

INTERVIEW WITH WARREN BISHOP

PART ONE: Family Background, World War II Military Experience, Early Teaching Career in Washington State, Marriage

Ms. Kilgannon: This is Anne Kilgannon for the Oral History Program. Today we're going to talk with Warren Bishop, chiefly about the Budget and Accounting Act. But before we dive into that subject, let's talk about your life before you became Governor Rosellini's chief of staff. Let's talk about your background first: where you grew up, what you did, what you learned and then eventually how you came into the position to achieve this milestone act for Washington State. If you could just tell me about where you were born and just briefly about your family?

Mr. Bishop: I was born east of Colorado Springs, about twenty-six miles east of Colorado Springs, and as a matter of fact, I was born in a homestead. We lived there until I was about a year old and then we moved into the Drennan schoolhouse, in the basement, because my mother was chosen to be the operator and manager for the telephone system for the entire area east of Colorado Springs. So we were responsible for the El Paso Mutual Telephone Company. There was also one brother in the family, six years older than I. We grew up helping my dad maintain and service the telephone system and take care of the schoolhouse and keeping it clean, and building the fires in the schoolrooms, and so on. My brother shared duties with me. That and working summers on the farms, made up most of my real young life. Later, while in college, I served as Farm Range Supervisor for the Federal Conservation Program (AAA) in El Paso County, Colorado.

Ms. Kilgannon: That's kind of a flat area of Colorado, so you were not in the mountains, right? You were on the plains?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. It was flat cattle country, but it was a beautiful area. Our school was small. I think there were about nine or so who graduated with me from the high school. We had good teachers who probably did not have as up-to-date modern textbooks and equipment, but at least we had good teachers.

One of the teachers took a special interest in my going to college, which I truly have appreciated in years since then. In high school he started putting a good deal of attention on my desire by then to go to college. My cousin grew up about the same time and about the same age and also went to the Drennan high school. We both went to Northern Colorado University in 1939.

Ms. Kilgannon: Were you the first in your immediate family to go?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. My mother was very pleased. She thought that would be wonderful. And of course, having moved out away from the homestead and so on, she really was excited about her career and she sort of became

the chief hostess for that area because she ran the switchboard and the post office and it was just one of these things that was a gathering place.

Ms. Kilgannon: She knew everybody?

Mr. Bishop: She enjoyed it. But that really is what started me on the track of getting away from the country and working on farms and so on. So I went to what is now called Northern State University in Greeley, Colorado. I took, of course, education. I had completed three years at Greeley and was about to become a senior when I was drafted into the Army. I would liked to have gotten into the V-8 program, which was a Navy program for flying, but for some reason the doctors who came around during the examinations felt that I had a murmur in my heart, which I've never had detected anywhere else—no other doctor has!

Ms. Kilgannon: You seem to be fine.

Mr. Bishop: So I was not able to get into the V-8. I would liked to have. So I was drafted and went into the service and spent about two-and-one-half years in the service. I think that maybe I'll just say a little bit about that because that also helped to frame my future.

We were shipped out of where I was inducted in Denver and moved immediately to Palacios, Texas, without knowledge of what that was going to mean for me, but we were part of a cadre of persons who were going to form these officers—the non commissioned group who would start receiving new recruits mostly from the eastern part of the United States. It was a Triple A mobile aircraft artillery, so it was an exciting kind of field of military service to be in. We did our training there and boot camp and so on. We went to Louisiana for the Louisiana maneuvers. After about six months we were shipped out because they were concerned at that stage that England was going to be invaded.

Ms. Kilgannon: What year are we now discussing? Forty-one, forty-two? On your resume it says: Battlefield commission, five campaigns, European theater, October, 1942 to December, 1945. Does that seem about right?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. So I think I went in, in October and participated in the Louisiana maneuvers and shipped out and went to England as a complete unit—a battalion. We were billeted in England to do training and prepare to take care of any invasion that may have occurred in England.

Ms. Kilgannon: How did you feel about all this?

Mr. Bishop: It was a concern to me because England was being sort of invaded with bombs and so on, at that stage. We were not located close to London or those places that were being hit, but we were obviously down in the southern part of England—actually training and getting ready for the invasion of Europe.

