

U. S. Air Force Oral History Interview

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Maj Gen John R. Alison

22-28 April 1979



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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview
of
Maj Gen John R. Alison

By
Maj Scottie S. Thompson

Date: 22-28 April 1979
Location: Washington DC

Edited and Transcribed by Beth F. Scott

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

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REMARKS/PURPOSE

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, Maj Gen John R. Alison, USAF, Retired, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with Major Scott Thompson, covering my best recollections of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the United States Air Force.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center to be used as the security classification permits. In the best interest of the United States Air Force, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all right, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Office of Air Force History, acting on behalf of the United States of America, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, right, title, and interest therein to the donee expressly on the condition of strict observance of the following restrictions:
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John R. Alison DONOR
Dated 6/3/83

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Dated 15 June 83

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Maj Gen John R. Alison, USAFR, was born in Micanopy, Florida, 21 November 1912. General Alison graduated from Gainesville High School in Florida and received his degree in industrial engineering from the University of Florida. He enlisted as a cadet in 1936 and completed flying training at Randolph and Kelly Fields in Texas. General Alison was in intelligence and operations at Langley Field and Mitchel Field prior to World War II. He also was an assistant military attache and advisor to the RAF in London and advisor on the lend-lease program with the USSR. At the time the United States entered World War II, he was assistant military attache for air to the USSR. Combat assignments during World War II include fighter pilot with the 75th Fighter Squadron in China where he is credited with six kills. General Alison helped establish the 1st Air Commando Group. In 1946 he resigned from active duty as a colonel and was later promoted to brigadier general and then major general in the Air Force Reserves. General Alison is a former Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Air and ex-President of the Air Force Association.

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Oral History Interview #K239.0512-1121
22-28 April 1979
Taped Interview with Maj Gen John R. Alison
Conducted by Maj Scottie S. Thompson

T: Where were you born, who were your parents, and what did they do for a living?

A: I was born in Micanopy, Florida. Micanopy was the site of a Seminole Indian camp. The chief of the Seminole tribe when they were deported from Florida to Oklahoma was Chief Micanopy. Micanopy is about 12 miles outside of the town of Gainesville, Florida. Gainesville was my home.

My father was in the lumber business, and he had a small sawmill somewhere in the county. I don't know exactly where. He and my mother were living at or near the sawmill, and she came into the town or the village of Micanopy because we had relatives who lived there. Her father, who was a doctor, lived there. That's where I was born.

T: What year was that, sir?

A: 1912. My father's family came from Abbeville, Georgia. My mother's family had been in Florida, I think, for two generations. Her father, I believe, was born in Florida, but I am not sure. There is a lot that I don't know about

ALISON

the family. The families had been in the country since Revolutionary times. My mother's mother was a Culpepper, and originally the family had come from Culpepper, Virginia. Then, I think, her grandmother on my grandfather's side was a Timmons. That family was from Timmons, South Carolina.

Onetime when we were driving north, we stopped in Timmons and visited some of the distant relations. I really know very little about the family other than they settled in the South. I believe my grandfather's family originally came from Pennsylvania. Anyway, they moved south, and finally, they got as far south as Florida.

T: There were three sons. Where are they now?

A: Well, one is in the Merchant Marines, and he is a seaman, Merchant Marines. He enjoys that life and spends a great deal of his time at sea. The other one lives in Costa Rica where he is in the book business. He travels South America for one of the book publishing houses. He had owned some bookstores in Puerto Rico and then decided that Costa Rica was a nicer place to live so he sold his business and moved to Costa Rica.

T: Your immediate family, sir? We were talking about your sons.

A: This is my second marriage. I have no children by my first marriage. I have two sons by this marriage--John and David. John is 22, and he is graduating from college this year, and he will go on to graduate school. David is still in high school.

T: Any military background in your family?

A: Not for several generations. As I say, I really don't know enough about my family. My father's family was in the lumber, turpentine, and naval stores. At the time of the Civil War, they were either in South Carolina--I think they had moved to Georgia by that time. I think my grandfather, my father's father, was born in--he was 13 years old, and he and his mother were on the plantation or place or whatever they had in the lumber business.

I guess the men were away in the army, but he and his mother were there when Sherman's [Gen William T.] army came through. People talk about unreconstructed southerners, after that experience, emotionally, I don't think you could have ever reconstructed my grandfather. I know that on my mother's side some had been in the Army, but it was several generations ago. As I say, I really don't know the family

history well enough to know any of the details.

T: You went to school in Gainesville?

A: Mother and dad moved into Gainesville shortly after I was born. I guess they felt out in the woods where the sawmill was, was no place to raise a child so they moved into town, and I was raised in Gainesville. I went to grade school there. I stayed there in high school and went to college. We lived just a few short blocks from the university. That was very helpful in the depression.

T: You continued to live at home?

A: Yes, I lived at home.

T: What did you major in in college, sir?

A: Engineering.

T: Was it straight engineering, electrical engineering, or----

A: No. I took mechanical engineering. The reason I took engineering is because I wanted to go to the Army flying school, and I wasn't really very interested in college, but I figured if I wanted to go to the Army flying school

an engineering background would be the best one that I could get so I took engineering. After I had spent 2 years there, I think I would have left because after 2 years of college then you could get into the flying cadet program. I think I would have left and gone into the flying cadet program except my mother insisted that I graduate from college.

I ended up getting a degree in industrial engineering. After I had taken 3 years of mechanical, I figured that I really didn't want to be a mechanical engineer on the boards, that I really was more interested in the business end of it so the dean suggested that I take 2 years of business administration. I had 3 years of engineering and almost 2 years of business administration.

The last year was a very easy and light year. I got a combined degree that they call industrial engineering.

T: Do you recall your first interest in aviation, General?

A: I think it started about the time I went to high school, maybe a little bit before. In Florida we knew very little about it because we saw very few airplanes. Well, we saw the Jennies. The barnstormers would come, and there was a grass strip, and they would land and take people to ride,

but my mother and father didn't really understand flying and didn't want to. They felt it was highly hazardous, and they would never have let me go up in one of those barnstorming airplanes.

T: You never got to ride?

A: I never took a ride. I know when I was in high school there was a friend of my family by the name of Ruddy who lived in Gainesville. Mr. Ruddy had a brother, Ralph Ruddy, who was a lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. I never will forget the first time he came home to Gainesville. I guess he was in a P-1, one of the fighter airplanes that had the Curtiss Conqueror and the short stacks. He buzzed the town. If I recall, I was sitting in study hall, high school. I heard that sound and said, "I think that's something I would like to do." I don't know how my interest developed. It is just something I wanted to do.

T: Where did he come from?

A: I think he probably came down from Maxwell Air Force Base. As a matter of fact, when I went through the Pursuit Section at Kelly, we had the P-12s. The Air Force has all the art work, and there is one shot of all the instructors at Kelly in the P-12s and their names. There is Lt Ralph Ruddy.

(laughter) I looked at that--he was one of the motivating forces.

Then later on, I went through the Pursuit Section at Kelly Field and flew those same airplanes. Ruddy was not there, but surprisingly, there were a number of those instructors that were in that picture in the Pursuit Section that were still there at the time I went through the flying school.

T: Did you participate in sports?

A: Yes. Being small there is a limit to what you can do. Gainesville High School was a small high school, and I did play 3 years of high school football.

T: What position did you play, sir?

A: I played end. The only reason, I guess, that I was able to play and make the team was the fact that there just wasn't much talent around. I enjoyed it. It was a great sport. I was on the swimming team. I was the captain of the swimming team in high school.

We didn't even have a coach. We coached ourselves, but we went to the meets, and we participated. Then when I went to college, of course, I was far too small for college football. I was on the intramural wrestling team. I was the

intramural wrestling champion at the university for a couple of years. My participation in sports was kind of limited to my size.

T: Did you ever have any odd jobs as kids would growing up-- paper routes or anything like that?

A: No, no. Life was a ball.

T: What were your hobbies, sir, other than sports?

A: Oh, I don't know.

T: Hunting, fishing?

A: Oh, yes. My dad loved to hunt and fish. When I was 12 years old, he bought me a shotgun, and he bought me a rod and reel. In those days Florida was not densely populated. I think there were about a million and a quarter people in the whole state. There was game everywhere. Between Gainesville and Micanopy, there was a large lake.

Florida is built on a limestone shelf, and they have these sinkholes. There were sinkholes on the edge of the lake, and the bottom dropped out, and the water drained out. It was just a tremendous marsh. It was a great place for

ducks. We would hunt ducks on the prairie, out on the marsh, and in the ponds. Then quail and dove. Ducks, quail, and dove hunting. Then, of course, the fishing in the rivers and the lakes was just great for bass and bream.

T: You had to watch your step in that part of the country; the rattlesnakes are pretty bad, aren't they?

A: Well, no. Yes, there were a lot of rattlesnakes but not really enough to bother you. My dad, when he hunted particularly for quail, had a pair of tin leggings which he wore. The dogs would point, and he would go into the palmetto and kick the palmetto, but I don't think Dad was ever struck by a snake.

Out on the prairie there were just hundreds of water snakes. Among the water snakes, of course, there were the big stub tail or cottonmouth moccasins as we called them. They were very common. They were aggressive, and you avoided them. The ordinary water snakes never bothered you at all.

T: What were some of your best subjects as far as studies?

A: I wasn't a particularly good student. (laughter)

T: I didn't want to ask you that.

A: In college I made a few As. I wouldn't claim to be a good student at all. I was an average student, but I liked chemistry and physics. In addition to those courses, I took a lot of outside courses like public speaking, which really didn't count toward my graduation, however.

T: You made application for the Navy?

A: Yes.

T: Will you tell me the story, why you were not accepted in the Navy?

A: I didn't really want to go into the Navy. I had always wanted to go into the Army Air Corps. That had been a fixation. My two closest friends in college--we had started together, and then when I changed from mechanical to industrial engineering, I was a year later getting out. They both went into the Navy.

T: What were their names, sir, do you recall?

A: John Taggart. He was the son of the president of the university. The other one's name was Addison Pound. We were three close friends. Because they were in the Navy, I decided, well, why not? I will try to get in the Navy.

So I went to Pensacola, and I took the physical examination. I flunked. I wasn't tall enough. I could have easily passed the examination because when the chief measured my height I was just about a quarter of an inch short of 5 foot 6. Five foot six was the limit.

He stood me up against the wall and put a ruler on top of my head and saw how high it came. All I would have had to do was raise up a little--just raised my heels up off the floor, and I would have been 5 foot 6 or taller, but I didn't do that. I just stood flat. He reported it, I think, as 5 foot 5-3/4 inches. So this doctor said to me, "Well, you didn't pass the test." I said, "Well, doctor, why?" He said, "You are not tall enough." I said, "I know I am just under 5 foot 6, but I thought I was close enough to it." He said, "Oh, no." I said, "Well, I will ask for a waiver." He said, "Well, you won't get it. We don't grant waivers." I said, "My friend, Pound, went through here last year. He and I are exactly the same height. There is no difference. I have known him all my life. We are exactly the same height. Somehow or another you let him get through." He said, "Oh, I remember Pound, but he is a little bit closer to 5 foot 6 than you are." (laughter) I said, "Well, I will ask for a waiver." So I did.

ALISON

I wrote to Senator Duncan Fletcher [Duncan U., Dem-FL], who was the Florida Senator. I told him the situation. I told him that I would like for him to request a waiver. He turned it over to his staff, and they requested a waiver, and the Navy came back and said, "We don't grant waivers." So I said, "Well, okay, to hell with the Navy. I went right up to Montgomery and took the physical examination. I don't know how this happened, but it put me late. I got to Randolph 2 weeks late, and I missed the first 2 weeks of hazing, much to my delight. (laughter)

T: That was going to be my next question, General. Where did you take flight training and what class were you in?

A: I entered flying school in June 1936 at Randolph and took primary and basic there. I took advanced at Kelly.

T: What kind of aircraft?

A: We started on PT-3s. When we moved to basic stage, we had the BT-8s and the BT-9s. They were delivered to Randolph while we were there. They were the first modern trainers the Air Force had. If you remember, the BT-8 was made by Seversky, and the BT-9 was made by North American. I think on the whole they were very successful trainers.

After flying the biplanes, the PT-3s, we had the Douglas BT-1, which was just a larger biplane. It looked something like a large Jenny. To get in a low-wing monoplane with that little tiny wing on it and you look out there, you say, "What's going to hold this thing up?" The BT-8 ground looped. It was close coupled, and unless you were on it all the time, it would get away from the students and go upside down. You were lucky if it didn't go all the way over. Sometimes it looked as though they just tumbled. There were quite a few of them damaged and some, I guess, major damage.

As soon as the airplanes came, the instructors began to check out in them. One of the cadets, Cadet Smalley, asked one of the instructors to let him ride in the back seat, which he did. The instructor went up and was practicing his spins. In those days, the Air Corps didn't know how to instruct the way they do today. The difference in the way cadets are instructed today and the way we were instructed, there is no comparison. We kind of learned to fly all on our own. This instructor put the airplane into a spin at, I guess, seven or eight thousand feet, and after a couple of turns, he recovered. The airplane would recover beautifully from a spin, but he just wouldn't wait long enough for it to get flying speed, and with that short wing, he started to pull out too soon and went into another spin. He recovered again, and then he didn't wait until he got

enough speed. I guess the third time he spun it in.

We lost a few cadets in the BT-9. The BT-9 had a bad wing-tip stall. On the last turn at 400 feet, turning on the final, a number of the cadets would just pull it in too tight. The wing tip would stall, and the airplane would roll over, and of course, at 400 feet there is not enough room to recover. One cadet lived through it. Then, I think, we had one or two more that were killed on the last turn. The airplanes were good airplanes, both of them. North American fixed the BT-9. They changed the angle of the wing tip so that the stall would occur inboard, and after that, I don't think we had any more trouble with the BT-9.

T: But you had never flown until you went to----

A: No, I had flown. When I was in college, my mother and father realized that I was going to flying school. A friend owned an airplane, and he had an itinerant instructor who flew it around and gave people instructions. It was a lovely little biplane. I believe it was a lovely little Travel-Air, I can't remember, with open cockpit however. The airplane came to Gainesville.

The instructor set up shop there, but the instructor needed an automobile to go back and forth from the airport. My

father was in the automobile business. He said, "Okay, I will give you a used car if you will give my son flying lessons." Somehow or another someone had told my mother and father that maybe if I tried it I wouldn't like it--I would get sick. (laughter). I think I had five lessons. I think I went up five times because each time I liked it more. Then my dad got so frustrated, he said, "No more." He told the instructor, "You can have the car. It belongs to you, but no more lessons." I was ready to solo, but my dad said no. He just said, "Son, it just makes me too nervous. I don't want you to do it." So I said, "Okay, Dad, but you know, I am still determined to go to the service flying school if I am accepted." They finally became reconciled to that.

I didn't even make an application for an engineering job when I graduated because I didn't want to go out and have an engineering job. I wanted to go to flying school. I just said, "I am going to do it." My family was so concerned that they went out and got me a job with the state as a surveyor with the state road department. (laughter) I think the job paid \$125 a month. Of course, that's \$50 more than the flying cadet got, but I wasn't interested in the money. I was very disappointed when I didn't get in the Navy, not because I really cared that much whether I was in the Navy or not. I felt very badly that I just didn't make it.

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T: What was the height requirement in the Army at that time?

A: In the Army it is 5 feet 4. It has always been. It still is. Five feet four is the requirement in the Air Force.

T: When you were in the war and in combat, it must have been pretty tough on the folks.

A: Yes, and boys don't really realize what they put their folks through. I wrote them letters, and I know they liked to get the letters. I described the war. I arrived in London the night of the biggest blitz of the war, stepped off the train; the sirens started to blow. This was all very exciting particularly for the young guy who has never been there before. I really didn't know what was going on. The next day, of course, there was this writeup about this big air raid.

We were staying in the Dorchester, and we took a straddle right over the hotel. Two of the bombs fell short in Hyde Park, and the other two fell--the last one fell in Grovenor Square and busted a lot of the windows in the American Embassy. Then in Russia, the first 14 nights I was in Moscow, we were bombed every night.

T: You wrote this home?

A: Oh, yes. We would go up on the roof of the Embassy to watch the fireworks.

T: Your mother was at home crying?

A: Well, I don't think mother was crying because by the time she got the letters it was all behind her. When I got to China, I guess I had been there 2 weeks, maybe a little more, when I got shot down the first time. Of course, you know, you write home and say, "Well, I got shot down for the first time today." (laughter) Big deal! I know my mother was worrying herself sick.

T: Did they ever say that they wished you had not written about combat?

A: No.

T: They would rather have heard from you regardless of whether it was good or bad?

A: Oh, sure. They wanted to know all the details even though they might not have been--by the time they got the details, there was a new event on the horizon. Until you get older and until you have children of your own, it's difficult for most people--and it was difficult for me--to really

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understand how concerned I now know they must have been.

T: Who influenced you the most in flying school?

A: I was fortunate--I say I was fortunate--most kids who get through the flying school are fortunate, but it was fun. Very small classes. I think my upper class had about 16 in it. My class had about 38 or 42, something around that, including the student officers. The student officers in my class were not West Pointers. I went in June, and of course, the West Pointers graduated, and then they went on vacation. They usually went in the fall. They went to flying school in the fall.

(End Tape 1, Side 1)

A: There were several officers from Latin America who were going through the school, but it was a small class, and it was very personal. You knew everybody. We knew everybody in our upper class personally and, of course, our own class. The class behind us was a little bit larger, but I doubt if there were more than about 50 or 60 in the class that followed us. This was in 1936, quite awhile before World War II, so the classes were still very small.

I had five instructors on A-stage. It seemed that every time that I would get an instructor he would be with me about 3 weeks, and then he would get a transfer. I think the one that I had the longest was Lieutenant Skeldon [Col John R.]. He was an outstanding instructor. He really was. He was very, very good. He gave me an understanding of the fundamentals of good flying, what I should practice, how to achieve precision in my practice. He made me feel that this was very important. I think he probably influenced me more than any of the first instructors I had. The only other one that I remember personally was Lieutenant Minter. The reason I remember him is because I got to know him later. They were all fine men, and they were all good instructors. My experience was most pleasant.

T: No problems or incidents?

A: No problems at all. The flight commander on A-stage--he may have been the stage commander--was General Cabell [Charles P.], Gen Pearre Cabell, who I think retired as a lieutenant general and went on to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] General Cabell was a good instructor, a fine officer, levelheaded officer. He flew with me several times. I never will forget, I was so proud of my landings. I would come in, and I would just grease that thing in, but I was greasing it in on the wheels. You could hardly feel--

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the old PT-3 was kind of rough. He said to me, "Alison, that's not the way to land an airplane. You are doing it wrong." I said, "Sir, you explain it to me and show me." So he did. He went around, brought it in just on the stall, and stalled it into a three-point landing. He said, "Now, that's the right way to land an airplane." I said, "Yes, sir, I will learn it."

The PT-3 had shock cords which gave a spring action to the landing gear. If you landed too hard, the cords would break. The cadets were always breaking cords. I had never broken a cord because I was rolling them in on the wheels. I wasn't doing it. We practiced landings coming in over an obstacle. They would have a rope, and you would come in over the rope. Then you were supposed to land. I got quite good at this three-pointing a PT-3. One day I was out practicing by myself. They had this little landing area down at one end of Randolph. I was bringing this PT-3 in, and I was dropping it in over that rope. The rope was about 8 feet high, just dropping it in and having the greatest time. I brought it in a little high, and I could see the mechanics looking at the airplane. (laughter) I hadn't broken a shock cord, but I had bent the axle I dropped it in so hard. I never will forget the line chief coming out, and he said, "I just don't understand. I don't understand how that student could have bent the axle without breaking the

shock cord." But no, I didn't have any incidents. I went through with no problems at all.

T: Was there a mixture of instructors, civilian and military?

A: No. They were all military. I was very fortunate. My instructors were even-tempered. They were eager to impart their knowledge to you, and they took the time to explain what they wanted. Some of the instructors weren't. Some of them were shouters. They would terrorize their students.

T: You never had one of those?

A: I was very fortunate. I didn't have one of those. Then we went to B-stage. My instructor was Captain Ronin [Col James A.]. He was very nice, but about halfway through B-stage--the year's course was divided into three parts, about 4 months.

T: How many stages, three?

A: There was A-stage, B-stage, and then you went to Kelly for the last one. I don't remember exactly when, but I guess First Lieutenant Ronin was my instructor. He had some kind of physical problem. I believe it was some kind of heart tremor, and he was grounded, but he was still my instructor.

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He would come down in the morning and tell me what he wanted me to do, and I would go out and practice. For 2 months, I had had no one to fly with me except occasionally the stage commander, Gen Charlie Lawrence [Maj Gen Charles W.]. He was a captain, Captain Lawrence. He was a stage commander. He would fly with me. He would go up and fly with me. He said, "Well, son, you are doing all right." Every day I would come down to the line, and Lieutenant Ronin would be there, and he would give me my assignment. He said, "Here's what I want you to practice today."

T: Did Ronin ever get back on flying status?

A: Not while I was there. I just didn't have an instructor.

T: You taught yourself more or less?

A: Yes. Ronin would explain to me what he wanted me to do. Of course, on B-stage we had night flying. We had a little instrument, but it was really almost a do-it-yourself business.

T: I can't help but think of those poor guys who had the shouters, sir. They must have been awfully envious of you.

A: Yes. So I got through B-stage without any trouble, and then we went to Kelly. That was just great. I was in the

Pursuit Section, and we had the P-12 which was a delightful airplane to fly. Lieutenant Hardy was my instructor. He was a fine instructor. There was no problem. I went right through there.

T: Did you have him the entire time you were at Kelly?

A: Yes, I had him the entire time I was at Kelly.

T: What were you flying at Kelly?

A: We flew P-12s but they also had the Pursuit Section. We had the Bomber Section. We had the Attack Section and the Observation Section. We all had different airplanes. The Bomber Section had the Keystone bomber, which was a sight to behold, this great big wooden biplane, twin-engine, and the cockpit was so large it was unbelievable, just a great big bathtub sticking out in the open up front. We flew those things solo. I could just barely reach--well, I had cushions. Even the P-12 had no adjustable seats. If you had an airplane that a 6-foot student could fly--they seemed to rig them all for the 6-foot students--a man that was 5 foot 5-1/2 had to have his pillows. I had my cushions.

T: What kind of cushions did you have?

A: The parachute shop made them.

T: I thought maybe you might have gotten a regular pillow.
(laughter)

A: Oh, no. I had a cushion about 4 inches thick. It would sit in the seat, and I would put the parachute on top of that. I would sit on that, and I would be just like 6 feet tall. I also had one for my back because, you know, my legs are not long enough. (laughter) I got in those big Keystone bombers; even with my cushions, it was hard to reach the pedals. It was great fun flying those things.

T: Forgive my ignorance, but did you train a certain amount in each one of those different sections--Pursuit, Attack----

A: Yes. I think I had 20 hours in bombers, and in the attack I probably had around 8 hours flying the attack airplane. Then I had some time in the observation airplanes. They did this with everybody. The bomber pilots flew pursuit. They let them go up and fly the pursuit airplanes. I believe when I finished flying school I had almost 320 flying hours. When I commanded a squadron in China, they were sending me boys with less than 200 hours, and they couldn't fly.

T: Did you have pursuit locked in at this time even though you flew other----

A: Oh, yes. When I left Randolph, they assigned me--they asked you your choices. What branch do you want to go into? I picked pursuit. I don't know what my second choice was; probably attack was my second. I can't remember, but pursuit was my first choice, and they gave it to me. Then when you graduated, they asked you what station you wanted--first, second, and third choice. I believe my first choice was Barksdale. My second choice was probably Selfridge. My third choice was Moffett, and they sent me to Langley, which was fine. It was a great station.

T: Who were some of your other classmates?

A: My two roommates were both from the University of Florida. We got to the flying school almost 2 weeks late, and they put us together. One was a boy that I had known in college, Coleman Hinton [Maj], and his nickname was "Sugar Boy." It stayed with him until he was killed in the war. He was General Tinker's [Maj Gen Clarence L.] aide.

He was flying General Tinker when they went down in the Pacific. It was a bombing raid to Wake or Midway, I can't remember where they were going. They were flying, I believe,

B-24s, but I am not sure. Just how they were lost, I am not sure of that either. They were leading the formation, and as I remember, they called and said, "We have got a problem, and we are going to drop out of the formation," and that was the last that was ever heard of them. Apparently, they went into the Pacific somewhere. Coleman Hinton was a delightful man and a most popular cadet and a most popular officer in the Air Force. Everybody liked him. Everybody liked Sugar Boy.

T: Do you know why he had the nickname Sugar Boy?

A: They called him that at college, and I don't know why. He was a great man with the ladies. That might explain it. Francis Black was our other roommate. Francis Black was a most interesting boy. I didn't know him at the University of Florida; he was deeply religious. I think Francis was a Baptist. He really took religion seriously. They made you say all kinds of--they had the routine for the dodoes, the cadets. They would ask you, "Have you soloed?" The answer would be, "No, sir." "Well, when are you going to solo?" The answer was, "Tomorrow, by God." There was no deviation. Francis Black would never say, "Tomorrow, by God." He would say, "Tomorrow, by golly." Francis had so many demerits. Francis couldn't make his bed. He would dust and clean, and he would leave his dresser full of dust. (laughter)

He had so many demerits that he was right on the point where they would kick him out. When he wouldn't say, "Tomorrow, by God," they would take him over to see the commandant. The commandant said, "Mr. Black, why won't you say, 'Tomorrow, by God'?" He said, "Because my religion is such, sir, that I cannot say, 'Tomorrow, by God,' but I will say, 'Tomorrow, by golly'." So the commandant said, "Mr. Black, you are permitted to say, 'Tomorrow, by golly'." Everybody else said, "Tomorrow, by God." Black said, "Tomorrow, by golly." (laughter)

At first, the upperclassmen thought Black was putting them on. They thought he was a smart ass. Not only did he believe it, but he lived that kind of life. He was genuinely a good guy, but he was always in some kind of problem. I know once in flying school Lieutenant Hardy had us out, and he had this formation drill you went through. This was a tactical formation drill. We had no radios so we used hand signals. When they gave you hand signals, that meant the instructor was going to do a certain maneuver, and the students should take certain places. Everything had a signal.

There was one maneuver where the instructor would make a dive such as in a diving attack from a tactical formation where the two wingmen were spread out. As he started down,

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the two wingmen were supposed to change places. So he gave the signal, and off he goes. Black is the wingman. He is on the right, and he is the man who is supposed to move. He just flies along merrily, and he doesn't move. I look over, and I see he is not going to move so I dive in, and I take Black's place. He flies on, and then he decides to come in, and he never catches up with the formation.

I can see Lieutenant Hardy. He gives the signal to close up. I get in on his wing. He is wobbling his wings, and he is doing everything to get Black back in formation, and he never does. He goes back to Kelly, and he lands. The instructor and I go over the fence together as we sit down, and I am looking, and here comes Black in. He is about a half mile behind us, and he lands. We go up to the line, and we park the airplanes, and we get out. Black and I are walking up to the instructor. I can see he is fuming. He is red in the face, and he starts on me, and I have never had such a chewing out in my life. He says, "Mr. Alison, you are the dumbest man I"--and he goes on and on. "Don't you understand the signals? Why didn't you drop into place?" (laughter)

Black was standing there shuffling his feet. I guess all of us in Florida talk with the same accent. He is saying, "But, suh, but, suh." He said, "Mr. Black, you shut up."

Then he would work on me some more. Black would say, "But, suh." When Hardy had vented his spleen and gotten it all out, he said, "Now Mr. Black, but, suh, what?" Black stood right and looked at him and said, "But suh, that was me." (laughter) Hardy just threw his hands up, and he walked into the hangar. Black, after flying school, did a tour of active duty at Barksdale and then became an Eastern Airlines pilot and became one of their senior captains, and I guess he has retired by now. Those were my two roommates.

T: Any other good stories like that one? That is one that is not recorded.

A: Well, there is another one, and I don't know whether this is true, but Black generated so many stories. There was one of our upperclassmen by the name of Snavelly [Brig Gen Ralph A.]. Snavelly was at Barksdale, and Black was stationed at Barksdale. There was another one of our students--I guess he was in our class, but I can't remember. His name was Harper. Harper was at Barksdale.

Harper and Black were sent to Randolph to pick up two PT-3s and ferry them to Barksdale. The PT-3 had no compass. You got the roadmap and you followed the roads and the railroad. Harper was leading, and Black was on his wing. Harper saw a farmer in a field. They were flying low, and

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he went down and flew low over the farmer, and he turned around to look back, and he ran straight into a pine tree. (laughter) He hit the pine tree, and the pine tree and the airplane went down. Harper wasn't hurt because I don't think PT-3s flew that fast. Black went back and landed in the field. Harper had to have some Band-Aids or something. Black called Snavelly who happened to be officer of the day. He said, "Mr. Snavelly, Harper flew into a tree." After he got through assuring Snavelly that Harper wasn't hurt--Black didn't tell me this; Snavelly told me this--maybe he elaborated on it. He said, "Now what shall I do?" Snavelly said, "Black, get in your airplane tomorrow and get on the railroad track and fly to Shreveport and report here at Barksdale."

The next day went by, and they didn't hear from Black, and late that afternoon, came another call. Snavelly was still on duty. He said, "Mr. Black, where in the world are you?" He said, "Suh, I am in Dallas," which is the other direction. Snavelly said, "Black, how in the world did you get in Dallas?" He said, "Mr. Snavelly, I followed the wrong railroad track." (laughter) I don't know whether that happened, but Snavelly swears that it did, and maybe it did.

T: Super story. You buckled down and did real well in academics at Randolph?

A: Yes. There wasn't really much buckling down. If you are an engineering graduate, the academics at Randolph were relatively simple. It was something I was interested in anyway. I think I was their honor student in the academics course such as it was.

T: Did you continue that at Kelly?

A: I don't remember what my grades at Kelly were. I think I had high academic grades.

T: How much emphasis was put on academics at Kelly or was it primarily on flying?

A: The flying, but we had things like observation, and all of us had to take it. We had a room that was several stories high with a balcony. Down on the ground floor of the room, there was a battlefield display. These little cannons shot big ball bearings. We had the same thing in college. I had taken ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. I finished 4 years of ROTC in the Field Artillery. I was quite familiar with adjusting of artillery of fire. That was kind of old hat by this time. We would sit in the balcony.

We had our code key, and we had our binoculars. This was just like you were in an airplane up looking at the battle-field. The order of battle would change down below, they would fire, and you would correct the fire from the airplane. You would do it in Morse code. That's the way the artillery observation planes used to do it because we didn't have the kind of communication we have today.

T: I didn't know you were in ROTC at Florida.

A: Florida was a land-grant college, 2 years were.

T: Were you offered a commission?

A: No. We didn't have the kind of ROTC we have today. I was commissioned and went to summer camp at Fort Bragg as an officer. Then I went to Randolph as a flying cadet. When I graduated from Randolph, I was given a commission in the Air Corps. Somehow or another my commission in the Field Artillery was canceled.

T: If you had not made it in flying school, did you have any obligation? Field Artillery?

A: No. I didn't want to be in the Field Artillery. I just wanted to be in the Air Corps.

T: After you completed flying training, you went up to Langley?

A: Yes.

T: Supposedly in the mid-1930s it was very difficult for Reserves to get any flying time, really to get on active duty.

A: Our class was the first class to commission lieutenants. I was commissioned at Kelly Field.

T: Received your wings all in the same day?

A: All in the same day.

T: But you were commissioned in the Reserves?

A: Yes. Second lieutenant, Air Corps Reserves.

T: Do you recall in that time frame, after graduation and receiving your commission, was there any discrimination against the Reserves versus the young man coming out of the Academy?

A: No. I saw none of that really.

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T: You considered yourself a pretty good acrobatic type in flying training. There was one instructor you thought you were a little better than. Did you ever really get to take him on?

A: Oh, no. The reason I thought I was better, Lieutenant Skeldon had shown me acrobatics and how you should come out on point, the importance of coming out on point, the importance when you did a loop, of when you came down you should go through the airplane wash. That would tell you had kept your needle and ball centered all the way around. The importance when you did a roll of keeping the nose on point as near as possible. One of my instructors, particularly in slow rolls, had great difficulty in keeping the nose of the airplane on point. The PT-3 wasn't much of an acrobatic airplane anyway. Second lieutenants are inclined to think they are better than they really are anyway. For fighter pilots that's not bad. That's maybe an important ingredient if you don't kill yourself. A lot of them did because they thought they could do things they really couldn't.

T: Did you ever reflect back to Lieutenant Ruddy, his P-1 over Gainesville, and wonder if you would make it?

A: I never had any question that I was going to make it through flying school. Of course, I could have been 100 percent wrong.

(End Tape 1, Side 2)

A: I could have been wrong, but I didn't have any difficulty. Not only did I want to fly, but I appeared to have an aptitude for it.

T: You went to Langley after graduation?

A: I drove the automobile which I bought on credit in San Antonio. I bought a Ford automobile, and I drove directly to Langley from Randolph.

T: You were assigned to the 8th Pursuit Group at Langley?

A: Yes.

T: What stands out about your tour at Langley now?

A: When I got there, I thought it was the end of the world. It was way down on the tip of that peninsula down in the boondocks. Hampton was a sleepy little town steeped in history. One of my classmates, John Marshall [Maj John A.], I think, put it correctly. He went with a girl from Hampton. Then he later married her. In her family's home there was nothing but antiques. You could hardly sit, afraid of

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breaking these antiques. (laughter) I will never forget John's making the remark in the parlor one evening while we were waiting for Nancy to come down. He said, "You know, these people are 100 years behind time and proud of it." (laughter) I hadn't been there too long before I discovered that it was a delightful part of the world. Langley was a wonderful station. The real privilege was that it was the home of the GHQ [General Headquarters] Air Force, and some of our top Air Force leaders were stationed there. I lived in Dodd Hall. General Spaatz [Carl] and his family lived about two doors away. General Spaatz was a major. You get to know the families, and you get to know the people. Curtis LeMay [Gen Curtis E.] was a first lieutenant when I arrived there as a second lieutenant. General Bob Olds [Maj Gen Robert] had the 2d Bomb Group, which was the first group to get the B-17. Gen Bob Olds was Robin Olds' [Brig Gen] father. Robin was just a youngster when I arrived. Gen Bill Kepner [Lt Gen William E.] was the Commander of the 8th Group. General Krogstad [Brig Gen Arnold N.] was the station or the base commander. Gen Frank Andrews [Lt Gen Frank M.] was the Commander of the GHQ Air Force. There were a lot of people who went on to positions of high leadership. We had an opportunity as second lieutenants to get to know them.

T: General Momyer [William W.] was there?

A: General Momyer was about two classes behind me. He lived there. Of course, they were all in the 8th Group. The 8th Group was comprised--we had about three pursuit groups. This was the nucleus of the whole Air Force fighter business. It was still a very small community where you really had an opportunity to know people, and you had no idea they were going to be the leaders in a great war, but before we knew it, a war was on us, and they were. Gen Fred Smith [Frederic H., Jr.], who later became Vice Chief of the Air Force, was our deputy group commander or group ops officer. Maybe he was the deputy squadron commander, I can't remember. Glenn Barcus [Lt Gen Glenn O.], Gen Glenn Barcus. Gen Ned Schramm [Brig Gen]. Of course, Gen "Butch" Griswold [Lt Gen Francis H.]. They were all captains and majors. Kepner, the group commander, was a colonel. Gen Caleb Haynes [Maj Gen Caleb V.], J. B. Montgomery [Maj Gen John B.] were all in the bomb group, Curt Lemay.

T: How long were you a second lieutenant?

A: I was a first lieutenant when I was overseas. Three years, I believe I stayed a second lieutenant 3 years.

T: Did you get a lot of flying time your first year?

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A: No. I got very little the first year. That was one of my chief complaints. I don't know how I got stuck with the duty, but I was airdrome officer [AO] for 2 months. There was no flying while I was airdrome officer.

T: You were AO for 2 months?

A: Not all in one stint. You took it for a month at a time. We had a requirement levied that everybody fly 250 hours a year. We had those bar charts, pilot and his name, to chart his time. The end of the year came up, and I didn't have it, and I put in for 30 days' leave. They said, "You can't go on leave until you get your flying time." I said, "I have been here for a year, and you have not permitted me to fly. I have 30 hours I have to fly." They said, "Well, we know that." I said, "Well, I will take a cross country." They said, "But you can't take a cross country. Second lieutenants can't go on cross countries until they have been in the Air Force for a year." So I said, "What shall I do?" The answer was, "You figure it out." (laughter) So I circled the airport for 30 hours essentially. I did more than that. It was just a matter of filling out that bar chart.

(Interruption)

T: We were talking yesterday about your tour at Langley in the 8th Pursuit Group. What stands out today about your tour down at Langley?

A: The thing that really stood out was the opportunity I had to associate with officers and airmen who were the small cadre on which the Air Force expanded in World War II. I think I gave you the names of some of the people who were there.

T: From my research, you could stay on active duty for a year, take an exam, and receive a commission?

A: Yes. There was a Thomason Act. I guess it was named after the Congressman who introduced the legislation. This was, I guess, legislation which made it possible for ROTC graduates, possibly others--I don't know whether you had to be an ROTC graduate or not, I can't remember--to take competitive examinations for a Regular commission. I had been at Langley 6 months or so when they announced the Thomason Act examinations. It was suggested that everyone in the squadron who was qualified should take it. Having been an ROTC graduate and a graduate engineer, it wasn't really much of an effort to prepare for the examinations. I took the examinations, and I was given a Regular commission. I believe there were two given at Langley Field that year. I don't recall who the other was, but I believe there were two

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who received their commissions under the Thomason Act that year. The next year they began to commission Reserve officers in the Regular establishment. I guess this was because of the stress in the world, and it was obvious we needed the strength in the military, and the officer cadre just wasn't there. However, they just didn't appoint a Reserve officer to the Regular Air Force. They had to go through examinations too. There were preparatory classes given on the base, and I remember I was asked to be an instructor in one. I forget what subject I was an instructor in. Another one was "Hal" Watson [Maj Gen Harold E.], who was also an engineering graduate and later went on to become a major general in the Air Force. I remember we were both instructors who were chosen to instruct our peers who were still Reserve officers. They took these examinations, and those who passed with a sufficiently high grade were given appointments as officers in the Regular Army.

T: Was it your intention at this time to make the military a career?

A: I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew I liked the military. I liked the Air Force. I won't say I had unhappy moments. I was a little dissatisfied the first year. Having spent an intense first year in the flying school where you were really challenged, where everything

was structured, you studied, you flew, 100 percent of your time was taken up. You really didn't have much time off, you really didn't want much.

Then when I went to Langley, I began to find that there were a lot of other things you had to do in the service that weren't nearly as exciting, such as airdrome officer, for extended periods, and mess officer. Most of the assignments were routine and really didn't have anything to do with furthering what I considered to be the main objective, which was to learn how to be a fine pursuit pilot, as we called it.

There was very little intense training in the art of flying the airplane such as there was in flying school. Even though, for the reasons which I told you earlier, I didn't have continuous instruction because of the problem with the instructors. Nevertheless, the flying school training was structured. I was given assignments, and I had to complete those assignments. We got on active duty with a tactical unit, and it wasn't that way.

Another thing that has always been true in the service, accidents create great problems. They create great problems for the command structure. Congress doesn't like accidents. The civilian population doesn't like accidents. The military

as always is a whipping boy, and when we had an accident and lost a \$35,000 airplane, the criticism didn't come down on the pilot who lost it nearly so much as it came down on the Chief of the Air Force. So regulations would be promulgated to prevent accidents. At every level of command as they came down, they added a little bit more. There were a lot of restrictions.

For example, we had single-engine aircraft. Because there had been some losses in the airplanes, we weren't allowed to practice acrobatics. Finally, they stopped instrument flying completely in single-engine airplanes. This was very distressing because I realized--and I think not just I did, but many of the other lieutenants realized, and I am sure our superiors did also, but our superiors had the responsibility of living with the regulations. The lieutenants down the line were free to fret about them.

You could just see a national emergency occurring, and the weather was bad. They say, "Okay, boys, get off and go out there and get them." Nobody was really being trained properly to fly on instruments. There had been a large number of pilots who had killed themselves trying to get there.

Although acrobatics per se are not absolutely essential to combat flying, it is an important part of learning how to handle your airplane, certainly learning the limitations of both the machine and the pilot. I considered it very important.

I broke that regulation, but I was very careful not to be caught. I practiced my acrobatics at night. The airplane actually was completely safe. There wasn't really any problem with the airplane.

T: What aircraft was it, sir?

A: It was a PB-2A. It was supposed to have a bad spin characteristic, and it didn't. You could stall the airplane. You could stall the airplane in the last turn. All you had to do was turn loose of the stick, and it would immediately recover. It didn't have a vicious wing-tip stall. I suppose if you got it into a spin, once it was in the spin, it wouldn't come out. It would go flat. Some airplanes are that way. I never spun the airplane, but I would think you would really have to work at it to get it in a spin.

I remember the first PB-2A I ever saw was at Wright Field, and I jumped up on the wing and looked into the cockpit. There was a big red placard in there, "Don't spin this airplane. If inadvertently placed in a spin, abandon after three turns." (laughter) I have never flown a more honest airplane in my life, and as far as I know, we have never lost an airplane because the pilot got one outside of its flight envelope. It was a sweet airplane to fly.

T: You say you practiced your aerobatics at night?

A: Yes. I can say that now. It's 35 years later. On a clear night you always had a good horizon. Norfolk, Newport News, and Hampton, Virginia, perfect horizon. There is nobody to apprehend you if you practiced at night.

T: As long as you didn't get over some farmer's farmhouse and keep him up all night.

A: Well, you would do it up at a high enough altitude so that it didn't bother anybody.

T: In the period prior to World War II the Reserve Officers Association and the Air Reserve Association were influential in convincing Congress to furnish more funds for the Army Air Corps, both Regular and Reserve. Do you have any comments on that?

A: I didn't know a thing about it. I didn't belong to the organizations at the time, but I wouldn't be surprised because those organizations have a political nature, and they can speak out when the man in uniform can't. A Reserve officer is a citizen soldier. He has the image of being a citizen soldier, and he can say, "Look, if I am going to be called on to fight, I want to be prepared to fight." He has

every reason for saying that, and because he isn't part of the Regular establishment, he probably would have a stronger voice in the community, and that's where it pays off in the long run. He would have a stronger voice than the Regular officer.

T: In my research I kept running across the nickname "new sports." That was in reference to the new second lieutenants that came into the outfit. Do you have any recall of how they got the name "new sports"?

A: Oh, sure. That brings back memories of long, long ago. We had one of the boys that came out of the flying school--I guess he arrived in about 1938 at Langley, and I can't remember his first name. His name was "Duke" Gurnett. I may have the last name wrong. Duke spoke with a very deep voice. He was a funny boy with a funny sense of humor, and he was gregarious.

I don't know who started it. Probably "Phil" Cochran [Col Philip G.] started referring to the new class--Phil had a vernacular. He had a way of talking which was not only interesting but unusual, and it attracted a lot of attention. Later on in the war, Phil was always quoted by the newspapers because when he said something he said it in a colorful way. I think it was Phil who called the new pilots who came in

the "new sports." Phil, I believe, was the operations officer of the squadron. He would have to schedule the pilots. He called them the "new sports." Phil was very Irish and very Catholic. He said, "Everybody in the squadron has to be Irish." He renamed the Jewish boys. We had Lieutenant Tuman [Capt Howard A.] and Lieutenant Schwartz [1st Lt Harry C.]. Both fine officers with excellent records during the war. Phil said, "I am sorry, sports. I am just going to have to rename you. You are O'Tuman, and you are O'Schwartz." (laughter) He put them on the board, "O'Tuman" and "O'Schwartz."

In every military unit, there is a lot of that kind of humor that goes on. Duke took up the phrase "sports," and he called everybody "sport." He called us the "old sports." We were about 2 or 3 years older than he. We were the old sports; they were the "new sports." Then the next class that came in had to be the "new, new sports," and then we were the "old, old sports." It was kind of a standing joke around Langley Field for awhile, the "sports."

T: You moved up to Mitchel with the 8th.

A: Yes.

T: Why that move?

A: The Air Force began expanding. This was 1940

T: You spent 3 years at Langley?

A: I went there in the middle of 1937 and we left there, I believe, in October 1940 a little over 3 years at Langley. As they began to expand the Air Force, they needed room so they moved us to Mitchel. There was a bomb group at Mitchel which, I believe, they moved to the Caribbean. I believe they moved that to Puerto Rico. Then they began to split the groups. I think one of the first splits was the 8th Group became the 8th and the 57th. I was transferred to the 57th. I was the group operations officer of the 57th.

When I left Mitchel, we hadn't received any airplanes. We were still flying 8th Group airplanes, but the group was organized. Colonel Moffatt [Reuben C.] was the group commander. I think Fred Smith was the deputy group commander, or maybe Fred became the group commander of the 8th Group. I can't remember. We had three squadrons, and Phil Cochran had one of the squadrons. "Rom" Puryear [Maj Gen Romulus W.] had another squadron. John Aiken had the 3d Squadron. When John was killed, in addition to my duties as group operations officer, I took John's squadron. It was about that time that I left Mitchel and went overseas.

T: You shared a house with Cochran?

A: We rented a house at Langley before we went to Mitchel-- Phil Cochran, John Aiken, and myself. Then when we moved to Mitchel, we rented a house off campus, and we moved in with our lousy furniture.

We bought furniture from a lieutenant who had just gotten married. He had bought this awful furniture. He couldn't even have gotten it at Sears Roebuck. It must have come from somewhere else. It was this overstuffed furniture in the world's worst taste. The girl he was marrying said, "I won't have that in my house." (laughter) We said, "We will take it."

T: At a good discount?

A: At a good discount. We took the furniture off his hands, but we didn't live there long. I guess we had been in the house 2 months when Johnny was killed.

T: What happened to him?

A: John was a great pilot. He was an MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] graduate. He was a very smart man and a most attractive man. At that time we used to test

ourselves against each other. It was the only way we had to do it. We did a lot of individual air-to-air combat, trying to work out tactics, ways of doing it. It was the blind leading the blind, and we were feeling our way, but we learned a great deal about it. We practiced individual air-to-air combat at Langley a great deal, and then by the time we got to Mitchel, we had honed it to what we thought was a fine art. John was very good at it, and I figured that I was fair. John and I used to go at each other all the time. You would measure off, and then you would come at each other head on. When you passed, then you would start into a 180° turn. You would try to see who could gain an advantage. Of course, we had the same aircraft and were pilots of about the same ability so it was very hard to get a decisive advantage.

T: The aircraft you had at this time?

A: We had the P-40. John would try all kinds of maneuvers. One of his maneuvers was he would pull straight up and then stall the airplane and then fall right back down on you if you weren't careful. He did that on me several times, but I was able to anticipate it with no trouble at all and get out from underneath and let him go by and then try and get on him. We had a pilot in the group who was particularly weak. He shouldn't have been in pursuit aviation. I say he

shouldn't have. Sometimes you never can tell. If you were a good shot, maybe he never would have had to get into that kind of thing. John was working with him. He was telling me, "John, this maneuver where I pull up and stall, it works well. I am going to show it to"--I forget the name of the pilot--"I am going to show him how to do it." I said, "John, don't you do it. He may not be able to get out from underneath you. You know, you come down in an awful hurry. If the pilot who is underneath you, chasing you, doesn't anticipate what you are going to do and get out of your way, you are going to run into him." John was irrepresible. He said, "Oh, no, that won't happen." I said, "Well, you be very careful." That afternoon, we got a call, emergency call, two airplanes had just run together.

(End Tape 2, Side 1)

A: Nobody knew exactly why. One pilot was still alive. As a matter of fact, one pilot had gotten out in his parachute. He wasn't hurt. The other pilot had been killed. The other pilot was Aiken who lived with Phil and me, a very close, personal friend. I got out there. John had hit very close to the airplane, and his body was still on the ground. The ambulance hadn't gotten there. Apparently, what he had done when they ran together--he did get out of airplane. Later on after I had jumped out of a P-40, I understood how difficult

it was to get out of that airplane. I guess it is difficult to get out of any airplane. But apparently, John didn't have much time, and he rolled out of the airplane, and he rolled into the stabilizer. His hand was in the D-ring, and his arm had been broken. His forearm had been broken apparently where he rolled into the stabilizer and hit the stabilizer. He was not able to pull the ripcord. Probably when it broke his arm, it knocked him unconscious at the same time. So he hit the ground very close to where his airplane crashed. What it looked like--and after talking to the other pilot, apparently he had pulled this particular maneuver, and the boy below him just really wasn't able to anticipate what he was doing and didn't get out of the way, and they ran together. Both airplanes were severely damaged in the midair collision but not so bad that both pilots couldn't get out. John apparently got out close to the ground because his body was close to the wreck. So we lost John Aiken, and it left just Phil and myself in the house.

