six or seven—yeah, he probably graduated, but it was probably in the eleventh grade, or the—

KEN:

That only worked if there was something to do in the field. They didn't go to school until after fields were picked.

KE:

I know Jenny and Jen were like that, that was his sisters. Dad had been, within the hay fever. I think Jenny always said he was on the bus going to school, I think, because he couldn't be out in the field because of the hay fever. He was allergic to cotton, and of course, they were cotton farmers.

DM:

Do we have any record here of when he entered the service? Have y'all come across that?

KEN:

Yes.

KE:

Yeah, it's probably in here somewhere.

KEN:

Right there.

DM:

He was born in '21.

KE:

[grabs and tears paper] Date of entry of active duty was May—excuse me, November 5, 1942.

DM:

Forty-two. So he was twenty-one years old, roughly, when he entered. Did he ever say anything about where he trained, basic training.

KE:

Camp Bowie.

KEN:

Camp Bowie was his—

DM:

Camp Bowie. Here's the really puzzling part of this: he was in there as a first lieutenant, and achieved the rank of captain—

KE:

He went to OCS [**Officer Candidate School**] school, and we have a record of that. We have a record of that.

DM:

[at the same time] Is there a record of that? Okay. That doesn't often happen from a guy that comes from a small town, and he doesn't have an advanced degree or anything like that, he worked his way up.

KEN:

I think he was very smart, and he knew where he wanted to be and he didn't want to be a regular soldier, he wanted to be higher up, so he worked. There's several papers that—where he's; completed different schools in the service.

KE:

He trained to get the knowledge to be higher up.

DM:

It's a very interesting story because of that. And then also because he went through so much of the war, starting in Italy and then into southern France and then into the Rhineland, at the front line a lot of the time. What did you say about the number of days?

KEN:

Hundred and forty—

KE:

Hundred and forty-three, hundred and forty-four I believe something like that, he said, right?

KEN:

—total days. He got several medals.

DM:

What did he look like?

KE:

He's about five-six, five-seven, five-eight, about a hundred-eighty pounds. He was really determined weight wise to stay at that. I imagine he could probably fit in that uniform that's sitting right over there.

KEN:

Blue eyes and blonde hair.

DM:

Blonde hair all until—

KE:

Then you see the pictures, he didn't have a whole lot of hair after that either.

KEN:

He went bald.

KE:

I guess I got that on his side. Our mom had some hair but it obviously didn't come to me.

DM:

What was his personality like?

KEN:

He was a dynamic person. Everybody liked him. He was very generous to people. He did a lot.

KE:

He would really help you like in farming. He would really help you out if you got in a bind. He'd help finance them, get them financed. She's right, yeah, everybody really liked him.

KEN:

He was well-liked.

KE:

They had a golf tournament named in his honor back a number of years back in Gaines County.

DM:

How did he come out here? How did he get out to Tahoka?

KE:

When he got out of the service he wanted to own a gas station. They gave him a choice like: there's one, I believe, in Phillips or Borger, and then maybe Plainview, and then Tahoka. There might have been one south. He chose Tahoka. He told me, said, "I can't tell you how many loads of gasoline I brought over the Caprock to get out there." He owned two or three stations here. We have pictures of that. It's in those photos over there somewhere.

DM:

Okay, good.

KE:

I guess he met my mom at that time, our mother.

DM:

What was her name?

KE:

Peggy Elliot—Peggy Finton. Buster Finton, or RW Finton Jr. was our grandad. He was a big rancher, and he had an insurance office out there too. My mom passed away in eighty-one. Karen and got both got our license so we were third generation owners of that insurance office that my grandfather started. He sold—did he go to Brownfield? We went to Brownfield after that, and he owned some stations of there, and then he got into making loans for farmers and buying cotton. That's basically what he did in his later life.

DM:

So your mother was from here though?

KE:

Yes.

DM:

But your father moved in here.

KE:

Yes.

DM:

And that was right after the war?

KEN:

Um-hm. Then he moved over here, yes.