Ms. Kilgannon: Did you know that? Did they tell you?

Mr. Bishop: I think we suspected it, but we weren't really given that kind of information. We were there to protect England.

But a lot of things happened as a result of this. We landed at Liverpool when we went to England and we were billeted at the Aintree race track, which was interesting because we were, I think, billeted in the horse barns, probably.

About the same time, they needed to modernize our equipment, especially our equipment that was used to sight planes and their trajectory and so on. Because what we had were electrical sighting mechanisms that required a large engine to generate the electricity and so on, and that was not the right kind of equipment to be going into the battlefield. So I was chosen to go to Scotland to take training in a visual kind of tracking with two gunneries on both sides of the weapon, one for the horizontal and one for the vertical, to track planes and to do it without doing it through telescopes or something like that, which really was an interesting project.

Ms. Kilgannon: Just with the naked eye?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. I learned how they trained for that, and that was the main purpose of going up there because they were the only ones who had developed that system before we had left the United States.

So that was sort of interesting to go to Scotland. I was there all by myself and stayed in a military camp there. After about two or three months of that, I then came back to Liverpool and built the equipment—or at least gave instructions to persons who built equipment for us to be able to practice doing that. The mechanism had lights and so on. And they were able to do this without having this big engine and of course a big box which a person stood on each side of it for aiming at the aircraft. So that was quite a break.

As a result of that, we practiced a lot on the beach in the gunnery tracking. They would drag targets that were large panels—they didn't really have a name for them—but they were comparable in size to an airplane, in behind the planes so that we could actually fire at something. But anyway, it was a plane pulling a target.

Ms. Kilgannon: So this is just for target practice?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. It was far enough from the plane that we didn't have to worry about... In fact, we really became quite expert—our gunners and others—so that we could actually hit these targets rather well. So that was our training.

All the time this was going on, of course, things were really building up over in France. France was being completely occupied by the Germans. It became very apparent that we were training to go to the landing. Interestingly enough, we saw that this could be organized and commanded in an orderly way. In the landing we were assigned to the Twenty-ninth Infantry Division. The Twenty-ninth Infantry Division came over early,

too, but not as early as we did, and they assembled their troops in southern England and that's where we were attached to each other and boarded the landing craft for D-day.

Ms. Kilgannon: In Higgins boats?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. There were Higgins boats. There were LSTs and so on. In fact, we were part of the landing plan on Omaha Beach. There was only one regiment of the Twenty-ninth Infantry Division and only one regiment of the First Division. Our regiment was 116 and the regiment for the First Division was 115. Those two regiments are the ones who made the initial landing. And of course, it was a very unexpected difficult landing.

Ms. Kilgannon: Weren't planes supposed to take care of the gun placements along the cliffs?

Mr. Bishop: They were. But they missed many of them. It did not happen.

Ms. Kilgannon: So the initial troop landings on the beach were under heavy bombardment from installations?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. They were located on higher cliffs. And we couldn't get off because we were with heavy equipment and could not be landed with the initial infantry troops. Even though we were sitting out there. Of course, there was quite a bombardment by destroyers and other Navy battalions that were offshore. It still did not do the kind of job that needed to be done. To be real honest about it, I don't think any of us can tell you how devastating it really was. It was several days before we were able to get our equipment in on the beach. It took at least a couple of days to gain the beachheads and to be able to protect the equipment. So we did participate in Omaha, but not on the day of the initial landing. I know our objective was supposed to be D+5 to take St. Lo, which was a city that was about twenty miles inland.

Ms. Kilgannon: Fighting all the way?

Mr. Bishop: All the way. And of course, the Germans were still heavily entrenched. In fact, they were being added to with reinforcements and so there were counter attacks.

Ms. Kilgannon: I understand there were hedgerows in that area that were very difficult to get through.

Mr. Bishop: Yes. And that's where, I think, that we came into play because there weren't very many planes flying from Germany. They did have dive bombers that would come at night and of course, they would try to hit concentrated areas with troops.