Shortly thereafter, I was ordered to go to England, and Phil was away on the west coast delivering some aircraft. The Air Force is always switching airplanes around between units. I believe these airplanes were destined--these were our airplanes, but I believe they were destined for Hawaii so some of our pilots ferried them to the west coast. Phil was out there, and I was ordered to go to England, supposedly

to stay there 3 months. I left a note for Phil. I said, "Sell the furniture and get rid of the house. I am sorry to stick you with all this, but please save my golf clubs and my paintings." I had three paintings which were done by Ross Greening [Col Charles R.]. You probably never got a tape on Ross Greening. Ross was in my class at the flying school, and when we were at Kelly, he had the bed next to mine. Ross was a good painter, mostly watercolors. He did watercolor paintings of the planes we flew in as cadets. I had three of them I was particularly fond of, I guess more for sentimental value than the fact that they were very valuable paintings. They were very valuable to me because Ross had done them. I asked Phil to save my paintings and save my golf sticks. I never saw them again. (laughter)

T: Did he ever give you a reason?

A: Phil didn't have to have a reason for anything. He would just walk away and say, you know, "Goodby." I think he gave everything away to new second lieutenants who had just gotten married. I know he did. He gave our bed--the only thing I had in the house that I liked was my brandnew bed with very good innerspring mattresses. That was gone. Some lieutenant and his wife had that bed. (laughter) Some poor lieutenant and his wife got stuck with our furniture. Phil is the kind of boy who wouldn't charge anybody for

anything. He would just give it away. We didn't care. One-third of it was John Aiken's, one-third was Phil's, and one-third was mine. I was just very happy to get rid of everything. I just hope that the person who got my paintings appreciated them.

T: Was he the first close friend you lost?

A: Yes, but we lost quite a few out of my flying school class. If I recall, we lost, the first year out of flying school, about 10 percent of our class. The second year out of flying school we lost about 10 percent of our class. I said, "My goodness, 10 years from now, there aren't going to be any of us left."

T: It leveled off after that?

A: Yes. After that, it leveled off. In the war I believe we lost just two pilots. Most all of our class really went through the war, went through combat in the war.

T: Did you attribute that to your having experience prior to entering the war?

A: Yes. I think the more experience you had before you had to go to war, the higher your chance of surviving. As a matter

of fact, I am sure of that. Assuming that you are good in the first place, if you have two or three thousand hours under your belt, you are going to be a heck of a lot better. This doesn't mean that all pilots are equal. Some pilots have lots of experience, and some get killed either through bad luck or just through bad judgment. Basically, a good pilot, if he has more experience, it stands to reason that he is going to be a lot more competent. Competence does play a part in surviving.

T: Were you a believer in luck?

A: Well, yes and no. I guess you have mixed views on that. I survived many times just through pure luck. I saw friends get killed with just bad luck. It's too complicated to try to explain.

T: Did you have a rabbit's foot or superstition?

A: No. I had no superstitions whatsoever. I never prayed to the Lord to save me. I figured that's one thing that you couldn't do. You couldn't say, "Lord, let me kill that man and don't let him kill me." This wasn't the Lord's business. Maybe the other man deserved the attention of the Lord more than you did so just leave the Lord out of it. I had a funny experience. I never will forget the first

serious combat--I came up on these bombers from behind. I am just sitting there ready to pull the trigger, and I just remember saying to myself, "Lord, forgive me for what I am about to do." I didn't quite do it. They shot me down. (laughter)

T: That might have given you a hint how you were standing with Him at that time. (laughter) Back to Mitchel. You were chosen to go down to Bolling for a P-40 demonstration for General Chennault [Lt Gen Claire L.] and the Chinese?

A: If I remember correctly, I think it was Fred Smith or maybe John Barr [Col John E.], both of whom were in the group, called me and said they had received a message from Bolling asking that the 8th Group dispatch a pilot and an airplane to Bolling to demonstrate it to General Chennault. I didn't have the slightest idea what this was all about. I knew who General Chennault was, but that's all. I just knew who he was. I really wasn't up on what he was doing. I had a reputation in the group of being able to handle the airplane well. I suppose that's the reason they sent me down. I went down and reported in to the commander at Bolling. He was a colonel. He was the base commander. I can't remember who he was or what his name was.

T: You were a first lieutenant?

A: I was. I think we were made first lieutenants after 3 years. I went into the commander's office. General Chennault was there with two or three Chinese officers or officials and two representatives from the Curtiss-Wright Company. One was a test pilot. I shouldn't forget his name because we became good friends, Jerry--I can't remember Jerry's last name. At that time I hadn't met them. I went in, and the commander said that he would like to have me demonstrate the airplane to General Chennault and the Chinese. I said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" Because this was at a time with great stress on accidents, and you couldn't fly below a certain prescribed altitude. Acrobatics at low altitudes were completely verboten. He said, "Well, just demonstrate it." I said, "Well, do you want me to fly low? You know, we have regulations." He said, "Well, don't break the regulations but demonstrate the airplane." (laughter) I could see the Curtiss people over there, and they were looking, and I wasn't a very impressive looking officer. I think they saw this little fellow, and they said, "Could our pilot fly the airplane?" I remember saying, "Yes, it is perfectly all right with me. I can't grant you that authority myself, but the colonel can pick up the telephone and call Mitchel Field and talk to the group commander. He has the authority to let you fly the airplane."

T: General Chennault and the Chinese were there?

A: They were sitting there. They said, no, that was too much trouble, I might as well go out and do the best I could.

T: Still in your flight suit?

A: Yes. I had just gotten out of the airplane, but I had taken off my coveralls and gone up there in my uniform, such as it was. Anyway, they walked out to the center--and it was a cold, windy day at Bolling. The wind was blowing down the Potomac River. The runway was directly into the wind so they walked out to the intersection of the runway.

I did know what the P-40 would do. I had a very good feel for it. The P-40 that I had was very light. It had no armorplate. It had no bulletproof tanks. It didn't have the heavy VHF [very high frequency] radio. It was a very light machine. Even though they had limited the horsepower to 980 because they were having trouble with the engines, I knew that you could overboost the engine and run it way above 980 horsepower and get away with it for a limited period of time. I knew this because when we practiced dog-fighting, I wasn't going to let anybody beat me. I didn't care if the engine blew up or what. (laughter) Whatever it took. Until the engine started detonating, I would let it run at whatever power I could get out of it. I had a good feel for the engine too. I also realized that on this cold

day this was no time for a long demonstration and one that was remote from the field.

I got the airplane down at the end of the runway and pointed it into the wind and started my takeoff run, pushed the power up to 980 horsepower. I forget the mercury and rpm setting or the manifold and rpm setting that was required, but we had a specified rpm and manifold pressure for takeoff. The airplane starts running down the runway, and because of the wind, it is airborne very shortly. I start the gear up. It has an electric gear, and it takes forever to get up, but I started it up early. By the time I passed the reviewing party right there on the edge of the runway, the gear was fairly well up. Just as I passed them, I boosted the airplane up to its max boost. I listened for about 2 or 3 seconds, and the engine just took it fine, no problem at all. With all of that power, the airplane would really perform. I just pulled it right straight up and did an Immelmann right back over and went in the other direction, which I know the Curtiss people didn't know their airplane would do that. They may have known it, but I doubt if they had ever seen it done.

I came back at a reasonable altitude and did a slow roll, cut the throttle back, and came down, and I put my wingtip right, at about 100 feet, on the Chinese and Chennault, and

I did about five turns at max power, high-performance turns. The light P-40 with that power was impressive. I headed right back down the runway, downwind, pulled it up, and did a split S, and landed out of the split S and taxied in. I couldn't have been airborne 2 minutes, maybe 2 minutes. I got in and stood there waiting for them to come in out of the wind. It was cold on the field. As they walked up, I could see that the Curtiss people were very pleased, big smiles on their faces. The Chinese were excited. We stood around and talked for a minute. One of the Chinese generals said to General Chennault--I can't remember whether Chennault was a general or a colonel then, but he said to Chennault, "I am convinced. What we need is 100 of those." Chennault looked the Chinese general right in the face, and he stuck his jaw out the way he did. He took about two steps over to me, and he tapped me on the chest, and he said, "No, General. What you need is 100 of those." (laughter)

T: That made you feel about 12 feet high, didn't it?

A: That was one of the most flattering comments that I have ever received. Chennault put that in his book. He wrote The Way of a Fighter. That was when the Chinese with Chennault's help were selecting the airplane they were going to buy for the American Volunteer Group. I didn't know what they had in mind. I didn't know they were going

to buy airplanes. I didn't know that Chennault had any idea of getting Americans to fly it, but looking back, of course, as soon as he hired 100 Americans to fly the airplanes, then that statement, "What you need is 100 of those," had a different significance.

T: Little did you know in a few years you would be over there with him.

A: Little did I know in a few years I would be right there with them.

T: Did that demonstration have anything to do with your being picked to go to England?

A: It could have. I am sure the commander of Bolling reported back to my commander that the demonstration was successful. The commander of Bolling was out on the runway watching it. I am sure he reported back that it went very satisfactorily. I don't know what he said.

T: I am sure glad you didn't break any regulations.

A: There were so few things--I wasn't even supposed to be doing that. What I did really wasn't very hazardous. Only hazardous if your engine quits.

"Hub" Zemke [Col Hubert] and I were picked. Hub was a maintenance officer, and I was an operations officer. They wanted one pilot to go over and be a consultant to the RAF [Royal Air Force] on the maintenance of the airplane, and that was Hub. They wanted another one to be air consultant on operations, and I was an operations officer. Of course, we had both flown the airplane a great deal. We were both familiar with the airplane. Hub was much more familiar with the maintenance than I was. I really didn't have that much interest in maintenance.

T: How long a period, sir, between the Bolling demonstration flight and your being selected to go to England?

A: Maybe a month. We went to Mitchel in October. The Bolling flight may have been in January, I don't remember. January or February. All I know is that it was cold. In March Hub and I were told that we were going to England. We sailed on the American Export Line, combination passenger/freight boat, around the first of April.

T: That was what I was going to ask you, how you got there.

A: We went by boat. The first boat trip I had ever taken. It was a great trip. The boat was very comfortable. Hub and I had a fine stateroom. Ten days on a boat for two

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second lieutenants, no pretty girls--there were a couple of women on board. One was an antique French countess. (laughter) There were very few passengers aboard. The other passengers were older, and they stayed in the bar and drank a lot. Hub and I didn't have much of a social relationship, but it was an interesting trip. It got awful boring. The ship was painted white, and it had floodlights all over it and a great big American flag painted on each side to let the German submarines know that this was a US ship.

We stopped in Bermuda. We were able to get off the boat for 4 or 5 hours in Bermuda, and then we went on to Lisbon. I think it took us 12 days, I don't remember. I think we both ran out of patience. It was a very pleasant trip. We got to Lisbon, got off the boat, and then had to find a hotel in Lisbon, which we did. I don't know how we found one, but we ended up in a reasonably nice hotel. Neither Hub nor I drank very much. That wine every day with breakfast, lunch, and dinner--Hub said, "Man, it is awful hard to get a drink of water around here." (laughter)

Like most Air Force officers, we were country boys, and here we were moved into this hotel room. Hub walked in the bathroom. He came out and said, "John, come here and take a look at this thing." (laughter) There was a bidet in the

bathroom. He looks at me and says, "Do you think that thing is what it looks like it is for?" (laughter) I had never seen one either. I said, "Well, Hub, it has got to be. I don't know what they call it, but I bet I know what they use it for." (laughter) Hub was a great guy, a delightful guy, and a wonderful guy to travel with and talk with.

We spent 3 days in Lisbon waiting to get out on a KLM DC-3. You had to have priority rights, or you would never get out of Lisbon. So we had a chance to go out and spend an evening at Estoril where they gamble. We didn't have any money, but it was fun to watch the rich folks gamble. Lisbon, of course, at that time was a city of refugees trying to get out of Europe. So here were all the pretty ladies in their finery, throwing away money at the gambling tables. We finally got out of Lisbon and got on a KLM DC-3.

We landed in Bristol just about, oh, late in the afternoon, I guess it was. Bristol had been bombed pretty heavily. As a matter of fact, it had been bombed just a few days before. This was all so strange there was no way to know--it looked like a ruined city, but we saw very little of the city. We left the airport and took a cab down to the railroad station, got on the train, and took the train to London. We landed, I guess, in the morning. I think on the KLM flight we flew at night, and we landed at Bristol in the morning. Sometime

that afternoon we took the train for London, and we were introduced to watercress sandwiches and other British fare, which we attributed to the wartime conditions, but a very pleasant train trip into London. When we pulled into the station, got out on the platform, there were three RAF chaps, as Hub called them, three little RAF chaps to pick us up. We got our luggage, and as we walked out of the station--it was just dark--the air raid sirens began to sound. In the newsreel you had heard the sound of the air raid sirens, but this time they were really real. We wanted to know, "How long before they will be here?" Of course, the RAF boys were very casual about this. They said, "We will be out of the blitz in plenty of time. It will be 45 minutes or an hour before they get here." So we got into this RAF car, had a driver, and the lights were blacked out. They had these little slits--sitting in the back seat, of course, you could absolutely see nothing. I guess the driver could see something.

He went through the town at which seemed to me to be a reckless pace, but we finally arrived at the Dorchester Hotel. The front was completely sandbagged. Actually, we went through a sandbag tunnel. A lot of the bags were broken and sand--it looked like a pretty decrepit place until we went through the revolving doors and into the brightly lit lobby, beautiful lobby with the crystal chandeliers,

beautiful people walking around. Here is a whole different world, not like the one on the outside. So the RAF boys said, "Well, we are going to take you to dinner tonight, and we have invited a few girls," and they had. They said, "Go up to your room and change." We went up to our room and changed and came down. The hotel had a little cabaret where we had dinner and danced. I guess we danced until after midnight. Every now and then though, the building would shake. Of course, Hub and I were very interested to know what in the world it was. We knew in Hyde Park right next to the hotel were the antiaircraft guns because you could hear them go off. It took awhile before I could distinguish when it was an antiaircraft battery going off and when it was bombs falling. Nothing happened to the hotel that night.

We went up, and we were in bed, and I guess about 3 in the morning, there was just a tremendous explosion. It really shook the building. The next morning there were a few cracks in the plaster. It was a good, solid hotel, and we didn't realize that the hotel had taken a straddle. Two 500-pound bombs had hit just short of the hotel, and two had gone over. We got up the next morning and walked over to the American Embassy where we were supposed to report for duty. It wasn't far--oh, I imagine five or six blocks--to the Embassy. We were directed where to go, and we walked

down. The streets were pretty dusty and rubble. It gave you the impression the British just didn't take very good care of their town. Neither Zemke nor I at that point really realized that this dust and this rubble were the result of this bombing raid the night before. When we got to Grovenor Square--the Embassy was just diagonally across the square--there was one building on one side of the square that apparently a bomb had hit, but there was no way for us to know it had hit there that evening. I really didn't connect it. I thought it just looked like an old building that had been bombed out. That building had actually been hit by--I guess the last 500-pound bomb in the cluster went through that building. The concussion had broken a lot of the windows in the Embassy.

I went over and looked at the American Embassy, and it looked just about as dirty as the rest of London. (laughter) I thought, "We ought to keep up our Embassy a little bit better than this." Then when we got in, someone told us the last bomb in the string had actually hit in the square.

(End Tape 2, Side 2)

A: This Embassy employee had gotten up in the middle of the night and gone to the bathroom, and while he was in the bathroom, this 500-pound bomb passed through his bedroom

and went off in the basement. He wasn't even hurt. (laughter) We went through numerous bombing raids after that. If I recall correctly, I believe that was the night of 4 April, I am not sure. We were told that was one of the biggest bombing raids on London of the entire war. We were in the west end, and actually very few of the bombs were dropped on the west end. Most of the bombs were dropped on the eastern side of London, and they hit tenement houses. I heard that there were lots of casualties, but we were insulated from it. I wouldn't have known whether it was a big bombing raid or a little one. That was really the peak of the blitz, and the RAF by this time had gotten on top of the Luftwaffe. From there on, the raids tapered off in severity and intensity and didn't pick up again until they got the buzz bombs and the V-2s--what did they call them--the V-1s, whatever they were, the great big ones. We stayed in England for about 4 months, sometimes in London, but most of the time out at the airbases working with the RAF.

T: What did the RAF think of the P-40?

A: They thought it wasn't in the class with the Spitfire or the Hurricane, but it was. At low altitudes it was a match for either of them. I was called on to demonstrate the airplane, and I flew acrobatic demonstrations, such as they were, and on occasions I would go up and have mock combat

with the RAF pilots. I remember at one station there was a Wing Commander Carey [John H.]. He was one of their top Hurricane aces. I think Carey had 21 victories. We kept talking about the airplanes. I said, "This airplane is better than you think it is." He said, "Well, let's go up and find out." So he got in his Hurricane, and I got in my P-40. We had this go right above the airdrome. The first go, I had the fuel offset on my rear tank, and I didn't take it off. We were pretty evenly matched, and then I ran out of fuel on a tank. Then we started over. The second time around, I got on his tail, and I stayed there. We got down, and he was very impressed. He said, "I just didn't really know the airplane would fly as well as that. When we were talking on the ground, I really didn't have a feeling that you Yanks would be as competent as you are." I said, "Well, Wing Commander Carey, coming from a guy who has a record like you, that's quite a compliment, and I appreciate it." Actually, he had the lightest and most agile Hurricane.

I later had individual combat with the 12-gun Hurricane, and it was heavier and no match at all for the P-40. He was a very experienced pilot and a good pilot. At low altitude that Hurricane and the P-40 would maneuver at about the same maneuverability. The P-40 had more speed than it did. The Spit at low altitude was no match for the P-40. The Spit was a high-altitude airplane. The engagement I had with

the Spit really wasn't representative of what the Spitfire would do, but it did let the guys know that down low the P-40 was a formidable opponent, and it was.

T: And down low, you mean by what kind of ceilings?

A: We were at 3,000. We did it at 3,000 feet so all the guys-- the whole airbase was going to watch this thing. They were all out watching. (laughter) Everybody was out taking a look.

T: You didn't have a big contingent to yell and scream for you?

A: Only Hub, I guess, was there. This actually was a Canadian unit, and they had gotten the P-40. The wing commander was just visiting there. That's when we got to talking about the capability of the airplane, and he said, "Well, okay, let's go up and see what you can do."

T: Did you ever fly any of the British aircraft?

A: I flew both the Spitfire and the Hurricane. Not the advanced Spit or the advanced Hurricane. They were the early models, and they were beautiful flying machines. The Spit was considered really their firstline airplane. As far as effectiveness was concerned, particularly against the German

bombers, the 12-gun Hurricane was one of the most effective airplanes they had as long as it could get up to the altitude of the bombers. I guess when they went higher, then the Spit was much more maneuverable. The later Spitfires had 20-millimeter cannons. They were high-altitude airplanes and very high-performance airplanes, but they didn't have the range. All of a sudden the battle wasn't over Britain any more. The battle was over Berlin, and the only airplanes that could get to Berlin were the American P-51s and the P-47s.

T: You never slipped away and flew a mission with them?

A: I was told they would hang my hide on the Embassy wall if I went across the Channel. As you know, we were not in the war. There was a tremendous amount of antiwar sentiment in the US. There was absolutely no publicity given to the fact that young Americans were actually in England flying, assisting the RAF, because there were people who were opposed to the US Army's getting involved in anyway. This would have created an embarrassment for the administration. Roosevelt [President Franklin D.] had sent 1,000 P-40s under the lend-lease program to England. I don't know whether they were all under lend-lease. The British bought some of them. They bought the early ones, I guess. Then, I guess, later on, he lend-leased them. Not all of those were used. As a matter of fact, the majority of them stayed

in their crates. I think what they had done, they had stockpiled them there in the event there was an invasion, and they needed airplanes in a hurry, but there was no invasion. They had several wings of P-40s operational in England.

By this time the Battle of Britain had tapered off, and the residue of it was at high altitude. The Germans came through mostly at night under cover of darkness, weather, and dropped their bombs in an area pattern on the cities. After the spring of 1941, the Luftwaffe didn't do very much damage to England. Later on the buzz bombs and the V bombs were effective because they had an adverse morale effect on the population. You can't really win a war with those things either.

T: When did you get the message to leave England and go to Russia?

A: I spent my time between the Embassy in London and the RAF airbases. I stayed principally at the ones that were equipped with the P-40s, but I did have an opportunity to visit other RAF bases that were equipped with the RAF equipment, Spitfires and Hurricanes. One week we had been scheduled to spend with the Eagle Squadron, which was on the outskirts of London. I can't remember whether this was Eagle Squadron

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number one or two. I guess it was number one. I am not sure what number squadron it was, but anyway Hub and I were out there. I guess we had been there a couple of days. It was a Sunday. Around noontime or early afternoon, I can't remember, I guess it was sometime around midday I got a call. It was the Embassy. The person who called me, someone out of the military attache's office, was very cryptic. He said, "We want you to come into the Embassy this afternoon. We want to see you." I said, "Fine, I will be there. By the way, should I bring my bags?" They said, "Yes, bring everything you have." I said, "You can't tell me any more than that?" He said, "No, just report here." Nothing about Zemke, just me. The RAF gave me a car, and they drove me into the Embassy, and I reported. They said I was leaving at 11 PM that night to go to Russia accompanying Mr. Harry Hopkins and Gen Joseph T. McNarney.

They were going to Russia to determine what equipment we could send to the Russians under lend-lease. I guess this was early July. I can't remember the dates. In June the Germans had launched their attack against Russia. I said, "Well, I don't have any winter clothes." They said, "It doesn't make any difference." It didn't make any difference to them. It made a little difference to me. They left me with the impression that if Mr. Hopkins decided he was going to give P-40s to the Soviet Union I would be left there to

help the Russians in the assembly and operation of the aircraft. I got word out to Zemke. I didn't talk to him on the phone because I couldn't tell him this on the phone. I wrote him a note, and I told him that I was leaving. I told him that there were indications that if airplanes were to follow he probably would be coming over and would he please get me some long underwear and some RAF flying boots, fleece-lined flying boots and bring them with him. The stores weren't open on Sunday. There wasn't anything that I could buy, and here I was at the Embassy so I had nothing to do but wait around until 11 o'clock that evening. I was down at the railroad station at 11 o'clock with my B-4 bag. They introduced me to Mr. Hopkins. I had met Mr. Hopkins before because Mr. Hopkins had been in England for several weeks. Mr. Harry Hopkins was President Roosevelt's special emissary. He wasn't the Secretary of State, but he was in many respects a Mr. Kissinger [Henry A.] of those days. He had been in England discussing the British requirements, policies, and other things with Churchill [Sir Winston, Prime Minister]. As a matter of fact, I recall that is when I met Mr. Hopkins.

T: You had met him previously then?

A: Yes, I guess maybe a week before. The RAF had a static airshow and a flying airshow, too, of the RAF airplanes for Mr. Hopkins. They had asked that Hub Zemke and I be

out when Mr. Hopkins came out to inspect the airplanes. The airplanes were lined up, and the car came up, and Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Churchill got out of the car. This was not a public demonstration. There were really just a few people there. Hub and I were standing about 50 feet off to one side. I never will forget this. Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Churchill got out of the car, and they started to walk down to the airplanes. Hub and I wore civilian clothes, but on this occasion we were told to be in uniform. We each had one uniform. That was all we had. As Churchill and Hopkins walked by, Mr. Churchill looked over, and he saw Hub and me standing over--maybe we were 25 feet to the side as they started pass. Mr. Churchill stopped, and he turned to Mr. Hopkins. He said, "Mr. Hopkins, I would like to meet your boys." He left Mr. Hopkins, and he walked over to Hub and me, and he introduced himself, and he shook our hands and told us how pleased he was we were there assisting him. That is the first time I had met Mr. Churchill. Of course, that day I also had an opportunity briefly to meet Mr. Hopkins, but I didn't know him.

T: Do you think that is one of the reasons you ended up going to Russia?

A: No.

T: Why were you selected to go to Russia?

A: Mr. Hopkins was going to Russia to arrange lend-lease assistance. The only thing we had that was immediately available to give to them were the P-40s. They were in crates in England. They had been shipped to England. England didn't really need them because there was no danger of an invasion at that time, and they needed somebody that knew something about the P-40. I was slightly senior to Zemke in rank so I am sure the military attache just looked down and said, "Alison is the senior, and he goes." So I was called. When he went over on the exploratory trip, they only wanted to send one. Probably the reason was that they anticipated sending the airplanes later, and they wanted Hub to stay back and get the airplanes ready for shipment.

We were down at the train station, and Mr. Hopkins was there. There were British dignitaries there to see him off. I don't remember who they were. Ambassador Winant [Frederick], the US Ambassador, was there. Of course, Mr. Hopkins was a most important figure. The British wanted the US to come into the war, not only wanted us to come into the war, but we were a source of the kind of material support they needed in addition to their being very anxious to have the US join them in the fight. The British had a contingent down

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to see him off. There wasn't a tremendous number of people, but they were all very important and very high level people. We got on the train. They had a five-car passenger train for the three of us. There were guards aboard the train, but we never really saw them. Occasionally, I would see people, and I would assume that they would be members of the British Secret Service, people who had been assigned to guard Mr. Hopkins on this trip up to Scotland. I don't believe the train stopped. I think we left London and went straight through. It may have stopped once for fuel, but British trains pass over a water trough, and they have a scoop and a method of picking up water as they roll along. We had a sleeping car and a dining car. Of course, they had a lounge and a bar. At 11 o'clock the train pulled out of the station, and Mr. Hopkins said, "Well, let's have a nightcap before we go to bed." So we go up to the bar car or the lounge, and we sit down. I ordered a soft drink. Mr. Hopkins ordered whatever he drank, I forget, probably a martini, and General McNarney ordered a drink. He said to me, "What will you have to drink?" I said, "Sir, I don't drink." I had a soft drink.

The next day before dinner, we went through the same procedure, and he said, "All right, Alison, what are you going to have to drink?" I said, "Thank you very much, Mr. Hopkins, but I don't drink." About the third time this happened, he

looked at me and said, "You know, I don't really care whether you drink or not, but please don't look so damned superior." He said this with a twinkle in his eye. He had a tremendous sense of humor. I knew nothing about his politics, but he was a very pleasant man to travel with. He certainly was very nice to me. He couldn't have been nicer.

The train let us off at Invergordon, Scotland, which is right up near the northern tip, and there was an RAF sea-plane base there. They had Catalina flying boats. We got aboard a PBY, and we flew out to sea and then north along the coast of Norway. We were 100 or 200 miles out. We flew north as far as the island of Spitsbergen. Then we turned east again and flew east. We were way above the Arctic Circle, about halfway between the Arctic Circle and the North Pole, flew east until we were due north of Archangel, and then we turned south, and we flew down into Russia. We landed at the Port of Archangel. There is a harbor and a river there. We were a little over 20 hours in the air. Most of the time we were in cloud cover all the way, heavy clouds, the ceiling maybe 100 feet above the water. The RAF pilot would--the Catalina flying boat's cruise speed is about 120 knots--let down slowly because the navigator would say, "I have got to get a drift reading so I can chart this course." There was no way of taking us to Okhotsk. We dropped down at 100 or 150 feet so the navigator could see

the waves, and then he would get his instruments adjusted, and he would try and get a drift reading. Then we would go back up into the clouds, and we would keep on going. It was an interesting but really a dull and tiring flight.

We landed at Archangel, and we were met by launches, fast launches, that came up along the flying boat and took our party off. They took us to a yacht. It had once been a grand yacht. It was in pretty sad shape. It was painted white with a little dirt on it. We went aboard, and on the aftdeck there was a state dinner. I think the Russians standardized everything. At least all the state dinners that I went to the format was very much the same. The array of drinking glasses was the same. It started with a shot glass which they put the vodka in and went on up through the wine glasses to a tall champagne glass shaped more like a parfait glass than the tulip glass. They would start with the vodka, and then they would fill the rest up, and when you left the table, every glass was filled. When you sat down, there was the wonderful black bread the Russians served and heaps of the world's best caviar, big blocks of butter, chopped onions, smoked sturgeon, smoked salmon, and even smoked pork, which up in the colder climates tastes pretty good when you eat it on black bread. This was not lean pork. This was smoked fat pork. You started off drinking the vodka and eating the caviar and the black bread and the

smoked sturgeon and the smoked salmon. The toasts began. They toasted Roosevelt, and they toasted Stalin [Joseph], and they toasted everybody. They were toasting the seagulls. After awhile--of course, I would sit there and drink a toast in water.

There was a Russian general and a Russian colonel who were our hosts. The general had on a white tunic embroidered, and they all wore the belt that cut them right in two in the middle. The Russian general was kind of portly. The uniform was rather strange, but after you have seen them for awhile, you get used to it. Anyway, he stood up and said, "I want to propose a toast to the American flyer who has come so far from his home to help us in the struggle against the common enemy. I want to toast his friendship and ours." He stood up and picked up the glass of vodka, and I had never had a drink of hard whiskey in my life, and I said, "Well, the time has come. I guess I am going to have to do it." So I stood up.

The technique is to--it was a shot glass, and it all goes down in one gulp. So he drank his vodka, and I raised my shot glass, and I emptied mine right down. I got it down, not too much difficulty, but then I sat down, and tears came to my eyes. (laughter) I picked up my napkin, and I put my face in it for just a moment. When I came out from under

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it, Mr. Hopkins was sitting across the table, and he looked at me and laughed and said, "Well, Alison, that shows a definite lack of character." (laughter) All I can say is that I am very happy it was good Russian vodka. We went through the dinner. The next day they put us on a DC-3, and they flew us to Moscow. That was a very interesting flight. I forget how long the flight from Archangel to Moscow was, but it must have been 600 miles probably. The DC-3 made it without a stop. We flew over miles and miles of the northern forest that you could see, and also as you went down on that route, you would see a prison camp here and a prison camp there. Later on I had an opportunity to see prison camps at very close range. We landed in Moscow. I can't remember where they put me up initially.

T: Did you stay close to Mr. Hopkins?

A: Yes. I think I probably stayed right in the Embassy itself. Eventually, that's where I ended up. I do know that Hub Zemke and I stayed in the National Hotel for about 10 days.

T: This is after he joined you?

A: After he joined me, but I think I got there first, but I either stayed in the Embassy residence--the Embassy was a lovely old house and very large. It was a big mansion.

Many been sent home because Moscow was under siege. The Germans rsonnel hadweren't very far away at that time. All the women had been sent home, and all the nonessential employees had been sent home. There were a lot of beds available. The Ambassador had a country place, a country dasha--he was very generous--and we could go out there on weekends. I was always invited. The military attache had a country place. It was much more modest, but it was a typical picturesque Russian cottage in one of these kinds of black wooded areas. That was quite pleasant.

Although my stay in Moscow was interesting, simply because it was at war and very exciting, I really didn't want to stay there very long. Mr. Hopkins negotiated the agreement with the Russians. I recall I sat at the table with Mr. Hopkins when he had his first conversation. The Russians are just very difficult to give anything to, just very difficult. They absolutely gave out no information. Mr. Hopkins would try to find out what they needed. They didn't need anything but they would take it. He tried to find out something about their own materials. He said, "How are your tanks performing against the Germans?" The Russians would say, "We have good tanks," and that's all you could get out of them. I believe at that first meeting it was Mr. Hopkins, Freddy Reinhardt [G. Frederick], who was the Third Secretary of Embassy, later became Ambassador to

Yugoslavia and then our Ambassador to-----

(End Tape 3, Side 1)

A: He became our Ambassador to Italy and perhaps other countries that I don't know anything about. Ivan Yeaton [Lt Col Ivan D.] was the military attache, and Ivan was either a major or a lieutenant colonel. I don't remember which at the time. I guess Ivan was a lieutenant colonel. General McNarney and myself. The Russians just wouldn't tell you anything. Although I didn't know this at the time, the US was determined to assist the Russians because they felt if the Germans were occupied on the eastern front it would make it easier for the Allies on the western front. I might say, at that time Laurence Steinhardt [Laurence A.] from New York was the US Ambassador to Russia. In my opinion he was a very good Ambassador. The First Secretary of Embassy was "Chip" Bohlen [Charles E.], but he had been sent back to the US, I guess, to report on conditions, and he never returned to Russia as far as I know. While I was there, he was still the First Secretary of Embassy. The Second Secretary of Embassy was Llewellyn E. Thompson, who later returned as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The Third Secretary of Embassy was Fred Reinhardt. The minister's name was Thurston [Walter]. I can't remember his first name. We had a naval attache who was a captain. I guess the predominant

attache was the military attache. Ivan Yeaton had gone to Columbia University and studied the Russian language and studied Russian history. He certainly was not sanguine about the Russians as allies.

He also was convinced that the Germans were probably going to prevail in this thrust they had mounted into Russia. I am trying to put this in some kind of context. I believe Mr. Hopkins stayed in Moscow for at least a week. It may have been longer. Before he left he decided that we would send P-40s from England to Russia. The first shipment was, I believe, 48 aircraft. They came by sea around the tip of Norway and into Archangel. They were unloaded there. Hub Zemke came with them. It was probably a month or longer before the ship arrived. Well, it was. It must have been around October.

T: What did you do all that time?

A: I stayed in the Embassy, and I became the Assistant Military Attache for Air. Everything I did was frustrating because the Russians wouldn't let you see anything.

T: They wouldn't let you take a ride in their airplanes.

A: No. They never let us fly their airplanes. I asked.

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Actually, we saw nothing. They wouldn't even let us out-- the Russians wouldn't invite us to see a military demonstration. They would invite the press. Then the press would come back and tell us what they saw. The Russians would not allow the US military attache to see anything. Before I left Russia, they did organize a tour through the MiG aircraft plant. The military personnel at the Embassy were invited to accompany the press. That's the only thing I saw of any military significance the entire time I was in Russia. Of course, at Archangel there were no real military installations.

The first 14 nights when I was in Moscow, we had an air raid. I used to go out and climb up on the Embassy roof and watch the fireworks and wait to see a German airplane shot down, which I never saw. The Russians used barrage fire. They used sound-locating and sound-ranging devices. Invariably, you would listen to the sound of the aircraft motor as it passed overhead. Then the barrage would go up behind the airplane. It was a mighty barrage. The sky was just filled with bursting antiaircraft shells. The shrapnel would just hail down and fall on the Embassy roof just like rain. I probably was very foolish to sit up there and watch it, but I never got hit.

T: It had to be coming down pretty fast.

A: There certainly was a lot of it up there. I never saw a German airplane shot down the entire time I was there. Occasionally in the Russian press, you would see a picture of a crashed German airplane, and they would say, "This was shot down in last night's air raid and fell out in the country, and this is a picture of it." When the airplanes arrived in Archangel, I flew back to Archangel and joined Hub Zemke there. The Russians had constructed with prison labor an airfield on the----

T: Tundra?

A: Not tundra. Actually, this was forest, but it was bog. Most of it was bog. It was wet, and they made the runway completely out of timber, a 5,000-foot runway.

T: How wide was it?

A: It was about 100 feet wide.

T: That's a lot of trees.

A: A hundred feet or wider, I don't remember just how wide it was.

T: Did they build this out of trees or----

A: What they did, they felled trees, and they put the trees down longitudinally first. Then they felled a second set of trees, and they put them down crossing the trees that they had first laid in there. Then on top of that they spiked in 6 by 6 timbers and had the greatest runway you have ever seen; also the taxiways and the dispersal areas were made out of timber. You landed on this timber runway, and you taxied on timber taxiways back into the woods where you parked your airplanes.

The clearing of the forest was done by prison labor, and they were a sorry lot. We would see them march by going to work in the morning, and we would see them come back in the evening. I went out where they were doing their work. They were doing the dirtiest, the hardest work. They were digging the drainage ditches and clearing the forest and laying the logs down in the mud. Then the Russian engineers actually finished the runway on top. You looked at these people and wondered who in the world they were. There was absolutely no way of telling.

I asked some of the Russian pilots--I asked the Russian commander of the squadron to accept the airplanes we were putting together, but there was no comment. They would make absolutely no comment on who the people were. We lived in railroad cars. I noticed that these cars were made in

Finland. They were actually from a Finnish railroad. I guess they were liberated when the Russians took over. No, these weren't--I think these were Latvian cars. They were not Finnish cars. They were Latvian cars, and I guess they took them over when they liberated Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. We had one sleeping car, which we slept in, and then we had a dining car.

T: Did you share the car?

A: Well, the car was really for Zemke and me, but there were Russian officers who stayed in it. They used it as kind of a transient----

T: Kind of a BOQ [bachelor officers' quarters]?

A: Yes. There was a dining car with a kitchen. They had Russian women who cooked for us and served.

T: Was it pretty decent food?

A: Oh, yes. Russian food is good. It was the greatest cabbage and beet soup you have ever tasted and plenty of black bread. We had meat. We had eggs in the morning.

T: Wasn't it awfully cold up there?

A: This was in October. This was just the beginning.
Occasionally snow would fall.

T: This was October 1941?

A: Yes. Archangel is right on the Arctic Circle, but that part of the world is warmed by the tail end of the Gulf Stream which goes up along the coast of Norway. There was a lot of rain and drizzle. Before we left, it began to snow.

T: Were there a lot of insects?

A: Not at that time of the year. The mosquitoes, if they were there, were gone. The airplanes were unloaded from boats, and they were brought on trucks over timber roadways out to this airstrip, uncrated, and the Russians put them together. We really had no documents. When we left the United States-- before we left the United States, Hub and I were brought down to the Pentagon. General Arnold [Gen Henry H.] brought us in and spoke to us and said, "Colonel Quesada [Lt Gen Elwood R.] will see that you have everything you need." One of the things that Hub kept saying, "I need a set of tech orders." Of course, Quesada said, "You will find them in England. When we got to England, there were 1,000 airplanes and not one book on the airplane, not one book. We didn't bring any with us. We were told not to

bring them, everything would be there. We got to Russia, and of course, Zemke was livid, not an instruction on how to put those airplanes together. The Russians put them together. We checked them out.

T: They did not speak English?

A: Oh, they had interpreters. We had interpreters.

T: That was still a feat though to put an airplane together----

A: The Russians do it right. They sent capable--they had capable aeronautical engineers, and they even had some scientists there. They were looking at these American airplanes. For a good aircraft factory man, they didn't have any trouble. They assembled the airplanes. Hub and I test-flew every one of them, and we had trouble. This airplane had been designed for a 500-watt generator. Then as the airplane matured and they began to add things to it, the heavy VHF radio--it was all electrically operated. The landing gear was electrically operated.

T: Did they later change the landing gear?

A: No.

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T: It stayed electric all the way?

A: Yes. It was a good system, but the problem was in the cold weather the load was just too great. There was a big load put on. The 500-watt generator was not enough to carry all of the electrical equipment that the RAF wanted on the airplane, the radio gear and the other gear that the RAF wanted. So they increased the generator size to 1,500 watts, but they didn't increase the size or strength of the shafts and the accessory gears that would drive the generator. They worked fairly well--I guess they worked all right in England, but when they got to Russia where the weather was colder and the loads were greater, the accessory drive gears began to fail. I think the generator was run off of the left-hand accessory gear. It would just shear the teeth. The load on the generator would get so big that it would either break the shaft or shear the teeth off the gear. When it sheared the teeth off the gear, the fuel pump was also driven off of that group of accessory gears, so you lost your fuel pump. Then you had to use your wobble pump and hope to get your airplane back. Out of the 48 airplanes we put together, I believe we had 11 gear train failures or shaft failures.

T: You did a lot of pumping, didn't you?

A: We lost a few airplanes, but fortunately, we didn't lose any pilots.

T: You and Zemke were doing the test hopping, right?

A: Yes.

T: Did you ever lose one of them?

A: I never had one that failed on me. Zemke did. Zemke had one or two that failed on him.

T: And he had to get out of it?

A: No. He used the wobble pump, and he got back, but he said, "John, that is really an experience." Fortunately, we were not far away.

T: You didn't have anywhere else to land, did you?

A: There was another airfield where we were delivering the airplanes. This was the field where the airplanes were put together, and it was remote. We put them together there. Then when the airplane was all together and checked out, we would fly it over and leave it at another field where the Russian Air Force would pick it up, the squadron we were working with.

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T: Did you train this squadron?

A: No. This squadron was trained, and they came right from the front. The MiG-3 was an airplane about in the same class as the P-40. The Russians had no trouble whatsoever.

T: They just climbed in and took off?

A: If you were an experienced pilot, nobody would really have much trouble with the P-40. It was a simple and easy airplane to fly. Finally, the Russians came to us--and this was before we had the last one finished. Every time a shaft would break or the gears would break, they would come and show it to us. They would say, "Now what is the metallurgy of this shaft? What's the metallurgy of the gears?" They had an awful hard time understanding when we said, "We don't know." They said, "Can you get it for us?" I would say, "The metallurgical formula belongs to the Allison Engine Division of the General Motors Corporation." They said, "But your government can get it." I said, "I don't know whether our government can get it or not. Maybe they can; maybe they can't." Well, that they couldn't understand. As far as I know, we never got them the metallurgical formula for the shafts or the gears.

As a matter of fact, we were so far out of communication, all we could have done was tell them to wire the Embassy and then send a message. Communications left a lot to be desired. We were up there really all by ourselves. They did send us three RAF airmen, aircraft mechanics, who came on the boat with the airplanes with Hub Zemke. Of course, they were very helpful. They were RAF mechanics out of a P-40 unit in England. They knew the airplane. With their help, the Russians were able to get the airplanes together. Nobody could solve the problem of the shafts and the gears. The Russians came to us, and they had a conference with Zemke and me. They said, "We have lost so many of these airplanes. We hate to tell you this, but the airplane isn't safe to fly. What would you recommend?" I said, "Well, we have only lost 11 shafts. We haven't lost any lives yet. I been flying these airplanes for over 2 years, and I have never seen this happen. Why don't we just keep on flying until we have a little better feel for what the problem is?" They said, "No, we can't afford to risk our pilots in these machines." At that point they grounded them. I guess later on they worked out some kind of fix. We had tried to fix it by putting a flexible coupling between the generator and the accessory drive so when the load came onto the generator it wouldn't create an abrupt shock in the shaft and the gears, but even that was only partially successful. Later on, someway, they solved the problem, but I don't know how.

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Getting back to the tech orders, when we first got to Russia, we immediately started sending wires back to the US requesting that they please send us some literature on this airplane that we were trying to help the Russians put together. Well, when I left Russia about 7 months later, I heard that the publications had finally arrived in Vladivostok, and at that time, they were on the Trans-Siberian Railroad moving toward Moscow. Whether those publications on how to operate a P-40 ever got to Russia, I will never know, but they got lots of the airplanes. I guess eventually the information did get there.

T: Could you tell how the Russian pilots stacked up against you and Zemke?

A: No.

T: You never had a chance----

A: No way. Both of us put in requests to fly their airplanes. They didn't have any airplanes right here. There was never any response to that. We also put in a request to be allowed to accompany them to the front, and of course, there was no response to that. There were some lighter incidents. One of the funniest things--Hub was allergic to bedbugs, and we had bedbugs. Maybe it was because I was raised in the

South, raised down in Florida, I just didn't seem to be allergic to any of them. I guess they bit me, but they didn't bother me very much, but Hub would get up in the morning, and his neck would be so red where these bedbugs would bite him. (laughter) One night he landed over at the Russian airbase, and he had to spend the night there and sleep in a Russian pilot's bed. He came back the next day. He was dead. The bedbugs had absolutely eaten him up. (laughter)

(Interruption)

A: As long as I am talking about the P-40 and Russia, early I told you about the mechanical problems we had with the airplane. That was the only serious mechanical problem which we had with the P-40 in the entire overseas experience.

(Interruption)

A: I first experienced it in England during the 4 months that I stayed there. I was asked to fly acrobatic demonstrations in the P-40 from time to time. The British had all kinds of patriotic drives, and they had 1 week set aside as War Weapons Week. They asked me if I would fly an acrobatic demonstration over a particular town that was having a promotional celebration. On the appointed day I took off

and headed for the town. The ceiling was low. There might have been 200 to 400 feet of ceiling, probably closer to 200 feet. Usually as you go over a city, you have a little bit more ceiling. I thought there was nothing I could do on this occasion but fly over the town. I was measuring the ceiling as I flew over, and I said, "I have enough ceiling here. If there is a little lift over the town, I will be able to slow roll safely as I go over the village or the town or whatever it was." I was practicing on the way over. As I approached the town, I did a slow roll to the right, and I did a slow roll to the left, and I felt very comfortable under the overcast. I was making the slow rolls with a reasonable degree of precision, not losing any altitude. I thought I was all ready, and as I did this last slow roll and came out and pulled back on the stick, the stick just stopped.

Fortunately, it stopped in the neutral position. The airplane was headed down slightly, and instinctively, I opened the throttle. The thrust line in the airplane is such that when you open the throttle it picks up the nose, and the airplane started to climb, but the stick--the fore and aft movement was stopped right at the neutral position. The stick would go forward; then it would come back, and it had a solid clunk as I brought it back. The ailerons would still move. So the airplane could fly, and I could climb or

lose altitude in the airplane simply by adjusting the throttle. More power and it would go up. Less power and it would go down. I realized I had a problem so I flew back toward our base, and I found a hole in the clouds, and I was able with the use of power to get up above this layer of clouds. I tried to free the stick. I shook it. Nothing happened. The stick was just stuck. This was in the morning, and it was about an hour after I had taken off, and the overcast had begun to burn off. The largest flat area of land was the Newmarket race course. I was thinking of maneuvering the airplane and flying it down onto the turf at the race course, but I decided that I better practice on top of the cloud layer.

So I found an area where there was a solid layer of clouds, and I adjusted the throttle and came down toward the clouds, and before I touched the clouds, I was able to pick the nose up with the thrust of the airplane. I thought, "Well, gee, this won't be too difficult. Then I decided I would try it a second time. The second time I did, I miscalculated so badly that if I had been doing it on the race course at that time I would really just have driven the airplane right into the ground. I reached a conclusion that it just wasn't worth it. We had 1,000 airplanes in boxes in England, and they weren't going to miss this one. So I flew up to a safe altitude--first, I wrote a note on my map and flew over my

airbase and dropped the note.

T: I was going to ask if you made contact with them.

A: No radio contact. I wrote a note to the commander, and I said, "I hope you don't feel too badly, but this airplane is gone. There is nothing I can do to free up the stick, and I am going to jump out."

T: This is the first time you had ever----

A: The first time I had ever bailed out.

T: How many hours did you have in the airplane?

A: I had probably close to 2,000 hours in the airplane.

T: It wasn't a lack of experience in the airplane?

A: Oh, no. I was apprehensive because this was maybe 2 months after my friend John Aiken had tried to get out of a P-40 and had rolled into the tail. When he hit the tail, of course, it broke his arm and probably knocked him unconscious. So I didn't want to hit the tail. I thought I would do a little experimenting because the P-40 seat was not really adjustable. I flew with a pillow, and then in

order to augment the pillow, I had an RAF blanket in the airplane folded and behind my back. So I threw the blanket out one side of the cockpit, and it hung on the tail. I threw the yellow cushion out the other side, and it hung on the other side. I said, "Well, it is going to be difficult to step out on the wing and get out of this airplane." I rolled the airplane over expecting to fall out, but I made a mistake. I pulled the throttle back, and the airplane just fell with me. I fell about halfway out, and the upper part of my body got into the slipstream, and I was pinned against the back of the canopy. I was able to get back in, and by this time the airplane had picked up great speed and was headed down at a steep angle, but I was able to roll the airplane right side up, and of course, with high speed, the nose came up. This really frightened me. I said, "Just enough of this."

(End Tape 3, Side 2)

A: I think at that point I would have settled for anything but a broken neck. (laughter) Just to be on the ground. I was concerned. I was getting short on fuel so I just pulled the airplane up and cut the throttle and stood up in the seat and put my foot on the cockpit rail and vaulted upward as well as I could. I went over the horizontal stabilizer, cleared that without any trouble, but on the left side of

the airplane where I went out, there was an antenna which was strung from the wingtip up to the top of the vertical, and I hit that. It took quite a bit of skin off the back of one hand, but nothing serious, and I pulled the ripcord, immediately dropped it, and when the parachute opened, the harness just slipped all the way around, and the backpack came up over the back of my head. I hadn't realized this.

This airplane wasn't my airplane. It was just a random airplane out on the line, RAF airplane, I had gone out and stepped into. There was a British parachute with the quick-release harness, and I slipped it on. I didn't check it for size. It must have been rigged for a 220-pound man because I almost fell out of the harness. The backpack on the parachute harness came up and pressed on my head, and it was hard to tell. I was suspended in air, and I was trying to look up and see the canopy. I don't think I ever saw the canopy because my head was bent right down onto my chest. (laughter) I floated down. I was floating right over a small village, and it looked like I was going right into the middle of it. This was something I didn't want to do. Having no experience, I didn't know how to guide the parachute. It probably wouldn't have made any difference if I had. I just sat there or hung there. When I passed through the residual cloud layer which was still over the countryside, as I dropped below it, there was a wind shift, and it

carried me out into a field.