KE:

She was born in '51 and I don't exactly—there may be a date on the back of those photographs on the station as to when they were opened.

DM:

Were these service stations or gas stations?

KE:

Service stations.

DM:

So there was automotive repair?

KE:

Yeah.

DM:

And he was involved in that so he had mechanical experience obviously because of the materials he used over there. I can't really tell if it was motor or—motor vehicle or aircraft. There are some pictures of them working on aircraft. Did you ever know? Did you ever hear if he worked on aircraft?

KEN:

Not on aircraft but I think he did work on the Jeeps and things like that.

KE:

I don't know about the aircraft other than the fact that he's got a manual over there on how they re-service them and stuff.

DM:

He didn't do any aircraft repair out here?

KEN & KE:

[at the same time] No.

KEN:

Then he moved to Amarillo and worked for John Hancock making loans for people, then he ended up in Seminole, Texas. He was very successful.

KE:

[at the same time as Karen] He was a real—he did real estate as well; he sold homes. Matter of fact, there's an ad over there in a box that shows his place in Amarillo. Then he continued—he did mostly farm loans and stuff like that at Seminole.

KEN:

Until his death.

DM:

Okay. Well, he was a very—he was an active person.

KEN:

Yes.

KE:

As a matter of fact he lived-- in the seventies, they lived like on 14th street in Lubbock. He just missed Seminole so much, he had to move back down there. He was really good for Gaines County in what he did, and of course Gaines County was good to him too.

DM:

It kind of matches what you said too, Karen, that his personality was sociable it sounds like; he got along well with people.

KEN:

He was very driven, very driven, but he was good to people.

DM:

I'm glad we have some photographs of him here and his World War II collection but are there later photographs as well?

KE:

Yes.

DM:

That we could—if you have a copy we could put it in—

KEN:

Karen and Kent talk simultaneously] Oh, we have plenty of pictures of him.

KE:

We have some colored photographs over there.

DM:

Okay. The other thing is, can you just kind of give a general description of what you have here from World War II? You have some artifact items. You want to just mention those?

KE:

I still have the foot locker when he was a first lieutenant, then we have his war helmet.

DM:

A wooden footlocker, I might add.

KE:

Have his uniform, have his holster—I'm assuming it's a gun holster of some kind. We've got some books by the comic Bill Mauldin.

KEN:

Got the helmet.

KE:

Yeah, we got his helmet. Numerous photographs, numerous, numerous artifacts as far as paper articles—these paper articles.

DM:

Service records.

KE:

Magazines. I thought it was really cool to see that Lucille Ball is on the back of one of the Yank magazines. That's what they fought for, it helped inspire the troops over there, because they knew what they were fighting for.

DM:

Yeah. He has a good collection of that type of pinup. The diary, the diary is wonderful.

KE:

Oh, yeah the diary. He kept a diary for like ten months.

KEN:

A year.

KE:

Was it '44, right?

KEN:

Forty-four, '45.

KE:

It might've been the time that he was on the front lines.

KEN:

Part of it was, yes.

KE:

He talked about the shells going over all the time and hitting close. He'd been twenty-two at the time. Of course, in war you're going to be scared all the time anyway, and I'm sure he made that—

KEN:

Nineteen forty-four is the time.

KE:

He made that mentioned a few times, but gosh, I'd have been scared to death too, regardless of what age I would have been.

KEN:

His mother died when he was over there and it was only two weeks before he was notified which I thought that was significant back then.

KE:

It was on February twentieth, because it was in that book, because I remembered seeing that date in there.

KEN:

I thought, That was pretty quick back in 1944 to notify somebody of death. I figured it would take months to get to them.

KE:

How in the world they got the mail to them was just amazing.

DM:

I don't know.

KE:

Guys were moving all the time.

DM:

That's right. It didn't always work but sometimes it worked out.

KEN:

It didn't say if he was notified by letter, it didn't say.

KE:

I'm sure he was because nobody else would have known his mother over there more than likely, unless they might have wired his commanding officer and told him.