But as soon as we got on the beach or got up on the cliffs ourselves it became apparent that our equipment, because we had a forty millimeter and half-track equipped with quad-mount fifty caliber machine guns that had a height that could just about look over the top of the hedgerow and help with the initial impact of going through the hedgerow, because at that time there were no tanks heavy enough with plows to plow through the hedgerows. So it was just troops who had to jump over and take their chances.

But there we were, with fire power that was helpful enforcement to support infantry in early encounters with hedgerows. So we were just, practically, the front edge of clearing the troops so that they could get across the hedgerows. So that was sort of an interesting development. They did start putting plows on the front of tanks to deal with it, but it was after several weeks. So that's where it started. From that we did take Saint Lo, but it was supposed to be taken on D+5, and it was D+30 or something. So that first initial thrust was very difficult.

Ms. Kilgannon: War never does quite go according to paper plans. Were you a leader of a group? Did you have troops under you?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. At that time I was a section sergeant, so I had one complete unit.

Ms. Kilgannon: How many people would that be?

Mr. Bishop: There were about fourteen in each unit, but that consisted of a truck, halftrack, forty millimeter, and all the equipment and persons who were trained with the equipment in that group. Each section was independent, even though we were in radio contact or telephone contact. We were all separate and initiated our own decisions.

Ms. Kilgannon: I've always heard that the American G.I. was successful because they had a lot of ingenuity and independence. That they didn't need the top-down approach as much as some other groups, perhaps. You could all just be sent off in your smaller units and if you knew what the goal was, you could get there one way or the other. Does that seem true?

Mr. Bishop: That's right. There was a plan, but each section fit in the plan in a certain way so that we would pick out our own sites and knew where everybody else was so that even though all sections participated for the battalion in a movement, we were all independent in the process of doing so.

Ms. Kilgannon: So whatever you came upon you solved it yourselves?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. We ended up in several campaigns across France, into Paris.

Ms. Kilgannon: Were you part of the liberation of Paris?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. In fact, I was one of the first ones to go because our kind of artillery was just excellent to be located in various locations in Paris, so I went in with the spotters the first day to find out where we were going to put our particular site. It was in the Tuileries Garden. I selected Tuileries Garden! We had spent all those days before. By that time, the Germans were mostly out of Paris, but they were still around.

Ms. Kilgannon: Wasn't there some street fighting? It wasn't that you just walked in and there was nothing, was there?

Mr. Bishop: They were still fighting, but that meant we came out of the trenches, which we'd been in all the way up to Paris and into a hotel, which was right across the Champs Elyees where we stayed at night. Then our men were able to take shifts on the equipment. So that was quite a change for us!

Ms. Kilgannon: What kind of condition was Paris in at that stage?

Mr. Bishop: Paris was not too severely injured because the bombing in Paris did not really take much effect. They were moved out of Paris just to kind of back up and out into the fields to fight because they were in no position to do that in Paris. There were a lot of people in Paris who were attempting to provide protection for themselves and also support France. The troops from the United States moved into Paris very rapidly and then left quite rapidly. I think we only had a site there for about a week and we moved on, into the trenches again. It was quite an experience because the huge infantry divisions would march through Paris, and they would even lose a few in the process! But otherwise, it was a new experience for all of us.

I shouldn't say too much about my military career because it was pretty normal and the kind of service that was put in by most of the men who were there.

Ms. Kilgannon: True. But a very critical and formative experience, I'm sure.

Mr. Bishop: In the early stages, because we were pretty much a self controlled group, our section was invaded and we were successful in getting ourselves extricated and also doing quite a bit of damage. So I got the Bronze Star as a result of that. As time went on, the casualties among the commissioned personnel was really pretty high in those kinds of situations with the infantry. So I also received a battlefield commission, which was sort of exciting because I was discharged in France and for two days I was not in the Army or belonged to anybody. It was interesting to move up the chain and eventually become a commissioned officer. So from that time forward, in the rest of the battle, I had several sections.

Ms. Kilgannon: In the end how many different people would you be responsible for?

Mr. Bishop: I suspect by the time I became second in command of a battery and I imagine there were several hundred people in a battery.

Ms. Kilgannon: So this would involve: moving towards your objective? It would be making sure you had equipment, food, what your strategy was going to be, the whole thing?