I hit, and I really didn't realize you hit as hard--first of all, this was a small canopy. I facetiously said, "It didn't slow me down. All it did was hold me up straight." I hit this field, and oh, my legs. I thought I had broken both of them. I hadn't, but I did sprain both ankles badly because I hit in an awkward position because of the way the harness was holding me. I could remember lying there on the ground for just a few minutes banging my fists in the dirt and saying, oh, a four-letter word. (laughter) Finally, I realized my legs weren't broken. I tried to stand up, and I couldn't so I started to crawl. There was a farmhouse not far away. I was crawling to the farmhouse.

T: You got out of the harness?

A: Oh, yes. All you had to do was hit the button and the harness came off. I crawled about 50 yards. By then I was beginning to get some circulation back into my legs and my feet. I found out I was able to stand up. With some effort, I could walk very slowly. I was walking across this field, and there was a hedgerow and a farmhouse behind it. I must have gotten, oh, maybe 50 yards from the hedgerow.

I heard this voice say, "Hey," so I immediately shouted

back, "Hey, I need some help. Please come out and give me a hand." It was the home guard. There must have been 10 or 15 of them back there in the hedgerow. They came out, and they didn't know whether I was a German pilot or what. They were armed. They immediately recognized my accent and said, "Howdy, Yank." I wasn't in uniform. I was in civilian clothes. They didn't know what in the world--here was this civilian dressed in a suit, fallen down in the middle of a field in England. (laughter)

Once I had established my identity, they couldn't have been nicer to me. They took me into the farmhouse. They had a proper tea established. There was just a beautiful table set. I sat there and had tea with them. We had a wonderful chat while I waited for the ambulance. I had come down about 10 miles from another RAF station, and they sent an ambulance, took me over, examined me, and wrapped up my ankles. They said, "There is not much we can do for you." It was just a minor sprain. Although my ankles hurt for a month or so, I never quit flying. I didn't run around the track, but I could get around. After they had finished looking me over at this RAF station, they put me in a staff car and sent me over to the other one. I didn't know what in the world had caused the problem with the airplane.

T: Did they ever find out?

A: I found out in Russia. The same thing happened. I had just given this brandnew airplane a test hop. I was on the way over to the Russian airdrome to deliver it to the Russian group that was receiving the airplanes. On the way over, I decided I would roll the airplane. I rolled it around several times one way, and then I rolled it around several times the other way. America was putting out airplanes just as rapidly as they could. They came to us, and they weren't clean. There were nuts and bolts all in the cockpit. There were tools--you would find tools left down between the cylinders of the engine.

As I rolled this airplane, there were nuts and bolts flying around in the cockpit, but that didn't bother me, it had happened so many times before. I came around and let my gear down and came in for a landing. I was on final approach and maybe 50 feet above the ground. When I pulled the stick back to level the airplane off, the stick stopped, just thump, and it was solid. I said, "Oh." Then I had no alternative. I just opened the throttle wide, and as the airplane approached the ground, the nose came up, and I hit on the two wheels and just--fortunately, this was a big grass field. I ran across the grass until I could reduce the power and get the tail down. I taxied the airplane over to the line, and I called two Russian mechanics. I was sitting there in the cockpit.

Now if you pulled it back, you could hear the stick go thump, thump as it came back and came to a complete stop. It was obvious that there was some obstacle interrupting the movement of the stick. So I stayed there with them while we dismantled the shrouds in the cockpit, which covered all the controls. We found the culprit. The armorplate had been installed in this airplane as an afterthought. The ones we had in the United States had no armorplate. The armorplate was installed right behind two bellcranks in the control system. The stick moved a jackshaft, and the jackshaft then moved two bellcranks to which the cables which operated the elevators were attached. There was a fuselage-to-wing attach bolt that had lodged right between the bellcrank and the armorplate. They were just sitting there. There was just no way to move the stick aft beyond a certain position.

Then I examined the shrouds. The Curtiss Company had put a shroud over the control system to keep foreign objects from falling in there. Somehow or another the shrouds just didn't fit well. In this airplane--and I noticed in others--there was a gap. There must have been a 1- or 2-inch gap. This gap was right at a point where a flange went through. What happened was, any foreign object that got back up against the armorplate, and if you rolled the airplane, you would just funnel it right down inside the shroud that protected the control system.

I am positive that is what happened to me the first time because it happened both times that I was slow rolling the airplane. The feel of the stick, the interruption of the travel was exactly the same and just about at the same point. So it was a foreign object of some kind, a bolt, a loose tool, or something the mechanics had left in the airplane that got into the control system and jammed it in England. It had to be. In Russia, I picked the bolt out and put it in my pocket. Then I was able to get a wire back to Wright Field and say, "We have a problem. I have lost one airplane already, and I almost lost a second one, and the US Air Corps almost lost a pilot." That was a minor problem and a random problem. That was no real problem with the airplane.

T: How far from the airplane did you come down?

A: The airplane hit about a mile away from where I--maybe it was a half mile. They took me over to look at the airplane. It had gone straight in, and just the tail was sticking up. It had all crushed down. There sticking on the tail was my yellow seat cushion, still with the airplane. (laughter)

T: So you used it again?

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A: No, I left it right there. (laughter) I was through with that airplane, and I was through with that seat cushion.

T: How about the blanket? Was it still on the other one?

A: No. I couldn't find the blanket. It probably floated down somewhere else.

T: In those days did you send wires back to Wright-Pat or wherever telling them you had a problem?

A: Zemke was sending a wire every month saying, "The technical orders and the instructions for operating the airplane have not arrived. We have 1,000 aircraft in boxes in England, and we have no documents." Hub couldn't--well, who could understand it. I think I said earlier on the tape, when I left Russia in January 1942--we had left the United States in March, the latter part of March. We arrived in England in April--the latter part of March 1941.

T: And you stayed in England until----

A: Until July, and then I went to Russia. I was assigned to the Embassy in Moscow until June, but I moved from Moscow to Iran. When I left Russia for Iran in January, someone had given me a report that documents on the P-40 had actually

arrived at the port of Vladivostok and were being shipped on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. I don't know if they ever got there.

(Interruption)

T: A few more questions about your time in Russia. Had they developed the rockets by that time?

A: Oh, yes. They had rockets. They were firing rockets from airplanes. I never saw this because, as I told you earlier on the tape, the Russians never let the US military attache see anything. It is strange--our people in the United States were trying to make friends with the Russians, and they had an open policy. They would show the Russians everything. They would let the Russians fly our airplanes, but there was no reciprocity. As a matter of fact, in the year that I worked for the Russians, I don't think I saw one act of true reciprocity in the entire year. I know they had the rockets. They had demonstrations of fighter or attack airplanes firing rockets which were witnessed by the American press. The American press told us. I remember they took the press on an expedition up to the western front. They came back and reported that they had actually seen the rockets installed, and the Russians had demonstrated the firing of the rockets. So they had rockets.

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T: What were your feelings of the lend-lease program with the Russians?

A: Well, I had mixed and evolving feelings about the lend-lease program and our relation with the Russians. Of course, much of this is retrospective. I rather facetiously say I enjoyed a great advantage when I went to Russia. I didn't know anything. I had graduated from a good American college. My education was not in the liberal arts or humanities or history. When I arrived in Europe in the spring of 1941, I didn't know what communism was, and I didn't know what nazism was. Oh, perhaps, I knew what the definition was, but I really had no in-depth understanding of the nature of these philosophies.

When I went to Russia with Mr. Hopkins, I went purely as a technician. I was an expert on the airplane which was available for the United States to lend-lease to the Soviet Union. Like most Americans, I went there saying, "Okay, I will do my job. If the Government wants to give the aircraft to the Russians, I will do my best, and I will do it in a cooperative and friendly spirit." The Russians were formally friendly, but that's all. We sat at the table, and they actually would convey no information to us about their problems in the war, what equipment they really needed. They just said, "If you have it to give away, we could use

it, and we will take it." That's about as far as they went.

The fact that I didn't understand what communism was or I didn't understand what nazism was, I guess, was of no importance. In retrospect I don't believe Mr. Harry Hopkins or Mr. Roosevelt, the President of the United States, had any indepth understanding of the philosophy of communism or the protracted struggle which has become so apparent in recent years but which the Russians fully understood at that time. We went there as friends, and they were sitting on the opposite side of the table as adversaries. There are a number of instances, I think, that illustrate it. We were tasked to get information. We were a communications point for the US military with the Soviet Union. Of course, our military back in the United States wanted to understand the problem. They were being told by the Soviet Ambassador and the Soviet staff in the United States--they were passing out information to the authorities back in the United States. The authorities in the United States assumed that we were getting the same kind of treatment in the Soviet Union. We weren't getting any information. There was every evidence that the Russians never intended to give us any information.

We were losing a tremendous number of cargo ships that were making the trip around Norway, through the Arctic Ocean and down into the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. These ships

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had essentially no protection against the German submarines, and they were just running the gauntlet. We were losing them in large numbers. It was tremendously costly, not entirely in the terms of lives when the ships went down, but the cargoes that never got to the ports could never be used in the fight against the Germans. The US had alternative plans. One of them was to route ships the other way and bring them through the Persian Gulf.

One of the most ambitious was a plan the staff in Washington-- I don't know whether this was a political staff or a military staff, but of course, the messages came to us through military channels--had to fly American aircraft all the way from the United States to Alaska. Then American pilots would fly them from Alaska and deliver them to the Russian front. This would not require Russian manpower and take the burden of this long ferry flight off of the Russians and deliver the fighting equipment right to the Russians who were carrying on the battle. There was much enthusiasm for this plan in Washington. It was described to us by telegraphic message, and we were asked to get information on the ferry route from Alaska all the way across Siberia, Russia, and to the delivery points on the western front where the Russians were engaging the Germans. This would be a tremendous logistics task. You would need to have the names and locations of the landing areas, the housing, the messing,

the facilities, the supply, transportation, communications, all of the complex support which is necessary to establish a ferry route across the biggest continent in the world. It was a massive amount of information.

The War Department directed us to get this information from the Russians. They told us that this plan had been thoroughly discussed at the highest level in Washington, not only among the US policymakers but with the members of the Russian delegation, the Russian Ambassador in Washington, and that they had been told the information would be made available to us in Moscow. They wanted us to get it to them just as quickly as possible. At this time the US Embassy had sent all essential people home. I can't remember whether we were at Moscow or whether we had been evacuated to Kuibyshev. I think we were at Kuibyshev when this request came in for this information. We had no code clerks. As a matter of fact, at that time, I think, in the military attache's office, there was Lt Col Ivan Yeaton, who was the military attache, and Capt John Alison, United States Army Air Corps, who was the air attache. I was the air attache just because I was available. I hadn't been trained for the job. There was no planning to assign me there. I just happened to be there. The United States needed the eyes of an air observer.

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By this time Hub Zemke had been sent home. We both wanted to go home. We could see a war on the horizon. I was just at that level where as we formed new units in the United States I would have had a fighter group, and I would have been getting it ready to go to war with all the rewards that go along with being a group commander, including the promotions. Finally, the War Department agreed to let one of us return to the United States. Hub and I were close personal friends. Hub was married, and I was a bachelor so I said, "Hub, look, you have a family. You had better get on home." So Hub went home, and I stayed.

T: How long after you left England before he came over?

A: It was about a month or 6 weeks, or maybe it was 2 months, I can't remember. Hub came on the boat with the airplanes. We met at Archangel where we assisted the Russians in putting the airplanes together. Then we went to Moscow together where we were both Assistant Military Attaches for Air. Then we were evacuated from Moscow to Kuibyshev. That was a very interesting trip, and I will get to that in a few minutes. I am ahead of that. I am now at Kuibyshev because you were asking what was my feeling about the lend-lease and the relationship with the Russians. I believe when this particular sequence of events was happening Zemke had already returned to the United States. The sequence of

events probably started while Zemke was still there, but before it reached its final ends, Zemke had long since returned.

Without the support people, being the junior officer in the office, I had to do the encoding and decoding. I would work the books or work the little code wheel we had. It was a tedious and tiresome task. When our messages got back to Washington, they had all the code clerks in the world so they sent messages hot and heavy. When they got to Moscow, I sat up most of the night decoding the things. (laughter) I wasn't very happy when a new message arrived. They asked us to get this information. When the message was decoded, Yeaton, who was responsible, and the senior officer, said, "Well, we will go over tomorrow, and we will sit with our Russian counterpart in the foreign office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and deliver this request to him." The next day we went over. I don't remember his name, but there was a Russian colonel, and he was mature and very cold and very knowledgeable and really quite aloof. We came over, and we explained to him that we had received this message and that this was the plan and our people in Washington thought this would be of great help, it would relieve a tremendous amount of pressure on the Russians in getting the equipment that they needed.

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It would save really tons of equipment which we were now losing in the Arctic Ocean to German submarines. This would greatly facilitate the Russian war effort against the Germans. We told him the US officials in Washington had been assured at the highest level by their Russian counterparts in the United States that this was a good plan and that they would like to see it executed at the earliest state and that in order to do it we needed this route information. He looked at us and said, "Well, yes, it is a good plan, and we will get the information for you just as soon as we can. You must understand that a war is on, but we will get the information together for you just as soon as possible." He was appropriately vague and general. You learned after awhile this was the way the Russians were when they weren't going to give you anything. (laughter)

Anyway, we go back and we compose a message and say, "We have delivered the request to the Russians, and we have been told"-----

(End Tape 4, Side 1)

A: "The information will be made available to us just as soon as the Russians can get it together, but there is a war on and it might take a little time." I sat down with the codebooks and the code wheel and translated the message

into the appropriate code. Then we delivered that to the naval attache who had the communications in the Embassy, and it was transmitted by wireless to Washington. I guess it had no sooner hit Washington than they had an appropriate number of code clerks on it, and it was deciphered, and a lengthy reply came back and said, "Look, you have just got to understand that this information is of vital importance to the war effort, Washington is intensely interested in setting up this ferry route and this procedure at the earliest date, and we request that you go back to the Russians and ask the information be expedited."

The next day after the message had been decoded, we went back and saw the counterpart in the Foreign Ministry again and said, "We have received a message from our Government emphasizing the importance of the mission and requesting that the Russians give it the highest priority and expedite the information." The colonel was very patient with us, but he again reiterated they would get the information just as quickly as they could. He said, "Your people in Washington have got to realize we are in the midst of a critical war situation, and sometimes it isn't easy to get all this information together, but we will get it for you just as quickly as we can." So we go back and essentially repeat the message that we had sent the day before. This doesn't satisfy Washington. They come back and say, "Reiterate that

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this information is of the utmost importance and that we must do everything we can to get it as quickly as possible."

So we wait several days, and then we go over to the Foreign Ministry and say, "Any progress in getting the information?" "Well, they were working on it." So we go back, and we transmit this information to Washington. This thing just got to be ridiculous. Washington began to put more and more pressure on us to get the information. The Russians were very patient and condescending, but no information ever turned up. In the meantime--and I don't know just at what period--but Yeaton was relieved of his assignment in Moscow as the military attache, and he was replaced by Colonel McCabe [Robert E.]. Yeaton had been an Infantry officer. I think McCabe was Cavalry. Both, in my opinion, were very fine officers, and both were highly qualified for the job. They had gone to the Foreign Service School and studied the Russian language and, I presume, had studied Russian history and certainly knew much more about Russia and the Russian people than I did.

T: Was this a normal rotation?

A: Yes. Well, it was a normal rotation, but I think there might have been some pressure to change military attaches. Yeaton had an anti-Russian bias. I guess he had read too

much history. He just said, "Look, we are allied with people who are really not friends of ours." That was his attitude. I think it did affect his judgment because he was sure the Germans were going to march right into Moscow. I know he used to get into discussions with the press. The press would say, "No, the Russians are going to hold." Yeaton said, "No, they just can't hold." This dialogue went on and on. It was a good-natured dialogue. Yeaton was, in spite of the fact many of our press friends didn't agree with him, very popular with the press. Yeaton was a very intelligent man. In retrospect, a man with considerable foresight.

I believe this probably caused Washington to feel maybe Yeaton was not compatible with the position of representing the United States in Russia because he just didn't have the highest regard for the Russian establishment. I don't remember just when McCabe took over, but anyway, McCabe took up right where Yeaton left off. We continued this dialogue with the Russians, and we continued this code, electronic transmission dialogue with Washington. As time went on, Washington got more and more impatient, and their impatience was not with the Russians. Their impatience was with us. They felt we must be doing something--their messages gave us the feeling they felt that we must be doing something wrong.

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I don't remember the date, but I believe it must have been in October or November--I guess it was in November--an Army Air Corps lieutenant, Townsend Griffiss [Col]. He was a lieutenant colonel, but a lieutenant colonel was high-ranking. I can't remember. I believe when I went there the military attache to the Soviet Union was a major. Yeaton may have been a lieutenant colonel. By today's standards, our military accreditation to the Soviet Union was very low rank. It was an Army major or lieutenant colonel or Air Corps lieutenant colonel. When McCabe came, there were two other Army officers who came, one by the name of Boswell [Brig Gen James O.] and one by the name of Park [Col Richard, Jr.], "Dick" Park. I don't remember Boswell's first name, but they came, and they were Assistant Army Attaches. Colonel Griffiss was a West Point graduate and a fine officer, a most capable officer, and he had the full confidence of General Marshall [George C.]. He was General Marshall's personal emissary. Marshall had sent him to Moscow to find out just what the problem was.

We sat down and explained it. McCabe told him--I don't know whether it was McCabe when he first arrived or whether it was Yeaton, but it was one of the two--in his opinion the Russians had no intention of delivering this most important information to the United States. Griffiss said he couldn't believe it. He said the people in Washington had assurances

from the most responsible and the highest level in the Russian Government, the information was readily available right there. We said, "Well, every time we go and talk to the Russians about it, we get an excuse. One, there is a war on. Two, the records have been moved. The last report we got was that the records were at Gorki and they were going to send somebody to Gorki to try and find the records so they could give us the information." It was obvious this was just a put off and that the Russians didn't intend to give us the information.

Griffiss said, "The people in Washington certainly have no idea of this. It is difficult for me to accept because before I left London"--Griffiss had been in London when Marshall had requested that he go to Moscow and get this information. It was a long complicated trip to get into Moscow. Griffiss said, "I called on Ambassador Misky, who was the Russian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and I told Ambassador Misky what my mission was. Misky said, 'This is approved. This is a great plan that will greatly help the war effort, and the information is readily available'." McCabe said, "Well, it isn't." I believe it was Yeaton who was there. I think McCabe probably came a couple of weeks after we started--after Griffiss got there and started this dialogue. Yeaton said, "Tomorrow I will take you over, and I will introduce you to my counterpart in the

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Foreign Ministry, and Colonel Griffiss, you can find out for yourself." I will never forget. Griffiss said, "No, Major Yeaton, I am going to go by myself. I am not saying what you have told me is not true, but maybe inadvertently you have offended the Russians. There are people in Washington that think you have. I have to find out the answer to this myself. That is what I have been sent here to find out."

The next day Griffiss went over to the Russian foreign office, called on the colonel because he was the point of communication for the United States, and of course, the colonel couldn't have been nicer. The colonel said, "Well, it is very difficult, but we have been trying to get the information together, and it has just taken more time." Never said to him that we couldn't have the information. I guess we had been working on it for over a month before Griffiss got there. Along about the middle of December, the last half of December, I have never seen a more frustrated man than Col Townsend Griffiss. His nickname was "Pinky." He was called Pinky Griffiss. He said, "You know, the people in Washington just have absolutely no understanding of what we are up against."

T: Did he tell the people in Washington what was going on?

A: He sent some messages back. He said, "I am going to go back, and I will certainly let them know. I am absolutely convinced that in spite of all the diplomatic assurances we have received this is an approved plan, this is something the Russians want, this is something that is good for the war effort, this is something that will save lives, I am absolutely convinced the Russians have no intention and have never had any intention of giving us this information." So he said, "I am going to go back to Washington, and I am going to tell them." I said, "Colonel Griffiss, you are going to take Lt John Alison back with you." (laughter) I can't remember--I think I was still a lieutenant then. Maybe they had made me a captain, but it was about the time that I was promoted to captain. He said, "That's right, you are coming with me." I said, "Colonel Griffiss, every month I send a request to Washington"--because I had the code wheel and I could make up the messages. I would send a code message to the General Staff in Washington asking that I be relieved of my assignment and returned to my fighter group for duty because I was still assigned to a fighter group in the United States. I think I was the senior officer. I would have been the group commander. (laughter) Here I am languishing in Russia as a lieutenant when I could go back and get promoted to colonel.

T: Sending messages. (laughter)

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A: Yes, working a code wheel. (laughter) The Russians wouldn't let me fly either. I had just missed 3 months' flying pay. They would give you a grace period, and then when your grace period ran out, you would lose your pay. The Russians would not let me fly any of their machines. There was really no quid pro quo, and the US wasn't asking for any. We gave and gave, and we never asked for anything in return. I will get to that in a few minutes.

So Griffiss said, "It doesn't make any difference whether the War Department has given you orders. I am here as General Marshall's emissary. I speak for General Marshall, and I am taking you back to the United States with me." I said, "That's great." I told McCabe that. I said, "I am going, and I have no orders. This could be interpreted as I am going to desert my post. McCabe said to me, "John, I will never cause you any trouble. Go. I will never prefer any charges against you." So I went to see Ambassador Steinhardt and told him what I was going to do. He said, "John, we understand. Go." Our people in the State Department were very knowledgeable. They had a feel for this, and they were reporting back to Washington, but Washington was just not in any psychological mood to receive any bad news about these new Allies we were developing. America had already started the propaganda mill to make the Russians look great. This just apparently didn't seem to fit in.

Reality went out the window. Right at the end of December, at the end of the year, we prepared to depart. By this time we still had gotten absolutely no satisfaction whatsoever from the Russians. They wouldn't say they wouldn't give us the information, and yet they wouldn't give us the information. By this time Griffiss is really--he is pacing the floor. He said, "We have got such a bad situation in our relations with the Russians. Somebody has got to be realistic about this."

About 28 or 29 December, we were scheduled to depart. The Russian airlines flew DC-3s. These DC-3s were made in Russia in a factory put up by the Douglas Company. The engines in the airplanes were Pratt & Whitney engines made in a factory put up by Pratt & Whitney. When I was up in Archangel driving around the airport, I drove a Ford automobile made in a factory put up by Henry Ford. People, you know, say, "Gee, look at the progress the Russians have made." Well, one thing, once they got their factories up, they kicked the Americans out, and they run them themselves. They had consultants they would keep there and just let them live in a hotel and only call them on occasion when they got into trouble. They would pay them handsome salaries just to live in a hotel.

We had to wait for 3 days for the temperature to rise to

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minus 30 because the Russian airlines didn't fly when the temperature was below minus 30. We were at Kuibyshev. We had been evacuated. I am losing some of the continuity because I am telling a story that doesn't have any real relationship to geography, but during this interim period, the Germans had actually run us out of Moscow, and we had moved to Kuibyshev on quite an odyssey, moving the diplomatic corps out of Moscow and across the Siberian steppes or the mid-Russian steppes in the middle of winter, and it was really quite a trip.

Finally, after 3 days and sitting around at that frozen airport--there was no indoor plumbing. It was outdoors. (laughter) The Russians don't sit on their toilet seats. They stand on them. I would go into that awful place, and I would say say, "Lord, I bet when the spring thaw comes, this is a gamy environment." (laughter) It was really pretty awful. When I discuss this with friends since, they said, "You sure were preoccupied with the toilet facilities." That's one of the great contrasts between those countries and ours, the sanitation facilities. And the bathing facilities. As an American, I wasn't--I wanted my hot tub.

We left Kuibyshev, and the first leg of the flight we landed at Astrakhan. They took us in in a bus to the hotel. The streets--I never will forget--the ice must have been 3 feet

deep on the streets of Astrakhan. It didn't look as though they had removed it all. It was just packed snow and ice with potholes. The airplane was cold. The bus was cold, and I was just chilled to the bone when we arrived at this hotel. You talk about lousy hotels. I have seldom seen one worse than this. There was no central heating. They had these tile stoves actually built as part of the wall where you built a fire inside of the stove, and then the flues went through, and the tiles would get relatively warm, and the radiated heat would reduce the temperature of the room somewhat. The room was beastly cold. I never will forget. I got in, and I had the chills. I was just trembling and shaking.

Pinky Griffiss--of course, by this time we are personal friends. He was a most attractive man and a most personal man. He said, "John, I have got something to cure your chill." He pulled out a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label. He said, "I have been carrying this all the way for an occasion like this." We didn't have a cup or a glass or anything, but he opened the bottle, and he said, "You first." Well, I really hadn't become an accomplished drinker since my bouts with Mr. Hopkins, but anything to warm up. I took this bottle of Johnny Walker, and I turned it up, and I took about three great swallows. I never felt anything as warm going down, oh! After I took about three good swallows of

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that Scotch, my blood began to circulate, and the chill left me, and I began to feel a lot better.

As long as I have been commenting on the plumbing, the plumbing in this hotel--there were no bathrooms. As in most places, there were no bathrooms in the rooms. In quite a few of the hotels, the only plumbing was, as it is in many Middle Eastern hotels, the holes in the floor. They will have a public bathroom, and then they have holes in the floor, and that's all there is in the bathroom. One hotel I stayed in, there was a hole in the floor, and then, of course, there was the faucet and the pitcher. You learn how to use it. It is perfectly functional, but you have got to get used to that. (laughter) This hotel was even worse. They did have toilets, and there wasn't a toilet seat that was intact. It was a public toilet room, and the toilet bowls were absolutely filthy. I thought, "Oh, Lord, I wonder when civilization is going to come to this country." (laughter) We spent the night in the hotel.

I did meet some Russian pilots there. We exchanged notes. The Russian pilot knew that I was cold, and he looked at my boots. I had the RAF boots, and they were kind of--I guess they were fleece-lined boots. He said, "Those will never do." He showed me his boots. His boots were really made

for the weather. They were made out of dogskin with good sturdy leather soles. He had kind of flannel rags instead of socks that they wrapped their feet in. He said, "This will keep your feet warm. Your feet will never freeze with this." I said, "I just don't think I would ever be able to put those socks on." He said, "Oh, you get used to it. You learn how to do it."

The next day we left Astrakhan, which is on the northern shore of the Caspian. We flew across the Caspian and over the mountain range and landed in Tehran. When we landed in Tehran, the sun was shining. It was crisp but so beautiful, clear. It reminded me of Palm Springs, the desert mountains and the clear sky. There were oranges on the stands in the streets. I hadn't seen an orange in over a year. Here was Tehran with the fresh fruit, the beautiful sky, and just 2 weeks before it had been minus 50 or minus 60 somewhere. It was a wonderful change. We didn't have an Embassy in Iran. We had a mission. There was a minister rather than an ambassador. I guess at that time Iran was under the--well, the British had occupied Iran, not forceably. I don't know exactly what the relation was. It wasn't called Iran. They called it Persia. After making a visit to the mission, Griffiss sent the messages back to the States, but he didn't send a message on me. After he had sent the messages, he said to me, "John, look, you know, you don't have orders. I

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still am willing to take you with me, but we probably can save both of us some trouble if you stay here in Tehran and wait until I get to London. When I get to London, the transatlantic phone is available. I will talk to General Marshall personally. You will have your orders immediately. You will have orders in a week."

I was staying in this little Persian hotel, and I didn't know anybody in Tehran, and I just didn't want to stay there by myself for a week or 10 days waiting to get a message. I said, "I think I will go down to the Persian Gulf." We had been told at the State Department mission by the chief of the mission--I believe it was Dreyfus [Louis G., Jr.] There was a military attache, and I believe his name was Ondrick [Brig Gen John G.]. We were told that there was an engineer detachment at Basra, which is right at the head of the Persian Gulf, and they were building the railroad port and the railroad up to Dizful, which is as far south as the railroad out of Moscow was completed. Somehow or another it didn't go all the way to the Persian Gulf. They ran out of money, or they ran out of something at that point, and the railroad just terminated. Dizful must have been 70 or 80 miles north of the Persian Gulf. This engineer mission had been there, and they were constructing a port and putting in some air facilities on the island of Abadan and building the railroad.

I heard some American ships were landing in that area and discharging A-20s. The engineer mission was going to deliver those A-20s to the Russians. They were short of personnel, and they might be able to use me for a few days until I got my orders. I said goodbye to Griffiss. As a matter of fact, he went down to the railroad station with me. I got on the train and went south. It was an amazing railroad through the mountains. We traveled all night, and the next morning we arrived at Dizful; then we transferred to a river steamer, and I went down river to the port of Basra. Griffiss was kind enough to go down to the railroad station with me that evening when I got on the train, and we said goodbye. He said, "All right, I will see you in Washington." I said, "Okay, Pinky, I will look forward to it. Get me my orders just as quick as you can." He said, "Don't worry, John, just as soon as I have a chance to talk to General Marshall, your orders will be on the way." Then I never heard from him again. He just disappeared.

(End Tape 4, Side 2)

A: The exact time intervals escape me, but I believe it was a month, or it might even have been 6 weeks, before I found out what happened to Lt Col Griffiss, and it was a real tragedy. He left Tehran by air. The airplane that he was on, approaching the English coast, was misidentified, intercepted by Spitfires, and shot down, and everybody on

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board was lost. If he hadn't had those second thoughts about my proceeding to Washington without orders, I would have been on the airplane with him. So Pinky Griffiss was lost. I was told the chief engineer of Rolls-Royce was also on the airplane and that he was lost and, of course, everybody else. I don't know how many passengers were aboard the airplane. By the time I found this out, I was deeply involved in the affairs of the engineer mission at Basra, and I stayed with them for approximately 6 months before I moved on to my next assignment which was in China.

Before I go into the 6 months I spent with the engineer mission delivering light bombers to the Russians, I might just mention that Zemke and I both were in the Embassy in Moscow when the Germans got to the city limits. This is when Major Yeaton was certain the Germans were going to come on in and take the town. Apparently, the Russians felt the same way because they moved us out. We kept anticipating being evacuated. One evening, I guess 8 or 9 o'clock, we were called, or the Ambassador was called, and told it was time to leave.

For several days prior to this, all day long we could hear the artillery. As a matter of fact, I sat in the Embassy library and read Mein Kampf, listening to the German artillery shells fall in the city. It was kind of an eerie

experience reading this ridiculous book written by this ridiculous man. It was an impossible book. Reflecting, I said it was impossible, but the impossible happened because he was right at the door of Moscow. Prior to that time, our stay in Moscow had been reasonably pleasant. It was October, the fall in the North Woods. It was quite pleasant. The Ambassador had a lovely country place, and he was very generous. He took us out almost every weekend to his country place, and we spent the weekend in the country. When I didn't go to the Ambassador's country place, Major Yeaton had a dasha right outside of town. We spent many pleasant hours there sitting in front of the fire and talking and wondering what in the world was going to happen to the world now that Hitler [Adolf] was just within a few miles of the city. Of course, as the Germans moved up on the city, we didn't go to the country any more. The Germans were bombarding the city almost nightly.

Hub Zemke and I would go up and sit on the Embassy roof and watch the fireworks. Of all the bombardments, there was only one occasion where a string of bombs came close to the Embassy. On that evening, Hub and I were both outside, but we weren't on the roof. We were out in the garden, kind of in front of the Embassy just off the driveway. We were watching the antiaircraft and listening to the display. It was really a sight. The amount of antiaircraft fire that

the Russians put into the air was just absolutely amazing. They must have had thousands of guns. They were all put up in these giant barrages. Most of the barrages would be after the airplane had already passed over, but on this evening, we were standing out there watching the fireworks, and all of a sudden we heard these bombs whistling down. I never will forget, both of us turned and ran back for the shelter of the portico there on the driveway. As we turned, we started, and there was a can of some sort--I don't know whether it was a trash can or a can that the gardener used, but we fell over that. We finally got into the portico, and two of those bombs hit short of the Embassy, and two of them went on the other side.

That's as close as any of the bombs came to the Embassy in the entire time--in the number of air raids that were launched on Moscow while I was there. There was an air raid of some kind almost every night. The German bombers were not like our bombers. They were much smaller. They carried a much smaller bomb load, and the Germans must have had very few of them because very few bombers got to Moscow. I guess the Germans launched them as nuisance raids because on a city of that size, a limited number of bombers and a limited number of bombs, although you could kill a few people, you certainly couldn't do any material damage, but the Russians were disciplined. The whole city would get up and go to the

bomb shelters every night. When Hub and I first came back from Archangel, that's when we were put in the National Hotel. We stayed in the National Hotel for maybe 10 days. There was an air raid almost every night, and the hotel staff would come and knock on our door and say, "Get up. Get up. Air raid. Everybody out. Everybody go to the bomb shelters." Hub and I would just pull the blankets up over our heads and go right back to sleep. I wouldn't go, and it was highly dangerous because the Russian buildings had very little steel in them. They were just bricks and mortar. They had steel girders that supported the floors, but there was no real reinforcement, concrete or reinforced steel buildings. If a bomb had hit nearby, half of the building would have collapsed and fallen in. Fortunately, no bombs hit any of the buildings we were in.

We were young and really didn't know what was happening and maybe didn't realize the magnitude of the danger although on an odds basis the danger probably wasn't very high. You could hear in front of the hotel the thousands of people running out of their homes, running to get in the air raid shelters. They would go down into the metro. The metro would be full. I never went down to the metro. The whole time I was in Moscow, I never went underground.

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We got this message that we would leave, and we were given very little time to pack up and get out. The Embassy had an evacuation plan all prepared, and that's the one I showed you at home. I don't know how in the world I ever got that home. It was secret orders on how everybody would leave Moscow, who would take the cars and who would take what and how many typewriters--the Embassy had it all planned on what we were going to do because they thought we would have to go out over land. Thank goodness we didn't because when we got on this train and started out across the snow-swept plains, I wouldn't have wanted to be in an automobile going anywhere. We left a small staff at the Embassy. That staff was reconciled. They were going to stay there with the Embassy and be captured. We were not at war with the Germans and presumably the Embassy staff that would be picked up, aside from the danger as the war rolled through Moscow, the staff would probably be taken back to Germany and repatriated through Switzerland or somewhere back to the United States. The corps of the diplomatic staff accompanied the Ambassador, and they took us down to the railroad station.

A wet snow was falling. The snow turned into slush. There must have been 2 or 3 inches of slush on the station platform. It was a long time before we could get on the train. I never will forget, my boots got wet. They didn't actually

get soaked, but they got wet enough. I spent such a miserable night. It was so cold. There was no heat on the train. There was a stove. The car was heated by the wood stove. There were a limited number of so-called soft cars or first-class cars, and the rest were hard cars. Hub and I were put in a hard car. I wasn't particularly unhappy about that. The berths were just wooden planks, but we had our heavy fleece-lined flying clothes that we put down to rest on, and that wasn't bad. After the first night, we went back and we stoked the little stove in the car and got it warm. When we ran out of wood, we started pulling the paneling off the side of the car. That really upset the Russian train women. They weren't men; they were women. They serviced the train. We said, "If you don't get some wood for the stove, we are going to burn the paneling." (laughter) Which we were doing. There were women on the car, and there were children. It was beastly uncomfortable but survivable and so much better than the condition that the poor Russians who were being evacuated--factory workers.

We had food baskets. We had taken food, but we were 5 days and 6 nights on that train going a distance of a little over 500 miles from Moscow to Kuibyshev. Kuibyshev is southeast of Moscow. It was out on the treeless plains of Russia on the Volga River. The train was very slow, and it would stop. It would have to pull into a siding while freights

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passed. The Russians were moving factories and families, and the conditions of the poor people who were going on the factory trains were pretty grim.

T: Cattle cars?

A: They had boxcars. They had straw in the boxcars. Somehow or another they would rig a stove, and I guess they had wood, and they would burn it. There were absolutely no lavatory facilities on the car. When those trains would stop, there was absolutely not a tree or a bush or anything, just flat snow. I said, "Oh, Lord." (laughter)

T: Will you ever get to civilization again?

A: That's right. After about 3 days, we ran out of water on the train. We had water in bottles for drinking, but we ran out of water for shaving, brushing your teeth. In the mornings we would get up and when the train stopped, we would rub snow between our hands until it got moist. We would put that on our faces and rub a bar of soap and then shave. (laughter) Man, that was some shave. The toilet facilities on the train got so terrible, the men never used the train. When the train would stop, the men would get off the train. You left the toilet room really for the women and children who couldn't get off. Getting off that train

at night, the lights would come down in a little triangle and light up about 30 or 40 feet. Then you would go out in snow that was deeper than your knees and get ready to go to the bathroom, and about that time, the whistle on the train would blow. It would have been fatal if that train had pulled off and left you standing there with your pants down. (laughter) So a mad scramble to get yourself, to get your act together, and get back on the train. That was no discomfort at all compared to what the Russian civilian was putting up with.

When we saw the condition in which these factory workers were living, you really--I remember we came up alongside one prison train. Just for a few minutes, they opened a door, and then the stiff frozen bodies of the people inside of the car were pushed out, and the door was closed and locked again. I said, "Oh, Lord, what conditions human beings impose on each other." There was no way of knowing who the people on that train were. You didn't know whether they were political prisoners. You didn't know whether they were German military prisoners. You didn't know who they were. All you knew was that they were shoveled out of the car, and usually they didn't have any clothes on because the people wanted to keep the clothes inside. I just don't know how many people perished in that war.

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Eventually, we made it into Kuibyshev, and they moved us into a school building, a secondary school building. That became the US Embassy in Kuibyshev. That's where it got really cold. On at least three occasions, the temperature dropped to minus 50. The school building that we lived in was relatively comfortable. Zemke and I were both there. Zemke stayed until after 7 December because he was there when Pearl Harbor was bombed. I remember that very clearly. There was nothing to do. We went to the opera. We went to the opera in Moscow; we went to the opera in Kuibyshev. The Bolshoi opera had been evacuated and moved to Kuibyshev. The Bolshoi Theater had been hit by a bomb. They had the full scenery for the opera "Eugen Onegin," and they had the full scenery for the ballet "The Swan Lake." I think they also had the scenery for "Traviata." We saw "Swan Lake," "Eugen Onegin," and "La Traviata" over and over and over. Then they would have concerts. This was about the only entertainment that we had while we were there. Of course, the Russian opera and the Russian ballet were very good, but I must have seen "Swan Lake" a half dozen times or more.

T: You mentioned Pearl Harbor. How did you find out about it and when?

The quarters that were assigned to the military attache in the school were quite small. There was a little hallway,

and on either side of the hall were two couches. I never will forget, I heard someone walk between our cots and wake up the military attache. I heard him say--it was one of the clerks from the message center. He said, "Colonel, we have just received a message that the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." So I raised up on my elbow and said--we were asleep under our blankets and our flying clothes. We could unzip our flying clothes and spread them out. We always slept under the flying clothes. I said, "Hub, we are at war." He said, "Yes, I heard it. Let's talk about it tomorrow," and he turned over, and we went back to sleep. There wasn't anything you could do. It was just a message that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor.

T: At that time you didn't know the extent of the damage?

A: We didn't know. We began the next day to get messages.

T: Did they tell you pretty much what happened?

A: No, just generally. We knew we had taken some bad losses, but they weren't passing that information all around the world.

T: The Russians knew?

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A: The Russians knew. Our Government informed them. They had an embassy in Washington, and when Roosevelt knew, Roosevelt got right on the radio. The Russians knew. I am quite sure that the State Department immediately informed the Russian Ambassador in Washington. So then we were at war.

T: In retrospect, if Colonel Griffiss had not been killed, have you ever felt he would have made an impact at a time, at a very infancy stage in our relations with Russia?

A: Well, you don't know. Certainly, he was convinced that it was going to be very difficult to deal with the Russians. At the time he left Moscow, he was quite disillusioned, and he recognized there was a big difference in talking about it back in Washington and trying to get the information from the Russians. I don't know what difference it would have made. I would like to think it would have made some difference, but I guess we were just embarked on a historical course, and the ship was too big and too heavy to turn it. I wish I could remember when Yeaton left and McCabe came because I am kind of under the impression that both McCabe and Yeaton were there. That's probably all spelled out in the Army history. The Army historical section was so much better than the Air Force history. I have read the Army history of the CBI [China-Burma-India] and the Air Force history of the CBI, and the Air Force

history is just kind of a narrative. The Army history is done by professional historians. There are some big gaps in the Army history, it is true, but that was because of the personalities involved rather than the limitations of the historians.

T: From your experience dealing with the Russians, so be it some years ago, what is your opinion of Strategic Arms Limitations Talks today?

A: I am a skeptic. I am just very skeptical in dealing with the Russians. Since World War II, I have done some reading. One of the books that I have read that impressed me was written by Joe Stalin on Marxism and the National and Colonial Question. I think it was translated into English in 1936. I believe it was written in 1933. It is really a collection of Stalin's speeches and lectures to his colleagues and to the party. He starts out talking about the question of the nationalities in Russia. Russia is not a homogeneous nation. Russia is a collection of nationalities held together largely by a force exerted from Moscow. The first part of the book discusses how you deal with nationalities within Russia and the freedom that nationalities should have. The catch in the whole thing, this freedom belongs to the nationalities until it conflicts with the Soviet plan. Then he goes on to the colonial

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question, and that is the relationship with the colonial nations of the world.

What he says is, in the war against capitalism--and he uses the word war--Europe and America are the front, and the colonies are the rear. You can't win at the front until you have prevailed at the rear. He said, "We will exploit the nationalist ambitions of the colonial nations of the world, get them into the Socialist camp, and deny the industrial West the fuel, the raw materials, and the markets without which industrial nations cannot survive." If you look at the course of history since World War II, if you study what they have done, wars of national liberation, they have followed Stalin's guide pretty much to the letter. If they were ever to get their hands on the fuel of the Middle East, and I happen to believe that is an objective, the consequences for the industrial West would be disastrous. They don't need to go to war.

The other thing that has impressed me with the Russians is they never really have had to go to war. They haven't lost any soldiers. Why we as a nation have put up with what they have done to us is very difficult to understand. Our concessions at Yalta resulted in the Russians' occupying Manchuria and North Korea. They armed and trained, and I am confident they directed, the North Korean Army against us in

Korea. They may have been surprised when Truman [President Harry S.] reacted, but then Truman began to rearm the United States, and about 2 years later, the United States was at a level of preparedness to where we became quite effective. A fully armed United States is very, very formidable.

Our Army started back up the Korean peninsula. As we approached the 38th parallel, to the best of my understanding from what I have been told by people who were there, our air at this point had interdicted the Chinese volunteers' supplies. They were out of ammunition. They were out of the things that were necessary to fight with. They were in full retreat, and they were facing a disaster. The Russians asked for a truce, and we gave it to them. The Russians never ask for a truce until they need one, or they never give you a truce until they have a definite advantage. We stopped at the 38th parallel which is the widest part of the peninsula and perhaps the most difficult to defend with no advantage. We had them in full retreat, and we could have moved north another hundred miles or wherever was the best spot to set up an effective defense line. Then we could have said to them, "Come to the tent in Panmunjom, and if you are nice, we will talk to you about giving you your territory back." The Russians could arm and implement a war against us in Korea and so could the Chinese without any fear of retaliation or consequences. We didn't bomb the Chinese. We

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didn't bomb any of the Russian installations. We didn't bomb any dams or the powerplants that might cause the Chinese or the Russians any discomfort. Our failure to be more decisive in Korea, I am sure, had a big influence on the course of the war in Vietnam.

(End Tape 5, Side 1)

A: We had the ability to punish the North Vietnamese or anyone that was trying to help them substantially in Vietnam, but there were no real adverse consequences to the Russians or the Chinese. About the only people we punished were our own Allies, many of whom were killed in this fratricidal war, and a tremendous amount of punishment on our own people, both the boys who had to fight in Vietnam and the people back home who became disillusioned and divided.

Now the next stage, of course, is in the Middle East. Nobody's crystal ball will tell you exactly what is going to happen in the Middle East, but certainly the Russians are going to try and take advantage of the instability in Iran. If they are successful in doing this, then they will really have, in my opinion, a trump card.

When you talk about SALT, I just have the feeling that nuclear weapons will not be used. I know a lot of people

think if you build them you will use them or the Russians will use them or we will use them. I don't believe we are going to do it. I think mutual destruction would be such they won't be used, but they will be used for bargaining purposes.

Russia has built this tremendous conventional army, the Warsaw Pact Army. I am not sure they are going to fight with that. It faces NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. One of the things that the Warsaw Pact Army does, it immobilizes NATO. If the conditions were right for an adventure to the south and the Russians did move into Iran, because of the presence of the Warsaw Pact Army, I doubt if NATO could pull one division out of Europe and move it to the Middle East, as if one division would be effective. The Warsaw Pact Army makes NATO impotent to protect its fuel and raw materials without which industrial society and the NATO nations are going to have an awful hard time surviving. If Russia can exert influence in the Middle East and influence the oil policy or control the flow of oil, then Europe is going to have to make an accommodation. I would think Russia would want to win without ever having to fight.

An example of what can be done, is when we had the overwhelming superiority at the time the Russians moved missiles into Cuba, and because of that superiority the Russians

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couldn't keep the missiles there. Just the very fact you have the superiority gives you an advantage without having to use it. It seems to me that this is the Russian objective. For this reason, I am highly skeptical of SALT. I have the feeling that it is not to our advantage to enter into a SALT agreement. People say, "What's the alternative? More and more nuclear arms, and then we blow up the world." There probably will be more and more nuclear arms or more and more sophistication given to nuclear arms. We probably have enough. It's just a matter of giving it additional sophistication. This doesn't mean it is going to be used. Certainly, if our nuclear arms are adequate, that will be the biggest deterrent of the Russians ever using theirs. There is just no way that anyone can convince me that this country will launch a first strike. I just don't believe we will, ever. I may be completely wrong, but I am highly skeptical of SALT.

T: I wanted to get how you feel after a number of years since working with the Russians.

A: I guess my concern is that I have watched the Russians progress since World War II. It really didn't make any difference whether they had the arms or whether they didn't. They increased their advantage each year. They have lots of internal problems. I am sure they are going to have

more. It has been, in a way, an expansionist society at the expense of their neighbors first. Obviously, with what they are doing in the Third World nations, the Third World nations are targets, and in time the Russians may be able to prevail there through the use of proxies and through the use of force. The point that I was getting at is that the Russians have progressed without really ever having to use their force in a way that has been terribly expensive to them. We are the ones that have paid the price of two wars in Asia, maybe \$400 billion that we have spent on the wars and their aftermath; 100,000 of our kids dead; many thousands more with their arms and legs gone. We are the ones who have paid the price. The Russians when they do pick a target pick one they can manage. Czechoslovakia is an excellent example. Czechoslovakia happened right in the middle of the Vietnam war.

(Interruption)

A: We were talking about wars and Vietnam, and I said, "While the Vietnam war was going on, there was a much larger war that took place in the world, but nobody seems to even think about it." Most people say, "What war was larger than the Vietnam war?" I say, "The US had six divisions in Vietnam. That's a big army for us, I guess. During that same period, the Russians moved the Warsaw Pact armies into

Czechoslovakia, and they moved somewhere between 20 and 30 divisions." I have heard certain NATO officers say it was close to 30 divisions that the Russians moved into Czechoslovakia in less than a week, and the war was over. The Russians put enough force in, and they put it in at the right place. I guess some people got killed but very few, and the war was over in a week so the world didn't get upset about it. I have the same feeling about Vietnam. It was such a ridiculous war the way we fought it.

In Los Angeles on one of the radio shows, someone phoned in and asked, "What is our policy in Vietnam?" This commentator said, "I really don't know. It is not to win, and it is not to lose so I guess our policy is just to stay there and kill people." When you look back on it, that's exactly what we did for 10 years, and I am surprised that the American people put up with it as long as they did. We could have done the same thing in Vietnam that MacArthur [Gen Douglas] did at the Inchon landing in Korea. North Vietnam was undefended. The North Vietnamese maintained they didn't have any troops in South Vietnam, but they had them all there. The defense of Hanoi is illustrated by the fact that we sent a flight of helicopters into the city and landed them at a prison camp. Our soldiers got out, went in, and inspected the camp, and they didn't find any Americans in the camp. They got back in the helicopters, and they

flew out of North Vietnam again.

If we could have landed troops at a proper place in North Vietnam--if you are going to fight a war, you shouldn't fight the war in your own village. If you are going to fight a war in anybody's village, you should fight in his village. If you are going to fight a war, you should choose the ground that you are going to fight on. We were fighting on ground that they chose down in the jungles of South Vietnam. We should have picked an appropriate place where we could have defended it from the sea and with air, and we should have put our Army in place and cut off their line of communication. Then that army in South Vietnam would have had to turn around and come north again.

T: Did we need to put anybody up there?