DM:

Might I also just add here for the record that we're looking at, as far as manuscripts are concerned, probably about three page boxes of photographs, maybe two or three page boxes of photographs and manuscript materials—

KE:

We had just acquired—

DM:

—scrapbooks, three scrapbooks I think.

KE:

We had just acquired the majority of this stuff just like within the last couple of weeks, especially the footlocker and stuff like that. It's interesting things to have.

DM:

Absolutely. Where is he buried?

KE:

Seminole, Texas.

DM:

When did he die?

KE:

August the ninth—

KEN:

Twenty-ninth.

KE:

—Twenty-ninth of 2009. She has to text me every—I can remember our mom's, but she said—she texted me, “Daddy died today.” I just don't—we were so much more closer to mother than we were to my dad.

KEN:

Our parents were divorced.

KE:

He was obviously the one that moved off so we unfortunately didn't associate as much as we would have liked, but it is what it is. We loved him from afar.

KEN:

And he was famous about calling us and saying, “This is D-Day. On D-Day I was—,”

KE:

He could tell you—

KEN:

Or whatever famous day it was. VE day [Victory in Europe] I don't even know what the days are, but he knew exactly what it was.

KE:

June the sixth of '44, right? It'd be June the sixth of '92 or something like that, and he'd say, "Today's D-Day and I was at Naples," or wherever he was at. He could tell you exactly where he was at.

KEN:

He didn't talk about—he didn't talk about at all very much.

DM:

But you got snippets like that occasionally.

KEN:

He didn't—we learned more from the diary of how scared he was and how many times they were bombed than he ever told us.

KE:

He was fortunate back in the late 1990s that he went back over there, he and his wife, and they went back to the places, said, "I was right here." They went all over Europe where he was at. That would've been a neat trip to go on with him to see where it's at.

DM:

That's what so important about the diary though, that he didn't talk much about this, he didn't bear his feelings, but in the diary he does to a degree. I can't wait to read through it.

KE:

The sad thing about it, you're losing so many World War II veterans every day and at least we have something of what he did. A lot of those stories when they go, they're gone. At least we have something that we can hang on to.

DM:

Absolutely, diaries are just priceless.

KEN:

[Kent and Karen talk simultaneously] We were excited to find that.

KE:

I was just really blown away when I read the diary.

KEN:

Actually, his wife gave it to us several years ago.

KE:

My wife, she blew it up so we could read it a little easier. That was really pricey.

DM:

And in color. [laughter]

KE:

Yeah. The price is priceless. I remember him talking about being in the little dugout where his head—where he slept at night and said all the shells going over all the time.

DM:

It was a bunker kind of—

KE:

Exactly.

DM:

What else do you remember? Any other little anecdotes that you recall?

KEN:

He drew, in one of the pictures, he drew an actual picture of what his bivouac—is that what it's called—what it actually looked like where they— yes it's in—

KE:

It's in the diary.

KEN:

—it's, "I slept here and this is,"—I don't know, it's real interesting to look at what an actual setup would be when they're out there fighting.

KE:

It was a lot smaller than whatever he ended up with over in Seminole as far as his housing arrangements are.

DM:

I'm sure he appreciated his house much more.

KE:

That's one thing he really did. Once you said that he grew up poor, and he wasn't going to stay that way. He was very driven to make sure he wasn't.

DM:

Right, right. Something else I'll mention is the postcard collection. It's an interesting thing how well he's documented—he documented his time. Maybe—I don't know if intentionally or unintentionally, but the postcards tell us exactly where he was.

KE:

He puts in that diary that if he dies while he's in the service, they'll be sure to send that diary back to his—I guess at that time his mother was still living but said, "Be sure to send it back to that address," in Jean or Olney, wherever they were at that time. I'm really thankful of what we have here.

DM:

Anything else you want to add about him?

KE:

I guess that's it.

DM:

Let me get your full name and date of birth, I forgot to get that at the beginning.

KE:

Full name is Allen Kent Elliot; March 3, 1956.

DM:

Okay, like I said, I'll need that to catalog this recording. So I'll go ahead and turn it off.

[End of recording]