Mr. Bishop: And checking on the sections and being sure that they were properly situated and sort of in a command kind of an operation.

The food situation never really became normalized because we were mostly, during the initial stages—through Saint Lo and even for quite a period of time after that—we were on K rations. But then soon after that, we were able to set up small places for a kitchen and then we started preparing C rations.

Ms. Kilgannon: A little bit tastier?

Mr. Bishop: A little bit. You could heat it! That was about the only difference. But that went on that way until we reached the Elbe River. We were always out there pretty close to the front because we were the anti-aircraft for the entire groups when we were moving. There's not as much air fighting as you would imagine in that situation.

Ms. Kilgannon: Weren't the Germans short of airplanes?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. But we were on the very edge of the breakthrough that the Germans made and in connection with that there were a lot of planes. They used a lot of planes, and fortunately we were on the very flank of that and were able to try to help out. But when we got to the Elbe River that's where we stopped, because the Russians were coming the other direction and it was decided that would be the point that we would meet.

Ms. Kilgannon: So you just stayed in one place at that point, or did you move up to anywhere else?

Mr. Bishop: We kept moving around on the Elbe River because we went into the Netherlands, we went into—what's the country next to France?

Ms. Kilgannon: Belgium?

Mr. Bishop: Belgium. We went into Liege, Belgium and that seemed to be the focal point of the front moving towards the Elbe River. Anyway, that's where we stayed and at the end, when finally the Nazis capitulated there, the men that I had been with all along who were still non-commissioned persons, had received points for their days and activities, but unbeknownst to me, commissioned officers did not receive any points.

Ms. Kilgannon: These points, didn't you need to have a certain number to go home?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. So a lot of my men were ready to go home and I remember how disappointing that was to me because I was counting on that as well.

Ms. Kilgannon: Had you kind of had your fill?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. So therefore I was assigned to a new unit and we were put in charge of a prisoner-of-war camp. So I was a provost of a prison war camp.

Ms. Kilgannon: These would be German prisoners of war?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Ms. Kilgannon: How long would they have kept those?

Mr. Bishop: We were there for another two or three months.

Ms. Kilgannon: I guess you had to process everybody or whatever they were going to do with them.

Mr. Bishop: We didn't have any trouble because they were in prison and they had a lot of men who were there

to guard them and so on, From there, it was decided that some of us would form a cadre, get new equipment and go to southern France and be shipped out for the Asian theater.

Ms. Kilgannon: How'd you feel about that?

Mr. Bishop: I was really absolutely shocked.

Ms. Kilgannon: Were you getting a little weary?

Mr. Bishop: By that time I'd already been through five campaigns.

Ms. Kilgannon: You'd already been fighting for two years of steady fighting. Did you ever get a break or any kind of leave in any sense?

Mr. Bishop: No, I didn't. Nobody got to go home.

Ms. Kilgannon: So, it's once you're there, you're just there?

Mr. Bishop: So they sent me on a four or five-day pass to someplace that I could rest and enjoy and so on.

While I was there the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and that changed the plan for us to ship out of southern France.

Ms. Kilgannon: Were you able to hear that news? Is that something that you knew right away?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Ms. Kilgannon: How was that presented? Was it over the radio—a newscast, or some kind of announcement?

Mr. Bishop: There was pretty good communication among the troops because they had mostly telephone communications and a message would come down through the troops and into the field.

Ms. Kilgannon: I just wondered how much they told you about what it was that had happened. If it was even comprehensible.

Mr. Bishop: Not very much because we didn't really know the nature....

Ms. Kilgannon: Did you even know what an atomic bomb was?

Mr. Bishop: We had very little information about the atomic bomb. And of course, we were all so relieved not to have to ship out again and go to the other theater. So that's pretty much the military, and after three or four months more I was discharged in Colorado.

Ms. Kilgannon: And you came all the way back home to Colorado? Was it hard to come back home after all your experiences? You just come back and pick up your life again?

Mr. Bishop: It was very difficult to resume my earlier activities. The first three years of my college life really, I had had a wonderful experience because in the summers I became a farm range supervisor for the agricultural program which went into effect about that time, which allowed farmers and ranchers certain benefits if they

practiced certain conservation measures such as building dams and strip cropping and similar activities like that.