A: If we had continued the bombing, I have been told that the morale and the spirit of the North Vietnamese was broken. They had to have a truce. The very fact that they went to Paris is an indication they probably did have to have a truce, but it is very difficult to demonstrate that you have won a war without occupying. If the North Vietnamese had had a couple of divisions at their backs while their army was down facing the South Vietnamese in the south, then the South Vietnamese could have been far more effective. Of

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course, the South Vietnamese could have been far more effective if we had used them differently, but that's all in the past. There is no use in rehashing that. My views are certainly not those of an expert because I wasn't in Vietnam. You can't help having strong emotions.

One of the things that bothered me about Vietnam was the air-to-air statistics. I know there were reasons for it, but at the time of the bombing halt, the Secretary of the Air Force announced in testimony before Congress that our ratio, air-to-air losses in North Vietnam, not from ground fire, but air-to-air, of losses would have been a little better than 1 to 1. At the time of the bombing halt, they had actually fallen to less than 1 to 1. This was the United States Air Force with the best pilots we have ever had, most sophisticated equipment that we have ever had, fighting the North Vietnamese Air Force. I know there are reasons for those statistics, but just the very fact that those statistics were there is a matter of concern. Another thing, we never really prepare our Allies to fight. Our Allies can't fight for some reason.

In Korea the South Koreans really weren't a factor in the Korean war, but the South Korean Army today is one of the best in the world. The problem was that it should have been the best in the world before the North Koreans attacked.

Chiang Kai-shek's army lost to the Communists. The Nationalist Army on Taiwan today is one of the highest quality armies in the world. Their air force is tremendous. Just look at the few battles where they have had an opportunity to demonstrate their skill against the Communists. The big air battle over the Strait where, I think, in a couple of days the Chinese Nationalists shot down 32 enemy airplanes and lost 1. The Chinese Communists have actually tried to take the island of Quemoy. The island of Quemoy is within talking distance of the mainland of China. They talk to each other over loudspeakers. The Communists have tried to take it, and their losses have been pretty disastrous. They could take it, I am sure, but the cost would be awful high.

Vietnam--the Russians supplied the North Vietnamese with modern jet aircraft 10 years before we delivered the first jet airplane to our South Vietnamese Allies. This may explain why the North Vietnamese Air Force was able to do what it did although it had very little impact on the outcome of the war, I will admit. It is all a matter of how we look at this problem of protracted conflict.

When I go back to the year I spent with the Russians, the 7 months I spent inside Russia and the 6 months I spent working with them in Iran, I can't help but think right there we appeared, as a nation, really to not have any understanding

of the kind of problems we were going to face down the road dealing with Communist governments and their philosophy of conflict. I think that has had a profound effect on the events which have transpired since then. We are able to win any war, but we really didn't win them simply because we were not philosophically or psychologically prepared to take the necessary action when we were confronted by a Communist force. That's enough for today.

(Interruption)

A: I have indicated to you that I am skeptical about SALT. I guess the basic reason for my skepticism is my own personal experiences. I have seen how difficult it has been to negotiate toward a common objective with the Soviet Union, and I guess the same holds true for all Communist powers. When you look at results of our negotiating efforts in the past, the Yalta Agreements--the so-called negotiated truce in Korea, the so-called negotiated truce in Vietnam, you can't be very optimistic about Americans' negotiating a sound strategic arms limitations treaty with the Soviets. Basically, it's awful hard to reach a goal such as the one we would like to reach with a SALT treaty unless the two parties to the treaty have the same objective. I think historically you can't correlate the objectives of the United States and most of the so-called free world with the

objectives of the Communist countries.

The Communists have written it and rewritten it in their philosophical writings and directions and discussions at the party congresses which they hold. Their objective in the world is different from ours. We have essentially what we want in the world, and we would like to see this stabilized with peace and not entirely for selfish reasons. We believe this is not only good for America but good for all the world. The Communists have given indication they really want an unstable world because instability helps them achieve their objective of domination which they have said over and over is their intention. I guess on two counts it is hard for me to be optimistic or sanguine about the chances of a SALT treaty. Philosophically, they are after an end which really doesn't relate to the reduction of strategic arms, and second, we have an awfully poor track record in negotiating with Communists. We seem to be so eager to reach our objective that we do not put the necessary caveats and clauses in our treaties which ensure we will have a true reduction of tensions or a true limitation of weapons in a total sense. That's the reason I have the reservations I do.

T: After you and Colonel Griffiss broke up, he went his way, and you went down to the Persian Gulf and found yourself a job?

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A: I wasn't looking for a job, but as you say, I found one. When I learned that Colonel Griffiss had lost his life in the aircraft accident, I wrote a letter to General Arnold because when Hub Zemke and I left the United States, Arnold had us both in, talked to us personally, and told us the importance of the mission we were going on. Of course by this time, it was almost a year and a half after he had sent me overseas. I didn't want to go back to Russia. I found there were more important things to be done in the Middle East and no Americans there to do them so I wrote him a letter. I remember I wrote it in longhand and pencil. By this time the War Department was sending out officers on trips all over the world. Senior officers would be going through our area, and Basra was the stop where many of them would have a layover. One of the officers going back to Headquarters Army Air Corps stopped in at Basra, and I gave him the letter and asked him if he would deliver it personally to General Arnold. I told General Arnold where I was and what I was doing and told him that I wouldn't move until I heard from him. I put down at the bottom of the letter, "Just as soon as you can, please attach me to a tactical unit and send me to a combat theater."

I heard from him, but I think it will be interesting to tell you what I found when I got to southern Iran and Iraq. At the train terminal at Dizful, I got on a river steamer. I

can't remember which river goes by Dizful, whether it is the Tigris or the Euphrates, but they had the flat-bottomed river steamers, paddle-wheel river steamers that went up and down the river. I got aboard one of those and headed for Basra. It was an interesting trip because we ran onto a sandbar. I think we were stuck on that sandbar for 8 hours. I had no food, but fortunately, there were British officers aboard, and they had food. They knew how to travel in Iraq and Iran. They were kind enough to share their mess with me. I had met one British officer, and he had his shotgun. The desert on either side of the river was loaded with game. There were partridge and antelope. So he said to me, "Come on. Let's get something different for dinner tonight." We had been living on bully beef. He hailed an Arab canoe that was coming by and gave him some money, and the guy took us across the river. We got off and really walked just a few hundred yards into the desert. He kicked up two partridges and shot them both. We picked them up, went back, and got into the canoe, and the Arab took us back to the boat. He gave the partridges to this young Iraqi or Iranian, I don't know which, and told him to fix it for dinner. The Iranian had some cans of the bully beef, which were British Army issue.

This was out on the freight deck, the bottom deck, of this flatbed steamer. There was really not an upper deck. There

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was kind of a roof covering, and up on that covering, there were a few staterooms. That's where we lived and stayed. He cooked these partridges with bully beef, and he made a partridge bully beef stew, and he seasoned it. It was one of the best stews I ever ate in all my life. Finally, after being on the sandbar for about 8 hours, something happened, and the steamer became free, and we went on down to Basra, which is right at the head of the Persian Gulf. There is a big tidal river, the Shatt-al-Arab, which is formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. It wasn't very long before we docked at Basra.

T: How long did this trip take?

A: It's about a day's trip, but we were on the sandbar for 8 hours so whatever it was--it took us about 17 hours, I think, to get down to Basra. I got off. I can't remember how I got to the US mission.

T: What did you do for money all this time? Were you paid?

A: No. The British banks were really very good. When I got to Tehran, I needed some money. I went to a British bank, and I wrote a check, and I showed my US Army identification, and they cashed it for me.

T: When you were overseas, you were having your check sent to a bank?

A: That's right. Fortunately, the Embassy in Moscow had written per diem orders, and in those days, we got the grand sum of \$6 a day. On \$6 a day in those days, I could live and make money. I had no trouble getting my per diem checks cashed at any commercial bank. I would just take it to a commercial bank, a United States Government check, show them my United States Government identification, and they would cash it. I never had any trouble getting a per diem check cashed.

T: Did you have more than one uniform by then?

A: No, I had one winter uniform, the one I had taken. We were told not to take any uniforms to England, but they said, "Take one khaki with the blouse because there might be a state occasion where you would have to wear it," but we never wore the uniform. I still had that uniform in my bag. When the temperature was as hot as it gets on the Persian Gulf, the last thing in the world you wanted to put on was a wool uniform.

(End Tape 5, Side 2)

A: When I got off the river steamer, I finally found someone who spoke English and could tell me where the Americans were located. I got a taxi out to this date plantation, which was on the banks of the river, the Shatt-al-Arab. This had been taken over by the engineer mission as their headquarters. It was the kind of colonial building you see in the movies. It was a great big old house with a big center court. I guess the date planter used that center court and the lower floor as his storage house, warehouse, and his offices. That's where the engineers had set up their offices. Also, the kitchen and the dining room were down on the ground level. It was a tile or cement floor to the building. Then our sleeping quarters were up off the balcony which looked down on the open court. It was a pleasant place to live, and it fronted right on the river with a large veranda.

This is a river that takes ocean steamers; big freighters would come by, and you could stand on the veranda and shout at the seamen on the boats. They were that close to you. It was quite interesting and really a quite romantic place living there among the date palms. There was quite a tidal movement in the river. That's the way the date trees are irrigated. Date trees were in essence on little islands. There were sluice gates. When the tide came up, the sluice gates were opened, and the tide would then flow through the

sluice gates and then all through the plantation. As you drove into the plantation, here were all the little islands the date trees were growing on, and the workers lived on the islands. They bathed and washed in this tidal water system. When the tide would go out, they would close the sluice gates, and the water would be trapped. Then it would gradually sink into the soil. Most of it would be gone by the time the next tide came up, and they would open the gates, and the water would come in again. It was quite picturesque and quite pretty.

They packed the dates right there at the plantation, and this operation was still going on except they had a back area which didn't interfere with the Army's operation. These dirty natives don't have the kind of washing habits that people in America who have an abundance of water are accustomed to. One of the young engineer lieutenants commented on these date packages. The dates were delicious. They packed the dates and walnuts into one big date walnut bar. On the package, they had something about how sanitary this operation was and the words, "Scarcely touched by human hands." (laughter) This lieutenant said, "It's obvious because they pack them with their feet." (laughter) We had dates and nuts on the table every day. I don't know whether they were very sanitary or not, but they were certainly delicious.

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I reported in. I asked for the adjutant. He was a lieutenant by the name of Ernest Ramme [Brig Gen Ernest L.]. Later on we became friends. "Ernie" stayed in the Army until he retired. I think he retired as a brigadier general. I told him I was an Air Corps captain because by that time I had been promoted to the rank of captain. I believe I was promoted just at the time I left Russia. I said I wanted to stay with them for several days and I would like to see the commander. He said, "Well, the commander is off on a trip." The commander was General Estes. He had been the president of the Denver, Rio Grande & Western Railroad. I presume he was a Reserve officer, and he was called back to active duty because the important project in southern Iran was to connect the Iranian Railroad to a port, finish the railroad, so that they could begin to move supplies north into Russia by rail.

General Estes was away on some business, and Colonel Shingler [Brig Gen Don G.] was the deputy commander. He was a career engineer officer and a very fine one. I believe his first name was Don, Don Shingler. He later became a general. I went in and reported to him. I said that I was an Air Corps officer and that I would probably be in the area for a week or 10 days before I got orders to move on. I said, "May I stay with you? If I stay with you, is there anything that I can do to be useful to you?" He said, "Are you really an

Air Corps captain?" I said, "Yes, sir, I am." I pulled out my AGO [Adjutant General's Office] identification. He looked at me and said, "Son, go draw a uniform." I drew a uniform, and I was there for 6 months.

T: At that time you didn't know about----

A: I didn't have the slightest idea what had happened to Col Townsend Griffiss. I thought by this time he was approaching London and the next day or so he would be talking to General Marshall and then several days later I would get orders to return to the United States. Colonel Shingler said, "Because of the ship losses around Norway and the losses of equipment and the losses of lives, the United States is diverting ships and sending them through the Suez Canal, up the Persian Gulf. They are unloading equipment there. They had just gotten in a shipload of A-20s. I have no Air Corps personnel. I have just one lieutenant they sent to me from Cairo and two Air Corps sergeants. I need all the help I can get. Would you please go out and help the lieutenant?"

It was Lieutenant Murray. He was a very capable officer, and he knew all about the A-20. I had never flown the A-20. As a matter of fact, I don't think I had ever seen an A-20. Oh, yes, I had seen A-20s in England, but I had never flown

them. I went out, and the RAF had a small depot at Basra. They were taking the airplanes and taking the protective coating off the airplanes and getting them in flying condition. The airplanes had to be test-flown. The Russian pilots who were going to arrive had to be checked out in the airplane. The A-20 was a single-seat airplane, but it had back of the pilot and under the canopy a tunnel where a man could lie down. We would stretch the Russians out and have them lie down, and then we would take the airplane up and demonstrate to them the flight characteristics of the airplane, demonstrate to them single-engine performance, stall, approach speeds and takeoff speeds, the things once a good pilot has seen he will have no trouble with the airplane. The A-20 was very honest and very easy to fly so we never had any trouble. We would put the Russians back up in the tunnels, take them up and give them a ride, get them down and explain the instruments to them, and say, "It's yours."

Then they would take the airplanes off and fly them north to Russia. It was difficult to give them airplanes. They nitpicked everything. They had lists of defects, what they called defects, which were really not defects. It was a tedious and difficult thing to give an airplane to the Russians. I will go to that in detail when I get to the rest of the story, but delivering the A-20s to the Russians

was relatively simple. We didn't have too many airplanes. Between Murray and myself, we could handle it. When I went down and met him down at the airport, he immediately checked me out in the airplane. It is a very simple airplane to fly.

T: Do you remember the two enlisted men's names?

A: One's name was Dean, and I thought I would never forget the other's name because he was an alcoholic. He was the source of problems. He wasn't a bad guy, but he had problems. I had him. He was mine lock, stock, and barrel before we were through. Fortunately, there were some Douglas tech reps [technical representatives] in Cairo. They sent three Douglas tech reps to Basra. They helped in assembling the airplanes and getting them ready for flight.

T: Were the A-20s in crates, or were they together?

A: The A-20s were deckloaded. They were covered with Cosmoline or gunk or something, whatever they used to protect them on the sea voyage. Actually, these A-20s had French markings on them because they were built for the French Air Force. Then France fell. I guess they had been in England. They must have been transshipped, or maybe they were still in the ports in the US. Anyway, the airplanes found their way

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to Basra. We had been doing this maybe 2 or 3 weeks.

I believe it was a Sunday afternoon late, and they knocked off kind of early, about--probably around 4 in the afternoon. I had gone back out to the date plantation. We had dinner. It was until, I guess, 8:30 or so in the evening. We had had our dinner, and we were out on the veranda watching the sea traffic go by and talking. There was a group of young engineer officers there. We were standing out there, and an airplane came by with United States markings on it. It was a twin-engine airplane with twin tails. No one had ever seen one. One of the young engineer officers said, "What kind of an airplane is that?" I said, "I have never seen one, but I have seen pictures. That has to be a North American B-25." Well, it went on over, and it headed down toward the airport. I don't know where Lieutenant Murray was. He must have been on a trip. I think he had gone back to Cairo for a short period for something. I was the only pilot there so I got in a jeep, and I drove to the airport.

When I got out to the airport, the airplane was already up to the line, and there was a big, large American about 65 years of age pacing up and down looking for somebody. So I went over to him, and I said, "Sir, is there anything I can do to help you?" He said, "You sure can. Sign for this airplane." I said, "Why should I sign for the airplane?"

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He said, "Because I was told to deliver it to the United States Army Air Corps right here at Basra." I said, "There is no United States Army Air Corps here." He said, "Well, you are an Army Air Corps officer, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I am, but I am not supposed to be here." (laughter) He said, "Well, that really doesn't make any difference. Sign for the airplane because I want to get back." I said, "Well, I will have to call my superior and ask him what to do." He said, "You can tell him if you don't take the airplane, I am going to fly it back to California because that's where I picked it up. I get paid by the hour. I am not going to stay here." (laughter)

So I went in to the airport terminal, and I called out to the plantation, and I got Colonel Shingler on the telephone. I said, "Colonel Shingler, there is a B-25 out here, and it is flown by a retired Pan American Airways captain. He is a civilian. He flew the airplane from California. He has a memorandum receipt which he wants me to sign because he says that the airplane was supposed to be delivered to the United States Army Air Corps at Basra. I have explained to him our operation here, and he says if we don't accept the airplane he is going to turn it around and head back for California. What shall I do? Do you know anything about this?" He said, "No. I have never heard a thing about it." I said, "Well, I have some more news for you." He said, "What's

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that, John?" I said, "He tells me that there are 100 more behind him." (laughter) He said, "John, sign for the airplane. Then we will unravel it." So I went back, and I said, "All right, Captain"--he made a number of trips after that. His name was "Pappy" Frictz. He was a famous Pan American captain.

T: Did you say about 65?

A: Yes. PAN-AM started a ferry business called PAN-AM Ferries, and they pulled in all of their retired pilots. Here these old guys were flying. I thought they were old. Sixty-five isn't old any more. (laughter) They had no problem. They could get in an airplane and take it anywhere in the world and do it safely and do it well. So I said, "I will sign for it. Then I want you to check me out in the airplane." He said, "Okay." I signed. We got in, and he said, "Well, now, I am going to take it around the airfield and land it and let you see it. Then you move over into the left seat." He flew it around the airfield, and he landed. Then he said, "Okay, get over in the left seat. I got over in the left seat, and he said, "It's all yours." I flew it around, and I landed it two, maybe three, times. He said, "Okay, son, you are checked out. It's all yours." We taxied back up to the line. I bedded the airplane down for the night, and he went to the hotel, and I didn't see him until his

next trip over.

T: How did he get back home?

A: PAN-AM was running around the world so he got on PAN-AM and came on back to the United States. Also, the British Overseas Airways ran through there. I don't know whether he got on PAN-AM or BOAC. Sure enough, there were lots of airplanes behind him. Fortunately, they didn't all descend immediately. I don't know. It was maybe 3 or 4 days before my next one came in. I had asked him, "Has anybody told you what we are supposed to do with the airplanes?" He said, "Yes, the Russian pilots are going to take them and fly them to Russia." I said, "Well, that's sure news to me."

Back at the engineer mission, they sent the message back. They said, "The first B-25 has arrived. Please give us instructions." The instructions came back, "You are to deliver these airplanes to the Russians." The Russians were going to be down to pick them up. We were there without any facilities, and these airplanes arrived, here again, without one piece of literature on board, not even a pilot's information file. Not even any operating instructions on the airplane. I am to take this airplane that I have no operating instructions on, and I am going to check Russian pilots out on it. The airplane was flown all the way from

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California. I don't know how many hours it has got on it. There was no record in there of how many hours the airplane was flown. I said, "I am going to assume that the airplane was flown 100 hours, and I am going to do what I call a 100-hour check." I will tell you, the Alison 100-hour check is pretty sketchy. (laughter) They gave me the two mechanics. The Embassy had a chauffeur who had been in the Armored Corps. He was a radio expert in tanks so he was my radio man. The RAF lent me two electricians because the airplane had the Emerson electric gun turrets. They were nightmares. Then I hired some Iraqis.

T: What did they do?

A: They cleaned the airplanes. I had the airplanes cleaned because they were dusty and dirty, and they had been landing at dirt fields. Every propeller was knicked where they had picked up rocks. So I cleaned the airplanes up as much as I could. I tested the armament. I even jacked the airplanes, and I gave the landing gears a test. I checked the tires. I checked the engines. The A-20s had Curtiss-Wright engines in them. The B-25 had Pratt & Whitney. Curtiss-Wright had a representative there, a tech rep. He was excellent. He was a graduate engineer, and he helped me on the engines.

T: What was his name, sir?

A: Oh, I can't remember his name. I remember what he looks like, but I can't remember his name. The senior Douglas representative was Al. I have seen him in the last 5 years. They couldn't have been more helpful. I have a North American airplane. I have Douglas tech reps helping me. I was able to ensure that the airplanes were in safe flying condition. Then I would check the Russian pilots out. I spoke no Russian--I spoke a few words. They had taught me how to swear in Russian. (laughter) I knew Russian phrases--retract the landing gear, flaps up, flaps down. I knew enough Russian that I could check a Russian pilot out without an interpreter. That was pretty simple because the pilots who came down to pick up the airplanes were qualified pilots. You didn't have to tell them what an airspeed indicator was. They already knew. We marked the dials for the safe operating limits so it really was a relatively simple procedure for what they needed to know--something about the flight envelope, stall characteristics, single-engine performance of the airplane. I made sure they knew that. When I was confident they did, the airplane was theirs, and they flew it north to Russia.

I had heard these stories about how reckless the Russians were. These were the most cautious pilots in the world.

They weren't going to bend an airplane; they weren't going to damage it. I know I would demonstrate how stable the airplane was and how you could stall it and recover it and how you could stall it in and how you could slip it in. They would say, "No, we are not going to do that." I finally got to understand why they were cautious because every airplane that would come in, the engineers would come with a list of defects a yard long. All of these were written in longhand in Russian. For example, you have spare fuses in the airplane, and they have a place to store them. You have spare light bulbs. On those airplanes, you would have a light bulb that would burn out or you would have a fuse that would burn out, and the pilot would just pull one out of the box and put it in. If the spare fuse or spare light bulb was gone, that was a defect.

They were checking them out in the daytime in the desert. The compass light is of such low power in the daytime, you just couldn't see it. Almost every list would come, compass light. The first thing I would look at on the list of defects, "Defect--compass light burned out." Every time he did that, I would call the Russian commander and say, "Commander, come here. Your engineers say that this airplane is defective, that the compass light doesn't work. Let's go look at it." We would go out and look. I had a black hood. I put it on and made him get under the hood, and I would

turn the compass light on, and it would burn. I said to them, "Why do you go into this detail? Why? We are giving these airplanes to you under the lend-lease program." They said, "No, you are not giving them to us. We are buying them, and we are paying for every one. We are going to see that we get our money's worth." That was the kind of relationship we had. They weren't buying them. We were giving them to them, but they thought they were buying them.

The height of my frustration, I think, it was difficult for me to get these airplanes ready to move north. I was working as a mechanic myself. I had mechanic's overalls. I worked right with the mechanics on the airplanes. First of all, we had no instructions on the airplanes. None of the Emerson turrets would really work right. At least, the bottom turret wouldn't. The problem was the turret had a design deficiency, and it was lowered on a screwjack. Then when it got to the full low position, a key fell into the keyway, and then the jack was used to rotate the guns in azimuth, in either direction, but the design of the key and the keyway was such that if the operator of the turret was not very careful, as the turret reached its operating position, the key would jump the keyway. The turret would then go down too far, and it would smash all the microswitches which controlled the turret.

The Russian armament engineer's name was Lieutenant Polovakin, which I believe in Russian means one hand. Lieutenant Polovakin couldn't coordinate his left hand with his right hand. In order to put the turret down, you needed to coordinate your hands so that the turret wouldn't bottom and smash the switches. Finally, I told the commander, "The lieutenant cannot operate the turret." He said, "If the lieutenant cannot operate the turret, then the turret won't be useful to us." I said, "I agree. The turret should have been designed differently, but it isn't. I can operate the turret, and I can make it work, but the lieutenant doesn't have the coordination to operate this turret." Well, this went back and forth. He said, "The lieutenant has to check each turret, and he has to sign off." That was one of the hardest things we had to get--his coordination was so poor--these guns were loaded. One day right in the parking lot, the bottom turret--he fired the guns. (laughter) There was this big burst of .50 caliber fire. Brrrrrp. (laughter) Right into the dirt underneath the airplane. I was standing about 20 feet away. It scared me to death. He comes out of the airplane apologetically. I said, "We ought to be awful careful." (laughter) They were nice guys and had a good sense of humor.

The acme of frustration was I had gotten me one of these airplanes all ready to go. I had gotten the turret ready to

go. I finally learned about the turret, not from any diagrams because there were no diagrams, but the two RAF electricians and I took one a B-25 into one of the RAF hangars, and we dropped the bottom turret, and we took it apart. That's how we found out how the Russians were breaking the turrets. I had been sending them north without the turrets operating because the darn things were broken. Once I found out, then I explained to the Russians. I had this airplane all ready to go, and it had a cut in the tire. The airplanes landed on gravel runways. Some of the rocks were sharp. A rock had cut through this tire. It was a ten-ply tire. It was cut through five ply. The airplanes didn't have a bomb load in them. They weren't particularly heavy. There was really no danger. It was a brandnew tire. Five of the ply were cut through, but there was no danger. It wasn't a great big cut. You could take a screwdriver and open it up----

(End Tape 6, Side 1)

A: You could count the cuts through the ply. I made a mistake. I should have just pushed the airplane forward about 3 or 4 feet so that the cut would have been on the bottom, and they never could have seen it. (laughter) I worked awful hard getting this airplane ready to go. They went all over it. They really had technicians. They were not engineers, but they called them engineers. They had what they called a

motor engineer and an armament engineer and a structure engineer. They would go over the airplane with a fine-tooth comb. They went all over the airplane and came to me and said, "We will have to reject the airplane." I said, "Why are you rejecting the airplane?" They said, "Well, it is not safe to fly." "Why isn't it safe to fly?" "The tire is cut." I said, "Yes, I know the tire is cut, but that cut is not going to affect the operation of the airplane. It is perfectly safe." They said, "Well, no, we don't consider it safe."

I was not only frustrated, but I was upset. I said, "I am going to show you how safe that airplane is." We were right there on the line. I said, "I am going to show you how much shock that landing gear will take." I got in and started it up. I flew it around. I just pulled it off and made a very short turn around the field, and I came back, and I deliberately just dropped it in. The B-25 was very rugged. It had no bombs in it. I just dropped it it. I opened the throttle and went around and dropped it in again. By this time I had had so much trouble with them, and I came around again, and I think I dropped it in five times, put on the brakes hard, turned around, and pulled up to the line. I said, "See there. I can't break that tire. No way can I break that tire. None of your pilots will ever land it that hard." So they thought, and they had a conference. They

came back and said, "We can't take it." I never will forget, I just threw up my hands and said, "Well, I will be a son of a bitch. I am through." I turned around and walked away. I got about 50 feet away, and I said, "Oh, Lord." I went back, and I said tovarish to their chief engineer. I said, "I am sorry. I don't mean that. It's all right. We will just put this airplane over to the side. But you know, this is a good fighting machine. There is not anything wrong with it, and we don't have a spare part here. We don't have a spare part spark plug. We don't have a spare tire, and the airplane is clean and ready to go, and I hate to see it sit there in the duststorms."

The dust would blow in that place, and it was awful. Finally, he said, "Captain Alison, we understand, but I hope that you understand our position. The reason we list all these defects is when these airplanes get to Russia, they go over them with a fine-tooth comb. They are grading us. We can't take a chance of any kind. We have to list everything that they would call a discrepancy in Moscow or in Russia." I said, "I understand. It doesn't make any difference to me. You can put down all the defects you want. It is perfectly all right. My instructions from my government are to give the airplanes to you. We have a lend-lease program with England. We are giving airplanes to Great Britain, and we are giving these airplanes to you." He said, "But that's

not our information. Our information is that we are buying these airplanes. This is the procedure we have to go through." I said, "Well, okay. The important thing is to get the airplanes up there so you can use them. Any way you want to do it, I will do it." That's the way Americans are. We give in to them. I gave in to them, but the message I had been given when it came back said, "Yes, the B-25s are coming there, and the United States wants those airplanes to get to Russia as quickly as they can get there."

They had all kinds of funny things. There was a commander. He was a full colonel. He was a commander of the detachment. Both Murray and I were on him all the time. We said, "Please get a Russian instructor pilot here." They never sent a pilot back twice. Every pilot that came to pick up an airplane was a new pilot. He had to be checked out. Every B-25 I sent to Russia, I personally had to check out the pilot in it. Get up, fly it, and check it out. I didn't mind that much because I love to fly. The Russian pilots were good guys, but it really was too much, and they didn't help at all. There was just one pilot flying those B-25s, and all those pilots were coming down there, and they all belonged to me. I was flying all the time. In addition to that, I was supervising the maintenance activity on the ground and actually participating in it. So I had my hands full, but it was a lot of fun.

T: What happened to the A-20s?

A: Murray continued to deliver those. Murray delivered the A-20s, and I took over the B-25s. I moved my operation from the municipal airport at Basra, and the RAF depot in Basra was on the municipal airport. They had a terminal and a small hotel. I moved my operation with the B-25s out to RAF Shibah, which was about 15 miles out in the desert but on the Iranian side.

T: Did you continue to live at the----

A: I stayed at Shibah then. I had been down there about 2 months, and we began to get more Americans. We began to get some help. I had an interpreter. He was a great guy. His name was Jack Turnawitz. Jack was born, I believe, in southern Russia or in Lebanon. He was born in one of the Middle East countries. He had come to the United States to go to college and had taken ROTC, and when the war broke out, all of a sudden he was in the United States Army. (laughter) He was Lt Jack Turnawitz. I don't know whether he was a lieutenant or a captain. Jack was one of these people who are fluent in language. He spoke everything. He spoke Arabic. He spoke Russian fluently. Jack was a lot of fun. He had a great sense of humor. We had this stuffy Russian colonel. Onetime I had five B-25s ready to go.

I had them all lined up. I checked the pilots out. I was down on the line in the morning. These airplanes were lined up side by side and facing out across this gravel field. The colonel walks out maybe a hundred yards ahead, and with his little notebook--they always carried kind of a little map case over their shoulders. He had this little notebook in it, and he would reach up and hold that notebook up. Then he would dash the notebook down and point out across the field. The Russian pilot would get in the airplane and take off. (laughter) To us, a very ridiculous procedure. He was very stuffy. He was nice enough.

Turnawitz and I were down in the bazaar in Basra, and Turnawitz loved to talk to the Arab traders. The boats would come in, and they had all kinds of goods there. You would sit on your heels, and Turnawitz would carry on this conversation. He would address the Arab men--I think the expression he used was ya-zi-zi, ya-ha-bi-bi, which is "my dear." That's a normal salutation. The men use a salutation of affection to other men. This was a strange procedure that I had never seen before, but I had an opportunity to see it. I would say, "Jack, what are you telling him?" He would turn around and tell me in English, and then they would go again. The Arab was liking it just as much as Turnawitz.

He haggled over this samovar, this brass coffeepot, and he haggled, and he haggled, and he haggled. As a matter of fact, I think he did that for about 2 days. One day we were down, and then another day we came back to the shop, and finally he bought it. I believe he bought it for \$6, which wasn't cheap, but it was quite an elaborate coffee urn, a samovar. I said, "Jack, what in the world did you buy that samovar for? You are moving. You are traveling. You don't know where you are going to be sent next. Why in the world would you want to burden yourself with this samovar?" He said, "I am not going to burden myself with it." "Well, what are you going to do with it?" He said, "I am going to sell it to the Russian colonel." (laughter) "What are you going to sell it for?" He said, "I am going to sell it for \$18." I said, "Oh, you will never." The next thing I knew, he invited me to a cocktail party. Then we were going for a boat ride. It was ridiculous the material that was coming there. Somehow or another we ended up with about a 28-foot Chris-Craft motorboat, a lovely little boat. We had it on the river, and we would drive it around, and it was great. (laughter)

T: Our Government sent it over?

A: I don't know how in the hell it got there, but it was there, and it was ours. We would go down, get in it, and drive

off. Turnawitz had a case of beer. First, he invited the Russians to a room in the hotel. It was air-conditioned. He got that samovar. He had that displayed right on the table in the room in the hotel. So they come in, and of course, they all admired the samovar. Turnawitz goes into this spiel on how he had been looking for just that kind of samovar and he had looked and looked and looked. He said finally he had found it. He said that the trader was very reluctant to let it go but finally he had gotten that samovar. So they talked about it. He said, you know, that he wouldn't part with that samovar for anything in the world. (laughter) We had a few beers, and we went down and got on the boat. We had beer on ice in the boat.

So we go out on the river, and we take a tour down the waterfront of Basra. Now we have the iced beer, and we are singing Russian songs. We are having a great time. Somehow or another, the subject of the samovar comes up. (laughter) By this time the colonel is really mellow. He and Turnawitz have got their arms around each other. Finally, Turnawitz says, "Because I like you so much, I am going to let you have the samovar for only \$18." (laughter) When the Russian colonel paid him, I just laughed and said, "Oh, boy." To Turnawitz that was the biggest joke in the world. I said, "Jack, I just have to hand it to you." He said, "John, that was easy. I knew I was going to do that."

I wish Turnawitz had been at Yalta for us. I wish he had been at Potsdam. I would feel much more confident if Turnawitz were here negotiating the SALT treaty.

T: What happened to him, sir?

A: I don't know. I think he lived through the war. I guess he is somewhere in the United States. Come to think about it, I would like to see him again. He was a thoroughly delightful man. He had a great sense of humor.

We ended up with a little Lockheed executive airplane, one of the little Twin Lockheeds. It looked like a Twin Beech. That thing showed up one day. Someone said to me, "Captain Alison, there are four passengers in there. They want to go over to Shibah. Will you take them over?" I said, "Sure." I had never seen the airplane before. I got in it, and I couldn't find the starter switches. They had a panel, and it was a very unobtrusive panel. You had to lift it, and underneath was the starter. It was as hot as it could be, and I was sitting there trying to find out how to start the airplane, and I couldn't find the switches. Finally, after about 15 minutes, I located the switches, and I got the thing started. I took the airplane off, and I flew it over to Basra. I used the airplane frequently. Today, when everyone is so careful in checking people out--there was

nobody to check anybody out. Here was an airplane that I had never seen, but airplanes to me were all alike. Once I found out how to start it, there was no problem. Actually, I had flown the Twin Beech quite a bit so I had no concern.

T: Did you ever take any trips or go anyplace?

A: I worked 24 hours a day. Another interesting thing, when the Americans first got there, they were highly critical of the British because the British didn't work as hard as we did. The British took off for tea in the morning and had lunch, and they had tea in the afternoon. This was in the days before the American coffeebreak. We used to work all day long. I know why the British had to have a tea break. The food in their mess was so horrible and so lacking in nourishment they needed those sweet cakes and tea in the middle of the morning, and then they had sandwiches in the middle of the afternoon that they bought from this naffy wagon that they would draw up. This supplemented their food. If you have ever eaten in an RAF or British Army enlisted man's mess, it just isn't the best food, and it certainly isn't the most appetizing.

I left in June, but in May and early June, the temperature was reaching 120 in the shade in the daytime. When we were out at Shibah, we lived in very thick-walled, kind of

adobe brick, buildings. We awakened at about 3 in the morning. These buildings were very thick. Although they had glass windows, they were papered over with heavy paper so no sun could come into the building. When we got up in the mornings at 3 o'clock, or when we went to bed after the sun had really gone down, then you would open the windows because the desert air cooled. When you got up in the mornings, your windows were opened, and really it was nice and cool inside of the buildings. With a ceiling fan--when I say nice and cool, it probably was 80°--blowing down on your cot, you were reasonably comfortable and could get a good night's rest.

I remember we would wake up at 3 in the morning. We would go over and have a quick breakfast. We would be at work about 5, before the sun came up. Then we would work until about 11. At 11 we would knock off and go to the officers mess. When I say go to the officers mess, I was the only American officer there at that time, but I had my two enlisted men. They would go to the airman mess, and they would eat. Then we would go back to our buildings. The houseboys who came in and cleaned up when we got out of bed in the morning--just as soon as the sun would come up, they would close the building up tight. We would have our lunch around 11:30 at the club and then be in our quarters around 12:30 and go to bed. They would wake us up at 3

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o'clock in the afternoon. That's when I would bathe. In those quarters there were tubs. There was a sink and a great big tub. You would fill your--and your ceiling fans would be going--tub up with water and get in it and wash, and you really felt quite refreshed. It was 120° outside. Along about 4:00 or 4:30, you would leave your quarters and go to the mess and have your evening meal. Then after the evening meal you would go back to work and work until around 10 at night and then go back to your quarters and go to sleep. During that cycle, life was reasonably tolerable. I got at least 7 hours sleep every day, and you would work in the coolest parts of the day. The hottest parts of the day you were in the buildings. There was no air-conditioning. There was no air-conditioning in the officers mess. There was no incentive to hang around the officers mess.

One of the big drawbacks was the duststorms. When the wind blew, the sand and the dust would fly. In this particular area, I guess the cradle of civilization, the Garden of Eden was supposed to have been located in that area. As you flew, you could look down, and you could see the pattern of the ancient irrigation works that went back to Roman or Babylonian times. You could see the discoloration in the ground, the canals and the dikes, and how they had the fields divided, but it was all desert now. People had been living on it for years. All of the human waste is right

out on the land. You would see an Iraqi going across in his long robes, and all of a sudden, right in the middle of the desert, he would just squat down. (laughter) There is no other place to go. You could look in every direction as far as you could see, and you couldn't see a tree. No water. Every time the wind would blow, I would get sick. I would get dysentery. I started then, and I lived with dysentery, and I guess I lived with it for about 4 years. I never missed a day of work, but actually, when I would get the dysentery that bad, I would run a fever. The worst thing was we didn't have toilets inside of our buildings. The toilets were the regular country-style toilets, maybe out 50 yards, and I will tell you, it was awful close runs. (laughter) It was interesting staying there.

Getting in an airplane when the temperature is 120° is something else too. You have got to be very careful of what you touch. The War Department or the Air Corps or whoever began the construction of a depot on Abadan Island--the British oil refinery was there. That's right down at the tidal mouth of the river. Eventually, they sent over a large contingent of civilian aircraft workers from Douglas, and they took over the job of assembling aircraft that came in by boat and checking them out and sending them on up to Russia. Before I left, we began to get additional Air Force officers. I got two officers to help me.

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T: General Arnold knew where you were?

A: Yes, he knew where I was. I didn't have anybody else to write to.

T: Did you ever receive a reply from him?

A: No, but I wrote several notes to him. People would come through from Headquarters USAF. They said, "Yes, General Arnold knows where you are."

T: After you had been there a month or two, you found out about Colonel Griffiss?

A: No. I arrived in Tehran about the first week in January 1942. We left right after Pearl Harbor. It was June before I received a message from Arnold to move on. Then an Air Force major was sent over, Maj Dan Callahan [Maj Gen Daniel F.], who later became an Air Force major general, a fine guy. He and I became very good friends. He in essence became my boss. He was a wonderful guy to work for, and we had a lot of fun. He was a wonderful guy to work for because he was not the guy telling me what to do in detail. When he arrived there, I was already doing it, and he just said, "Well, keep on doing what you are doing." He made suggestions of how I could do it better. Finally, we got in these

technicians, and I moved from Shibah--I took 40 of the first Douglas technicians that arrived--to Tehran. The B-25s that were being flown, they flew them up to Tehran. I had better facilities. I checked the airplanes out. I checked the Russian pilots out, and I sent them on to Russia.

T: Did you ever find out why there was no one there, a wing ADVON [advanced echelon]?

A: Nobody told me, but I know why.

T: Why?

A: Events were moving so fast in the world and we had so few people, we just didn't have the bodies to do the job. I was there, and nobody was keeping any tabs on me.

T: You could have stayed there until----

A: Yes, I lived off my per diem. I didn't get a paycheck for 3 months. It was over a year before I got 3 months' flying pay that somehow or another they missed giving me. That finally caught up with me.

T: Where were your records?

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A: I didn't have any. My records were back at Westover Field.

T: At Westover or Mitchel?

A: The 57th Fighter Group, where I was the group operations officer, had moved to Westover, but it went overseas before I got back. I kept getting bills from the officers club at Westover Field, and Westover Field hadn't been built when I left the United States. (laughter) I would get bills every month from them, but I never paid. I don't know what happened. Everybody said, "Alison doesn't pay his bills."

I got set up at Tehran, and I lived in the Darban Hotel, which was a lovely hotel. It was right up on the side of the mountains. I had a beautiful room and beautiful bath, a mountain stream right outside the room plunging down the mountain. It was just great. The food was good. Every morning I would get up and have eggs and bacon and strawberry jam. It's funny. I thought, man, I was really living high on the hog. I had a little special mess in the hotel for myself and the 40 Douglas technicians. We all ate together. I had two of them who really complained. I said, "What's this?" They said, "We were told when we came over here that we would be given American food." I said, "What are you complaining about? What did we have for breakfast this morning? We had eggs and bacon and toast and strawberry

jam. What's wrong with that?" They said, "We don't like eggs." I guess they wanted Kellogg's cornflakes. These guys were just problems anyway so I said, "Look fellows, I can't contend with this. You are not my responsibility. I am going to send you back down to Abadan."

(End Tape 6, Side 2)

A: I got rid of those two people. That's the only personnel problem of any magnitude I had. The other 38 people that I had were just great. Although they were Douglas Company employees who had been sent over to work at Abadan, they worked for me, and they did a great job. I had the two lieutenants with me. Between the three of us, we weren't overworked, and the environment was pleasant, and we got along reasonably well with the Russians. We were moving the airplanes to Russia.

One of the interesting things, the Persian Air Force was headquartered on this airport. One of the officers came out one day and said, "Look, you are flying the airplane. Would you mind if we flew with you?" They just didn't have any equipment to fly. I said, "No, I will be very happy to have you fly with me." These were Persian Air Force pilots. Then the mechanics wanted to ride. I said, "Sure." I would put mechanics in and get as many of them as I could

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in the front and put a few of them in the back. It was no problem for the airplane. Although I was test-flying the airplanes, the airplanes had already flown all the way from the United States so there was no hazard.

By this time, I was so familiar with the B-25 and I had flown it so many hours that I put the Persian pilots over in the left seat, in the pilot's seat. I would show them how to drive it and get it out on the runway and open it up and let them fly it right from the first. They just thought that was the greatest thing in the world. Some of them I would have to help a little because they had never seen the airplane before. They had their hands on the wheel and their feet on the pedal, and off we would go. We would fly the airplane. They just thought this was wonderful. They asked me if I would take the Minister of War, the Defense Minister--they called it Minister of War at that time--for a ride. I said I would be very happy to. They brought him down. I got him in the airplane, and I put him in the right seat. Through the interpreter, I said, "Well, I will take him, and I will show him a little bit of your country." I took off, and I headed for the mountains. I flew up the mountains, and I flew over to the Caspian Sea, and then I flew down the Caspian Sea. Then I flew a little southwest. They have a beautiful volcanic cone. I believe the name of the mountain is Damavand. It is 18,934 feet high. Right

at 15,000 feet was the snow level. Although we didn't have oxygen in the airplane, when I got to Damavand, I went up to just about the 15,000-foot level, and I circled this beautiful mountain right at the snowline and then went south and brought him back in after about a 2-hour flight. He thought that was great. When he was through, he thanked me and said, "Would you take the Shah?" I said, "I would be very happy to take the Shah for a ride." I had no real understanding of diplomatic protocol. I didn't even think to tell Minister Dreyfus, who headed our mission in Tehran. As a matter of fact, the Shah was the ruler, but really the British and the Russians were running--well, the British were the dominant force in the country, and I really didn't attach any significance. I said, sure, I would take the Shah. We set a date for me to take the Shah for a ride in the airplane. I was going to do with him essentially what I had done with the Minister of Defense.

My goodness, I got a telephone call, "Get up and report to the Minister." I went in, and he pulled me in front of his desk, and he really gave me a dressing down. He said, "We hear you have been negotiating with the Shah." I said, "No, Mr. Minister, I haven't." He said, "Well, I hear you are going to"--I said, "He has been negotiating with me."

(laughter) He said, "You can't do that. It is against the laws of our country. You cannot have diplomatic dealings

with the head of the state. I said, "But sir, I am not. I have had no dealings with the Shah whatsoever." Then I explained to him. I said, "Sir, there is a lot I don't know about this. I am a nice fellow. The Persian Air Force officers have been flying with me. I am very happy to have them fly with me. They asked me if I would take the Minister of War for a ride. I did that. It was a complete oversight that I didn't inform you. As a matter of fact, I am such a novice at this I really didn't realize you would be interested." He said, "Son, we are interested. Suppose you killed the Shah?" (laughter) I said, "Well, I really hadn't thought of it, sir, because if I killed him, I would be dead too." He said, "Do you realize what embarrassment that would cause your own government?" I said, "I am sorry. I just didn't even think about it. I am perfectly willing to drop out of this, and if you want him to fly, you can make whatever arrangements you want." He said, "Well, he wants to fly." They said, "Let us make the arrangements."

They changed the date. Then they changed the airport. They wanted me to fly over and pick him up at another airport. I asked him why they were doing that, and they said, "You know, this is highly sensitive. He is the ruler of the country, and there is always the chance that some dissident will try to sabotage the flight. We just want to take every protection." I really didn't understand it because,

as I say, I was really a know-nothing captain, and I was really quite naive. So I said, "Fine." The day before I was to take the Shah for a ride I received a telegram. It said, "Report to the Tenth Air Force in India." I had written to General Arnold and said, "I want to go to China and join Chennault."

T: You didn't write that in your initial letter?

A: No. I sent him quite a few notes. I had no one else to report to, and I didn't have any typewriters. (laughter)

T: How often were you sending these notes?

A: I think I probably wrote to him three times.

T: Did you give him a rundown of how many airplanes you----

A: I told him, "I want you to know what I am doing," and just very briefly, I told him what I was doing. He knew the airplanes were going there, and I told him, "I am the only one here. It's me."

T: Very few captains had direct access to the Chief of Staff.

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A: The only reason I did, there wasn't anyone else. I am sure General Arnold must have gotten a big laugh. Here's this lieutenant out there writing him letters. (laughter) In pencil. I got this wire, and it said, "Report to the Tenth Air Force without delay," signed Arnold. By this time Americans were beginning to arrive. Without delay, I was going. I didn't even think about it. I said, "I don't have to fly the Shah." There was a first lieutenant who was a very capable pilot with me. Two pilots--one was named McKee and one named Stewart. McKee was the senior and perhaps the more stable of the two. I told him, "You go to the Minister, and you tell him Alison received orders from General Arnold to move without delay and that Alison is gone."

T: I wonder what Dreyfus thought of that?

A: I don't know what he thought. He probably was so frustrated, he probably said, "Good riddance." (laughter) I went to the Russian colonel, my friend, and I said, "Colonel, I want to borrow one of your airplanes. I am going to fly it to Basra, and I will leave it there. One of your ferry pilots can pick it up and bring it back." This was the first real cooperation that I ever saw. They said, "Fine." I hadn't delivered the airplane to them yet anyway. I flew to Basra, and I went in and bought myself an airline ticket

to India on BOAC. I didn't leave until the next morning. I went out to the date plantation, to the mission, and I had my last meal with the boys. They said, "You will never get to China. You will never get in combat." I bet one of them \$5 that I would, and 2 weeks later, I sent him a wire and said, "I have been shot down for the first time. Send \$5." (laughter)

T: Did he send it?

A: No. I never collected. (laughter) One incident, General Estes was the chief of the engineer mission. Shortly after the B-25s arrived, he made a trip with the Russians in their DC-3 from Basra to Tehran, and we got a message from Tehran in Basra that they hadn't arrived. There was quite a range of mountains between Basra and Tehran. This must have been maybe March, I guess. There had been a snowstorm. Apparently, in the snowstorm, they had gone down in the mountains. I spent a great deal of time looking for them because I was familiar with the route. I got a B-25, and I spent many hours going through the passes and the mountains looking for the DC-3. I never found it. I understand that the next summer it was found. The airplane had hit a mountain, and everyone had been killed, but the snow was very heavy, and I guess the airplane just plowed in and went under the snow. I got to see a lot of Iran from the air and

not very much of it from the ground. Tehran was an interesting city.

I think it was called the Dean Mission, another illustration of US naivete. The United States was going to send a military mission into Russia to help them. Anybody who had been to Russia knew the Russians were not going to accept any military mission. The equipment had all been sent to Tehran and was ready to go. I got their motor vehicle equipment. That's how I had my transportation in Tehran. They had leased the garden at a lovely Persian house. The garden was quite large. It had a parking area, and that's where the vehicles were kept. They gave me my transportation when I was in Tehran. I had these personnel carriers that I used to move my men back and forth from the Darban Hotel to the airport. I never will forget when I went into the garden to pick up the car, these cherry trees, beautiful cherry trees, were just laden with these big ripe black cherries. I had never seen a cherry tree. I was raised in the part of the country where we didn't grow cherries like that. I never will forget climbing up into one of those cherry trees and just eating my fill and making myself sick. (laughter)

I thought Tehran was fascinating. The Darban Hotel was beautiful. It had a tremendous collection of Persian carpets in the hotel, not only on the floor, but many beautiful

ones hanging on the walls as tapestry. I was told that it had the second finest collection of Persian carpets, the finest one being in the palace itself. Having spent a drab winter in Russia, here I was in a nice hotel with a nice restaurant and a lot of pretty Iranian girls walking around in high heels and Paris fashions. That was quite refreshing. I was never able to really become acquainted with them. There was one there who was particularly lovely. I asked the hotel manager, "Is there any way that I could meet that girl?" He said, "No, captain, there is no way you can meet that girl. She goes with the Shah." (laughter) I said, "Okay." It was almost a 24-hour a day job. I found it very interesting, but I was very happy to leave and be on my way to India. I left Basra in a short Sunderland flying boat, one of these big four-engine flying boats, very luxurious and very comfortable, but slow.

T: BOAC?

A: BOAC. We flew first to Bahrain Island. That was our first landing. The flying boat tied up at a mooring on a dock that went out into the water. We all disembarked and went to really quite a nice little BOAC restaurant out on the dock and right over the water.

T: This was where, sir?

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A: I am quite sure it was Bahrain Island. We were on the ground there, while the airplane serviced for maybe 2 hours, and had a delightful lunch and got back on board the airplane and flew somewhere to the south coast of either Pakistan, or it may have been Afghanistan. I don't know, but we landed one more time, and then the next landing was in Karachi. As soon as we landed at Karachi, I made my way out to the airbase. There was already a well-developed Air Corps unit there. Col John Barr was deputy commander or chief of operations. I went to John, and I said, "John, I want to get to China as fast as I can." He said, "Johnny, everybody here wants to get to China just as fast as they can. Too bad you weren't here a few days earlier because we have made up a flight of the 16th Squadron. They are going to leave for China tomorrow, but it's full. Every cockpit is full." I said, "Oh, Johnny, there isn't any way you can get me on that?" He said, "I would like to, but I can't." So I said, "Well, I don't know what I am supposed to do." He said, "I don't know what I am supposed to do with you either. Just go on to the hotel downtown. You can get a billet there."

So I went down to the hotel, and I stayed. They put me in a room, really a suite, with two other guys. One of them was a test pilot for Vultee. Vultee Aircraft had sold some of their fighters to India or to the British or somebody, and

they were being assembled and put together there. This test pilot was flying them. I had dinner with him that evening, and before we had dinner, he sat there with this other guy, and they drank, and they talked. By this time he had two tall Scotches. We had bearers to bring us our drinks. I didn't have anything to drink because I didn't want to. I drank very little. Finally, after he had finished his second drink and he still wasn't ready to go down to the dining room, I got up and left. I went down to the dining room and had dinner. When I came back, I can't remember whether he was in the room or what, but when I woke up the next morning, I heard the tub running. The bearer was drawing his tub. He was in the tub. This was early in the morning. He shouted from the tub, "Boy, bring me a Scotch and soda!" Sure enough, the guy went out and got a Scotch and soda and brought it to him and gave it to him while he was in the bathtub. After that, he was going to go out to the airfield and test-fly these airplanes. I said to him, "Why in the world do you drink like this?" He said, "It's my stomach. I have this problem with my stomach. It hurts so damn much, the only thing that relieves the pain is a drink." I said, "Gee, this test pilot is going to really get himself in trouble." And sure enough, I received a report 2 or 3 weeks later he had just flown his airplane right into the ground right on the airbase, gone right through a tent area. Fortunately, it was in the middle of the day, and

people weren't in the tents.

Later that morning, I got a call at the hotel. It was John Barr, and he said, "How quick can you get to the airfield?" I said, "Just as quick as a taxi can bring me." He said, "Well, bring your stuff. You are going to China." So I went out there. There were two flights of six. The boy who was going to lead the second flight was celebrating his departure for China the night before, and he got drunk. He had become a little obstreperous, and the MPs [military police] tried to calm him down, and he turned around and hit an MP. He got in a fight with them, and they beat him up so badly he couldn't fly. I got his seat in his airplane. We left Karachi, and we flew all the way across India. I guess it took us 2 days to get across.

T: Were these new airplanes?

A: No. These airplanes had been in a flying school in the United States. I think my airplane had about 260 hours on it. It wasn't in good shape. The engine didn't run properly. When we got to eastern India, we got up into the wooded part, and we landed at an airfield to refuel. When the 12 airplanes took off and when I started running down the strip--there were trees at the other end. There was no strip. There was just grass. I got halfway down the strip, and I aborted. My engine was just performing so

badly. The flight went on. The next stop was our final destination, which was Dinjan. I turned the airplane around and went back to the starting point. I ran it up and leaned the mixture and tried to burn--I figured there were foul spark plugs. I ran it and ran it and heated it up and finally it sounded all right. Then the second attempt I got airborne and got out and finally got to Dinjan.

This is a fascinating country. This is the tea planting area. The tea plantations were beautiful with the tea plants, and then the tall teak trees--I don't know whether they were teak trees or some form of mimosa. I don't know what species they were, but they formed a canopy of half shade and half sunlight. This is an environment apparently where tea thrives. They had us billeted in tea planters' houses. There must have been a dozen of us in a tea planter's house with a thatched roof. We stayed there, for 9 days because for 8 days it just rained without letup. During certain seasons of the year, the monsoon season, it really rains. The monsoon hadn't really set in. So we just sat around and waited until it stopped raining.

Col "Tex" Sanders [Maj Gen Homer L.] came over. He hadn't been with the AVG [American Volunteer Group], but he flew with the Tenth Air Force in India. I was attached to the two flights of the 16th Squadron of the 51st Group. The

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51st Fighter Group was in India. Col Tex Sanders, who had flown the Hump several times in a fighter, came over to lead us back to Kun-ming. Tex was a good guy. I liked him very much. He was a very capable officer but not the most tactful officer, and he had some arguments with some of the AVG boys. As a matter of fact, General Bissell [Maj Gen Clayton L.], who was the Commander of the Tenth Air Force at the time--apparently, a number of the AVG boys had said, "Look, we are not going to stay. We signed a contract to stay here for 6 months, and we are going to go home." It wasn't so much that they were trying to get out of the Army, but they wanted to go home and then be reassigned into units in the United States. There were these arguments and disagreements. I was told that General Bissell threatened to draft them into the Army if they didn't shape up. Tex, of course, worked for Bissell, and Tex had some arguments with some of the boys. He wasn't very popular.

When the skies cleared enough, we took off. There was a big front over the mountains east of Dinjan between us and China. We took off, and we flew south until finally we had enough altitude that the airplanes went over the top of this front. It was pretty high. It must have been up 18,000 feet to get over the top. My airplane would never make it. Tex's airplane was fine. He went on over, and as many as could get over followed him. Harry Young [Col Harry B.] was

the squadron commander, and he was leading the 12 airplanes, and I was leading the second 6 of the 12. Harry called to me and said, "John, we are going to go over the top now. How are you doing?" I said, "Harry, I will never make it, but don't worry about me. I will meet you over in China at Kun-ming. There are also two airplanes below me. We are not all going to get through. I will pick up the two airplanes below me, and we will see you whenever we can." They went on over the top, and I throttled back and waited until the two airplanes below came up. They got on my wing. I continued on south until I found a low spot in the clouds where I could get over, and I headed out over Burma.

I guess I had gone halfway across Burma when I looked out ahead and I saw a bunch of fighters. I said, "Oh, my gosh, it's the Japanese!" But then I looked, and I recognized that they were P-40s. Here they were. I caught up with them from the rear, and we got on board. We crossed Burma across the Hump. We got across the Hump and across Burma and got into China. I was at the back of the formation. We were spread out somewhat, and I was flying quite a bit higher than Colonel Sanders. I must have been two or three thousand feet higher, and I was higher than Harry Young. Way off to the southeast, I saw a big lake. It had to be the lake at Kun-ming, which is where we were going, but we weren't headed there. We were headed north of it and right

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on into China. I called Harry.

(End Tape 7, Side 1)

A: The reason I called Harry Young, who was the squadron commander, rather than Colonel Sanders who was leading the flight into China was we had a frequency mixup, and my airplane was rigged so that I couldn't talk to Colonel Sanders. He had an airplane from a different outfit, but I could talk to Harry Young. Harry Young's radios were rigged so that he could talk to Sanders. I couldn't communicate with Sanders, but I could communicate with Young. The rest of the flight were really on a different frequency. I called Young and told him I saw the lake. I said, "I think that's where we want to go." As a matter of fact, I felt quite confident because we had passed that famous passage in the Burma Road where it snakes back and forth, and I had looked down, and I had seen that about a half hour before. Well, it wasn't a half hour--maybe 20 minutes before I had looked down and seen the Burma Road so I knew we should be heading off to the right. But Sanders kept going to the north of our destination. I don't know whether Young told him because I couldn't hear Young when he was talking to Sanders. Apparently, Sanders then got on the radio and began to call the AVGs warning net for some directions.

General Chennault had put a telephone warning net across that part of China in which he operated, which was really quite effective. These were observers on the ground.

If they saw the airplane, they would report they had seen it and the direction in which it was and about the height.

If they couldn't see it, they could hear it, and they would report, "Sound of one," "Sound of many," and then they would estimate how far away they were. It wasn't always right,

but at least you had an indication. They would also make an estimate in which direction the sound was moving. The plotting board back at headquarters had a pretty good idea

of what airplanes were crossing the area. As soon as we entered the China airspace, the plotting board began to follow our flight because there were 13 airplanes, and you could hear them an awful long way away. The AVG radio operators began to communicate with Colonel Sanders. I

couldn't hear the conversation, but the other boys on the flight told me. They said those AVG radio operators, who were civilians, were really abusing Colonel Sanders. They were saying, "Okay, you dumb colonel, you are lost." They weren't saying it that politely. (laughter) The language they used was very harsh. We ended up north of Kun-ming.

There was an airport, Chan-yi, oh, I guess it is 60 or 70 miles north of Kun-ming. One of the boys was so low on fuel that he had to go into Chan-yi, but the rest of the flight got to Kun-ming. However, there were one or two airplanes

that once they got down and got their nose up, they ran out of gas and had to be towed into the flight light, but we made it safely. That was the beginning of my experience in China, and I guess that is about as good a place as any to stop for the day.

The two Air Corps sergeants who were helping me in Iran and Iraq. Their names were Dean and Hodges. Both were excellent mechanics. Of the two, Dean was far the more responsible. I don't remember where he was from. He was a sandy-haired boy from somewhere in the South. He had a great sense of duty and patriotism, and he wanted to become an Air Corps pilot. He did an absolutely outstanding job for me. He had come over with Lieutenant Murray in the A-20s. Because Murray had the RAF help him with the A-20s, he let me have Dean and Hodges to help with the B-25s. Dean went back to the United States and went to the flying school, and if I remember correctly--I am sure that I was told--Dean was killed in a flying accident in flying training. I was awful sorry to hear that because he was a fine young American and probably would have made a good pilot.

Hodges had been an oilfield worker. He worked on the platform. He was redheaded. He was tough, and he was strong. He was a good mechanic, and he was a good worker, but Hodges had a little instability, which he may have outgrown later.

I hope he did, but he would get to feeling sorry for himself. He would say, "Well, you know, I had all this responsibility as a roustabout, and now I have been over here in this godforsaken place. I am still a buck sergeant. I think I will have a drink." If Hodges said he thought he would have a drink, you lost Hodges for about 2 days. (laughter) He just couldn't work for about 2 days. I guess he had an allergy to alcohol. Two drinks would set him off, and you would have a difficult time getting him back to work for a couple of days. You could have become indignant and said, "I am going to fire you," but I don't think that would have done any good. I never really was very successful in handling the alcoholics who worked for me, and I had several of them.

An interesting story, and I was going to bring it in later in China because that's where the main part of the story-- but there was a famous Air Corps pilot--a famous pilot; he was not an Air Corps pilot--by the name of Albert J. Baumler [Maj]. He was called "Ajax." Ajax had gone through the flying school, and just prior to graduation, he was washed out. I am sure it wasn't because he couldn't fly because he was a good flyer, but Ajax got drunk. Ajax was an alcoholic. I had heard of Ajax. After he washed out of flying school, he kicked around and went to Spain in the Spanish Civil War and became an ace on the wrong side. I think Ajax shot down five or six German airplanes in the Spanish Civil War.

T: He was flying what aircraft?

A: The side that was being supported by the leftists, the anti-Franco side, because Franco was supported by the Germans. The other side was supported by the Russians. Ajax may have been flying Russian airplanes. I don't know what he was flying. I guess we talked about it, but I forgot. When I was at Shibah, by this time American airplanes en route to the Far East began to land at Shibah. I never will forget one day this P-40 landed there, and I was down servicing my B-25s in my coveralls. The P-40 pulled up, and I went over to it in my jeep. I had on my mechanic's uniform. I had no rank insignia on. This captain jumped out of his airplane. He said, "Son, will you service my airplane?" I said, "Yes, sir." I serviced his airplane for him, and he went on up to the officer's mess, ate, and the next day he left. I recognized him, and I knew who he was. Just a few weeks later I was his commanding officer. (laughter) He was on his way to China.

As a matter of fact, he had started from China the other way, and he had gotten as far as Midway when the Japanese bombed Midway, and they had to turn around and go back. So he had gone back to the United States. I don't know where he had gotten his P-40, but he was ferrying a P-40 from the United States all the way to China. He put down at

Shibah. Ajax never knew, and I never told him I serviced his airplane. (laughter) We became good friends, and we were good friends until he died. We flew together; we fought together, and I suffered with him with his terrible alcoholic habit. When he was sober, he was outstanding, but when he wasn't sober, he was a terrible liability.

T: Didn't he later lose his commission, sir?

A: Yes. Ajax bounced between major and sergeant. (laughter)

T: He just kept both insignia.

A: When when I got to China, the next time I met Ajax, his face was all puffy, and he had a black eye. He had gotten drunk in the officers club or somewhere, and somehow he had insulted one of the AVG airmen. They weren't enlisted. They were hired mechanics. The AVG boy proceeded to beat him up pretty badly. I was in the 16th Squadron before finally they assigned me to the 75th as deputy commander. Tex was the commander. Ajax was in our squadron, and he was our operations officer. I will tell you some stories about Ajax as we go on, but he was a character, and he remained one right to the very end. Ajax died 3 or 4 years ago. I can't remember. He retired from the Air Force. He stayed in the Air Force until the bitter end, and I guess he retired

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as a master sergeant. He had been a major and a squadron commander.

T: And an ace?

A: And an ace.

T: For the other side.

A: He worked for me several times.

T: And he bounced from sergeant to major?

A: Yes.

T: Did you ever have to bust him?

A: I should have, but I didn't. How do you bust a friend?

(laughter) Particularly a brave one. Ajax was a fine guy.

He just had a problem he couldn't cope with, but in many respects a wonderful man.

T: You were deputy and he was ops officer?

A: Yes.

T: He did a pretty good job when he was sober?

A: Oh, outstanding job when he was sober. He was the best operations officer we had.

T: The AVG group must have been a pretty rough-and-tumble outfit?

A: Oh, no. I am sure they had a few, but they were great guys. There were two boys out of my squadron at Langley, in the 8th Pursuit Group, and I was in the 33d Pursuit Group. Two of them volunteered for the AVG, and both of them were killed. One was Atkinson [Peter W.], and the other one's name slips me. Not keeping a diary I forget those names, but they were both good pilots and very responsible men, good Americans. Guys like "Tex" Hill [Col David L.]--you can't find a finer more patriotic American than Tex Hill. Ed Rector [Col Edward F.], Frank Schiel [Lt Col Frank, Jr.]. Tex, Ed, and Frank Schiel stayed as squadron commanders, volunteered. They went into the Air Corps.

T: Tex had been a Navy pilot.

A: And so was Rector. They were both Navy pilots, but they were offered Air Corps commissions, and they were both commissioned as majors in China. Because Tex had been an

AVG squadron commander, General Chennault gave him the 75th Squadron. I was very fortunate. Chennault moved me from the 16th Squadron, and he moved me in as deputy to Tex. Tex and I were compatible, and we became close personal friends, and we have remained so.

T: How long did he stay on after you got there?

A: I got there in June, and he stayed until almost Christmas-time. In my memory I had thought he stayed 4 months, but he really only stayed a short time.

I have a letter from Bruce Holloway [Gen Bruce K.]--from an author by the name of Norris [John] who wrote about the Phantom P-40, that the guys put the skid on in the Philippines and flew all the way to China. Then it was shot down by John Hampshire [Capt John F., Jr.] and Costello. It made a big splash. It is the story of the Flying Dutchman, the ship without a pilot. The report was that when the airplane reached China the pilot was slumped over dead in the cockpit, which couldn't be. The P-40 wouldn't fly unless somebody had his hands on the stick. If you turned loose of the stick, pretty soon it would go up or down or somewhere else. It was a stable fine airplane, but it just wouldn't fly hands-off. The airplane never could have made it from the Philippines to that part of China.

The report was that it was full of holes, that it had flown through Japanese fire. None of this could happen, but the author wrote to me and said, "You know, I have heard so many reports that this story probably isn't true, but I have told it as it was told to me, and I have done all the research. There is just enough there that maybe it is true. Can you tell me anything about it?" Of course, Hampshire was in my squadron, and at that time I was the squadron commander. I began to check with Tex, and Tex was there, but he was in the process of moving out. First of all, John Hampshire wouldn't have shot down an unarmed fighter with a dead pilot in it.

T: Especially a P-40.

A: Yes, especially a P-40. He just wouldn't have done it. Second, if he had done it, I would have known about it. John Hampshire was a close personal friend. We flew together; we fought together. If he had shot down an airplane, the first person he would have told would have been me. So the story had to be a fabrication. It was an exciting fabrication. For people who don't know anything about it, it is an emotional and moving story. So I had written to Norris and told him, "It just couldn't be true." I told him the reasons I thought it couldn't be. I said, "If you want to check with someone else, write to Bruce

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Holloway." I gave him Bruce's address. He wrote to Bruce, and the letter just came in today from Bruce. Bruce didn't know what I told Norris, but I read Bruce's letter, and Bruce told him essentially the same thing. It's a great story, but it couldn't have happened.

T: It would make a good movie.

A: Yes. See, that's what Norris wanted. Norris is a writer, and he wanted to make a television short out of it. It would make a great one.

T: I sure hope he doesn't have Hampshire shooting him down in it.

A: Well, Hampshire didn't. I gave Hampshire credit for his 14th airplane. That was the day he was killed. He was killed when he was flying with me. I thought I had killed him.

T: He is the one who went down in the river?

A: Yes. A great guy.

T: You guys had quite a conversation about that on the way back and after you got back.

A: I wrote a story on that. It was published in the Air Force Magazine. It's a good story. I would rather not go through the details of that story. Instead of doing that, I will just refer you to the record. I did remember the names of all the people who were on the flight.

T: What were your feelings about going to China?

A: I didn't have the slightest idea of what tomorrow held. All I knew was that I was going to China and I was part of the 12-plane flight from the 16th Squadron. I didn't have the slightest idea what was happening in China, but we arrived there sometime the middle of June, or it might have been the latter part of June 1942. It was 10 days or 2 weeks before the AVG was disbanded. Many of the AVG boys were still there, but they were all in the process of leaving, getting out, except the few that volunteered to stay.

T: Those few that stayed, sir, did they receive a commission?

A: Some did, and some just stayed for a transition period and then left. The ones I can think of right now that received commissions, and I have already mentioned them earlier in the tape, were Tex Hill, Ed Rector, and Frank Schiel. They were the squadron commanders. Don Rodewald [Lt Col Donald L.], the armament officer, stayed.

T: Was he also a pilot?

A: No. Don was not a pilot. I think he was commissioned as a captain. He stayed about a year, and then he went home and went through flying school and became a pilot. Then after the war, he was coming into Andrews, came down through an overcast in a T-33 or an F-80--I don't remember which. The airplane picked up a load of ice. It was clear ice on the wings. He was flying instruments. When he broke out from the overcast, apparently he didn't realize that he had this load of ice which not only changed the flying characteristics of the plane, but increased the weight. When he went to flare the airplane, the bottom fell out, and he stalled out just short of the runway and was forced down into the seat and damaged his spine and lost the use of his legs. He retired but remained active. He worked for Lockheed for years, but now I believe is completely retired. He was an excellent armament officer and a very fine person. I am sure there were a few other AVG officers who stayed, but right at the moment I don't recall them.

There were a number of the enlisted men who stayed too. Joe Mitchell was one that was in my squadron. I can't remember the rest. A number of the airmen stayed, but the bulk of the AVG went back to the States because that was part of their contract, and they were replaced by people

who really came over as individuals, such as myself. Bob Scott [Brig Gen Robert L., Jr.] found his way there and became the group commander. Bob arrived shortly before I did. Bruce Holloway arrived about the same time. I can't remember whether he arrived a few days before or a few days after I did. Bruce eventually moved in and took the 76th Squadron. When Bob Scott left, Bruce moved up and became the group commander. I moved in and took the 75th Squadron when Tex Hill left and moved up and became the deputy group commander.

We had no idea what was going to happen to us. We landed in Kun-ming, stayed a few days, and then we were deployed forward to a station at Ling-ling. Chennault had established three main bases in the eastern part of China--Heng-yang in the north, Ling-ling about 90 miles south of there, and then Kweilin maybe 100 or so miles on below there. Those were our main operating bases in the east. The two flights of the 16th Squadron were stationed at Ling-ling. Of course, when the Japanese came, they either came from the Canton-Hong Kong area in the south, or they came from the Hankow area in the north. Kweilin was usually the first to receive the raid from the south, and Heng-yang was the first to receive the raid from the north. Ling-ling was in the middle, and it supported the bases at either Heng-yang or Kweilin.

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T: Where was the group headquarters, sir?

A: The group headquarters was located at Kun-ming, which was about 500 miles west of the three bases back in Yunnan. Kun-ming was a high plateau. The airport was five or six thousand feet above sea level. The climate was just delightful. The mountains and the scenery were just beautiful. It was a whole different world. We moved into Ling-ling, and the Chinese logistically supported the operation. They moved the gas around. How they moved it, I don't know-- railroad trains and carts. They fed us and housed us. Nobody really clothed us, and we had inadequate clothing. Tex's squadron and my squadron had about 65 or 70 Americans. We were supported by Chinese mechanics that supplemented the American mechanics.

We went through the first winter, and we didn't have a wool uniform for a single American. We were up in the high country. Snow fell. It wasn't a bitter cold climate, but it got awful cold at night. I had 13 sweaters, and I guess most of the pilots had flying jackets. I didn't have one. People ask me for pictures of when I was back in China, and I have Grant Mahony's [Capt] jacket on for my picture with the name blocked out. (laughter) Actually, we would have light snowfalls, and it was cold in the mornings. So I made communal property out of the sweaters and the flight jackets,

and we would hang them on a peg in the orderly room. When the mechanics got up before daylight to go down and warm up the airplanes, they had the privilege of wearing the sweaters and the jackets.

(Interruption)

A: The pilots would get down to the flight line shortly after daylight. When the sun came up, it would get a little warmer, and then they would give the flight jackets back. This was all done good-naturedly. There is a tremendous story about those sweaters and the problems they caused which is kind of illustrative of our organization and how we worked in that part of the world. Anyway, I went to Ling-ling.

T: When was the first time you saw General Chennault?

A: I don't remember. I imagine as soon as we landed at Kun-ming. He brought us in and welcomed us.

T: He remembered you from Bolling?

A: Yes, I think he did. I don't know. He certainly remembered the incident at Bolling because he put it in his book. He has several paragraphs reference to the demonstration.

I have related in the tape that he paid me this great compliment, and without any prompting from me, he repeated that in his book. One interesting thing, in Russia, the commanding officer of the squadron that Zemke and I were delivering the first P-40s to, whose name was----

(End Tape 7, Side 2)

A: His name was Smyrnov. He was not only an experienced pilot, but he was a good commander. I would liked to have had an opportunity to have gotten to know him better, but that was one of the problems. There was really no fraternization between Zemke and myself and the Russians. We had some limited contact.

They did give us a big dinner in our dining car the night before we left. On occasion, I had the chance to talk to Smyrnov about his experiences. He had fought in Spain. He had fought in Finland, and he had fought the Japanese. I gathered when I tried to probe him about his experiences in Finland--and this I had to do through the interpreter because he spoke no English and Zemke and I spoke no Russian. I gathered that he wasn't too pleased with the war in Finland. He seemed to be a fine man, a man of character, but I made the comment I heard the Japanese were not very good, not very effective as pilots. He came back through the interpreter

with words to the effect, "Look, don't underestimate them." He pulled up his trousers leg, and he had a great wound in the calf. He said, "I got that from a Japanese major." I asked him to tell me about his experience, and he said he had been in China, and he told me where he was stationed. I can't remember the exact location. I don't remember the name of the airbase he was at, but he said that the Japanese had come over and dropped messages and challenged the Russian leader up for an individual dogfight. Apparently, he was flying one of the little Russian biplanes. I don't remember the number, and the Japanese had the new Japanese monoplane, the fixed gear monoplane. He said that he went up and took on this Japanese pilot. He said, "I am just lucky to be alive."

About the Japanese coming over and challenging you, they did that. They had a big leaflet raid on our base one day. That's another story. We had quite an engagement. That was the day John Hampshire was killed. He said, "I did everything I knew how to in the book. There was no way that I could get an advantage on this Japanese. He riddled my airplane, and he hit me in the leg. I am lucky to have lived through it." When I got to China, I told Chennault about talking to the Russian commander, and he said, "I was there. I witnessed it. It is true. The Russian pilot was very skillful, but all he could use his skill for was to

save his neck. He did, but when he got down, his airplane was really full of holes. What would happen, the Japanese airplane just had superior performance and maneuverability, and this major would come in on him and start shooting. The Russian would wait until he got within a certain range, then he would do a violent snap maneuver with his airplane, and the Japanese would go by. Then the Japanese would come back and make another pass. The whole procedure would be repeated again." Chennault told me how many holes there were in the airplane, but I forget. He said that the Russian was really shot up. He said that both pilots were outstanding pilots. He said, "Your Russian friend had to be outstanding, or he would never have made it." (laughter)

We had some engineers in Russia who were responsible for the crews that were assembling the aircraft. They were great chess players. Hub Zemke knew a little bit about chess so one night he sat up in the car, and the Russian engineer was there. Sometimes they stayed in these cars with us. At other times, I don't know where they stayed. I don't know where the Russians housed their people, but the Russian loved to play chess. He sized Hub up, and he knew Hub was an amateur. Hub was telling me about it; I didn't see the game. Hub said, "John, do you know what he did? We sat down, and we set up the chessboard. The Russian engineer looked at the chessboard and said, 'Lieutenant Zemke, I am

going to make the first move.'" Hub said, "Well sure." I said, "Well, where did he move?" Hub said, "Well, he took his hand and he wiped off half of his back line." (laughter) I said, "Then what happened?" Hub said, "Then he just proceeded to beat me unmercifully." The Russians love to play chess, and apparently, this engineer was an outstanding chess player. He became Hub's teacher. Those were the few moments of relaxation that we had after we finished our work on the flight line and came back to the car.

Just before we left Archangel, some of the top mechanics and the Russian officers, Smyrnov and another officer who apparently was the deputy commander of the group, Captain Kokinoke. His brother had been one of the Russians who had done the long-range flight from Moscow over Alaska and gotten down as far as California--I guess that's how far. Or maybe it was from Siberia down to California in a Russian airplane especially configured for long-range flight.

(Interruption)

A: They gave this farewell party just before we departed Archangel to go back to Moscow. You know, in Russia the only entertainment is the opera and the ballet for those that are privileged and the vodka bottle. I will tell you, we had a vodka bottle evening. I had resisted drinking whiskey all of my

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military career, and I had gotten all the way to Archangel before I really had my first drink of hard whiskey with Mr. Hopkins. So I was very careful; I drank very little. I sat there, and the Russians got drunker and drunker. The party really became a shambles. I will never forget. One of the big Russian mechanics just picked me up off my feet and kissed me on both cheeks. I said, "Well, okay, there are all kinds of experiences that a man has in life. This is my first, and I hope it's my last." (laughter) I stayed until the bitter end of the party, and one by one they began to drift off.

T: Were you having a sip?

A: Very little.

T: How did you get away with it?

A: They were so absorbed in their own drinking, they didn't pay that much attention to me. We sang Russian songs. They tried to teach Hub and me their Russian military songs. It was not an uninteresting evening. Finally, I think there were two of us left, and I said, "Look, I can't stand it any longer." Hub was trying to stay with them, drink for drink. He had finally gotten up and left, and I heard him--I saw him go out the door of the car. These cars had platforms

in between them. For some reason or another, the steps down were configured as a ladder so you went straight down the side. I don't know why, but the platform on our car, right at the bottom of it, there was a pile of lumber. I heard Hub hit that lumber. (laughter) I didn't know what had happened to him, but I wasn't about to get up and go out in the snow and find out. I found out the next morning when I saw the cuts and bruises. Hub had gotten sick and had to go out and relieve himself in the snow. We had no toilet facilities in the cars simply because there wasn't any running water hooked up to them. Our facilities were a chick cell out from the car. The next morning when I got up to go out, the snow was just soiled everywhere. I think everybody in the car had been sick. We got through the evening. I am sure it was a successful farewell from everybody's point of view.

That has no significance, but the fact that the Russian pilot had fought in all of the Russian theaters prior to their war against Germany might have some significance.

Also, I had a chance to talk to him after he had flown the P-40. I had a chance to talk to him about his evaluation of the P-40 because he had fought the Messerschmitt. He said that in his opinion the P-40 wasn't as good at altitude as the MiG-3 which the Russians were flying at that time but

that below 3,000 meters he felt the P-40 was a match for the Messerschmitt and perhaps even more than a match. He said, "We never get above 3,000 meters anyway. That's where we do our work." He said that he felt the P-40 would be very effective in that arena. I think this was probably a correct assessment. I have talked to friends of mine who fought the Messerschmitts in the desert in the P-40. Down low, apparently, the P-40 did respectably well against them. At altitude, it was no match for the airplane. I think the greatest trouble the P-40 had was the Messerschmitt would start at a higher altitude and come down on them. That in certain situations was a disadvantage.

T: Did you ever talk any tactics with him?

A: No. It's unfortunate that I didn't speak the language so that I could sit down and discuss it with them. I had a chance to talk to the interpreter. They had a young interpreter there, a young engineer. He spoke English quite well, but he wasn't a pilot. What he was interested in mostly was how we lived in America. Where I had gone to school, what I studied in school, and the fact that I was a graduate engineer but I had taken courses in public speaking, economics, and other things. He was just amazed. I think the people they called engineers in Russia were just highly trained technicians. I found out the Russian engineers that

were down accepting the B-25s really weren't engineers in the sense that we think of an engineer. They were highly skilled armament technicians. The one that had responsibility for the engines, inspection of the engines, was called a motor engineer. He really had only a superficial knowledge of engine theory. He was an excellent technician and mechanic, but he really didn't have an indepth engineering knowledge.

I took a detour from China. After we had landed at Kun-ming and reported in, they sent us over to the airbase at Ling-ling. There was no one there. We had our 16 P-40s. We had a little lean-to operation down on the flight line, which consisted of about one enclosed room and then a rice straw thatched roof set up on poles where we lived most of the time because when we arrived at Ling-ling in June the weather was hot. We had very comfortable quarters to live in, a hostel, which were between a quarter and a half mile from the airfield. The airfield was down in the rice paddy area. Then we walked, I guess it was a half mile up this unpaved road--it wasn't a road. It was just really a one-lane surface they moved their carts back and forth on--up to our hostel which was on a little knoll. It was quite comfortable. The mess there was quite good with one exception. The countryside was green with new rice, and it was just beautiful. The water was in the rice paddies. Every

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evening when we left the line just before dark and walked up to the hostel, there was a small hill behind the hostel that was another 50 or 75 feet higher than the hostel. I used to walk up to the top of that hill and watch the sunset and the colors over the rice paddies. It really was just a beautiful sight, but it was hot and humid.

Plumbing facilities were still outside, no running water. Our shower facilities consisted of a 50-gallon gas drum with holes in the bottom. They had driven some nails through the bottom to make a water dispenser and a great cauldron of hot water over an open fire. The Chinese houseboys would get these buckets of water and go up, and we would get under the gas drum, and then they would pour the water into the gas drum, and that's the way we bathed. We would usually try and take a hot shower before dinner and get comfortable and go in the mess and eat. The enlisted men and the officers ate together. We ate at the same tables. We were so small, and our facilities were so limited that we had an opportunity to get to know each other personally, both officers and the airmen. We never had any disciplinary problems. I never had any disciplinary problems. Our enlisted men were fine American kids. They were doing a tremendous job.

T: Do you remember your crew chief's name?

A: I have his name somewhere. He was an experienced line chief, a senior noncommissioned officer. I should remember his name because an incident happened after we had been there about a week. I thought everybody was going to die. I had come up from the line, and I had come up kind of late. I threw my stuff into the hostel, and then I walked up to my favorite hill to watch the sunset. As I walked up, I saw two of the airmen out back of the hostel vomiting. I said, "Oh, Lord, could these guys have started drinking early?" My first thought was maybe they had the afternoon off and had been drinking and were sick. When I came back down from the hill, there were one or two more out there. We had had dinner, and I had eaten dinner and had walked up after dinner. When I came down, there were a couple more men out there sick. I walked in and said, "Where is Sergeant"--I wish I could remember his name, the senior noncom. He was very reliable, very stable, a wonderful guy.

I knew that we had some kind of a problem. It didn't yet dawn on me that these men were sick. I thought maybe they had just had too much to drink. I said, "Where is Sergeant"--and they said, "Sir, he is in the privy. He has got terrible diarrhea, and he is vomiting." I said, "Lord, what has happened? Who is on their feet here?" Everybody was sick,

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and everybody began to vomit and retch except me. I believe Charlie Bond [Maj Gen Charles R., Jr.] was with the AVG, and he had come up to spend the night with us for some reason. He went home shortly after the AVG was disbanded, but Charlie was there for some reason. I don't believe Charlie was sick, and I wasn't sick. Nothing happened to me so I had to figure by now it had to be food poisoning. The men would retch and vomit and then vomit and retch. When everything was gone from their stomachs, they just retched and retched, and there was not a thing we could do for them. We had no doctor. That's another thing, the fact that we didn't have a wool uniform may not have been so important, but we didn't have a doctor.

T: The AVG never had a doctor?

A: Oh, yes. The AVG had some doctors, but they were gone. We hadn't gotten any doctors there. This was in the 16th Squadron. The 16th Squadron had a doctor, Dr. Voss, and he finally got over there. I sent a wireless message out back to headquarters to Chennault to get me a doctor just as quickly as he could. I said, "I have got food poisoning, and everybody is sick." I think the next morning Charlie Bond and I were the only two that were able to get up and get on our feet.

T: You ate everything they ate?

A: I ate everything they ate.

T: Did you ever figure out what it was?

A: Yes, the Chinese found out. The cook was taking a shortcut, I think, and pocketing the money. Somebody told me that they shot him. (laughter) I don't think they did. What he did, he bought cheap cooking oil, and the cooking oil he bought really wasn't cooking oil. It was tung oil. The Chinese raise these tung nuts, and then they use the oil for lamps, lighting, and they used it for industrial purpose. We use tung oil in paints because it's a drying agent, but he had bought tung oil and cooked the food in tung oil, and it's worse than castor oil. (laughter) It's really a poison to the system. But fortunately, nobody died. It was just like they had all taken a dose of castor oil and then taken another dose of castor oil on top of it.

T: It's a good thing the Japanese didn't come over.

A: Yes. The thing that bothered me was the retching. The boys just couldn't absolutely stop retching.

T: How long did this go on, sir?

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A: Most of the night, way past midnight, I heard them get up and retch. They were dry, and they were still retching. We survived the night, and the next morning we got up-- I don't believe I sent a message that night because it was difficult because of the performance of the radios to get a message through at night. I think it was the next morning that I got a message through to Chennault telling him that we apparently had food poisoning and the entire outfit was sick with the exception of one or two. I requested he get a doctor over as quickly as he could. We didn't have them. We never got a doctor, and everybody recovered, and we were all right. Fortunately, nobody got shot up or wounded during that period because I don't know what I would have done.

T: Speaking of General Chennault again, did you ever get to fly with him?

A: No. I never flew with General Chennault.

T: Do you know what the problem was or what led to the problem between General Chennault and Gen Clayton Bissell?

A: Yes. Well, I say yes. I have to qualify that. Before I get to that, I would like to go through one other incident which relates to our lack of doctors. The American people really don't understand what a shoestring we were fighting

on. The American people don't understand how unprepared our country was. We sent our children out to fight a war, not only did we not have the gasoline or the ammunition or new airplanes, if it hadn't been for those 100 P-40s General Chennault had bought for the AVG, we would have really been short. We didn't have adequate clothing, and we went to war without doctors. They finally got doctors for us. The whole year I was in China we never had adequate clothing, but we had enough to get by.

It was almost 2 years before we began to get equipment, the kind of equipment that we needed to be really effective against the Japanese. The fact that we were so effective with very limited equipment is due to Chennault's understanding of warfare and his preparation prior to the time we got there. We were effective. We were scoring victories, significant victories, against the Japanese when they were beating us everywhere else in the world. When I left Ling-ling, General Chennault moved me to Heng-yang where I became Tex's deputy. This was shortly after 4 July. On 4 July the AVG was officially disbanded, and the AVG became the China Air Task Force of the Tenth Air Force. Tex was commissioned a major at that time and made the Squadron Commander of the 75th. Chennault moved me up, and I became Tex's deputy. It was shortly after that that we began to see some action.

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When we were at Ling-ling we had done some escort missions up over Hangchow, and I never will forget one of our first up over Hankow. I never will forget. One of our first escort missions we came down--you really had to know how to interpret the warning net. I was with the fighters. I think this was the first mission over enemy territory. I wasn't leading it. I was back on the tail end.

(Interruption)

A: The B-25s were led by Col Caleb Haynes, who later became one of our senior Air Force generals, a wonderful officer, a very experienced man of excellent judgment. We bombed the airport at Hankow. I didn't see any enemy fighters airborne anywhere.

T: Any on the ground?

A: No. There may have been some down there, but I think the B-25s bombed from about 12,000 feet, and we were probably at 2,000 or 3,000 feet above them and off to one side where we could intercept any fighters.

(End Tape 8, Side 1)

A: Where we could see and have an advantage if it became necessary to intercept enemy fighters that were trying to stop the bombers. On this day there was no opposition. The raid was completely uneventful, but the aftermath of the raid wasn't. We turned the aircraft around and headed back to our base at Heng-yang. After we had gotten well within the territory the friendly Chinese held, the fighters left the bombers and went on ahead and landed. This was not an unusual procedure. We had a warning net that kept track of our progress. There were no enemy aircraft following us so there wasn't a requirement that we stay with the bombers. I was on the ground. We dispersed our airplanes around the perimeter of the field. My airplane was across the field from the operations shack, and I was waiting for a mechanic and a gas truck. All of a sudden the air raid signal went off.

I couldn't understand what this was all about. I didn't know what the bombers' plans were. I didn't know whether they were going to land at Heng-yang or go on back to Ling-ling or what. Apparently, when the bombers came back, for some reason they divided into two groups. One of the groups hadn't landed, and the Chinese warning net picked them up. They had come back on a little different route from what they went out. The people who were operating the plotting board and the net received a report these were Japanese

bombers. Just as a precaution, people were taking off. I had no access to the operations board, and someone came by, and I said, "What's the problem?" They said, "Japanese bombers are just a few minutes out. You had better get airborne." It was kind of hard to believe, but just as a precaution, I didn't wait for my airplane to be refueled. I started it up and took off. I positioned myself at about three or four thousand feet, about a mile off to the side of the runway, and kept looking to the north where the bombers were reported to be coming from. I had my radio tuned to the frequency, to the squadron frequency. The net sure enough was reporting--it was very confused--Japanese bombers. By this time there were B-25s in the air and P-40s in the air, and there were supposed to be Japs in the air, but there were no Japanese. Somehow or another they had reported our B-25s were Japanese. As I sat there circling, I heard the dialogue go on the air. Someone said, "There they are. I have got them." Then someone else said, "Don't shoot, don't shoot. They are ours." He kept insisting, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot! They are ours." Then he said, "Oh, you have just shot down a B-25." An AVG pilot, whose name was Ricketts, a fine guy--and how you could misidentify a B-25 in clear weather, I don't know, but this B-25 somehow or another I believe had passed the airport. He was in a position where the fighters wouldn't expect him to be, but Ricketts got right in behind him, and with

his two wingmen calling over the radio, "Don't shoot! He's ours," Ricketts shot him down. Of course, we all recovered, and everybody came back and landed. I went over to the operations shack. Colonel Haynes, the bomber leader, was sitting there rather dejected and despondent.

At that time we didn't know whether anybody had been killed. Ricketts came back with his element. He had two on his wing, and I can't remember. I believe Carter was one of the pilots on his wing. I must say I would have had a hard time doing it. Ricketts walked up to Colonel Haynes and said, "Sir, I am sorry. I made a terrible mistake." I didn't know what Haynes' reaction was going to be. It was very mature. In a situation like that, what do you say? He said, "Well, son, it's just too bad; it's just too bad. We will talk about it later." Fortunately, everybody got out. The top gunner, when Ricketts fired his first burst, tried to get up into the turret, and apparently the .50 calibers hit the turret, shattered it, cut the gunner along the head, but he wasn't seriously hurt.

By this time, they began to abandon the airplane. They had a crew of five. Four of them jumped out and reported in shortly thereafter. The Chinese picked them up and got them to where they could telephone. They were all fine, but the pilot didn't report in for about 2 days. I had gone on back

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to Ling-ling and the phone rang. It was Lieutenant Skelton. Actually, he was the younger brother of the Skelton who had been one of my instructors on A-stage at the flying school, my very best instructor. Skelton called in, and I said, "Where are you?" He told me where he was which didn't really mean anything.

T: He called in over the net?

A: He got to one of the net phones, called in, and I asked him if he was hurt. No, he was all right. He said, "I just want to let people know I am all right, and I will be in just as soon as I can make it." I said, "Do you know what happened to you?" He said, "Yes. Three Zeros shot me down." (laughter) I said, "Boy, are you going to be surprised when you find out what really happened." And I didn't tell him any more. We lost an airplane, but thank goodness, it wasn't a real tragedy. No one was killed. None of the crew of the airplane were even hurt.

T: That's a miracle.

A: Yes. It's pretty easy to misidentify airplanes. I have seen them shot down before. I have been out with the Navy, and I have seen the Navy just sit there and shoot down a Navy fighter airplane when everybody was saying, "Stop! That's ours. Stop! That's ours." Once they get to shooting

you can't stop them. I think that was the first mission I went on.

T: Would you like to explain now, since we have talked about this net, just briefly what it was?

A: General Chennault was a tactical expert, and he knew the advantage of intelligence. He knew the advantage of knowing where the enemy was when the enemy didn't know where you were. That really is the reason the operation in China was so tremendously successful. It was the reason that with a very small number of airplanes we could be highly effective against very large numbers of Japanese. We always knew where they were, and they never knew where we were until we closed an engagement. Sometimes it didn't work this way. Sometimes we were caught by surprise because there was an element of confusion in the warning net, but most of the time when the Japanese came over, we were ready and waiting. We were at a superior altitude, and if possible, we positioned our airplanes between the sun and the Japanese formation. We were able to dive down into the formation using the superior speed that altitude gave us, the superior firepower of the P-40, and as a result, we were highly effective. They measured off--and certainly this wasn't any careful surveying--a giant grid over that part of China which the Nationalist forces occupied. At vantage points throughout

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the grid, there were observation stations. The observers at these stations either had a telephone with a direct line into the control center or a radio. Then this information was fed back to a control center and was fed to us in our operation room, and we could plot the progress of the Japanese.

Just to give you an illustration of how effective it was, one of the observer stations was on White Cloud Mountain near Canton. The observer looked right down on White Cloud Airport, which was a Japanese staging base. I will never forget, one evening we got a message from this station, "Forty-five Japanese fighters are now in the process of landing at White Cloud Airport." I don't know where Tex was that day. He wasn't there. I said to everybody, "Well, get a good night's sleep because we are going to have visitors in the morning." We were up early. We got up before daylight every morning. We were at Heng-yang. We were up before daylight, had our breakfast, and we were down on the line shortly after daylight. Sure enough about a half hour later, we got a report from the mountain, "Japanese fighters taking off from White Cloud." (laughter) Finally, 45 of them took off. We plotted their course as they came. They came up, and it was about, I guess, a 2-hour flight from Canton up to where we were, maybe not that long. So I said, "Well, we will wait until they are a half hour out, save our gasoline, and when they are a half hour out, we will take

off, and that will give us time to climb to a vantage point."

We were there waiting for them, and sure enough, there were 45 of them. We had five. They came directly to Heng-yang Airport. I had positioned the five airplanes on the other side of the airport. We were up at about 21,000, which was just about as high as we could get the P-40s we had at that time because we went up with a belly tank on. We went up with a full load of ammunition. When they came over, I think they were at 18,000, and we had about 3,000 feet advantage. There were 45 of them, and they came over the airport, and they started a big squirrel-cage operation where they would go around in a big circle. All we did, I just took the five airplanes down, and we went right through it, and with the superior speed, we were firing as we went through. We weren't very effective that day. We claimed one Japanese airplane, and we lost our engineering officer. This was the first time I had ever seen a P-40 shot down. When we went through, we pulled up, and we came through again, and by this time, we were all separated.

T: Who was the engineering officer?

A: I have it written down. I will think of his name in a minute.

T: That's not the time of the famous statement----

A: No. That's later on. There were 45 of them, and there were 5 of us, and we were not very experienced. Tex wasn't there. Tex was the only guy in the outfit that had really had any experience against the Japanese. I had never fought the Japanese before.

I saw this P-40 coming toward me. As a matter of fact, I saw two P-40s coming toward me. By this time we had gotten separated, and the Japanese were all scattered. I headed straight for them. I must have been a half mile away, maybe not that far, when the first P-40 blew up. Just fireballed. It was Lieutenant Minor, the engineering officer. I realized this was a Zero and a P-40, not two P-40s. I thought they were in formation, but he was just a little below him, and he just pulled right up, and he must have started firing when he was 100 feet away. By this time I was on my way by them. I had no chance to turn the airplane and get in a position to shoot. When Minor blew up, he turned, and he dove for the big formation. I lost him, not that I could have been effective against him anyway. They were very agile airplanes. That day we lost Lieutenant Minor, and we only claimed one airplane.

I landed, and our operations building was burning. It wasn't our operations building. Our operations building was nothing but--it wasn't even a lean-to. It had a little lean-to on it, but it was a thatched roof covering hard clay soil. We had chairs and tables in there, and that's where we spent the day. We had our operations plotting board and our telephones, and the Chinese would run the plotting board for us. Right next to it, there was a stone building. It wasn't very large, but it was a nice stone building. I think it had a tile roof. The Japanese had come down to strafe the airdrome; a number of them out of the squirrel cage had come down and strafed the airdrome. We had no antiaircraft, but everybody on the ground was armed, and they were in the slit trenches, and they were all firing.

Apparently, they hit this Japanese officer who was strafing the airfield because there was a bullet wound in his buttocks. He didn't lose control of his airplane. He went away, and then he came back, and he flew directly for that little operations building. He just flew directly into it. He kamikazed the building. It's pretty hard to understand. The building was still on fire, and I walked over there and said, "Where's the pilot?" They said, "He's in there on top of those rocks burning." There he was. There was his body in there. They said, "We got his papers." I said, "How in

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the world did you get his papers and he is still in there?" They said, "The Chinese pulled him out and took his papers and threw him back in." (laughter) He, of course, was completely dead. Even his samurai sword was burned. Of course, this was another mystery, how a man flying an airplane would carry a sword in the cockpit with him. They carried their swords, but his sword was ruined.

T: He didn't have room to use it in a cockpit?

A: No, but I guess this was part of the ceremony. They had the code of the samurai. That was written out. We captured a pilot briefly, and he had on him the code of the samurai. The code said, "If you are wounded or if you can't get your airplane back, put it into something." That's what this pilot did.

T: You had him briefly, the one you captured?

A: Yes.

T: What happened to him?

A: Well, I don't know how this happened. This was on an engagement just a few days later. We wanted to capture a Japanese pilot. We all wanted to talk to him, find out what

he was made of. (laughter) The Chinese reported they had one. He had come down in his parachute, and this was very unusual. The Chinese had an intelligence team that managed the net for us and worked the operations board. They were quite good intelligence officers. We sent the Chinese out to pick him up, and our intelligence officer, who was Lieutenant Cluck [2d Lt Martin S.], went out with them. This is the story that Cluck related when he came back. It had been reported to us that the pilot was intact, and he was when they reported in. Cluck got there just in time to give him a cigarette. He took a few puffs on the cigarette and died. What had happened--and we know this to be true because we got his diary. He had written in the diary that he had been hit, he was in a fight and had been hit, and the airplane exploded, and the next thing he knew he was falling and his parachute opened.

T: Blown out?

A: Well, whether he was blown out or whether he jumped, I don't know, but he got on the ground, and he was captured. The Chinese, I guess, took his gun, but they didn't take a knife he had. Whether he had it concealed, I don't know. Just before Cluck and the Chinese intelligence crew arrived to pick him up, he was in this house and apparently surrounded by Chinese. I guess he was having second thoughts

about what had happened, and he pulled his knife, and he attacked the Chinese. Cluck said there was one Chinese there who was really cut up. This pilot had cut him up.