So I did that for almost three summers.

Ms. Kilgannon: You would go out and teach farmers how to do this or just supervise this somehow?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. I would go out and determine measures being undertaken—it was all mapped, aerial maps, and I would go out and check up the fields that had been stripped and also check out the dams that had been built. The whole process. And then put a report together and send it in to the county so that they could receive their benefits. That was an interesting experience for me. It helped me to finance my college career.

Ms. Kilgannon: So the whole time you were going through college, you were planning on being a teacher?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Ms. Kilgannon: When you came back from the war, did you have the same plan, or did you have to rethink what you wanted to do?

Mr. Bishop: I didn't have much of a choice because I only had three years of education and I thought that I should finish and get a degree so that I could teach and get my certification. And additionally, my father, because I'd been gone all that period of time, was sort of possessive and he started making plans for me for teaching where we lived in El Paso County. And I had no desire or interest in doing that. So my mind was set to get my degree and to get interviews and go. And I did. I got some military service credit, so I was able to finish in two quarters and start making applications. Superintendents from various school districts were coming to the campuses because there was this whole group of persons who had been in the service and they were interviewing graduates. The Superintendent from Yakima County, Highland School district, came to the Greeley campus and conducted interviews and they interviewed me. I decided to take the position, sight unseen.

Ms. Kilgannon: You just really wanted to get started?

Mr. Bishop: I had to beat my dad! He was out there making commitments for me, pretty much. Well, you know how things are.

Ms. Kilgannon: Oh, yes, I can picture that. I imagine, were you a little restless? Your life had been on hold. You've had this big experience and you wanted to get started on things?

Mr. Bishop: Very, very restless. I was anxious to start teaching, even though that was a long ways away. My mother had a sister who lived in Chehalis, so that encouraged me to a degree.

Ms. Kilgannon: You'd at least have heard of Washington State.

Mr. Bishop: And I wanted to move out of that section of the country and Washington was some place I'd heard a lot about.

Ms. Kilgannon: You were just tired of that area?

Mr. Bishop: There wasn't anything there for me to do. The school districts were small. It would be a repeat of the kind of life that I had lived before going into the service.

Ms. Kilgannon: And you had changed; there was no going back, then. There's not a big population in that area, is there? It's pretty rural.

Mr. Bishop: So I ended up driving out to Yakima County, Highland School district, to teach at Cowiche. It was a small school but it was a lot different than I had experience with. The Highland School district was a large district, just not too far out of Yakima. It turned out that...a couple of things: A young man who was the son of a foreman of one of the very large orchards was having difficulty health-wise and couldn't go to school, so somehow they found out about me and I became a tutor for this young man and therefore my board and room was taken care of on this big orchard.

Ms. Kilgannon: Pretty helpful.

Mr. Bishop: So I did that the whole first year. The home was not very far away from the high school where I taught, so that worked out fairly well.

Ms. Kilgannon: What subjects did you teach?

Mr. Bishop: I taught history, political science in a different form—a high school type form, but mostly social science.

Ms. Kilgannon: Had you always been interested in that area?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. That's what I had taken my degree in. So it was fun. There were nice, young people there and I kept track of them for a long, long time.

The other thing that happened, when I came out of the service and went back to Greeley, I met my wife, Barbara. We both had been there the same period of time at Greeley—I think I knew her but we weren't acquainted until we came back.

Ms. Kilgannon: She had been in the service, too.

Mr. Bishop: She was in the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). She was a Link trainer in California, training pilots in the Navy. After I had made the decision to go teach, I spent most of that year and the summer on Satus Pass between Yakima and Vancouver. She taught in Vancouver.

Ms. Kilgannon: So she came up to Washington, too?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Ms. Kilgannon: Was that because you were in the area, or was that her own plan?

Mr. Bishop: Very fortunate! But it was a fun time and so we spent a lot of time visiting each other that year. And then the next summer we got married. We went back to her home to be married in Missouri. We moved back to Cowiche. We decided I had to teach one more year in order to make it financially, even though there was the G.I. bill and so on, we still needed to... So I taught one more year and then decided to go to graduate school at the University of Washington.