The Chinese returned the courtesy, and somebody stabbed the Japanese. When Cluck arrived there, he was still alive, and he was in bed, and Cluck lit a cigarette and gave it to him. Cluck said he took a few puffs off the cigarette before he died. That was as close as we came to capturing a Japanese when I was at Heng-yang. The whole time I was there we did capture one when we were down at Ling-ling. We captured one Japanese pilot; that's all we ever took.

T: Did he talk?

A: I really don't know. He was a bomber pilot, and I doubt if he knew very much. He was shot down--I believe Lombard [Maj John D.] shot him down. Somehow or another the airplane didn't burn. Lombard did shoot down an airplane that didn't burn, but I don't know whether this pilot jumped out or what. We got this pilot intact. I don't believe he gave us any information that was of any value. That was the first time I saw the Japanese. People say, "Well what happened the first time you saw them?" I say, "Not very much. There were 45 of them, and only 5 of us." I guess we were lucky. We were unlucky--we lost Lieutenant Minor who was a fine officer.

The next mission that I went on, there was some action, and I didn't see any of it, and I led the mission. We had six P-40s with bombs, and we had six P-40s flying top cover. We had a wonderful boy from South Carolina who was leading one of the elements of three. Our flights were divided into elements of three. We had 4 elements of 3 or 12 P-40s. A boy from South Carolina of Lebanese extraction--and he looked very Lebanese. His name was Henry Elias [1st Lt Henry P.]. He was just a delightful young American boy. He had the broadest southern accent I have ever heard. Here was a boy when you looked at him you thought he was straight out of Lebanon, and he started talking with that South Carolina drawl, and he had a great sense of humor. He was always a bright spot in the squadron. Elias was leading the second element, and he had a boy by the name of Bray [Col Clifton L.]. We escorted the six P-40s, and there were a lot of clouds. I tried to follow and cover the P-40s as they went down. They dropped their bombs, and then they headed on home, no event.

Elias had dropped behind me, and Bray was behind him. I called to them on the radio and said, "Close up. I want you to close up and then we will go home." There were a lot of clouds, and I wanted everybody together because people were always getting lost and going down in a rice paddy somewhere. I kept calling to Elias, "Where are you?"

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He said, "I am back here, and I am trying to get in"--he kept calling to Bray, and in this southern accent, he was saying, "Bray, get in here! You heah! Get in formation!" (laughter) I laughed. Here is this southern voice going, "Bray! Get in here! Close up!" He was really working on Bray. Bray would say, "Elias, I am trying to." He said, "Elias, who is that right behind you with his wheels down?" (laughter) Elias turned around and said, "Oh, my Lord, it's a Jap." Somehow they had sent up one of these little old Japanese monoplane fighters with the fixed gear. Elias got into a combat with him, and he reported that he probably shot him down, but he said, "I can't be certain unless the Chinese intelligence net reports that an airplane was shot down." We didn't have gun cameras. We relied a great deal on the net. This was over, I think, the city of Nan-ning. We had been sent out to bomb an installation at Nan-ning.

About a week after that, we were raided at night. It must have been about 2 or 3 in the morning. They ran through the dormitory where we were staying beating on tin cans with their little chopsticks. That was the air raid. There was a houseboy saying, "Air raid, get up please. Air raid, get up please." So we all got up and put our clothes on and went outside of the hostel and watched. These Japanese bombers--I believe there were six of them that night; I can't remember--came over, and they bombed the airfield.

They cratered the thing, and the next morning, of course, the Chinese filled in all the craters.

(End Tape 8, Side 2)

T: Did you have anyplace for cover?

A: We had slit trenches. We could hear the airplanes, and it was obvious they were heading for the airfield which was about a mile away. They were going to drop their bombs on the airstrip but not on the hostel which was kind of hard to find. The hostel was on the riverbank, and the airfield was maybe 1 or 2 miles away, maybe 3, I don't remember. We could hear the airplanes as they came over, and we looked up, and I could easily see from the ground the blue exhaust flame from the bombers. They didn't shield their exhaust, and you could see the exhaust flame, and you could count. There were six bombers up there. They came over unopposed and dropped their bombs. I turned to Tex and said, "Tex, has the AVG ever tried to get any bombers at night?" He said, "No, we never have." I said, "Well, if they come tomorrow, I am going to make the effort." He said, "Well, fine."

The next night the warning net reported that they had crossed the lines and were headed down into our territory. So we

got up and went out to the airfield. My friend Ajax Baumler was going to go up with me. I told Ajax that I was going to orbit the airfield at 12,000 feet and I wanted him to orbit at 9,000 feet beneath me because, although it looked to me as though the airplanes were up about 15,000 feet when they dropped their bombs, there was no way to be sure. The second time they might change their altitude. They might come in at a lower altitude. You would have great difficulty seeing them looking down. The only way that you could really see them was to be underneath and pick up the exhaust. It was a full moon or near full moon. It was a bright night, but still it is awful hard to see airplanes at night. We orbited the field, and the warning net reported the position of the bombers, and our radio station relayed that information to it. Finally, the radio operator on the ground said, "John, we can hear them now. We haven't sighted them, but they are coming in from the north, and they are headed toward the airfield." Finally, he said, "I see them. They are passing directly over the airfield." I expected to see the bombs explode down below, but they didn't. I was looking up, looking everywhere. I couldn't see the bombers. He said, "There are three of them." They went on south and out of hearing range.

T: Ajax couldn't see them either?

A: Ajax couldn't see them; I couldn't see them. Finally, the radio station on the ground said, "We hear them. It sounds as though they are coming back." Finally, he said, "Yes, they are just east of the airfield, and they are heading north again." I said, "I can't see them," but I kept looking, and all of a sudden, there were six blue spots of flame. They were about 3,000 feet above me at 15,000 feet. I said, "Okay, fellows, I see them. I have got them." Of course, I advanced the throttle. They were headed north now. I fell in behind them, climbing to 15,000 feet as fast as the airplane could get up there. I placed myself down moon thinking I didn't want a reflection off my airplane, and I came up behind them. I was just about in firing position when they made a 180° turn and started on their bomb run on the airfield. So I went around the corner.

T: You overshot them?

A: No. I wasn't in a position. Then they were in a 180° turn so I just followed them around the turn, and when they leveled off and started in on the field, I began--I had the throttle at a very high setting, and I was going fast, following them around the turn, but I was still overtaking them. When they rolled out, then I really began to close on them. At night it is very difficult to judge distances. As I began to pull up on them, I called the radio on the

ground, and I said, "Okay, watch the fireworks."

T: You were counting your chickens before they hatched?

A: I counted my chickens before they hatched. I never will forget, it was the first time I had ever fired a shot in anger. You have some mixed emotions. There must be 15 people up there, and I am going to kill all 15 of them. I remember saying, "Lord, forgive me for what I am about to do." (laughter) I had the left wingman in sight, and I just ran right into the formation. I was going so fast I didn't know what I was doing. I went right in with them. Now, I was trying to slow the airplane down. I was side-slipping so I wouldn't run into him. Before I could pull the trigger, they shot me down, just like that. (laughter) That wasn't the end of the story.

T: They never expected a fighter to come up on them?

A: I don't think they did, and it was probably quite surprising. Here was a P-40 right in the middle of their formation. The gunners could see the shock.

T: They were probably as shocked as you were. (laughter)

A: I was right alongside the right wingman, and he put the top turret on me. This was when I was trying to slow down. I got the airplane slowed down. I had the throttle completely closed and sideslipping it for all I was worth. He put these two .30 caliber machineguns, and he started right at the nose and went right to the tail of the airplane. Bullets went through the cockpit. I got burned in the left arm. He was shooting tracers. It didn't even break the skin, but I had an enormous blister on my left wrist. It hit my radio. I knew the airplane was hit very bad. There was no time to be frightened; there was no time to do anything to react.

Here the airplane was right ahead of me. I pulled the trigger. I am convinced I killed everybody on board, but surprisingly the airplane didn't catch fire. I think the reason it didn't catch fire is that I was firing right down the fuselage. He coated my airplane with oil, the windshield and everything. I remember it was all coated with oil. Then he pulled straight up, and I don't know what happened to him. I claimed him as a probable. We were fighting over a very broad river, and I think the airplane probably fell into the river. Later on we did pull up an engine out of the river, a bomber engine. I think that was probably an engine off this bomber, but there was no way to ever be sure. I kicked right rudder, and I blew up the

second wingman, and then I turned on the leader, and I blew him up, but they dropped bombs, and they hit the airfield, surprisingly. I don't know how many.

T: Where was Ajax all this time? Did he ever close up?

A: No. He was down below. He didn't even see me. The two of them were falling in flames; the first one I didn't know what happened to. I knew I was hurt bad so I started down from 15,000 feet. I was essentially right over the airport. I started down just as steep as I could with the throttle back to get the airplane into the airport. As I made my first circle, I looked back and I saw Ajax's guns go off, and another bomber was on fire. Apparently, there were two formations. So we had three bombers falling in flames. I didn't realize it at the time, but we also had a P-40 falling in flames too. (laughter) I still had control of the airplane but----

T: Were you on fire?

A: Not then. I didn't realize it, but I had a 5-inch hole right through the crankcase of the engine. It was just a little bullet hole where it went in and a 5-inch hole on the other side where it came out. I had lost all the oil. The engine kept running. I got down to where I thought,

"Boy, I have got it made." I had no safety belt in this airplane. There was a safety belt. They had a shoulder harness, and the shoulder harness was made out of such stiff material that it absolutely restricted you in the cockpit. I couldn't turn. I just can't stand not to be free in the cockpit and looking in every direction so I never wore the safety belt.

T: Or the shoulder harness?

A: It had no lap belt at all. It didn't have a lap belt. It just had the shoulder harness. I didn't wear any restraining gear figuring that nobody was ever going to shoot me down. I got down to about 3,000 feet before the airplane began to really develop symptoms. The engine began to backfire; flames began to spurt out from under the hood. I said, "Uh, oh, I am in real trouble." I guess I panicked a little bit because I dove the airplane from 3,000 to make a 180° and come back. I made this 180°, and I was going so fast, and when I headed back to the airfield, I had misjudged. It was dark, and I was apprehensive, maybe panicky, I don't know. I dove the airplane right at the airfield. I was going to skid it in on the belly. The airfield wasn't 5,000 feet long. The surface was clay, but I figured if I just got the thing on the ground and let it skid to a halt I would be all right, but I was going so fast that this was

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impossible. As I got to the edge, I realized I wasn't going to be able to do that so I pulled the nose and I opened the throttle, and the engine still ran. By this time, flames were now coming out of the cowling. The engine was still running, but I was headed right toward the river, and I must have had 120 knots even then. The airplane was in a nose-high angle, but the propeller was still turning, and I was getting a little bit of power, and I got just enough power to drag me to the river.

There was a railroad trestle I had to clear. There was no opportunity to maneuver the airplane. I was very fortunate that when I missed the airport I was pointed toward the river. All I had to do was go straight. The airplane was flying so slow and the attitude of the airplane was such that if I had tried to maneuver it I could have lost control of it. But I got to the river, and I breathed a sigh of relief when I cleared that trestle and got over the top of that. I sat it down in the river. Knowing that I was going to put my face into the gunsight, I braced--I had the throttle cut, and I had my left hand up on the cowling braced as best I could. I had my right hand on the stick. When the airplane hit the water, it was very rapid deceleration. I had the canopy open. We didn't wear helmets and goggles. I had my earphones, and of course when I was trying to slip it into the airfield, trying to slow it down so that I could

put it on its belly, I had lost my earphones. They had just been blown off my head and out of the airplane.

I hit the water, and the canopy crashed shut. Bang! The airplane came to rest with the canopy out of the water, and I just rolled it back--it still worked--undid my parachute and stepped out on the wing, and the airplane sunk. Water put out the fire immediately. I swam over to a log raft that apparently a lumbering operation--they had this great big raft of logs. I guess they were bringing them down to a mill. As I swam over, I looked over, and there was a Chinese man running out across the logs. He was dressed in Western pants and shirt. He reached down and got my hand and pulled me up. I had put my face into the gunsight, but fortunately, it didn't knock me out. I had a bad cut in my forehead. He helped me across, and when I got to the shore, the bank was quite steep. I never will forget, as I came off the logs, there were three Chinese soldiers up there all with their guns on me. I had my little flag out, and in my best Mandarin I was saying, "I am an American fighter pilot." They helped me up the bank and took me up to a small house. Then later they put me in a boat. I wasn't too far from our hostel. Actually, the people on the river-bank near the hostel heard me hit the water. Tex was on the ground, and he heard me hit the water. He thought I was dead. He didn't know I had hit the water. He thought I had just gone into the countryside.

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T: How far from the strip?

A: It may have been a mile or 2 from the strip and maybe 2 miles from the hostel, but when that airplane hit the water, it made a lot of noise. They didn't know I had gone into the river. They finally got a small boat, an oarsman, and he rowed me down the river. He pulled up at a dock right at the hostel. I climbed out on the dock and started to walk to the hostel, and six Japanese bombers came over at low altitude and dropped their bombs and blew up the dock. (laughter) They weren't after me. They intended to bomb the airdrome, but their bombs were long. I got about halfway back to the hostel, and then somebody said, "Why don't you go over to the missionary and have him take care of you?" There was a Methodist missionary.

T: Because of the cut?

A: Yes. Dr. Teotell said I needed stitches, and we still had no doctor. Here we were an American fighting unit in combat, and the closest American military doctor was 500 miles away. The missionary, of course, was completely unplanned, but he happened to be there. He was a wonderful man. I went over, and he sewed me up. It really was a minor injury. I wanted to go right back to the unit because I knew we were going to be hit by fighters the next morning.

I said, "Dr. Teotell, I have got to get back there. We are going to be attacked, and I want to be there." He said, "No, you have got to stay here." So I stayed in his little hospital, and sure enough, about 10 o'clock the next morning, Japanese fighters were overhead. Tex still thought I was dead. So I said to Dr. Teotell, "Okay, you won't let me go, but where can I watch this fight?" He said, "Well, let's go up on the roof." So we went up on the roof of his little house. He had a little spot there where you could look out over the town. I saw these two formations of Japanese Zeros, and they looked to be about 15,000 to 17,000 feet. They actually were at 17,000 feet, and then here came the P-40s from one direction. Tex was leading, and here came the Japanese from the other. We watched them come together, and then we saw the smoke from the machine-guns, and then a few seconds later we heard the----

T: This is Tex and the Japanese?

A: Tex and the Japanese head on. As they passed, the Japanese leader began to trail a long thin plume of smoke, and Tex went on by. I watched him, and it was fascinating to watch him. He had been hit at 17,000 feet, and he started a spiral. He made three complete 360° turns. I estimate that he had dropped down probably to around 12,000 feet when he just pushed that airplane over and came down

vertically. From 12,000 feet that airplane went almost straight down. It's difficult to fly an airplane straight down. It was a very steep vertical approach. The Chinese had bamboo decoy airplanes that they placed around, painted them like P-40s. He tried to dive into one of these. He must have missed it by 40 or 50 feet. He went right straight into the airport.

That was the first kamikaze that I had ever seen. The one that hit the little operations shack, I hadn't seen him. It is very difficult for an American mind to comprehend a kamikaze act. Gee, this guy has thrown away his life for nothing. It was completely opposite to our philosophy. Chennault had this little jingle. He said, "Don't dogfight. You hit and run. It's better to fight and run away and live to fight another day because I need you. I also need your airplane." The Japanese philosophy was, in my opinion, quite wasteful, and they sacrificed some excellent men who could have lived and maybe even gotten home, I don't know.

T: Did he hit Tex in that pass?

A: No, he missed Tex. Tex hit him. I was still at the hospital. Someone reported Tex went over after he came down and looked at the wreckage. The Japanese pilot was just

in bits and pieces. Somebody reported Tex took the toe of his boot and pushed a little piece aside and said, "Buddy, just want you to know two can play this game." (laughter) Tex is a very serious guy and very loyal, and he was very upset because he thought I was dead. Tex is one of the most loyal men to his friends that I have ever known, really deep and sincere feeling of loyalty to his friends and patriotism to his country. In my opinion he is not only a topflight pilot but a real first-class American.

T: You were still at the mission?

A: Late that afternoon I just insisted that I wanted to go home, which I did. I had no problem. I had to go back to Dr. Teotell 3 or 4 days later, and he took the stitches out.

T: What did you do, just walk in?

A: Just walked in, and everybody said, "There's old John. He's home again." (laughter) It not only happened to me, it happened to a lot of them. Guys would show up. They would say, "We will never hear from him again." The Chinese were wonderful in getting our people back.

Another amazing thing, Heng-yang wasn't really a big city. It had a wall, and both bombers fell within the walls of

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city. I was told that nobody got killed. Not a Chinese was killed. I don't know how in the world that happened. The Chinese were wonderful. They sent me baskets of fruit and flowers and embroidered silk.

T: Every time you shot down a Japanese?

A: Not every time. This was the first time we had stopped a night raid. The first time we had ever hit them at night. After that, the Japanese didn't come back for almost a year. We stopped the night raids.

T: Was that one of the first night intercepts?

A: That was the first one. After the AVG was disbanded, that was the first airplane the USAF shot down. I thought it was, but then you remember I told you about Elias getting in a fight. Chennault had a good intelligence net. The Chinese didn't like the Japanese at all. So there was a Chinese intelligence net. The Chinese intelligence net--we finally about a month later got a report out of Nan-ning--I think that's where it came from--from the intelligence recording the fighter over the city and the time and the bombing and one Japanese airplane had been shot down. By this time Elias was dead. He had been in a fight east of Heng-yang where we had sent some fighters to support the Chinese on

the ground. They got into a fight with some Zeros, and Elias was hit, and he jumped. We got his body back, but the Chinese reported that the Japanese fighter had strafed him in his parachute, and he was dead when he hit the ground. We awarded Elias a victory, and he shot down the first airplane, or we have to assume that he did. We were very happy to give the credit to Elias; I was happy to be alive myself. Here was a guy who gave his life. That's the way life went.

Another interesting thing. There were two other AVG boys that stayed, Petach [Maj John E.] and Shamblin [Arnold]. They just stayed as pilots to kind of help during the interim period. Petach had married one of the AVG nurses who still is alive. She goes to all the AVG reunions. Then another boy by the name of Shamblin. This was when I was at Ling-ling but they were with Tex in the 75th. The Chinese Army had asked for some support and asked that we bomb a town the Japanese were using as a headquarters. It was a small village. I wasn't on the mission, but the people who were along on the flight related it. This is very unusual because antiaircraft didn't shoot down too many. We got some shot down. Six P-40s carrying 500-pound bombs made a bombing run on this village, one at a time, the six airplanes.

(End Tape 9, Side 1)

A: All of the six airplanes had delivered their bombs, but neither Petach nor Shamblin recovered from the bombing run. They both went in. Although the flight reported not seeing any antiaircraft fire, it is quite probable small arms fire hit them both. It's the only explanation. There certainly was no reason for them----

T: It was a heck of a coincidence, wasn't it?

A: Both of them were AVG boys. Both of them were ready to go home. They just stayed to kind of help out. It was the two AVG boys that were killed on this raid.

T: Weird.

A: Well, that's the way life went at Heng-yang. Essentially we kept no records. We didn't have any paper. There was just no paper to keep records on. I never kept a record of flying time or missions. I had some kind of records. I think I had 75 or 100 missions. I think I had about 100 missions the year I was in China, which isn't very many.

T: You wouldn't go up unless----

A: As a matter of fact, there were times when our gas was so short that Chennault said no flying.

T: He even sent back a bunch of young pilots.

A: Yes. That wasn't because we were short of gasoline. That was because the pilots were short of experience.

T: He was losing so many airplanes trying to train people over there.

A: I insisted I be allowed to have one flight per pilot per week because it is essential to keep up the proficiency. I tried to keep the squadron at the highest level of efficiency. I tried to understand the capability of the pilots. Every pilot that reported for duty to the 75th Fighter Squadron had to go up and fly formation on my wing, and then he had to go through mock air-to-air combat with me. There is no way really to get the feel of what the boy can do better than seeing if he could follow you through a loop, get him into tight individual combat, and see how he handles his airplane. It was difficult to keep up your proficiency, particularly when many of the pilots who reported to duty were really pilots of very low flying hours. I found until the pilot got 500 hours of experience under his belt it was very difficult to rely on him. They couldn't navigate.

We fought mostly over our own airdrome.

If we were fighting away from our airdrome, we either fought over Canton and Hong Kong or up over the Hankow area. There was a railroad leading from Canton to Heng-yang, and there was a railroad leading from Hankow to Heng-yang. There was a river leading from Canton to Kweilin. Actually, you had to follow two rivers. You had to make the right turn at the right time. I put out an order that none of my pilots returning from one of the combat areas would ever leave a river or railroad. If he were short of fuel, he would never leave the river or railroad. They said, "Suppose we are so short that we can't make it home?" I said, "I don't want you cutting across. If you cut across, there are no landmarks, and you have proven to me time and again that you are going to get lost and you are going to put your airplane down on its belly out in the boondocks. Then it's almost impossible to get it back, but if you have to put your airplane in on its belly alongside the railroad track, it is very easy to salvage the airplane and bring it home." On several occasions I had--on two occasions, I had pilots who broke my rule. Both of them got lost.

Finally, I began to get more experienced pilots into the squadron. Chennault sent this group of young pilots back to the States because they didn't have enough flying experience

or flying time to be effective in a theater like China. The maps were poor and landmarks were few. Landmarks were many, but they were very difficult to identify. We got some pilots from Panama, all of which had about 2,000 hours of flying experience. Then that made a tremendous difference in the way the squadron was able to perform. Not that the low-time boys weren't good, they just hadn't had the experience. Of course, as they got more experience, they got better. It was pretty costly trying to build up flying experience and teach a person to fly 9,000 miles from the United States. Airplanes were precious. We couldn't afford to lose them.

T: Was becoming an ace a real desire for you?

A: No. I am not even sure it was on my mind. It was an exciting business. You knew it was going to go on for a long time so you just did what you had to do. Some people who should have been aces or could have been aces easily never became aces simply because they didn't have an opportunity to get into the air-to-air part of the business. The air-to-ground was far more hazardous. Air-to-air was relatively safe, but the air-to-ground business was formidable, particularly if you had to go into a heavily defended place. No, I don't think I gave much consideration to becoming an ace.

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T: In a war situation, most people don't think of killing as a personal thing, especially in the air; however, what were your thoughts prior to an engagement and afterwards?

A: I think my thoughts were conditioned by my first engagement where I got shot down. (laughter) I was always apprehensive before going into an engagement. Once in it, all that left because you were busy. It was the anticipation, like sitting on a sideline and waiting to get into the football game, multiplied 100 times. I must say it was very exciting, tremendously stimulating. I can remember a number of times having my feet shake on the pedals. I used to say, "Gee, I am sure glad I am not a bomber pilot. I would hate to sit here and let my copilot see me tremble." (laughter) Once you were engaged, that all left.

T: Like the first lick in a football game?

A: Yes. It's all over. Then you have something to do. Most of the apprehension is anticipation, thinking about it.

T: How about afterwards, sir?

A: A great feeling of relief and relaxation--I lived through it; I am going to be able to go home and lie about it. (laughter) No, a great feeling, particularly when you are

going in on a ground attack where you know you have a lot of antiaircraft. I got through that one.

T: How much of your time was spent air-to-ground versus air-to-air? Do you have a rough guess?

A: There may have been two air-to-ground for every air-to-air mission. A lot of our air-to-air missions were not air-to-air at all. We were spooked--Japanese in the warning net, airplanes taking off. They would disappear; then you would go down again. In terms of real missions I would say the air-to-air was probably half. One of the reasons was when I was there we really weren't supporting an army. The Chinese Army was not active. Later, the Japanese made a push down and took the eastern bases. There I don't know what the ratio was but almost 100 percent air-to-ground, not much air-to-air then. It depended on the situation.

T: Compared to the P-51, was the P-40 a better air-to-ground machine?

A: No. I would think they were both about the same. The P-51 was a sturdy airplane too.

T: It would take the punishment?

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A: Yes. Both were liquid-cooled. If you lost your coolant in either airplane, you only had a few minutes before you were going to have to get out. The airplane which I would liked to have had would have been the P-47 although the P-47 was a high-altitude airplane. We didn't have any real requirement for high altitude. The P-47 was long-range. It meant that we could get to targets that we couldn't reach with the P-40. It was extremely rugged. The P-47 would take lots more punishment than the liquid-cooled aircraft. It had eight machineguns. I used to say, "I am such a poor shot, two more guns would be a great improvement."

T: Before you left China, did you receive any new P-40s?

A: The AVG had P-40Bs; I believe that was the series they had. The airplane I brought over was a P-40E. I believe the latest P-40 we got just before I left was the P-40K, which was really a very good airplane. There wasn't much change between the P-40K and the P-40E except when the K came along they worked the bugs out of the airplane and made improvements in it. It was a much better aircraft. The airplane was very reliable. It would take a beating. That first night the first rounds from the machineguns hit the propeller. There were several holes in the propeller. There was one hole right through the engine. There were several rounds that hit in the cockpit.

T: Did you recover that airplane?

A: Sergeant Brewer was the one who was at Ling-ling with me that was so sick.

T: The line chief?

A: The line chief. He got a raft of some kind or a barge of some kind and found the airplane and got a line on it and pulled it up, and a month later, we had it flying again.

T: Isn't it absolutely amazing what GIs can do?

A: Yes. I saw the engine. I saw the hole in the engine; I saw the hole in the propeller, and one of the bullets went through the seat and into my parachute. It came in from the side, went right through the seat, and I imagine it stopped in the parachute. I never recovered the parachute. There was just a great big bullet hole through the side of the airplane. I said I didn't see the airplane. I did see parts of it they pulled up. The last bullets hit behind the cockpit and I guess on out the tail. I never bothered to count the number of holes in the airplane. At least the airplane kept flying until I shot down three airplanes although I didn't claim the third one. I am positive the first airplane was destroyed.

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T: Going back to that particular story, you ran into the young Chinese fellow that pulled you from the river some years later?

A: Yes.

T: Tell me that story.

A: I don't know whether this makes good history, but it is kind of interesting. After the war, from time to time, people would say, "Tell us about some of your missions." This mission has received some publicity. It has been written up in a number of the books that people write on the war in China. When I say, "I went into the river, and the Chinese pulled me out," they say, "Well, have you ever seen the Chinese?" I said, "Gee, out of 600 million Chinese, you have got to be a Communist or dead. No, I never saw him." I guess it was 15 or 20 years ago, I can't remember, that Northrop bought several small research companies from American Standard. They were located in the Boston area. Sometime after we bought them, I don't know when, I was in the East, and I decided I would go up and see what we had bought and get familiar with their operations and see if there was any way in which I could be of help to them in my role as customer relations for the corporation.

One of the companies built products supporting the nuclear sub program, the Marine Products Division. The general manager was showing me around, and he took me in and introduced me to the chief engineer. When we walked in, there were two other engineers there. The chief engineer was explaining something to them on the blackboard. He turned around and said, "Hello, I will be with you in a minute." He was Chinese. When he was through and the other two people had left, we chatted for a few minutes. I said, "Dr. Chen, I can tell by your accent that you weren't born in America. Were you born on the mainland?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Where?" It was someplace that I didn't know about. He said, "Have you ever been to the mainland?" I said, "Yes, I was there with General Chennault." He said, "Where were you stationed?" "Several places, Heng-yang." He said, "Well, I was actually very near Heng-yang during the war." I said, "Well, I was there for quite sometime." He said, "Were you a bomber pilot?" I said, "No, I was a fighter pilot. I actually became commander of that squadron." He looked at me and said, "Are you John Alison?" I said, "Yes, I am John Alison." He said, "We have met." I said, "Well, I don't remember." He said, "I pulled you out of the river." I said, "Oh, my goodness. I don't believe it." He said, "Yes, I did." I said, "Tell me why you were there and how you got here." He said, "Well, I had graduated from an engineering school in China, and I managed a small factory

very close to where you went into the river. I was out observing the fight. When you came down, I was right there where you went in." He described it to me, and there was no doubt he had been there. I said, "Well, goodness, how in the world did you ever get here?" He said, "When the Communists took the mainland, I got to Hong Kong. I got a visa to come to the United States, and I got my master's degree, and then I got my PhD, and here I am." We are still good friends. He now manages the factory in Taiwan.

T: Is there anything else you would like to say about Colonel Hill?

A: He was an expert combat pilot. He was really one of the best. Tex always felt he wasn't a good pilot. He said, "You know, I have a hard time landing an airplane right." I said, "Oh, Lord, Tex, if I could shoot like you, I wouldn't care how I landed an airplane." Actually, he was a very good pilot. He was an excellent marksman. Of course, that is something that is very important in this business. Tex was a good leader simply because he was a good performer and everybody looked up to him. He was such a good friend that people were willing to follow Tex. Well, that's not a good reason for following. They followed him because he was professionally competent and everybody knew that when the chips were down Tex was going to be there.

That's the basic ingredient of leadership. When I became squadron commander, I made it a point that I would lead every difficult mission. On some of the others, I would let some of the other fellows in the squadron lead, and I would fly back in one of the wing positions. If you are going to be a squadron commander, you are not going to be a leader unless you are out there in front of the troops. Also, I flew with each of the pilots individually, and I insisted they fight me. Then we would get on the ground, and we would discuss it. I would tell them what I thought they did wrong. That was our business. Administration was handled ably by our noncommissioned officers, but we didn't do much because, as I said, we didn't have any paper. We had enough to get by. I guess there are a number of ways to lead. There are leaders who can get things out of people by demanding. Then there is another way--you can get things out of people by example. I have never really liked confrontations, particularly between friends, and try to avoid them. You can avoid them really by example. I tried to set an example in the airplane, and I was very fortunate that I could do it. On the ground, I was quite lenient.

I had a redheaded first sergeant by the name of Ervin, "Red" Ervin. He was another fine man, kind of a rough guy, but a complete American and a complete patriot. He believed all of the things that you read in the patriotic history

books, maybe not in the modern ones, but in the old-fashioned history books. Red was a believer in that and conscientious about directing the men. We became good friends. He was first sergeant for Tex, and then he was my first sergeant. Although he wasn't from the South, he had kind of a southern accent. He would say, "Suh." (laughter) I never will forget, a number of occasions when I had something I wanted to tell the men, Red would be standing behind me. If he didn't think I was forceful enough--he was quite a bit taller--he would look down at the men and say, "That's an order." (laughter) I used to throw back my head and laugh and say, "Yes, fellows, that's an order." As I said, I never had any disciplinary problems. Ajax would get drunk, and I should have disciplined him. Tex Hill should have disciplined him, but he flew with us, and he fought with us. He was a brave guy. In the environment that we were in, formal discipline was difficult.

There was one occasion, and this was when Tex was leaving. That's when we should have lowered the boom on Ajax. We were at Chan-yi, which was north of Kun-ming, and I got a message from Chennault saying that a column of Japanese tanks had been spotted coming up the Burma Road. He wanted me to take six airplanes and take off at dawn the following morning. I had to land at a place called Yunnani, refuel, and then go down and stop these tanks. The Japanese tanks

in that area were light vehicles. I guess more like armored cars. The .50 caliber was effective against them. The problem was finding them, but they were supposed to be coming up the Burma Road.

The next morning, up before daylight, briefed the mission. Six airplanes were down on the line warming up. We walked out of the operations shack, the five other pilots and myself, and walked across the field. It was several hundred yards to the airplanes. The crew chiefs were just shutting them down. They had warmed them up. It was just dawn, and I got out there, and I heard one airplane start up, and it pulled out onto the airstrip, and I saw two--we were at the airplanes then--enlisted men run and jump on the wing, and the airplane throttle was open. The enlisted men were blown off onto the ground, and I knew what had happened. I said, "Oh, Lord." I didn't know he was drunk, but I just figured, "Okay, Ajax has been drunk, and he is in that airplane."

He went down the field and took off. He got up to about 400 feet and made a left turn and started for the rice paddies. He recovered and went around and landed, just went around the field, came back in, landed, and I could see him. His cockpit was open; he had never pulled his gear up. He landed the airplane. He rolled down--I said, "Thank God, he is on the ground." He turned it around and started back up

to where we were parked. I could see him; his head out of the cockpit; his hair was blowing; and here he came. He didn't realize how fast the airplane was going. I shouted to everybody, "Run for your lives! Get out of the way! Here he comes!" He came up the runway. He was still on the runway. We were parked to the side of the runway, but there was a drainage ditch right at the end. I just said, "Oh, Lord!" Right at the last minute, he saw the drainage ditch, kicked hard left rudder, and ran through the line of airplanes. When the dust cleared and airplane parts stopped falling, there were two airplanes locked together. Full of fuel--didn't burn. I saw him. He was on the other side and running. He jumped down into the rice paddies, water up to his knees, running across the rice paddies.

I said, "Tell the line chief to send somebody out and have them pick him up and take him up to the doctor." I said, "Have you got two more airplanes?" He said, "Yes, I think I have two more airplanes I can get you back in the shop. We were working on them last night, and I believe they are ready." That was all my airplanes. I had eight airplanes that would fly that day. Two of them were there, and I didn't know how badly they were damaged. Actually, when we got into it, we lost two wings. The airplanes were dented up. I guess we lost a propeller, but we lost two wings. We had one of them flying again in just a few days. Then we

had a lot of spare parts from the other one. They finally got me two more airplanes. This was the day that I should have stayed in bed. We flew to Yunnani. I was refueled at Yunnani, and I took off to head down to Burma. The strip at Yunnani was wide enough for single airplane takeoff.

(End Tape 9, Side 2)

A: I took off. I pulled up to the left and waited for the remnants of my flight to get airborne. When I say remnants, after we had refueled at Yunnani, one of the airplanes failed to start. The pilot couldn't get it started. As we taxied out, another airplane, flown by Lieutenant Grossclose, didn't see one of these big stone rollers the Chinese used to repair the surface of the runway, and he hit the roller. His airplane wasn't badly damaged, but it was damaged enough so that it couldn't fly. So four of us were out on the end of the runway. When I took off, I waited for the other three to get airborne. I don't know whether it was the second or the third man. I watched him as he rolled down the runway. He got close to the end, and his airplane never lifted off. He just ran right off the end of the runway, and he hit the rice paddies, and the water was going in every direction. So I lost another airplane. But now I had three airplanes airborne out of the eight I started with in the morning. (laughter) I hadn't seen a Jap yet

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and had already dropped five airplanes. Oh, Lord, I felt bad. I said, "Okay, now I have just got to go on."

I crossed the Burma border and started down the Burma Road, and there was just a solid bank of clouds. I dead reckoned for awhile thinking that maybe--this was in mountains, and they were high mountains. You have to go up to 12,000 feet to clear the ridges. Then the deep gorges. I guess I went 100 miles, maybe 75 or 100 miles, and I found a big hole. I looked down, and right down below me I could see the road. It was deep and down in the valley. I decided maybe I might be able to get down through that hole and get underneath although I never should have tried it because the mountains were so steep. I did let down into the hole with my three airplanes. I got down about as far as I could go and realized I couldn't go any further. Not only that, but this was very foolish. I had already lost enough airplanes that day; I wasn't going to lose any more.

So in complete frustration, I climbed back up and headed back to Kun-ming. I had to report to General Chennault, and I just couldn't figure what kind of stories I was going to make up to tell the general. As I approached Kun-ming, I saw off in the distance; here came an airplane, and it was Tex. He had been up to Chungking just prior to being sent home. He flew alongside; he looked at me, and I just

put my finger up to my head and went "Bang!" (laughter) He shook his head. He knew something serious had happened. We landed, and he said, "John, what happened?" I said, "Tex, I have got to go see the old man. Please come with me," because Tex was one of Chennault's favorites. I said, "I don't know what to tell him. Maybe you can help me." He said, "Well, what happened?" I said, "Tex, let me tell you what happened first." I told him about Ajax. (laughter) I said, "What happened at Yunnani couldn't be helped. Two airplanes had mechanical failure, and we are pushing the airplanes too much. Grossclose just made a stupid error. He wasn't watching where he was going. What I am concerned about is Ajax. If we tell Chennault what happened, he has got to court-martial him. He's through. So the question is, is Ajax worth saving?" Well, neither Tex nor I had had enough experience with alcoholics to know that you never really save an alcoholic. Ajax was worth saving if he could have been saved, but the way we did it was exactly the wrong way.

We went in, and we told General Chennault Ajax had damaged the two airplanes in a taxi accident. Well, General Chennault was a wise man. He knew what happened. He knew exactly, and he really didn't want us to tell him what happened. I know he didn't want to court-martial Ajax. In retrospect now, knowing Chennault, knowing the man, he had to know.

How in the world did you say, "Ajax damaged two P-40s in a taxi accident"? The first question he should have asked us, "Well, what in the hell was he doing taxiing airplanes at that hour of the morning?" So I am absolutely certain Chennault knew what happened. He never asked us a question, just accepted it. It must have been hard for him to accept, but he did. He tried awfully hard with Ajax, but even he didn't make it. Ajax finally slid down the tube lubricated by the bottle. He did survive. He actually became squadron commander. He was good, and he could lead. He was bright.

T: How old a man was he by this time, sir?

A: Oh, Ajax may have been a year or two older than I. He wasn't very old. I never will forget. Onetime, I don't know where I was, out in the boondocks somewhere. There was a Chinese restaurant in Kun-ming that served the world's greatest fried rice. By this time I had developed a taste for fried rice. I hadn't had any good fried rice in a few days. I wanted to go down and have some fried rice. So we met in Ajax's room. There were four of us. We had two jeeps. We made a mistake though. Ajax had a drink. I didn't think this would hurt him. I had a drink, and we drank an absinthe made by the French monks. The French had a mission there in some Catholic order. They made spirits. They made this absinthe, and you would pour it into a glass

of water, and it would turn white. We called it Kun-ming milk. So we had to have a drink of Kun-ming milk before we went and had the fried rice, and that's where we made our mistake.

Ajax only had one drink. This was enough to set him off. I said, "I will take Ajax. I got him to the jeep and I got him in the jeep. I figured if we got some food in him he would be all right. We got down to the restaurant, and I couldn't get him out of the jeep. I just couldn't get him out of the jeep. I was really pretty sore now because I was hungry and wanted that fried rice. The mess had closed down back at the camp, and here I had to take him back to camp without anything to eat. So we drove back, and we got in the camp. This was, I guess, about 9:00 or 9:30. So he goes and calls the first sergeant at the top of his voice from the little street in the hostel. The sergeant said, "What is it major?" He said, "Sergeant, come out here and call out the troops." I said, "Sergeant, don't you come out that door. This is Major Alison. You stay right where you are." Ajax said, "Sergeant, if you disobey a direct order, I will court-martial you." I said, "Sergeant, if you obey a direct order, I will court-martial you." (laughter) I said, "You had better stay in there because I am sober."

Finally, I steered Ajax--I pushed him, and I pulled him.

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He was bigger than I was. I pushed him, and I pulled him, and I bullied him. Finally, I got him into his room, and I got him in his bed, and I laid him on his bed, and I said, "Ajax, in heaven's name, why in the hell do you do this?" He looked up at me and said, "John, what's the use? What's life worth? What's the use?" I said, "Well, Ajax, that's too deep a subject for me tonight. Pull up the covers and go to sleep." So he pulled up the covers and went to sleep. I don't know what bothered Ajax, but something psychological, I guess, in his makeup caused him to drink, or maybe alcoholism is a physical problem. I don't know, but it's a shame because it sure ruined a great pilot.

T: Was he your worst problem as the commander of the squadron?

A: Yes, I guess he was. He finally got to the point where he wasn't effective. Then General Chennault sent him back to the States.

T: This was after you had left and he had taken over the squadron?

A: He didn't take over my squadron. I think Ajax had the 74th Squadron. He was capable. He was a good leader when he was sober, and he was a good operations officer.

T: How often did he go off on one of these binges?

A: Not very often, but when he did--I had him when I went back to the States. I am a sucker. I didn't court-martial him.

T: Where did you get him? At the 367th at Hamilton?

A: The 367th. I was at Hamilton. I had come back from China. I had a cadre that I brought back--I had five guys. One had been with the RAF, and four of us came from China, and we were the nucleus of the 367th Fighter Group which was organized at Hamilton to go to England prior to the invasion. I was with it about a month before General Arnold pulled me away for this Air Commando operation. I got a pitiful letter saying, "John, I am in trouble." He was at Wright Field. He said, "They are going to court-martial me. This time they are really going to court-martial me, but I can beat it if I can get a transfer, if I can get someone to accept me. If you will take me into your group, they won't court-martial me. If you will, I will give you the pledge." So sucker that I was.

I confided in Gen Ned Schramm, who was the commanding general of the Fourth Air Force and was a wonderful human being and had been one of the squadron commanders in the 8th Group when I reported out of the flying school for duty. I loved General Schramm, and he was a good pilot and a good

leader and a human being. He understood human frailties. I said, "What should I do?" He said, "Well, Johnny, you know better, but I can see that you want to do it so bring him on out." I authorized the transfer of Baumler from Wright Field to my group. Before the papers went through and he could arrive--the assignment was made--General Arnold had pulled me back and put me in this Air Commando. I said, "Oh, Lord, I can't stick people who don't know Ajax with Ajax. I can't inflict Ajax on the Fourth Air Force. Even I can't handle him, but I am better prepared for it than they are." The Air Commando group was a very high-priority group, and we just essentially wrote our own ticket. So I got the personnel people working on it, and I said, "Look, turn this transfer around and get him transferred to me." So he came with me in the Air Commando group.

I gave him a technical job, which was very good. We were equipping our airplanes with rockets. As a matter of fact, I think we were the first airplanes to go overseas with the rockets, the 3-inch rocket. I put him on the program, testing, logistics, and shipping them to India. He did a great job. Everybody kept saying what a great guy Ajax was and what a great worker. He was a good worker. I just kept praying that he would stay on the wagon but fearing that he wouldn't. By this time I was beginning to become a little more realistic about alcohol and people whose systems can't

tolerate it. Nobody told me, and I didn't want to inquire, and he wasn't causing any trouble.

So we embarked for overseas, and I was at Miami at the port getting ready to fly to South America and then across the Atlantic to India. This was in the Ferry Command. We were staging people through, and the administrative officer was there, Sam Smith. Sam said, "John, I have some bad news for you." I said, "What is it?" He said, "Ajax." I said, "Well, he fell off the wagon, didn't he?" He said, "He sure did. You know, he fell off slightly once or twice before, but we didn't tell you because we knew the pact you had with him." I had told Ajax, "One drink and we are through." I said, "Well, okay, what did he do?" He said, "Last night he was in the officers club at Goldsboro, North Carolina," which was a staging point for our group. He said he had a few drinks. I said, "Okay, tell me what did he do?" He said, "He pulled his hunting knife and stabbed Dr. Tullick." I said, "Oh, Lord. Is Tullick seriously hurt?" He said, "No. He stabbed him in the leg." (laughter) Ajax would draw his weapon. He would draw his .45 and cock it. It was just fortunate that he never killed anyone, but he cut Tullick, not badly. I said, "Okay, Sam. I can't carry that responsibility overseas. Get rid of him. I don't care what you do with him, just get rid of him. He is my friend. I don't want to court-martial him because he is really a

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medical problem. So what you do with him, I don't care. Just get rid of him."

I don't believe I ever saw Ajax after that. I followed his career all the way to his departure from this earth. He was busted from major, and he enlisted. I think he moved from buck sergeant to master sergeant to buck sergeant to master sergeant. He gained quite a bit of fame. He was on one of the famous airstrips in Korea. He was a GCA [ground controlled approach] final controller. Of course, he was an expert at it. He was a pilot and a good pilot to begin with, and he was a capable man. They said Ajax would bring those fighters in under the worst conditions and get them on the runway, talk the pilots down. He came back and retired as a master sergeant and several years ago died from some cause. I don't know what. Maybe he drank himself to death, I really don't know.

T: Were you one to have a premonition that someone wouldn't make it?

A: Yes. There were three guys that I had a feeling wouldn't make it. One wasn't in my squadron. His name was Daniels [2d Lt Patrick H. III]. He was in the 76th Squadron, and he was good. He had been a Marine, and he was all man, and he was macho. He was very macho, but he was pushing beyond

his capability. He was in the 76th, but he knew that I took every pilot in the 75th up and fought with him. One of the things he was just set on doing was going up with me and beating me. I would have done it. I would have gone up with him, but I was at an airbase 90 miles away, and I just didn't have the time. This guy was so eager and he was pressing so hard that I just had a premonition he was going to get killed, and he did. He certainly had guts, and he was brave, and he was competent.

I had been stationed at Yunnani. I had the squadron at Yunnani, and he had been on a strafing mission down on the Burma Road. I didn't see him when he came by, but someone told me he just stopped and had his airplane refueled and was on his way. He was wounded. I said, "How badly was he wounded?" Apparently, he had been strafing this target and was banking to the left, and a machinegun bullet went through the flesh of his upper arm, and he was looking out of the canopy, and took his throat mike off of his throat. When he landed at Yunnani, he had a big wound. My doctor tried to get him to stay, but he wouldn't stay. The doctor put a big bandage on it and wrapped it up tight. He said, "No, I want to go home." He got in his airplane and flew on to Kun-ming. He was apparently hit by antiaircraft fire. He was on a dive-bombing run. Nobody knows exactly what happened, but apparently he was hit because his airplane

exploded. Really, that wasn't Daniels' fault; that was just bad luck. So my premonition had no basis. He really wasn't killed because he did something foolish, but I had a feeling that Daniels wouldn't make it.

I had two boys--one was Burrall Barnum [Capt]. He was one of my pilots, and he was a delightful guy and a brash guy, but he was pushing it. I just had a feeling that something was going to happen to Burrall. He was shot down in air-to-air combat. John Hampshire, who, I guess, was one of the best pilots we had in the whole theater. John and I were close friends. I was always saying, "John, slow down just a little." There was nothing in the world you could do to slow Johnny Hampshire down. He just wasn't built that way. He was actually killed on a flight with me. On this flight, we had three airplanes on the deck, and my two wingmen and I were right in behind him getting ready to shoot when I saw this hail of bullets about 100 feet off the ground, a hail of bullets coming up in front of my airplane. Here comes this P-40 zooming up right in front of my--by this time I had started to fire. As a result, we both missed the leader. There were three Japanese, and there were three of us. My two wingmen both fireballed the two Jap wingmen. They exploded and hit. Neither Hampshire nor I hit the leader. I chased him on up into the clouds. We were fighting under a cloud cover. He fell out, and I fell out several times.

Apparently, finally he jumped out. One Japanese pilot jumped out. We assumed that it was this pilot, but when he did this, Elmer Richardson [Col Elmer W.] and I were both chasing him. I didn't see him, but he jumped out, and the Chinese Army was right underneath us. They reported he jumped out and his airplane crashed. We credited Elmer Richardson with the victory on that one.

T: Where did Hampshire go after he pulled up under you and started firing?

A: That's a long story, and it's a tremendous story, and I don't want to get into it because I have written that story for Air Force Magazine. I have a copy of it, and I will give you a Xerox copy of it. It tells all about that flight and how Hampshire was hit. We were fighting over the edge of a river, and he apparently started home, got his airplane back somewhere near Chang-sha, which was a Chinese headquarters, and had to ditch it. We got a very brief wire from the Chinese Army saying, "American pilot hit in stomach; guts running out; send doctor quick." So we were home. We stuffed the doctor in the baggage compartment of a fighter, and we had Joe Griffin [Col Joseph H.] fly the fighter up. The doctor, with his bag of tools, was going to jump out and help John. They never got there. Hampshire died long before they could have reached him anyway, and they were

lost, and I had a big story to tell Chennault that night. I have put all that down, and it's a fascinating story.

T: Hampshire had 13 or 14 kills.

A: I gave him credit for his 14th airplane that day. This was the fight we started over our airport. When we left and pursued the Japanese formation, which by this time was out of sight, he came alongside, and he told me he had shot down an airplane, and he told me that it had fallen right off the end of the runway and we could find it there, which we did. That was his 13th victory. "Charlie" Gordon [Capt Mathew M., Jr.] went along with us. There were about six of us, I believe. I got six together, and we started chasing the Japanese north. Charlie Gordon went along for the ride. His guns had jammed, and he couldn't fire. So when we were fighting, he was just circling watching us fight. One of the Japanese airplanes dove headfirst into the river or the lake. Charlie witnessed it. He said, "There is no question. That Japanese Zero headfirst hit the water." No pilot claimed to have shot down an airplane that fell into the water so I assumed that airplane had been shot down by John Hampshire. It was definitely destroyed. Charlie was a very reliable witness. We had gotten into an argument. Somebody had seen a P-40 land in the water, and there was an argument as to whether they were

talking about the same airplane, but Gordon said there could be no mistake. He said not only was it a Zero, but it went vertically right into the water. I credited John with his 14th airplane posthumously. He was a great pilot, and he was a great shot, a wonderful boy.

T: You are officially credited with how many victories?

A: Six and one destroyed on the ground. That was almost my seventh. I thought I was going to get him before he touched down on the runway, but I was just a little late.

T: I have seen accounts where you are accredited with as many as ten.

A: That's correct, and that's wrong. Records get mixed up. Somebody counts probables and things of this kind. For example, when I shot down the two bombers, I am sure I shot down three, but I claimed two. I don't know how they have added them, but the record is wrong. The correct record is six and one on the ground.

T: That's what you personally claim?

A: Yes.

(End Tape 10, Side 1)

A: Probables don't count.

T: I had asked you earlier what the problems were between Generals Chennault and Bissell and why they could not get along. If you would like to, we could touch on that now.

A: That was a small problem. I really don't know the basis of their disagreements. I have to assume that they were just different people. There are all kinds of stories written about the theater, about who was right and who was wrong. It really doesn't make much difference; we lost. America lost. It is my opinion that these personal disagreements played a large role in our future course of action. When I am asked to explain it, I point out in the China theater when I was there the top personalities were Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who was the leader of Nationalist China, and Gen Joseph W. Stilwell, who was the top United States representative to China. They didn't get along. For the sake of illustration, you could even say that Stilwell hated Chiang and Chiang hated Stilwell. Those words, I know, are too strong, but if you read The Stilwell Papers, which were edited by "Teddy" White [Theodore H.], it was obvious that there was a terrible bitterness toward Chiang Kai-shek in Gen Joseph Stilwell's heart. With this kind of

bitterness, I just don't know how you can establish a relationship, an allied relationship.

Under General Stilwell, General Chennault was the second-ranking US military man in the theater. He was an airman in what was primarily an air war at that time. Here again, Stilwell and Chennault didn't get along. For the purposes of illustration, I want to exaggerate again. Stilwell hated Chennault, and Chennault hated Stilwell. To qualify that, those words are too strong. There were really almost bitter disagreements between the two top Americans in the theater. Why General Arnold sent General Clayton Bissell with his personality into the theater and put General Bissell over Chennault, between Chennault and Stilwell, I really don't know. Here again, Bissell and Chennault didn't get along, and for the purposes of illustration, you could almost say Bissell hated Chennault and Chennault hated Bissell. Then Admiral Mountbatten [Louis] was placed on top of the pile. He was the Supreme Commander in Southeast Asia. Stilwell had no respect for Mountbatten, and Mountbatten had no respect for Stilwell. I had an opportunity to meet all of them. Some of them I got to know quite well. I say I had an opportunity to meet all of them except Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. I never knew him. With the difference in viewpoints of all of the Allied leaders in that theater, it is no wonder that the results were disappointing.

It is no wonder the whole nation was confused about what we should do after the war. To make things even worse, there was also a difference of opinion in the State Department. Although I did not know this firsthand, I talked to a great many of my friends who were out there at the time. Ambassador Hurley [John P.] and the staff disagreed on the direction that our policy should take in Asia. Three of the staff members--John Stewart Service, John Ker Davis, and John Patton Dawson, I believe those were their names--felt that the Communists were going to prevail in China. Whether they felt that the Communists were the wave of the future or agrarian reformers as many people described them, I don't know. Apparently, Ambassador Hurley was strongly opposed, and here you had this difference in philosophical approach in the State Department.

At the end of the war when peace didn't come and the Communists prevailed--a lot of our people like to pass it off by saying that Chiang Kai-shek and his government were corrupt--and I am not saying that there wasn't corruption there--I don't believe you can apply that term to Chiang Kai-shek. I didn't see any evidence of corruption at that level of the government. I am convinced that Chiang Kai-shek was a true patriot. Maybe he was difficult to get along with, but I don't believe corruption created the disaster that eventually overtook the Nationalist government on the

mainland. Certainly it contributed. If they had had a government free of corruption, it may never have happened, but we have lots of corruption in our government. We haven't had the same fate befall us. Actually, Chiang Kai-shek fell before a well-trained, well-disciplined Communist army, which was supplied and supported by the Soviet Union. The same thing has happened time and time again since to our other Allies. Somehow or another it seems a tragedy that we fought a war in the Pacific. There may have been a number of reasons why we fought the war, but the thing that probably brought it to a head was our concern that the Japanese were going to dominate the mainland of China. We suffered a quarter of a million casualties. I don't know how many young Americans were killed and how many were mutilated for life, but it was a terrible toll to pay. We spent billions of dollars only to see the Communists prevail on the mainland of China after World War II. Maybe we are fortunate that the two Communist powers are having a falling out over differences in philosophy and border disputes and jockeying for power and prestige in that part of the world, but that's small compensation for what happened.

There are many people who said, "Well, there was nothing we could do. Secretary of State Acheson [Dean G.] was right when he said, 'Let the dust settle'," but that's what the Communists would love to have you do. They want to create a

lot of trouble. Then they would like to have us stand aside and let the dust settle because when the dust settles they have got it. I think things went the way they did just simply because when World War II was over we thought it was over. We didn't realize there would be a protracted struggle for world power, and we just weren't prepared to shoulder the mantle of leadership that really fell on the United States because there was no other power in the free world that had the resources to accept the role of leadership. We just didn't exercise any leadership in the Far East at all. After making that tremendous investment in American lives and American dollars in the Far East, we just kind of folded our tents. We paid a dreadful price for it.

Since those events started in China, we have fought two wars in Asia. The total bill in dollars may be as high as \$400 billion. The toll in American life alone has been close to 100,000 dead and Lord knows how many with their arms and legs off, lives ruined. That's to say nothing of the thousands and thousands of Asiatics who lost their lives in these wars. The battle still isn't settled. It continues to go on, and I don't know, I certainly have mixed emotions about our recognition of the Communist government on mainland China. I would like to see a relationship between the American people and the people of China because I have great respect for the Chinese, but we haven't established

a relationship with the people. We have established a relationship with the Communist government.

The very nature of Communist governments are such that they deny a true people-to-people relationship. In order to recognize this nation, we acceded to its terms. As Goldwater [Senator Barry M., Rep-AZ] said, "We stabbed an Ally in the back." That may be wrong, but essentially that's what happened. We may try and put some bandages on it, and I hope it works. That kind of leadership, world leadership, bothers me. I just have the feeling that this new venture is not going to turn out well. I hope that it does. We started out being anti-Communist. This doesn't mean we shouldn't try and get along with the Communists. Maybe in China it will work simply because the Chinese people are different from the Russian people. They have a long historical record, and maybe communism isn't embedded very deep, but it just bothers me that we did forsake a good Ally. We are taking a chance that maybe the course of action that we took will work. If it doesn't work, it is going to be to our disadvantage. We are supposed to be talking about history, and I am talking about other things.

T: That was one of my questions, what did you think of the recent recognition of China, Communist China?

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A: As I told you, I have no real objection to recognition of Communist China. It's the way we did it and the damage that we may have done to a consistent Ally through all of the years. That's the thing that bothers me.

T: General Alison, from your experience in Asia, could we have still maintained an Ally and recognized Red China at the same time, in your opinion?

A: You read that, and serious commentators say that's true. I happen to believe it's true also. I think the Communists needed the relationship more than we did. As a matter of fact, I don't see why we need it at all except to the extent that it might have been a step toward stability. We made a relationship with the government in China that hasn't proven it's even stable. I think the proper attitude would have been to extend the hand of friendship, do it sincerely, and do it on reasonable terms, but those reasonable terms should have been our terms. Whether the Communists would have accepted that or not, I don't know. I have the feeling that they would have, but apparently the President felt otherwise. History will show whether he was right or wrong.

T: I have a couple of more questions about General Chennault, and then we will move on. General Holloway stated that in his opinion General Chennault was a tactical genius.

What was your opinion of General Chennault and his tactics?

A: I had the highest regard for him. You can describe it as genius or however, but actually, when you look back, what General Chennault did was just good commonsense, but he exercised good commonsense every step of the way backed up with perhaps the most complete professional knowledge of fighter tactics of any senior officer in the world. That knowledge, his commonsense--that was General Chennault's genius.

I think maybe I can illustrate some of the things that made us successful, the warning net, and Chennault put that in because he knew the man who knows where the enemy is has a tremendous advantage and particularly when the enemy doesn't know where he is. We saw that in the Pacific. The P-40s in the Pacific were taking a rather sound beating from the Japanese. "Buz" Wagner [Lt Col Boyd D.], who became an ace in the New Guinea area, went back to the United States, and of course, everyone said, "Now Buz, what would you really need to fight the Japanese?" He said, "We need a light or more maneuverable aircraft. The Japanese are able to out-maneuver us at every turn." Well, the Japanese could out-maneuver us, but no matter what you did to the P-40, you really would never have had an airplane which could have maneuvered with the Japanese. Buz Wagner recommended the

number of guns in the P-40 be reduced from six to four. He recommended that all the armorplate be taken out. He recommended the fuselage tank be removed to lighten the airplane up so that the airplane could perform with the Zeros. What happened was, the Japanese came in across the water. The airdromes where Buz Wagner was fighting were very close to the water, and they had no warning. The P-40s were taking off and trying to climb up and get some altitude, and the Japanese were coming down on them from on top. When that happened, the Zero was a formidable machine.

I flew the first Zero that the United States captured. It was actually taken by the Chinese. I don't know whether this story is completely true, but I heard that two Japanese pilots were on patrol, and one of them had engine trouble. He made a forced landing. The airplane wasn't damaged. There was no clearly defined frontline in China. The Japanese moved in and out almost at will, but there was no way that they could occupy and control a vast amount of territory. These Japanese pilots thought they were over territory which the Japanese controlled. The second airplane landed alongside the first. The pilots got out, and they asked to be taken to a telephone so they could telephone back to base.

As I understand it, there were some school children there, and one of the school kids said, "Come on up to the school, and we have a telephone that you can use." So they led the Japanese pilots up to this schoolhouse, and they captured them. (laughter) I was told the Chinese farmers, particularly in that part of China, didn't have newspapers to read, and they weren't quite sure that these were the enemy. As soon as they found out, before the soldiers got there, they actually destroyed one of the aircraft. The other one was carefully taken apart and carried some way up into the mountains. I don't know whether they carried it in oxcarts or coolie carts. General Chennault sent Sgt Gerhard Neumann down to put it together. I didn't know Neumann at the time, and I really didn't know that we had the Zero until Chennault called me. He said, "We have this Zero, and I want you to go down there and pick it up and fly it up to Kweilin." He sent a message, and I said, "I can't read Japanese." He said something to the effect, "You don't need to. There is a sergeant down there who is smarter than you are, and he will tell you how to fly the airplane."

The DC-3 dropped me off. I met Sergeant Neumann, and he explained the cockpit to me and how to get the airplane started, the instruments, and when they were in the safe range. The landing gear had been blocked down. He had blocked the landing gear down because the hoses, on the

trip, had either been damaged or deteriorated, and he just felt that the hoses were not adequate to hold the pressure. The airplane had a high-pressure hydraulic system on it. So I took the airplane off, and I flew it up to Kweilin and landed it. It is a beautiful flying machine, but I wouldn't have wanted to fight in it. It had two 20-millimeter cannons in the wings, and it had two .50 caliber machineguns firing through the propeller, highly maneuverable, but the structure was just light, almost paper-thin. Adequate, but it just didn't have that solid feel that the P-40 had. The Zero had almost as much speed but not quite as much speed as the P-40.

Our advantage was in our armament. Our six .50 caliber machineguns were formidable and tremendously effective. They were high-velocity guns and had a relatively high rate of fire. The two 20-millimeter cannons in the Japanese Zero, in my opinion, were almost useless. They weren't really any good unless the pilot of the Zero was in close because it had a low-muzzle velocity. The rounds had no range. Of course, a 20-millimeter shell, if it hits you, will do a lot of damage. The slow rate of fire, the low-muzzle velocity just meant that even though they were 20-millimeter they weren't putting out much firepower. Our airplanes were so strong that when we were hit we had an awful good chance of surviving and we could keep right on

going. When our six .50 caliber guns hit a Japanese airplane, the airplane came apart. One of the very important things in aerial warfare is that you would like to be decisive once you get in a position to shoot your weapons. The P-40 with its six .50 caliber machineguns was a decisive weapon.

I got into this because I was comparing the P-40 to the Zero and the problem they had in the South Pacific. Although it was a beautiful flying machine, it just wasn't the combat machine we had. Even with our heavy weight, we had a better machine simply because we had superior armament and superior endurance and ruggedness in our airplanes.

Chennault recognized that you couldn't maneuver with the Japanese. He said, "Don't maneuver with them. Don't ever try to maneuver with them." Well, I had been practicing maneuvering the P-40 for about 3 years, and I wasn't going to miss an opportunity. On two occasions I actually engaged a Zero in a dogfight. It is absolutely astounding how quickly he was on my tail and not only on my tail but hitting me. If the P-40 hadn't been good and rugged, I wouldn't be here. On almost every occasion instead of being caught on the ground taking off, this was a situation where you would give the Japanese a very clear advantage with its maneuverability, its agility, and with the added energy that

the altitude gave them. It was just awful hard to fight a Japanese airplane going up. We were very good when we had gravity with us and we were going down. We could actually out dive them and outrun them.

A lot of people gained the mistaken impression that speed saved our lives. Speed is important. If you can run away from the enemy, it helps, but there were so many occasions when I was just caught, and the Japanese pilots were behind me and hitting me. I did have a faster airplane, and I gradually opened the range and got away. The reason I survived was not because I was able to run away. The reason I survived was in the time he had me in range and was hitting me he didn't have the armament which was decisive. That was the greatest weakness of the Japanese airplane. They didn't have decisive armament. One of the best illustrations, in one fight I got my rudder shot off, lost the rudder. It all went off. The P-40 will fly without a rudder. The vertical will hold it reasonably straight.

(End Tape 10, Side 2)

A: Under those conditions, the airplane wasn't controllable above a certain speed. I was going down trying to get into some clouds which were a long way away, and I had to limit the speed of the airplane to 300 miles an hour. This Japanese sat there, and he hit me, and he hit me, and he hit me. I

kept expecting the airplane to come apart, but it didn't. It just kept right on going. On this flight I was leading the Chinese Fighter Command on their first mission. One of the Chinese boys apparently heard me screaming for help because I was screaming. I was hysterical. I knew I was gone.

T: Who was your wingman? You kept telling him, "If you don't get down here and help me, I am gone."

A: That was "Charlie" Tucker. Charlie lost me. He couldn't see me. I said, "Oh, Charlie, if you don't help, I am gone." I didn't say it the way I am talking now. (laughter) There was a tone of terror in my voice because those bullets make a lot of noise when they go through your airplane, and they make noise when they hit the armorplate. This Chinese boy came, and he shot him down, but I thought he was going to kill me in the process. When I got the airplane back to the airbase, I had been hit hard. I have pictures. The mechanic they sent to salvage the airplane took pictures of the rudder post. The rudder post is not big. It's not more than about 4 inches wide, if that. There were four .50 caliber rounds right down the rudder post. They hit that rudder post, and of course, there were probably several hundred that were around. I don't know how many times the airplane got hit, but all of the gas tanks were penetrated.

They were self-sealing and closed back up. My armorplate was hit, and there was one armor-piercing bullet hung in the armorplate right between my shoulder blades, but I got the airplane back and got the landing gear down, and I would have landed it successfully, even without the rudder, but both tires were gone. He had hit both tires. So he was hitting all around me. If that had been a P-40 back there shooting at me, I wouldn't have lasted 10 seconds. It would have been all over.

When we got this query which was sent out to all the theaters that were using P-40s based on the comments that Wagner had made about reducing the number of guns and reducing the amount of fuel and taking out the armorplate, my squadron responded, "The airplane doesn't have enough fuel. We would like to have more added. The airplane doesn't have enough guns, and if it could carry eight, we would prefer to have eight guns." We said, "Leave the armorplate in." We didn't need the maneuverability because Chennault had the foresight to give us the warning that made it possible for us to be at altitude when the Japanese came in. So instead of the Japanese diving on us, we were usually diving on him. With our firepower, that gave us a decided advantage. That really accounted for the success of the operations of both the AVG and us. Of course, that wasn't all. Chennault personally coached us in the tactics we should use, which

essentially were hit and run. He said, "You can't maneuver with them," and he was absolutely right. I am living proof of that.

Those things, in retrospect, look very simple. That was really Chennault's genius.

T: Did he have you on a physical training program?

A: No.

T: Did all the decorations have to go through General Stilwell? Your group was not as highly decorated as some of the ETO [European theater of operations] groups?

A: That could have been. I don't know. I heard some complaints, and because there were differences between Chennault and Stilwell, I am sure Stilwell looked very critically--or Stilwell's staff, knowing of these differences, looked very critically at Chennault's recommendations before they gave them to General Stilwell to sign off on. This I don't know firsthand. My firsthand relations with General Stilwell were limited, but they were pleasant. He was a good soldier, and he would come down to the flight line, and he would walk down the line, and he would shake hands with the men, and he would shake hands with you. He would look you in the eye

and say, "Son, is there anything you need? Is there anything I can do to help you?" You knew he meant it. As far as being a soldier's general, I guess he was very good. I think the main complaint against Stilwell was that he was a soldier's general. He would have been more at home in the field leading the troops. There is no question about his personal bravery, but he wasn't in the field. He was up dealing at the highest political level.

T: Did anybody ever say, "Yes, you can send me home, General"?

A: No.

T: Did he ask you personally if there was anything he could do for you?

A: Oh, yes. I remember him. He would come up, and he would talk with you and ask you what your problems were.

T: Did you tell him?

A: I didn't know that I had any problems. (laughter)

T: Talking about the Chinese that shot the Zero off your back, what was your opinion of the ability of the Chinese as aviators?

A: You have to qualify comparisons. The Chinese--one, we didn't have any gasoline. We had come from America where we could fly every day. The Chinese were lucky if they got 4 hours flying time a month. That's not enough to maintain proficiency so they cracked up quite a few airplanes. Kids don't think, and we were kids. I used to sit and listen. They would talk about how the Chinese were cracking up airplanes. They said, "The Chinese have no inherent flying ability." I used to lecture to them. It's funny how people can look at other people's faults and shortcomings and completely ignore their own.

The 74th Squadron was a training squadron we had at Kun-ming. Kun-ming airdrome was around 6,000 feet high. We were getting these new pilots over. I believe this figure is right. In 16 days, the 74th Squadron ground looped 17 airplanes on Kun-ming airdrome inflicting everything from minor damage to major damage on the P-40. I said, "Fellows, look, you talk about the Chinese," and I would remind them the Americans right on Kun-ming airdrome right in front of the Chinese Air Force Headquarters, right in front of the Chief of Staff of the Chinese Air Force, cracked up 17 airplanes in 16 days. I said, "Do you know what I bet the Chief of the Chinese Air Force is doing? He looks out his window and he sees these airplanes going ass over teakettle. I bet he is looking out there and saying, 'Gee, it's a good

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thing the Americans are rich because they have no inherent flying ability.'" (laughter) I know onetime they were talking that way, and Grant Mahony, who was a great pilot, and he led six airplanes across the Hump, and he got two of them over. The others landed gear up all in the rice paddies because Grant got lost. Over half of his flight ran out of gas, and he just barely got into an airdrome. (laughter) I said, "Now, you know, Grant is a pretty good pilot, but I don't know of a Chinese yet who has come across the Hump and lost that many airplanes."

Actually, no ethnic group has a corner on flying ability. We are very fortunate. We come from a nation where most of us have a mechanical background of some kind or another, and we are rich. We could afford to crack up airplanes, and we did, and we flew. Also, we received basically a lot of technical education during our school years which made it easier for us. Here you impose airplanes on a society such as the ones they had in China without any of the training facilities or support facilities which we had in the United States, and they are going to have trouble. They proved that they are absolutely outstanding as pilots because you go to Taiwan and watch the Chinese Nationalist Air Force fly those airplanes, and they are awfully good.

The F-104 had a bad accident record. In particular, our accident record here in the US was very high. I believe the Chinese, who also had -104s, had one of the best accident records in that airplane. The Chinese could be just as good aviators as we, but they didn't have an opportunity to practice as much as we did.

T: You lost nine guys in that time frame?

A: I was in China almost a year, and I think that's right. I left China along the end of April to come back to the United States.

T: April 1943.

A: Yes. I went over in June 1942 and returned in April 1943. It's hard for me to remember, but I believe though we lost eight or nine.

T: Hampshire. Barnum was P. T.'s nephew, right?

A: They were related, but since then, I have met Barnum's brother, and he said that Barnum wasn't their uncle. There was some kind of relationship. I was under the impression from what Burrall told me that P. T. Barnum was his uncle.

T: The others were Gross----

A: We lost Gross.

T: Cluck, the supply officer. O'Connell [Capt P. B.].

A: Minor.

T: Elias, Shamblin.

A: And Petach. I can't think of anyone else. How many was that, nine?

T: Yes, sir.

A: It's hard to believe we lost 9 because the squadron averaged about 18. There were more than 18 that passed through the squadrons. We got replacements, and people came in and were transferred out. I think one thing that might be interesting historically was how you deal with weak pilots. I had several pilots that were liabilities. They were good boys. They never refused to go on a mission. Having flown with them, I knew they weren't particularly strong flyers to begin with. Although none ever refused to go, their emotional

condition was such that it would be better not to have them in the squadron. We had ways of transferring them out. There were other flying jobs where there wasn't as much stress. Although flying a P-40 in combat was not as dangerous as flying a C-47 across the Hump. As a matter of fact you were far safer going into combat in a P-40 than you were making those daily runs across those mountains. There is just something about going into combat and having somebody shoot at you that affects some people.

We had one boy--I was really surprised when he came in and said, "I would like to talk to you." I know this was a brave boy. He wasn't really a bad flyer either, and he had been decorated over in India before he came over. He was on the ground when the Japanese raided the airbase, and they made strafing run after strafing run on the P-40s, and they were burning them up. He went out, and he made a valiant attempt to get in his airplane and take off. His crew chief was there trying to help him. He would get up on the wing, and then the Zeros would come down, and he would jump down off, and they would strafe, and he would get back on the wing. He tried it about three times before they burned his airplane up. He had been in combat. He had shot down two airplanes. He came to me, and I won't mention his name, and he said he wanted to talk to me. I said, "Sure, come on in." He said, "I would like to talk to you privately." He

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said to me, "John, I won't refuse to fly. I will go on any mission you want me to go on, but I am in such an emotional state that I am a liability. I am really not capable of holding up my end." So I said, "Well, okay, I appreciate your coming in and talking to me. We have a lot of other jobs. What would you like to do?" He said, "I would like to fly the Hump." I said, "I can get you transferred." So I got him transferred out of fighters and put him in a C-47 flying the Hump, and he was just as happy as he could be. That didn't bother him psychologically, getting in that weather and crossing the Hump. The losses to our transports crossing the Hump were fierce. I have heard they were higher than the combat losses. Per sortie they were higher than the combat losses of B-17s over Germany during the campaign in Europe. I wouldn't be surprised. We lost a lot of airplanes.

I had another pilot who asked to be transferred to transports. He wasn't terribly uptight. He just said, "You know, I am really not psychologically cut out for it." He had been doing fine. He wasn't a bad fighter pilot at all. He said, "I would rather fly transports; would you object to my transferring?" I said, "No." We transferred him to the Hump. About 3 months later, he landed his airplane at our airfield at Chan-yi. He came in and said, "John, come out here. I want you to see this airplane." That airplane had

13 drums of octane gas in the fuselage, and it had holes all through it. It had one hole in the right wing where it had hit in the top of the gas tank and opened it up so you could look right down into the gas tank. I said, "My goodness, Scott, what happened to you?" He was laughing. He said, "Well, they put up the air raid signal, and they said, 'Get your airplanes off the field.' I was just airborne when they caught me." I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I stationed two of the enlisted men back, one looking out of one side and one looking out of the other. When the Zero got in firing range, he shouted up to me, 'He's here,' and right on the treetops, I would roll that that thing over, and I would pull it in just as hard as I could, and he would go by. I kept that up until I ran them out of fuel." (laughter)

T: He was happy flying that -47.

A: Yes. I had a couple of other guys that didn't ask to be transferred, but they weren't particularly strong pilots, and I got them transferred, not to the transports, but to another job, which they did just fine.

T: What about the guy you knew was afraid of it but would keep going?

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A: You know, everybody is frightened. I was frightened, but I didn't have any morale problem with my pilots. They would take on anything. They would take on any mission. I know the other squadrons used to say, "Those guys in the 75th are crazy." Strafing was the most hazardous mission. Of all these people who were shot down--Petach and Shamblin were shot down by ground fire. Gross was shot down by ground fire. Barnum was air-to-air. Hampshire was air-to-air. Who else did we leave out?

T: Cluck?

A: Cluck was killed in an accident.

T: O'Connell?

A: O'Connell and Minor were both shot down in air-to-air.

T: Elias was air-to-air.

A: Three out of the nine were air-to-ground. A lot of those happened when we were really badly outnumbered. Air-to-ground was a mission that most fighter pilots didn't like. My squadron seemed to like it, and we would take any air-to-ground mission they gave us. I never had anyone--as a matter of fact, we didn't have enough airplanes so that

everybody could go on a mission so we had to take turns. There was always great competition to see who was going to get to go on the mission and particularly if it was a good mission, one where we might pick up a little air-to-air combat along with it.

T: You want to add anything before we leave China?

A: There are a couple of stories that illustrate the feeling of the Chinese people for Americans. I think they are worth recording. I saw a tremendous store of good will in one people for another when I was in China. I was born and raised in Florida. I had never really seen any Chinese even in the United States. Of course, when I landed in Kun-ming, it was a strange world. The Chinese have a strength and a character which is impressive. I don't want to derogate the Indians, but the Indians don't have the spirit that the Chinese have. On many occasions, it is difficult to get an Indian to smile. Maybe they have been depressed in life to the point where they don't respond the way the Chinese do. This doesn't mean that individual Indians don't, but in China, almost universal, pass, say, "How," and you will get a greeting right back.

One day I was walking along a road back up in the mountains near Kun-ming, and this woman was coming down the road.

She looked like an old woman, but life's burden probably made her look a lot older than she was. She was walking on lily feet; they still had bound feet. How they maneuvered on these little feet, I don't know. She had an A-frame on her back, and she had a load of firewood on it, and here she was coming along on these little feet on this gravel road. I don't know how she was making it. I passed her and I said, "How." She looked up and gave me this big grin. Most of her teeth were gone, and she said, "Hubba, Hubba, I am doing fine." They genuinely liked us. They helped us, and I am not talking about soldiers or government officials. I am talking about the people. We got our pilots back. I have seen civilians go to great lengths, risk their own lives to save our pilots' lives. I told you we got Elias' body back. Somehow or another they picked that up on the other side of the Japanese lines, but of course, the Japanese lines were not very clearly defined.

I was out on a reconnaissance flight, and I was all by myself. I was over northern Burma, and I looked up this valley, and I saw two villages burning. I flew past the villages, and there was a third village that wasn't burning-- it was a small village. As I passed over it, I rolled up and looked down--I was at low altitude, and I saw the horses there. In one courtyard, there was a Japanese soldier firing at me with a rifle. I could have pulled up and done

a wingover and come back and given him a good dose of the six .50s, but I thought, "No, this is too good. I want to really get him." It was only about 45 minutes back to base so I went over the mountains and went back to base. I got six airplanes, and I loaded them with 500-pound bombs. I knew exactly where this village was. It was in this valley, and there was a 12,000-foot mountain range between the valley and my base. The village was down at the foot of it so we came up to the mountain range. I went right up to the top. I knew just the peak to go over, and I came down the mountainside thinking, "I am going to catch these guys completely by surprise." I had briefed the guys. I said, "We will go over to the village." I would wing up, climb back, and I would drop my 500-pound bomb. This would be the target, and then they would come in and put the other five bombs in. Six bombs would have really had an effect. There would have been horsemeat all over town.

I passed over it, and I pulled up, and Jesse Carney, one of the 75th pilots, was right behind me. I had just started up when Jesse called me and said, "John, I am hit." I said, "Are you hurt bad?" He said, "My engine has stopped." I told the rest of the flight to hold the bombs. That probably was a mistake. We probably should have gone ahead and bombed them and created a great deal of confusion, but I was concerned that Carney was going to jump out right

there and he would fall in the village or very close to it, and the Japanese would get him. If we had bombed them and killed them, I am sure they would have made short work of Carney. So he turned and went back toward the mountains. I just dropped my airplane down, and I flew right with him. I was flying right alongside of him when his airplane hit the first time. When he hit, the bomb came off, and it was bouncing along beside him. He hit on a little knoll, and he bounced over to the next knoll, and when he hit the next knoll, the propeller came off.

(End Tape 11, Side 1)

A: Then he skidded across a small clearing and came to an abrupt stop in a shallow ravine. Of course, at that time I passed over him. Ronnie Wilcox, who was leading the second element of three, called me on the radio and said, "John, he's out and running." I couldn't believe it. I just thought Carney would have been so smashed up because that airplane really came to an abrupt stop. I said, "Okay, let's leave," because I didn't want to circle him and attract the Japanese. We went about 40 or 50 miles down the line, and there was a Japanese fortification we often used as a secondary target, and we bombed that and went on home. Of course, we didn't know what happened to Carney. It was almost 3 weeks later when he walked into camp. He had spent

a week evading the Japanese. He said that he didn't remember getting out of the airplane or running. He said that when he came to he was in this small grove of trees. He had some cuts and bruises, but that was all the damage that had been done. He waited until dark, and he started walking east because he wanted to cross the mountains. It's a very high mountain range. He said that first night he didn't realize until he heard them snoring, but he walked right into a camp of sleeping Japanese. I said, "Well, what did you do, Jesse?" He said, "I just turned around and walked out again." (laughter) After about a week, he made contact with some Chinese villagers, and they quickly got him over the mountains and started him on his way back. About 3 weeks later, he showed up in camp ready to go again.

We also had Don Brookfield [1st Lt Donald S.] shot down in that same area. As a matter of fact, he was shot down by this fortification that we bombed that day when we didn't bomb the Japanese village. This occurred actually before Carney was shot down. Brookfield was strafing the fortification, and a machinegun hit him, and he jumped out. The fortification was up on a hill, and he fell at the bottom of the hill in a small stream. He was just kind of standing there wondering what to do, and two Chinese boys ran out of the bushes, and one of them picked up his parachute, and the other one got him by the arm, and they started running up

this trail. A Japanese squad had been dispatched from the fortification, and they were hot after them. This was a narrow mountain trail, and he would turn and fire his .45, and the Japanese would stop and deploy, and then they would run. Then the Japanese would catch up, and he would fire, and they would run. Of course, the Japanese were firing at them. It wasn't long before the Japanese hit one of the Chinese boys in the leg. He wasn't badly wounded, but he couldn't run any more.

They happened to be at a place where there apparently was a little ditch with vegetation right beside the path so Brookfield and the Chinese boy got down in the ditch under the bushes. The other boy carried the parachute, and Brookfield said the last thing he saw was that parachute going on up the trail. The Japanese came and ran right by them chasing the boy with the parachute. When the Japanese had passed, Brookfield and the Chinese boy got up. He could hobble apparently. They walked down the path, not very far, and took a side path, and they got away. I asked Brookfield, "Well, what about the other boy and your parachute?" He said, "Well, I never got the parachute back, but he brought me my backpack." Of course, in the backpack were all your emergency supplies--knife, the opium, the money, and the trade goods. They brought that back, and the Chinese kept him in the attic of a building or a house in the village for

about a week. He said the Japanese would come into the village every day searching for him, and the Chinese kept him well hidden.

At night he would come down--in civilian life he was a professional magician--and do magic tricks. When the word got around the countryside that there was a magician there, he said every night the size of the crowd grew bigger. He said, "I just knew it was going to attract the attention of the Japanese. Finally, after much persuasion, I got them to get me on the trail with some guides." About 2 weeks later--you have no idea whether your guys are alive are not, but all of a sudden here they come up with a Chinese escort. These are not soldiers; these are just civilians that brought them out.

T: He probably could have been back much quicker if he had quit performing.

A: (laughter) That's right; they wouldn't let him go. They didn't want to lose the performance.

T: Did they ever give away or use the goodies in the pack?

A: I think so. I think I have heard of one occasion--but not any of my people. I guess Brookfield gave his away. I am

sure he did, just to repay the villagers.

T: They liked the opium?

A: If they didn't use it themselves, they could always trade it with the hill people.

T: Do you know whose idea that was to put opium in there?

A: I guess it was the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency].
(laughter) We didn't have a CIA, but we had a pretty good intelligence organization.

T: You have an association?

A: Well, the AVG has a reunion about every 2 years, and I go to that. Then there is the Fourteenth Air Force Association. I go to that whenever I can. The 75th Fighter Squadron had a reunion this past year in Nashville. We had quite a turnout. I was just surprised at how many of the old guys showed up, still living.

T: Everybody doing fairly well?

A: They are all alive.

T: I bet there were some tall tales.

A: Oh, yes, but they didn't drink as much whiskey as they once did. (laughter) Actually, we drank very little over there. One, you didn't have much to drink. When you went to a Chinese dinner, they would have the yellow wine, and then they would have the galleon, which is the very high alcohol content, white liquor. I think it is a distilled spirit made from rice.

T: Is that about the same thing as sake?

A: No. Yellow wine is somewhat like sake. Sake doesn't have very high alcohol content. This stuff just burns with a bright blue flame. As a matter of fact, some of the braver kids would pour it in the palms of their hands, strike a match, light it, and let the boys light their cigarettes while it was burning in the palms of their hands. I tried it, but it would get so hot around the edges I couldn't hold it.

T: Did you smoke at that time?

A: No. I didn't smoke. I really drank very little. I only drank when I had to.

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Another little insight into the way we lived, one day at Kweilin, General Chennault told Maj Harry Pike [Col Harry M.] and myself that he would like to have us go to dinner with him. The Chinese put on a dinner in his honor. Of course, you sit around with yellow wine, and you toast-- you toast everybody. You toast each other. You toast the President, and you toast Chiang Kai-shek. You toast the host, and then the host toasts the honored guests. Although the cups are very small and the wine isn't particularly strong, if you keep at it long enough--on this occasion I was glad that I had a few drinks because this was a beautiful dinner. It was at Kweilin, I guess 200 miles from the sea. We had fresh crab. We had several different kinds of fish. We started off with a suckling pig, beautifully cooked with the skin cut in squares and all put back on. Of course, the crisp crackling skin is quite a delicacy, but the host got up, and he made a big thing about the guest of honor receiving the choice morsel. He reached over, and he pulled off the tail, this little tail on this little pig, and he handed it to General Chennault. (laughter) The general just sat there and put it in his mouth and chomped it up and ate it. Everybody laughed, "God, I think that's funny. I just think that's the funniest thing in the world." The next thing he does, he says, "Now for our next guest," and he reaches over, and he picks off the ear, and he gives it to me. I get the ear, and it still has the hairs in it.

(laughter) I said, "Well, okay, here it goes." I put the ear in my mouth, and I ate it.

T: Was it good?

A: Well, I had had enough wine, it wasn't bad. (laughter)
Of course, Harry Pike got the other ear. There was a lot of laughter. The Chinese were awfully nice to us. People say, "Gee, wasn't it tough being way over there?" It really wasn't that tough. They made our life comfortable. Our hostels were nice except you were a long ways away, and most of the time it was pretty boring because you couldn't fly. You just had to sit and wait. Yet it wasn't bad.

T: How was your mail service?

A: It took an awful long time, but we would get letters from home. Everything had to be brought over the Hump. We had food grown in China. The only imported food we had was canned bacon, and it was quite good bacon that had been preserved and packed in cans in Australia and shipped in. We had canned milk, condensed milk, from Australia, and that came in by air from India. No chocolate.

I never will forget, one day we received a great big tin of Whitman's Sampler. It was in a big cylindrical can. I

hadn't had any chocolate for months and months. I hadn't had any chocolate for months and months as many of the other guys. After dinner, we doled it out, and every man in the squadron got five pieces. I was going to eat one piece a night for 5 nights. So I ate one piece of chocolate. When I went to bed, I put the other four pieces in my drawer. We really had a rat problem. We had mosquito bars, but the rats were big, and they were fierce. They would eat your soap. You would put your soap in your drawer, and the next morning you would get up and half your soap would be gone. On many occasions I would just reach over and hit my dresser, which was right by my bed, and run the rats out. They would jump out, and sometimes they would climb up your mosquito bar, but I put the chocolate in the drawer, and the battle began. I couldn't go to sleep. I would reach over there and hit that thing.

Finally, I just said, "Enough of this." I got up and pulled the mosquito bar back and lit the candle. We didn't have any lights. I pulled the drawer out, and I had three and a half pieces. They had eaten a half piece of chocolate. I said, "Oh, to hell with this." I sat there, and I took that half piece, and I ate it. I took the paper off the other three pieces, and I sat there and I ate them. (laughter) I was not going to let those rats have them.

T: You ate the piece the rats had been eating?

A: Oh, sure. Oh, Lord, yes. I wouldn't have missed it.

(laughter)

T: Health, how did you fare?

A: Everybody had a form of dysentery. I think the simplest form they call bacillary dysentery. All that does is make you go to the bathroom, and I mean you really go. I think it took an average of 30 minutes for me to pass a meal. (laughter) This was everybody. This really doesn't have much to do with the war, and I guess people who lived in China know all about it. This is before DDT [dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane]. The Chinese collect human waste for fertilizer. Their toilets are just open pits in the backyard dug into the clay. There is water in them, and they have cut little steps, and they just walk down to the water level and relieve themselves. That is the fertilizer pits. This is mixed up and put in the buckets. Two of them are carried over the pole. They carry them out to the garden, and they fertilize each plant individually. They have the most beautiful vegetable gardens that you have ever seen, but you have to be very, very careful eating the vegetables. We cooked them. We finally got some kind of dip that we could put lettuce through, and then we could

eat the lettuce, but it was best not to eat any uncooked vegetables.

The flies. There were just millions of flies. They served us five meals a day. We would get up in the morning, before daylight, and we would have our breakfast. We would be down on the line right after daylight. Along about 9:30 in the morning or between 9:00 and 10:00, we would have morning tea. The morning tea usually consisted of sandwiches, meat sandwiches and tea. This was all brought to us, catered from our hostel. They brought it down on a truck, and they would serve us. Then they would bring down lunch around 12 o'clock. Then around 4 in the afternoon, we would have tea and sweet cakes. Then we would go back to the hostel and take a bath and have dinner and go to bed. Finally, we began to get movies. That removed a little of the boredom, but it was months before we even had a movie. When they would bring the lunch down, and they would serve the lunch on your plate, you would just immediately start fighting the flies. These were fresh flies. It was a wonder we didn't die. Actually, some of the boys did. Some of the boys got amebic dysentery and died, not many. Some of them got amebic dysentery and had to be sent home for treatment. I went through the whole thing in Iran, Iraq, India, and in China, and I never got anything more than just unpleasant ordinary dysentery.

T: And you only had two shots during the war?

A: That's right. When I went to England, it was such a secret mission nobody thought to give me any shots. Then when I was in England, I left there and went to Russia. I went with Mr. Hopkins, and nobody stopped us to give shots. Then when I went down to Persia and Iraq, I was my own boss. We didn't have any doctors so I didn't have any shots. Like everybody else, I hated shots, but when I got to China, I got concerned. I said, "Well, I am going to be shot down, and I may get hit, and I may fall in a pool of dirty water so I had better have a tetanus," and what was the other one I took? I took typhoid. No, I took tetanus and cholera. Cholera was the thing that was so prevalent. Those were the only two shots I had.

T: When did you get the word you would be returning to the States?

A: I was in Kun-ming, and I was the deputy group commander at that time. I was told we would be sent back to the States--there was a group of four--and I was being sent back as a cadre to form a new group. That's when I formed the 367th Group at Hamilton. Before I could go back, General Chennault called me in. I was going through the clearing process and waiting for transport. He asked me if I would go up near

Chungking at an airbase called Liang-shan and fly with the Chinese Fighter Command. They had just received their new P-40s. We had B-24s flying out of Cheng-tu. Liang-shan was east of Cheng-tu so the B-24s would go near Liang-shan to the targets. He wanted fighter escort, and he wanted to give the Chinese an opportunity to participate. So he asked me if I would go up and lead them. So I went up. Lt Charles Tucker and Lt Don Brookfield went with me. The three of us had a hostel all to ourselves. Then we had a chef in the hostel who had been trained by the French monks at one of the French hospitals. The food was really quite good. We had French cuisine. Where it came from, I will never know, but we had it. We flew out of there and escorted B-24s. It was on one of these escort missions when I got my rudder shot off, and the Chinese boy came in and intervened. I am sure his intervention kept me alive.

The B-24 squadron was led by a very brave major by the name of Major Beet, who later was killed. We were going to bomb the airdrome at I-chang. Well, I knew where I-chang was. When I was at Heng-yang, I had once flown over I-chang. It was an active base. We flew up to the base, and there was cloud cover. There were also mountains around the base, although generally this was in the plains area. There was a small range of mountains right by the airbase. There were some big holes in the clouds, but they were off aways. Beet

called me and said, "Johnny, what do you think?" I said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Do you think we can go down through that hole?" I said, "Well, before you take this formation"--there were nine B-24s--"down through that hole in the clouds, I am somewhat familiar with the terrain. Let me go down and take a look and see what the weather is under the clouds. So I started down. Brookfield had a problem. His engine didn't start so he didn't get off. It was just Tucker and myself and seven Chinese boys. There were nine of us, nine fighters and nine bombers.

The Chinese didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak any Chinese, but somehow the Chinese had enough sense to stay up with the bombers. I started down with Tucker on my wing. We were at 15,000 and the clouds were at about 9,000, the top of the clouds. Before I got to the top of the clouds, they started popping through. The Japanese fighters just came right up through the clouds, and there were lots of them. I don't know how many, but there were lots of them. So I called Beet, and I said, "Let's go to the secondary target. We have lots of fighters, and they are coming up." Actually, they would outclimb us. They were passing me going up. I got in behind one, and I hit him. I could see my tracer exploding on the side of his airplane, and he turned over and went straight down into the clouds. I feel that I killed him. He didn't even pull out. He just went

straight into the clouds. I claimed him as a probable.

As I got near the bombers, I came up on another one, and he began to turn, and I hit him, and he exploded. There were three of them, and how they got up there so fast, I will never figure this out, but there were three of them coming in on the bombers from the side and above. There was also one coming up from underneath, and I saw him. I pulled the nose of the airplane up, and I just held the trigger. I didn't really expect to hit any of the three coming in, but I just thought the fact that I was firing at them I might be able to divert them or turn them. I thought I could finish this before the guys from down below got within range, but I didn't, and he got a lucky first blow because apparently the first burst hit me in the tail and hit the main hinge of the rudder, and the rudder fell off. That's when I was in trouble. That's when--I don't know whether it was the same airplane or another one that got in behind me.

T: You didn't know you had a rudder missing?

A: I knew that the airplane was about to shake apart. What caused that, the rudder actually came off, but the cables, the control cables, which make the rudder move back and forth, held the bottom half of the rudder, and it was off the airplane, and it was just fluttering. That was causing

the airplane to just--I just couldn't understand it. When the rudder went, the pedals just went bang, and the left one went all the way forward, and the right one came all the way back. So I knew something bad had happened. I didn't know what, and I didn't know what was making the airplane vibrate. I thought something had come loose in the back, but I didn't know what it was, and I didn't know that the rudder was off. When I got back to the base, it was obvious. My airplane was standing on its nose, and there was the rudder hanging down on a piece of cable.

That was almost my last mission. I landed, and just as I landed, the headquarters C-47 landed. I hadn't received any messages. The pilot said, "General Chennault has told me to pick you up and bring you back to Kun-ming." Capt "Eddie" Rickenbacker [Edward V.] was making a trip to China at this time, and he was aboard the airplane. He had to get out and look at my airplane. I said, "Captain Eddie, you are a veteran at this business. You kind of showed us how it should be done. There is a good example of how not to do it." He had a big laugh.

We went on to Cheng-tu and spent the night there, and the next day we flew down to Kun-ming. I was waiting there for my airplane, transport, to take me back to India. That's

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the time when I took off--we had an air raid that never materialized. The net kept reporting these--milling back and forth just out of range. We didn't go out after them because we didn't want to leave the base uncovered, and we were expecting them to come in. I wasn't even airborne. Finally, I decided, "I am going to go up and take a look." There was still an airplane on the line that was available. I don't know whose airplane it was. I picked it up. When I got airborne, I was still listening to the reports of the net, and it was obvious the Japanese were retiring. They were pulling some kind of feint or training mission because they never came in. They did this from time to time. So I said, "Well, I will catch them. I will just bet you that some of them will be landing at Myitkyina, which was the closest airbase in Burma." I said, "I am going to go there just as fast as I can." As I started out, there was a flight of six P-40s.

(End Tape 11, Side 2)

A: I came alongside, and I called the flight leader on the radio. I said, "Come on and go with me. I am going to Myitkyina because I think some of them will be landing there." He said, "We can't make it. We have been out patrolling this line too long, and I don't have enough fuel to get there and get back." I said, "Well, okay. I

am going on by myself."

One of the flight members left the flight and pulled onto my wing. He was a new pilot in the theater. I can't remember his name. I don't think I had really met him, but I recognized that he was one of the new pilots. So I tried to call him to tell him to go back because I assumed that he didn't have enough fuel, but this boy knew what he was doing. He stayed on my wing. Apparently, he had no radio communication. He just stayed with me. I thought, "Well, I don't know what I can do," so I just kept on going to Myitkyina. Apparently, he had been receiving my transmission, but he couldn't talk back to me. I was afraid he didn't have enough fuel, but he looked at his tanks, and he probably figured that he did. We headed for Myitkyina, which was maybe 75 miles inside the Burma border. I approached Myitkyina at 18,000 feet. I looked down, and I saw two airplanes in the traffic pattern. I started down as fast as I could. You just couldn't turn the airplane up and go straight down. It would go so fast that it would be difficult to control. It would be very difficult to get a shot in. So I went down in rather a big spiral and as steep as I could hoping to catch those two airplanes before they got on the ground. I couldn't make it. They both were on the runway, and the first one pulled off and went over to his parking place, and the second one was coming down the runway when I

straightened out, and he pulled off.

I think by this time they might have had some warning that I was there because someone ran out to the airplane just as it pulled off the runway, and he got right to the airplane just as I pulled the trigger. I was at about 3,000 feet in a very steep dive. I pulled the trigger. The first rounds hit him. All six guns just hit him almost at once, and he just blew in every direction. I leveled off and went across the runway. I looked over and my wingman--I don't know how he stayed with me because I was coming down so steep and so fast--but he shot at the other airplane, and the airplane was off on clay soil. It wasn't very far from the one that I blew up. I saw his tracers as he pulled out. They started short of the airplane, and then they walked through, and he missed it.

When I pulled out, I was going away from Kun-ming. I was going in the wrong direction, and then the antiaircraft started firing at us, the 20 millimeter with the little gray bursts and then the bigger guns with the big black bursts. The small arms fire you never knew because you couldn't see that. They had lots of guns at Myitkyina, and they were all firing. So I kept the airplane right on the airfield. I went around it at the tree level and did a 180° turn and started back. I purposely kept the airplane low. This

other pilot was doing a good job catching up with me, but as always, the second airplane was getting most of the antiaircraft fire. It was all hitting back near him, but apparently they never hit him. He came up alongside, and he was very excited. By this time I had the airplane turned around and was headed back across the airfield toward Kun-ming.

He kept pointing back. I just assumed that, having missed the shot, he wanted to go back and get the airplane. I kept shaking my head. I couldn't talk to him. He kept frantically pointing back, and I just kept shaking my head and kept right on going. He stayed with me. I thought, "When we get to Yunnani," which was our airbase just on the other side of the border where we would have to land and refuel before we could get back to Kun-ming, "I will have an opportunity to explain to this newcomer that one of the things you don't do, you don't go back for a second pass on an airdrome as heavily defended as this one." If we had gone back on a second pass, I would have been the first, and he would have been the second. Usually, it's the second man that gets killed. So I thought, "Well, I can impart some of this wisdom to him." When we landed at Yunnani, I got out of the airplane and walked over. I was going to explain to him. I said, "I know that you are disappointed you missed the airplane, and I know that you wanted to go back, and

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that's what you were signaling me about." He said, "Oh, no, that's not what I was signaling about." I said, "Well, what were you trying to tell me?" He said, "I wanted you to look at those five Zeros that were just above us." (laughter)

There were more than the two airplanes there. There was at least another flight of five. When we went down, both of us apparently went right under them. I wondered why they didn't come down and attack us because we would have been pretty easy marks. Then I figured out why they didn't. Here they were coming in getting ready to land. The squadron commander probably landed first, and here come two P-40s right out of the blue over their own airport. They blow up the squadron commander. These guys that are still up there are not looking at us. They are looking up and saying, "Where are the next ones going to come from." It would be a normal reaction to think there were not just two, there was probably a whole squadron up there waiting to come down. They wanted to get their bearings, and while they were trying to figure out what was happening, we flew right out from under them and headed for home. We refueled and went on back to Kun-ming. Then several days after that, I got on a transport and started back.

T: Which way did you come back?

A: The first journey was across the Hump and into India. Then across India.

T: Most of this on -47s?

A: Yes. Then from India, we went to Aden. I think that was our next stop. Then from Aden across Africa. I think on this one, I went across Africa and then up to England and then across the Atlantic. I am sure that's the way I came back, but I can't remember what kind of airplane I flew in. On one trip back I flew in a C-54, but on this one I think it was a C-47 all the way. I can't figure out how I got from England to the US, but I did by air some way.

T: You had orders to report to Hamilton?

A: I had orders to report to Hamilton.

T: You went down to Gainesville?

A: I had to go down and see my folks and spend a few days with them.

T: The local hero comes home.

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A: Oh, absolutely. Back to the University of Florida, addressed the student body. They got them all together in a great big auditorium. Then back to Washington and out to California.

T: Why did you go back to Washington first?

A: There was the process of debriefing.

T: That's where I found many items.

A: I am almost sure that's where I was debriefed, but I don't remember the details. I didn't remember that I had been debriefed. I am sure I was, but I don't remember the specific debriefing or the officers who debriefed me.

T: You had the other three as a cadre for forming a new group?

A: I had three from China--Smith, Griffin, and Stewart. Then there was an American who had flown with the RAF. I think his name was Keck. Of those four two of them were killed at Normandy strafing. I was only with the 367th about a month when I received a message from General Arnold to report to him without delay. Those are the only kind of messages General Arnold wrote, "Report to me without delay."

T: You had actually met General Arnold before?

A: Arnold called Zemke and me in. We went out and had a visit with Arnold before we left on the initial trip.

T: He called a couple of other guys in, didn't he?

A: No. As a matter of fact, General Arnold called me, and General Vandenberg [Hoyt S.] called Cochran. When I arrived in Washington, I walked into General Arnold's office, and Cochran was sitting in the outer office. I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I don't know. What are you doing here?" (laughter) I said, "I don't know. I guess we will find out." Arnold had met me when I went overseas and then, of course, because he had been receiving my letters--"Alison, because I know you, I called you in. Cochran, General Vandenberg speaks so very highly of you that he suggested that I also have you in."

Then he told us the story of Wingate [Gen Orde C.], how he had these long-range penetration groups, and that he had fired the imagination of Mr. Churchill. He had become a favorite of Mr. Churchill's. That his operations were successful, but he had no way to evacuate his wounded. This created a morale problem. Wingate's forces depended on mobility. If they didn't move, they got caught and annihilated.

They would leave their wounded and leave some food and water and a rifle with him and walk off and leave him. That's an awful hard thing to do. Wingate said, "We just can't do it any more. We have got to have some light planes to evacuate our wounded." Churchill took Wingate to the Quebec conference with him. That was in 1943, I guess it was. Churchill introduced Wingate to Roosevelt. Roosevelt told General Marshall to help him. Marshall told Arnold to help him provide the airplanes. That's how Phil and I ended up sitting in Arnold's office.

So Arnold said, "We are going to help him. We are going to get his wounded out. One of you boys has got to take the job." I remember saying, "Well, General, I have spent a long time training as a fighter pilot. I have gone through 1 year of war as a fighter pilot. It's something that I now know how to do. I think I know how to do it well. I have a group in California, and I am getting ready to go to England. If all you are going to have us do is to fly light planes and evacuate wounded, you have plenty of people who can do that. I don't think you need me, and I don't want to go." Phil, in one of his few diplomatic moments--Phil was always direct and to the point. He didn't beat around the bush. This time he was quite diplomatic. He said, "General Arnold, I don't think he means that." I said, "Yes, I do." General Arnold said, "Look, I am going to tell you what I really

have in mind. This man has really done some remarkable things. He has walked through the jungles. He has carried his supplies on mules. It takes him about 6 weeks to get his men through the jungle, across the rivers, and in behind the Japanese lines. The next time he goes in, I don't want him to walk. I want him to go by air. I want to demonstrate that we can use ships in the air just like we use ships on the sea. I want to stage an aerial invasion of Burma. This is going to be the 1st Air Commando Group."

T: He named it?

A: First he called it Project 9. He named it first. We didn't name it. He said, "Now, I am going to give you the resources to do it. Which one of you is going to take it?" Phil looked at me, and I looked at Phil. I said, or Phil said-- I don't remember who said it, but maybe we said it together, "Can we both go?" He said, "Yes, you can both go." He was under the impression that I was the ranking officer of the two. He said, "Alison, you are the ranking officer. You will be the commander." I said, "No, sir, I am not the ranking officer. Phil is the ranking officer." He said, "Oh well, make it a cocommand." For a few weeks, we did have a cocommand. Cocommands are really not made for the military establishment. You need to have a leader. You need to have someone who has assigned responsibility for the

organization. We were just confusing the people in the Pentagon who were trying to help us get this organization together and get it on the road. It was hard enough naturally, and the idea of a cocommand was just not understood. So Phil and I resolved that. Phil was the commander. He was designated Commander of Project 9, which became known as the 1st Air Commando Group, and I became the Deputy Commander. This worked very well. Phil and I went through the flying school about the same time. Phil was in my upper class. We were close personal friends. We had flown together in training. We were assigned to the same squadrons when we got out of the flying school. We had a high respect for each other. We had no command problems whatsoever.

We did have lots of problems trying to explain what we were doing because we were not permitted to explain it. General Arnold said, "I am going to give this a super secret classification. I don't want you to tell anybody what you are going to do. I am going to give you an A-1 priority," or whatever they called a number one priority in those days. We were allowed to man the organization with volunteers. We had no table of organization and table of equipment because there was no precedent for a unit of this kind. Resources during the war were scarce. Everybody wanted them. When we figured out what we needed to do the job as General Arnold said he wanted it done, we were asking for

high-priority materiel, and we were asking for experienced personnel.

There were other people who wanted the same resources. When we would go into the particular section in the Air Force that controlled the resources and we would say we wanted a squadron of P-51s, the first question would be, "What do you want it for?" The answer was, "We can't tell you." The reply to that, "Well, if you can't tell me, I can't give it to you." (laughter) Then as tactfully as possible, we would say, "General Arnold set this program up; he directed that we not tell anyone. If they really wanted to know what the equipment was going to be used for, they should communicate with General Arnold." Then we would add, "He has given us an A-1 priority." They would laugh and say, "He gives everyone an A-1 priority." (laughter) They said, "We have so many A-1 priorities there is no way we can comply with them."

In spite of all this, we did get a lot of help in the Pentagon, but we ran into problems. We ran into problems getting the kind of equipment we wanted. We ran into problems getting the people we wanted. When we did and when we were turned down, we had a very simple procedure. We would go into the office, and we would type up a memo. The memo said, "You are authorized to assign to the 1st Air Commando group a

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certain number of P-51s," or certain communications equipment or whatever item it was that was in contention and we felt we needed. Then we would type General Barney Giles' [Lt Gen Barney M.] name, who was the Chief of Staff, and we would take it in. General Giles had been told by General Arnold what he wanted done, and General Giles would sign his name to the piece of paper. We would go back to the procurement agency or whatever agency controlled the equipment or the personnel. With that piece of paper, we got what we wanted.

We did have lots of support, in spite of the complexity and in spite of the fact that--we were limited because General Arnold wouldn't let us tell what we were going to do. We got great cooperation from the logistics people and the individuals in the logistics end of Air Corps Headquarters. Without their help, we never would have made it.

T: You didn't actually call it Air Commandos until after you left the Pentagon, did you?

A: I don't know. General Arnold named it Air Commando, and I don't know when he made this public.

T: I think you called it Project 9 all the way through until you actually went operational.

A: I think so. That wasn't our name. We didn't dream up that name. We really had quite a unit, all volunteers, highly experienced people.

T: Everyone was multitasked?

A: If you get people who have been in the Air Corps or the Air Force for a long time, they just automatically know how to do two or three jobs. As long as those people are functional and intact, you get along fine, but one of the things I learned is that there is a good reason for the regulations. The people who wrote them knew what they were doing.

We had a total of about 300 air vehicles. Our manning was a little over 500 people so we had less than 2 men per air vehicle. The Air Force doesn't man that way. It is true that many of our vehicles were relatively simple--the ambulance airplanes, the L-5. We had sergeant pilots. The sergeant pilots were also mechanics. The airplane was their responsibility. So you could get by almost on a one-on-one basis. We had 100 of those. We had 100 gliders. We had 100 glider pilots and a certain number of glider mechanics. We had to also have a certain number of administrative people. An experienced noncommissioned officer in the field of administration had no trouble with it.

Our trouble began after we had been in the field for about 3 months. A lot of our key people came down with malaria. Some of them were killed. All of a sudden it was almost impossible to do your job. As long as everybody was there, it was fine. We got replacements, but the replacements we had to take from the theater pool, and we began to get replacements who really had no experience. Then an elite unit doesn't work. You start off with 500 and some odd elite people, and in the course of your operation, maybe 20 percent of them are lost for one reason or another, and you replace them with 20 percent of ordinary people, they just can't carry the load their predecessors carried. Then the organization begins to become inefficient.

T: Originally, he only wanted this thing to work for a year?

A: Oh, not that long. The object was to put them in and then move them out when the monsoons came because it's almost impossible to have large-scale resupply during the monsoon. We could do it today with the kind of airplanes we have developed that have the precision navigation and can be flown in minimum weather conditions, take off and land, but we didn't have that kind of equipment. Our basic transport airplane was the DC-3.

Back to getting started in the Pentagon. Goldsboro, North Carolina, was the base where we did our major assembly. There was some dispersion to other bases around Goldsboro where we practiced the glider operations. Our fighter pilots and our bomber pilots didn't need much practice because most of them were veterans. We didn't get our B-25 bombers until we got to the theater. We did get our P-51s in the US, the earliest P-51. We had the P-51A, which had the Allison engine in it. We would liked to have had a later one, but the later ones were just not available. They were just beginning to come off of the line. We had to have equipment, and we had to go into operation before the more advanced P-51s were available.

T: It was still a good deal more of a platform than the P-40?

(End Tape 12, Side 1)

A: The P-51A had more range and endurance than the P-40. It had a little bit more speed than the P-40, but like the P-40, it couldn't engage Zeros in maneuvering air-to-air combat. As a matter of fact, the tactics you used with the P-40 were the same tactics that you used with the P-51.

Our first engagement with the Japanese--and we had experienced pilots, a few who had been in the European theater

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and had experience fighting the Germans. They thought the Japanese were going to be easy. I think there were 12 P-51s on a dive-bombing mission over the airport at Mandalay, and they had delivered their bombs. They were recovering, and they were at about three or four thousand feet when somebody looked up and said, "Here they come." Here came the Zeros. Phil was leading. Phil remembered the tactics that he used against the Germans, which was turn into them. He shouted, "Turn!" He started the formation into a tight turn to go underneath them. Well, the P-51 was great, but like I said about the P-40, don't try and turn with the Zero. That day we lost two P-51s. We didn't claim a Zero. Phil came back with his airplane all shot up. R. T. Smith [Maj Robert T.], who was an AVG ace and really one of the outstanding fighter pilots, said, "Boy, it was hard work." He came back with most of one wingtip gone. They just got caught at low altitude turning. The way Phil got away, finally he just put the thing on the deck and opened the throttle wide, and he ran away. The P-51, like the P-40, was strong enough to take it. Here again, if the Zero had had the six .50 caliber guns, we would have lost a lot more people than we did.

T: Back in the Pentagon, Colonel Cochran was already in the office before you got there, right? Had he talked with General Arnold?

A: No.

T: He did go back and talk to him once without your being with him, didn't he? I have read in a couple of places that he told General Arnold you were the guy for this job, there was no doubt about it. He was trying to get out of it.

A: No. He really wasn't. Of course, I felt the same way. I honestly do believe Phil was the right one to command it. Phil has a lot of leadership personality. He has charisma. He has a way of saying things that inspire people. We had an outfit that believed they could do lots more than they really could. There just wasn't any job that these guys couldn't take on. I guess Phil and I talked ourselves into believing the same thing. (laughter) This is an asset, but it also creates some liabilities.

The thing which I think is of historical interest, we took the first helicopters into combat, and very few people know that. Not with the greatest success, but it was a reasonable demonstration. When General Arnold said he wanted to move Wingate in by air, he said, "I want to make this an air operation completely independent of land transport. I want to demonstrate that you can use the air just like the Navy uses the sea. You can land and maintain

a force and support it in battle. We will make available the resources that you need." We said, "Well, what do we need?"

"Dick," Richard DuPont, at that time was the glider expert in the Pentagon. He was a sports sailplane enthusiast and a great believer that you could use the glider to transport and land people in unprepared areas. After discussing the utility of gliders with DuPont and after going to some of the glider training fields and having demonstrations of what they could do with the gliders, we decided we would use gliders. We would use gliders to land in an area, secure it, prepare a landing strip, and then we would move in the bulk of the forces with C-47s. We had one C-47 squadron with highly experienced pilots, but we were using that for specialty jobs. We used them to take gliders in, then go back in, pick them up and bring them out again.

For example, we would take a patrol, land it on a sandbar, let the troops get out, and then we would come back and using the snatch technique, the reel on board the airplane, the C-47, would come down and with a long fishhook on a pole underneath the airplane, engage a loop in the nylon rope and actually snatch the glider back into the air and bring the glider home. We did this on a number of occasions, but really it was a specialized operation. It didn't have any

value on a general scale, but it did help us in a number of cases where we wanted to put in a reconnaissance unit and bring it out again.

Our squadron was kind of a bellwether squadron. It would participate and lead, but we moved in approximately 12,000 men. Everyone of them was a rifle toter. I say we moved in 12,000, we had 12,000 men behind the enemy lines that we supported. Three brigades we flew in, in the C-47s. Some of them went in gliders, but the bulk went in the C-47. One brigade, which was Brigadier Fergusson's [Sir Bernard] brigade, walked in. So we had a very good comparison of the effectiveness of a walk in versus the effectiveness of a fly in. We did move in 2,000 mules by air, and of course, this was their transport once they got down behind the enemy lines. They carried light field pieces, and the mules carried the mortars and other things.

T: I understand they took to flying without any problems?

A: Yes. We didn't have any trouble.

T: They had to shoot a couple?

A: The figure of two mules sticks in my mind. I know the first one they shot the first night. Unloading the mules,

they just pushed the mules out the door. The mules would fall all over themselves. They didn't break their legs or anything, but one of these mules had gotten excited on the flight. There were British soldiers with the mules. They were the ones that were responsible for the mules on the march. They felt that it was the better part of valor to shoot the mule rather than to contend with him in the C-47. The first night they shot one, and they just pushed him out. When you get an 1,800-pound mule, or whatever the darn things weigh, on the ground and he is dead, he is hard to move. They said, "How are we going to move this mule? We are right in the parking area." Fortunately, we had these little airborne tractors. The airborne engineers had tractors, little bulldozers that we would use to make the strip. They put a rope around the mule and hooked it on the back of the tractor, and that way he was pretty easy to dispose of. The bulk of the transport and the resupply was all done by the Troop Carrier Command under Gen Don Old [Maj Gen William D.], the US Air Corps Troop Carrier Command, and then the RAF Troop Carrier Command.

T: Did Colonel Cochran and General Old get along?

A: They were both strong personalities. Although Phil is my personal friend and I have absolutely the highest regard for him, and Don Old also I considered a friend, but just the

personalities of the two, it wasn't easy. Don was quite a bit senior to Phil. Phil was independent. We were really independent of the command. He had just a little difficulty accepting this. There were some personality differences but nothing major, nothing that we couldn't contend with.

I know onetime Don Old came on the base, and he looked at the guys, and they had all started growing beards, you know, kids. Kids want to grow beards. Whether they had a beard or not didn't seem very important to Phil and to me, but Old said, "This is a rabble. This isn't a military organization. Off with the beards." That's when Phil put out his famous order. He said, "It's going to be like Saturday night in town. Shave them off." (laughter) I don't know whether you have a copy of that order. I think Lowell Thomas had one in his book.

T: "Ain't it tough."

A: "Ain't it tough." Of course, when they read that letter, they all laughed, and the beards came off immediately. So there are lots of ways to get troops to respond. If Phil had put out a hard order and said really it was General Old's fault, everybody would have done it, but then they would have been talking about General Old, and in the language of the GI, they would have said, "We have a chicken shit

commander." We didn't want that. To go back to your question, there was no real problem.

I got a little ahead of my story. I was going to tell you something that I thought was of significance on the helicopters. There were no helicopters in service. The Air Force had helicopters in flight test at Wright Field. Phil made an early trip to England before we went over, and then shortly after that, I made a trip over with General Wedemeyer [Albert C.]. General Wedemeyer was moving into the Southeast Asia theater. I guess he was the second ranking officer in the theater on Mountbatten's staff. We determined there were going to be some wounded we wouldn't be able to move with aircraft. We had seen how the helicopter was demonstrating the capability for getting into difficult places, and we decided that we would like to have some helicopters. Phil approached Wright Field. Frank Gregory [Brig Gen Hollingsworth F.] at that time was the project officer for the testing and development of the helicopter into a practical military vehicle. He was just adamant. He said, "Look, these machines are not ready to go overseas. We haven't completed the flight test. We don't even know whether they are safe." He said, "You just can't take them." Phil said, "Well, Frank, I am going to take them." Frank said, "It will have to be over my dead body, Phil." Phil said, "Well, so be it, it is going to be over your dead body."

About that time Phil went with the advance party to India, and I stayed back to clear up the details and be sure that the unit was on the water before I left. One of the last things Phil said to me was, "John, get those helicopters." So I said, "All right, I will get the helicopters." I called, and I talked to Frank. I said, "Look, Frank, we have got the priority to get them. So why don't we make this a joint program? Another thing, we have the priority to take the helicopters from the Navy. Your test program is suffering because, at a late date, Admiral King [Fleet Adm Ernest J.] saw a helicopter demonstration and he said, 'Does the Navy have any of these?' His aide said, 'No, sir. We are not in the helicopter program.' So Admiral King said, 'See that we get in the helicopter program.' So then the very limited production of helicopters at that time had to be shared with the Navy. The Navy got half of them, and the Air Force got half of them. So I said to Frank, "Look, I will make a deal with you. I will take three helicopters from the Navy, and I will get three helicopters from you. You can send your test personnel and your pilots over to India, and you can actually run a service test in the theater. If we do it successfully, you are going to do more for the helicopter program this way than you can do in any other way because you will get some extremely favorable publicity concerning what the helicopters can do." Frank said, "John, it won't work. If you go over there to India and you get

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in that dampness, we don't even know whether the blades will hold together. We just don't have enough information on these vehicles to put them into the theater." I said, "Well, Frank, Phil is the commander, and he has told me to get them. Don't feel bad because I am going to get them." Frank reiterated again, "John, you are not going to be able to get them."

I went to General Giles with a memo, and I asked him to sign it. This one they questioned. They said, "Do you really need it?" I said, "Yes, we do. We can't do what General Arnold has told us to do in certain areas where we are going to have to operate without a vertical lift capability." So General Giles had me go talk to a general in the R&D [research and development] community. After I talked to him, he said, "All right, I will tell General Giles I think you have a logical reason to have them." I went back, and General Giles signed the paper, and we took six helicopters to India with us. We actually moved two of them behind the enemy lines and operated them.

Frank Gregory was right. They weren't ready for operations, and of the six we took over, we lost two of them almost immediately. One was in a C-46 being transported to our base, and it got, I think, 90 miles from our base, and something happened. The pilot ran into a storm, or something

something happened to the C-46. It went down into the jungle, and we lost the helicopter. Also, our senior administrative noncom was aboard that C-46 on the way from the US to join us in India, and we lost him. That was a real loss. He was a fine noncommissioned officer, an expert in administration. I can't remember his name. I didn't know him. He volunteered. He was a very senior man. As a matter of fact, being young at the time myself, I thought of him as an old man. We thought this was a great loss. We could get along without the helicopter.

The second helicopter we lost, one of the helicopter pilots was flying it around the area after we had put it together, and he was doing very well. These were as experienced helicopter pilots as there were in the world at that time. One of the fighter pilots said, "Let me go with you." So he got in. The helicopter pilot said, "Where do you want to go?" He said, "Let's go over and talk to Mr. Graves." He was the manager of a big tea plantation. He had this big house. So they went and landed in Mr. Graves' yard. They talked to him for a few minutes, and then they got in the helicopter, and they started up. They were up about 10 feet off the ground, and they were talking to the planter, and this pilot backed it into a telephone line. The helicopter fell about 10 feet. The rotor broke, came down, and killed the fighter pilot. So we lost our second helicopter.

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The other four we did operate. I was gone by the time they really got into operation because I was only with the unit for about 30 days after the invasion. One of them we got late. Part of it arrived at our base, and the other part was lost. Finally, we found it at some other airfield. We located it, but it took several weeks before we could locate the second half of the helicopter. Apparently, it had been shipped in two transport airplanes. We did get the men behind enemy lines, and the figure was reported to me that we evacuated 22 men with helicopters from places which we could not have moved them from if we hadn't had the vertical lift capability. The medicos felt some of these men would have lost their lives if the helicopter hadn't been available. I just wish Frank Gregory had really sent a real good materiel program man with us because we would have had a lot better show, and there would have been a lot more justification for taking the helicopters.

T: Didn't Mr. Harry Hopkins help you on the helicopters?

A: No. We got the helicopters based on the priority General Arnold gave us, which most people said was no good because he gave everybody that priority. But he didn't. Apparently we had a real one.

We also had another instrument which was tremendously valuable, and this was a letter from General Marshall. It was just a short letter saying, "This is an independent unit which we have sent to Burma, and it is to be used to support General Wingate." When we got in the theater, because of the priority which we had when we organized Project 9, we had equipment which nobody else in the theater had. Not only did we have equipment that no one else had, but we had a level of experience in our airmen that nobody else had. This was, indeed, an elite unit. Everybody wanted it. General Stilwell wanted it particularly.

Merrill's Marauders were also sent over. Merrill's Marauders thought they were going to go in with General Wingate as a regiment or a brigade. That's what they thought they were going to be used for. Stilwell commanded the two Chinese divisions, and he had no American troops. Here was an elite infantry unit. Merrill's Marauders were great, and he did get his hands on Merrill's Marauders, and he put them right in with the Chinese spearheading the Chinese. Of course, if you had read Merrill's [Maj Gen Frank D.] book, he was just tremendously bitter with the experience. They were supposed to go in with Wingate and then come out before the monsoon. Instead of that, they were put spearheading the Chinese drive. There was no way that Stilwell could relieve the

Chinese. He was moving down on Myitkyina. If he couldn't pull the Chinese out, he couldn't pull Merrill's people out. They took terrible casualties. The unit should have been replaced, but there wasn't anyone to replace them so Stilwell just kept them there. That was understandable, but apparently it was a tremendously difficult campaign which Merrill thought was not completely necessary. This is all reflected in the book that he wrote on his experiences in Burma.

T: What did Colonel Cochran tell you about his initial meeting with Mountbatten and Wingate in late 1943?

A: He went to England, and this was August or September 1943. He went because he wanted to talk to Wingate. This was, in my opinion, absolutely necessary that the commander of the air unit that was going to support Wingate talk to him before we finalized our organization and the equipment that we were going to take to Burma. He and Wingate just immediately hit it off. Both of them were unusual personalities. Wingate was just delighted with Phil. We didn't have anything at the time, but Phil told him what we were going to have. Wingate just said, "That's wonderful." I don't know whether Phil saw Admiral Mountbatten at that time or not. He came back.

Phil always has interesting things to say about people, personalities, and things. His description of the man, who was Wingate, was most interesting. He just said, "This is going to be a most interesting campaign. This man believes we can do it for him so we are going to produce." Although we had just about made up our minds on what was necessary to move and support a force behind the enemy lines, his meeting with Wingate was useful and gave him a better insight into what we were going to do and whom we were going to be supporting. I don't remember the details of the meeting or the details of Phil's report. I just remember that his reaction was favorable.

I went over with Wedemeyer shortly thereafter, and I had been in hopes we would arrive there before Wingate left, but we didn't. So I didn't meet Wingate until we got into the theater. I did have an opportunity to talk to British staff officers about what we were going to do. I don't think I learned anything in particular. I was in England a short time. General Wedemeyer's trip was quick. I guess the highlight was being able to travel with General Wedemeyer and get to know him because he was going to be the senior US officer on Mountbatten's staff. From that point of view, it was productive.

T: Did you meet Mountbatten on that trip?

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A: I don't know whether I met Mountbatten in England or whether I met him in India.

T: Did the British claim they didn't need the bombers, that they were going to furnish them?

A: I don't remember that. I do know we made the decision we needed the bombers before we left the United States. We were told that we didn't need to take bombers from the United States, that we could get the B-25s once we got in the theater, and we did. We did take pilots.

(End Tape 12, Side 2)

A: The B-25s we got were the H model which had the 75-millimeter cannon which ran along the nose tunnel and fired through the nose.

T: Were they effective?

A: In a limited way.

T: I have read stories to the contrary is the reason I ask.

A: The problem was, unless you had a discreet target, there were other weapons which were better than the cannon. You were supposed to be able to get off about three rounds on a run. I think effectively you might reduce that to two depending on the kind of target that you were shooting at. Certainly, the 75-millimeter round was not nearly so good for area targets as frag bombs. You could do a lot better with frag bombs on area targets. The gun was accurate, very accurate. I know one day I was over in Burma and there was a railroad bridge. It had these timber pilings for support, and it went across some small gorge. Just to see what I could do, I backed off, and I picked a piling, and I hit it. The gun was very accurate. It was just as accurate as a machinegun. There was no opposition, and I just drove it down to about 500 feet slant range. When you fired it, it hit exactly where you pointed it.

An illustration, once we were supporting the British in a village, and the Japanese had holed up in the village. We had pretty fair air-to-ground communication. The RAF had VHF [very high frequency] radio sets. Then they would designate the targets they wanted you to hit. They said, "See the house with the red door about a third of the way down the street? Will you get that for us?" You could actually put a round right through the red door. In this particular instance, there was no heavy antiaircraft, and

the B-25 would fly right down, and almost pointblank, you would let them have a round. If you wanted to put one through the window on the right-hand corner of the house, you put it right in there.

T: It must have been heartbreaking to find the damage to the first shipment of the -51s?

A: I don't recall it.

T: One of the reports stated that one of the ships that had -51s on board ran into a typhoon and darn near sank and the planes were damaged.

A: There might have been. We had enough airplanes.

T: General Stratemeyer [Lt Gen George E.] supported the commando unit?

A: Oh, yes. All the senior American officers did. General Old did in spite of what you might hear. The controversy between Old and Cochran was perhaps more talk than it was substance. Col John P. McConnell [Gen] was on General Stratemeyer's staff. He later became Chief of Staff of the Air Force. There were some differences, but we didn't have any lack of support, and they all understood this

was a special and an experimental unit. I would say they were interested in us, and we got the kind of support we needed.

T: What happened to Maj Robert T. Smith, the P-51 pilot that buzzed Mountbatten?

A: Oh, nothing. (laughter)

T: He thought it was Cochran?

A: I don't know who R. T. thought it was. (laughter) R. T. saw that crowd, and he had a great sense of humor, and he said, "Okay." He saw the guy standing on the jeep. Mountbatten was making a speech. He made it. He had a hard time getting it out because every time R. T. would come around the conversation would have to stop. He laughed. Mountbatten was great with troops. He had a way with him, and he would laugh and kid. This didn't bother Mountbatten at all.

T: Were you and Colonel Cochran as satisfied with your exercises prior to your departure as Wingate and Mountbatten seemed to be?

A: I think we were. We had some reservations. We had originally intended to bring the gliders in and cut them loose at

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about 3,000 feet above the landing area and then allow the pilots to come down into the area. After we had practiced a few of these exercises, we found it was going to be difficult for all of them to hit the precise area. Our glider pilots were full of spirit. Some of them, of course, were excellent pilots, but some were not. We were greatly concerned that the weaker pilots would miss the landing area and go into the trees and we would lose some people. So we developed a technique which in practice worked just great. We figured the slant range of a glider if it were cut loose at 300 feet at 120 miles an hour, and the glider would go just so far, and then it would be on the ground. So we said, "Gee, if we can cut loose at so many feet before the designated landing spot, the glider is going to hit the landing spot every time."

So we set up a light at the calculated distance from the point we wanted the glider to touch down, and then the C-47 would line up on that light in the landing area, and he would fly at a constant 120 miles an hour. I believe 300 feet was the designated altitude. When they passed over the light, the glider pilot would hit the release, and then all they had to do was hold the stick and go straightforward and light in the spot. This just worked great in practice, but we ran into a great problem in the landing zone at night. The woods surrounding the landing zone were jungle,

and the guys couldn't get the light back far enough. They got back as far as they could, but because of the terrain, they just couldn't get it back far enough. So when the gliders were cut loose, when they got to the landing spot, they were all going faster than they should have been going. This caused us some problems. We had pileup after pileup, and the glider would land, roll along the landing area. We had the gliders overloaded.

T: Everybody brought a little extra?

A: I think Phil and I both said, "Well, 4,200 pounds is the load, and if we can fly them at 4,200 pounds, we can fly them at 5,200 pounds." I think my glider probably had 6,200 pounds in it. It was heavily loaded. I hit the ground at 80 miles an hour, and the glider is supposed to land--I didn't come in on the light. I was in one of the assault gliders, and we just came in and cut loose free. I cut loose free and picked the spot, and I put the glider right where I intended, and my glider rolled to a stop without any damage right in the wooded salient where we thought we were going to find Japanese, and thank goodness, there were no Japanese there. Anyway, I came to a stop, and the squad got out. There were ruts in the landing area which had been formed by the native teak loggers.

A teak log, in order to float, has to dry for about 2 years, I think. The wood is so dense that if it doesn't dry and you put it in the river, it sinks before it gets to the mill. They would use elephants, and they would cut these great teak logs, and they would cut a bow just like a ship. They would put a hole through it, and they would run a chain through it and hook this up to an elephant, and the elephant would skid the log out into a drying area. Then when the season was wet again, they would skid it across the field. This had cut some ruts that really didn't show up in the photographs. They were covered over with grass. The glider would cross the ruts, and the wheels would drop into the ruts, and one wheel would come off. Then the glider is down on its belly; it's heavily loaded, and we had no machinery to move it, and it was too much for a team of men to move. You couldn't get it out of the way, and in the dark, succeeding gliders would come and run into them. What we were trying to do was get the people out of the gliders just as quickly as we could so that when the collision came at least the glider that was stopped on the ground wouldn't have anybody in it to get hurt.

We had about 21 deaths around the landing area. Most of them though occurred in two gliders that hit the trees. We had lots of wounded. We had about 60 people that needed medical attention. Some with broken arms and broken legs.

I don't think any of them were very seriously wounded.

The next morning Phil sent our ambulance planes in, escorted by P-51s, and they picked up the wounded, and we were free of our wounded and went on with our business.

T: When did you finally tell the outfit where you were going?

A: We told them just before they embarked in the gliders.

T: I am talking about after you left the States.

A: When we embarked, they knew where we were headed, and they knew we were headed to India. I think they knew we were going there to support General Wingate's Chindits. They didn't know any of the details of how we were going to do this, and really right at the beginning, I am not sure we knew the details. These were all worked out with Wingate when we got there.

T: You were moved from the States in a real rush when actually you didn't jump off for Broadway until nearly 2 months after you were in country?

A: That's right. I arrived in India in December, I think, just before Christmas 1943. We flew into Burma 4 March, I believe the date was. One, you had to get everybody there and get

all of your equipment there. You had to practice with the infantry that you were going to support. We had to get our airplanes all together at the ports and move them forward to our advance bases. We started operating right away. One of the very dramatic things that happened when I arrived there, the people in the theater didn't know what we were going to do.

I remember talking to some of the staff officers. They said, "What in the hell are you going to do with 100 L-5s?" This was the Air Force talking pretty contemptuously about a small airplane like an L-5. They said, "We have a squadron here in the theater, and we don't know what to do with it." I said, "Well, we know what to do with it. What about giving me your squadron." Well, they didn't want to give me their squadron. They make awful good taxis. In countries like India where the road nets are inadequate, an L-5 is just wonderful to get around in. It beats riding down a dusty road with potholes.

We had just arrived in the theater, and we had just received our L-5s into the theater when the British launched a campaign in the Arakan, which is over Bangladesh. I say they launched a campaign, actually the Japanese launched a campaign. Before this the British would be in their outposts, and the Japanese would move a force in and surround the

British. Finally, the British would begin to starve. There was no way of really getting supplies and reinforcements to them, but about this time, it had changed. They got the C-47s. I guess the year before they did. They had dropped supplies. The British were still forming the old Kitchener box, the square, the British square. The Japanese were on the outside cutting off their supplies, and the British were on the inside. The C-47s would drop supplies to the British, which, of course, made it possible to maintain your square and continue to fight.

Until we arrived, they never had a satisfactory way to take care of their wounded. As a result, a lot of the casualties became fatalities just simply because there was no way to produce adequate medical care. When the British box was surrounded by the Japanese on this occasion, of course, the C-47s of the Troop Carrier Command could drop the supplies in. They scraped out a little strip inside the square, and we dispatched one squadron of our L-5s, and they started making the mail runs. They would carry a fresh man in and bring an injured man out. If a man were hit or wounded, very often in about an hour's time, we could have him back in India in a general hospital where he could get proper care. Well, the doctors just thought this was the greatest thing that had happened to military medicine, and it was. Not only being able to move the man, but if you move him by

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air, he has a much better chance of survival than if he had to be moved on the ground by an ambulance. The trip in an ambulance over a military road very often killed a patient. If you put him in an airplane and he was comfortable, to get him from the British box back into the Arakan was no more than a 45-minute flight, and he landed right at a general hospital. They took the patient right into adequate medical facilities where he could get proper attention. As a result, the Japanese stayed on the outside, and the British stayed on the inside. The British had their mail and newspapers in the morning; their wounded were evacuated, and a fresh soldier was there to replace him the minute he was hit.

T: You were doing this in January and February?

A: That's right. Maybe it started as early as December. We got just a tremendous amount of publicity. I am not saying this was the first time this was ever done, but we did it on an organized basis. We gave the British something they had never had before. So it hit all the newspapers in India, and of course, the PR people picked this up and sent it back to the States. Before we ever got into action, we were heroes. This surely changed the image of the L-5.

T: Did you have a tough time finding someone to head up the light plane section?

A: No. I don't know where we got him. The man who headed it up was Andy Rebory. He was an experienced liaison pilot commander.

T: Sergeant pilots worked out well.

A: Sergeant pilots worked out well.

T: They doubled as mechanics and a little of everything else that you needed. Fifty percent of them were college grads.

A: I suppose they were. Many of them were boys who washed out of flying school. One of my classmates at flying school showed up as a sergeant pilot flying L-5s.

T: Do you remember his name?

A: Hyland. But they weren't very experienced soldiers. We didn't lose any, but when we landed in Broadway, the British immediately put up the square, the fortified square, with the barbwire, the slit trenches, the foxholes, and supplies in the middle of the box looking out. This was a heck of a lot of effort. We had L-5s based at Broadway. Our L-5 pilots were living it up. They set up little camps all out through the woods, strung their jungle hammocks between trees. This was a great picnic, and then one night

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the Japanese came. I will tell you, panic hit. Somehow or another, with the British help, they got back inside the British box with the British soldiers who were very experienced at this.

T: They didn't string any more hammocks?

A: I will tell you. As Tex Hill said, "Nothing makes a man shape up quicker than getting shot at." That attack occurred the night I left Broadway. I never slept outside of the wire. I had my sleeping bag inside the wire with the British commander. It was so peaceful at Broadway. We had been there about 3 weeks, and nothing had happened. Then one night they estimate 250 Japanese marched down the airstrip and did a column right and walked into the camp. (laughter) The reason they think there were 250 is because that's how many they killed before it was over, but it took about a week to kill them. They dug in outside the perimeter, and the British took care of this very methodically, and they were experienced in it. They had Gurkhas, and the Gurkhas were experienced. They had night fighters. They would send the Gurkhas out at night.

T: The things we have heard all our lives about the Gurkhas, are they true?

A: I think generally so. He was a professional fighting man and took great pride in his profession. They were sturdy little people. I never saw them. I saw the aftermath of some of the fighting. I think they were quite effective. As Wingate said, "Each man has his effectiveness. The Gurkhas are just excellent, particularly at night. They are the world's worst in a water crossing. Somehow or another, the Gurkhas are just not prepared to cross water. We have lost a few. The West Africans are the best I have got defending a fortification. Once they get dug in, they are just almost impossible to get out." Of course, he had Indians, Gurkhas, West Africans, and boys from the British Isles.

T: His exercises were so real----

A: His attitude was, "Every man is a good fighter if he is led properly." He didn't believe in the ethnic limitations, but he felt because of historical reasons some people fought better in a certain environment or mode than they fought in another. He was really a remarkable man.

T: Do you remember hearing the stories about the Gurkhas practicing for the gliders?

A: Yes. It is just hearsay. It may have happened; it may not. I don't know. We did have bamboo mockup gliders with the seats in them. The purpose was to illustrate to the troops how to load the gliders and when the glider landed how to get out in short order. The British officer was drilling his Gurkha troops on getting in and out of gliders, and one of the Gurkhas noticed that these gliders didn't have any motors. He thought he had an obligation to tell his officer. He said, "You know, I don't want to cause any trouble, but these airplanes don't have any motors." (laughter) I don't know whether that happened or not. It was a current story, and it could have been true.

T: If Wingate couldn't get what he wanted, did he threaten to resign or quit?

A: Wingate was an unusual personality. He had his views on how the war should be prosecuted, and his views were not only strongly held but strongly put. He was articulate, and he was critical. He would be critical of both his peers and his superiors. I think that created problems for him. I don't say he was wrong, but Wingate did have problems in his peer relations and with his relations with some of his superiors. I think that has been illustrated after the war. The official British history downgrades Wingate and really undeservedly so. I know Wingate's associates, the people

who fought with him, thought a great injustice had been done to a great man, historically. He was accused of a lot of things. Actually, Wingate was a great soldier. He wanted to fight in Burma, and I think the official British policy was not to fight to retake Burma. That may have made some sense too, but there certainly was a difference of policy or military opinion about what should be done in that theater.

T: He did attempt to take his life once, didn't he?

A: That's what I hear, and he did have a scar, a throat scar from one ear to the other.

T: One of the reasons that he grew the beard.

A: Oh, I don't know. While we were there, he always had his beard, but you could still see the scar.

T: You thought pretty highly of him, didn't you?

A: Yes, I did.

T: Didn't you fly him most of the time?

A: After we went into Burma, I flew him on most of the missions into Burma. He came in C-47s at night on the lift, but

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there were several occasions when I flew him in in a B-25. Most of the time I used the little Noorduyt Norseman transport, which was a small transport. These were daylight flights. I preferred to use the B-25 on daylight flights because it was armed. He was killed, I guess, about 20 days after we landed behind the enemy lines in Burma. In that time, I flew him in two or three times in the daylight. I flew him into the blockaded area at White City. That's what we called it or Mawlu. It was the one where they cut the railroad bridge and established a block and stayed there for a long time. The Japanese had a hill fortification right over the bridge, and they were dug in. This was Calvert's [Brig J. Michael] first objective--Mike Calvert--his troops took the hill, took the fortification, and then dismantled the bridge. I don't think the railroad trains ever ran at the end of northern Burma after that. The British went up the hill. They walked up. I understand they lost five officers in the charge.

(End Tape 13, Side 1)

A: Our question was, "Why didn't you call on us for air support?" This was a small hill. The Japanese were concentrated. They had no undercover fortifications or very limited fortifications. We could have come in there with six P-51s and put napalm on the hill. I believe they probably

could have taken the hill without a casualty, but they wanted to do it. This was the first time they had met the enemy, and they wanted to just go up and take it, and they did. I flew Wingate in right after the battle. It's the first time I had seen the aftermath of an infantry battle. It's a pretty bloody thing. The British were disposing of the corpses. In the hot weather in the jungle, the flies would accumulate immediately so the stench begins immediately. The British would put ropes around the legs of the Japanese soldiers who were dead and drag them down the hill. There was a small stream there that had cut a small canyon. The sides of the canyon were sand. They pushed these bodies off of the little sand palisade, arranged them down at the bottom of the palisade, and when they got them all there, just for sanitary purposes, they put some dynamite in holes back from the edge of the palisade. When they blew it, there was an avalanche of sand that just covered all the corpses and got rid of the stench and got rid of the flies.

When I looked at that hill and I thought of men going up it in the face of enemy fire, being an infantry soldier was a pretty formidable operation. The British did it with spirit. They fortified a larger hill which was just adjacent, and they stayed there. The Japanese attacked their fortification for weeks, and a large concentration of Japs. I think the British estimated there were five or six thousand Japs

killed in the woods. Most of these were killed by our aircraft. In order to get at the British, the Japanese exposed themselves and made themselves very vulnerable. We would drop bombs into the area, drop napalm into the area, and we would drop depth charges, and under the jungle canopy, a depth charge was a formidable weapon. It would just blast. It would break your eardrums and cause other kinds of discomfort. I forget just exactly what the casualty count was, but the British were able to count them, and they were exceptionally high. This was the kind of situation where we provided the British with artillery which they couldn't carry.

On another occasion at this same fortification, the Japanese brought up about half a dozen field pieces, and they planted them out in the rice paddies, and they began to fire into the fortified area. The British immediately called for air support, and with the help of the British, we were able to identify every field piece and destroyed all of them in short order, the P-51s did.

T: You were the first to use rockets on -51s?

A: Yes, the Air Force was in the process of putting the rocket into operational status, and I believe we did get the first ones. They were the old 3-inch rockets that were fired out of--it looked like a paper mailing tube. We carried these

long tubes under the wing on the bomb rack, and the rockets were carried in there. I forget, I think the P-51 carried three 5-inch rockets on each bomb rack. I don't know how effective they were. It was just another form of firepower that you can carry on the airplane.

T: Were there efforts by the British to amalgamate the Air Commando units with the existing air tactical organizations as they existed?

A: There were no efforts by the British. I think the Air Force in India, when we first came over, would liked to have done that, but we pointed out that this was a special unit on a special mission and was really a test and experimental unit and that General Arnold wanted to keep it independent. General Stratemeyer respected that. We really didn't have any trouble. When we first got over there, there was a body of opinion in the Air Force that felt strongly that we should become just another unit of the Tenth Air Force.

T: Would it have worked?

A: I won't say that it wouldn't have worked, but to work, we would have had to gone to General Stratemeyer and said, "Don't touch our resources." We had better resources in our unit than the Tenth Air Force. If we had been part of the

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Tenth Air Force, the logistics people would have wanted to get their hands on our supplies. This way we kept the supplies we had requisitioned and brought with us separate, and for the purposes of the first expedition, I believe that was important.

T: Did you realize you were changing the concept of jungle warfare?

A: Well, I don't know whether I was smart enough to realize we were. We knew what we were doing. We felt as General Arnold felt that you could use air forces to land troops just as we did with amphibious forces. One of the things that we realized almost immediately was that we were limited by the equipment which we possessed. One of the things that we would liked to have had on the ground behind enemy lines was armor, light armor if necessary, but in some cases we would liked to have had heavy armor. We had no equipment that could carry it. When I was recalled, one of the first things General Arnold had me do was attend several meetings in the Pentagon and discuss with Logistics or Plans people or policy people the strength and shortcomings of the unit and what we could do to improve on this kind of warfare.

There was really no problem with the fighter. The P-51 was an excellent close support fighter. There was really no

problem with the B-25, an excellent light bomber with the flexibility to support this kind of operation. Where we were limited was transport. I had rather not do it with gliders. Gliders not only have limitations, but in certain circumstances, they are more hazardous. We caught the Japanese completely by surprise. In Broadway it took them 3 weeks to find us. We had no opposition, but we didn't know that. We thought when we got on the ground the Japanese were going to be there waiting for us. The jungle was so thick around Broadway, it took Calvert's unit over a week to get the 40 or 50 miles to the railroad.

T: They should have let the L-5 drivers----

A: (laughter) Well, you can't carry mules in L-5s. If we had known we were going to have that opposition, I would have gone in in the daylight with C-47s. If the landing area wasn't suitable, I would have just taken a half dozen C-47s in there and landed them gear up, rolled the bulldozers out, made the airstrip, jacked the C-47s up, and put the gear down again, and flown them out.

T: Could you have done that with the -47?

A: Oh, sure. We would have bent the props. We might have had to change the engines.

T: It still would have been safer?

A: Oh, yes. Even if we had to salvage them for spare parts. In the field we went into, you could have landed the C-47 gear up without doing much damage to it. You would have landed it on grass, and it would have just slid in and bent the propellers. I doubt if it would have damaged the landing gear at all.

We recognized that we needed specialized assault aircraft. So they said, "What do you need?" I said, "What we would like to have--I am not saying that this is practical at this stage of aircraft development--if we are going to support a land operation from the air, we would like to have an airplane that will carry the most effective army tank. We would like to have that airplane land and stop in 1,000 feet. We would like to have an ability in the airplane to do this without a prepared strip." The reaction was, "Well, this is impossible." I argued that it wasn't impossible. I said, "It may not be practical, but I know it's not impossible." They said, "Well, how in the world would you do it, Lieutenant Alison?" (laughter) I said, "Well, I know that you can land a big airplane and stop it in 1,000 feet." They said, "Well, how do you know that?" I said, "Well, I have seen a fully loaded glider with rockets on the nose land, and when the glider touched the ground, the rockets were fired. Not

only did the glider stop, but it went backwards." (laughter)
I said, "It's a matter of arithmetic. You can put enough reverse thrust on an airplane to stop it, not in 1,000 feet. You can stop it in 500 feet and probably stop it in less. You may limit the airplane's ability to carry anything, but I know that you can land the airplane and stop it. All I am asking you to do is give some freedom to your imagination and see what's possible. Just don't say that it can't be done." Here I am talking to my superiors.

You know the engineer who is faced with the practical problem of implementing this can immediately see all the problems. That's one of the difficulties that people who bear responsibility have. They have to make it work. They know how difficult it is. There is no way you can float an airplane that weighs 200,000 or 300,000 pounds on unprepared soil. I said, "No, that's not true. I know you can float the airplane. Here again, I don't know whether it is practical, but if necessary, you can put tank treads under that airplane, and it will support the weight on unprepared ground. Maybe you won't be able to carry very much, but you can put multiple wheels, or you can put tank treads, and you can support the weight." They agreed that that could be done but that it wouldn't be practical.

The reason it wasn't practical is because we didn't have these marvelous modern jet engines that we have today that will lift airplanes like the C-5 into the air in very, very short distances. Actually, the C-5 has come very close to doing what we wanted. On the other hand, the C-5 wouldn't be practical for this kind of operation because of the exposure. The C-5 is such a big investment and such a valuable machine that you couldn't afford to expose it in some of the forward areas. There are ways to do it, and of course, today, 30 years after World War II, we have the technology that will make this possible. We may not have the money to invest in the airlift force to do it, but essentially, the Air Force now has the capability that we were looking at back in those days.

T: You had regrets about accepting that assignment?

A: Not really. I hated to leave my group. This was the first fighter group which was my group and my responsibility, and I was going to England, and I had been in the Pacific war, and I had fought the Japanese, and now I was going to have a chance to fight the Luftwaffe. I wanted to do that. The Air Commando operation looked like it was going to be great fun. Working with Phil was always fun, and General Arnold wanted us to do it. That created a substantial incentive to

go on this expedition. I don't regret it.

T: Do you remember Wingate's plan to bring Spitfires into Broadway and the confrontation between Colonel Cochran, Wingate, and yourself?

A: I don't know how serious the confrontation was. I do know Phil questioned it, but the RAF wanted to be part of the action. We had secured Broadway. We moved our P-51s in. So here was this new American outfit over there with their airplanes behind the enemy lines in Burma operating, and the RAF was sitting back in India. So the RAF wanted to get in on it, and I don't blame them. They put a detachment of Spitfires in, and this was led by a squadron leader--I guess he was a squadron leader--who had fought in England in the Battle of Britain. Most of the RAF types that I met were real wonderful, ordinary, realistic guys about their business. Well, this guy was very arrogant. He apparently was good. He just gave me the impression, "Look, the Spit is the best airplane in the world, and I am the best pilot, and I can whip the world." And by gosh, he could come pretty close to it! He had been fighting the Germans, and he thought fighting the Japanese was pretty easy stuff.

There was practically no warning in Broadway. I had left Hailakandi in a P-51, and I was going into Broadway. When

I arrived in Broadway, I saw the columns of smoke rising. There were about three P-51s on the ground burning. We had to crank our P-51s. They didn't have starters on them. We got warning that an air raid was coming, and we didn't have time to get any P-51s off. We didn't even try. They strafed the P-51s, but the British got two Spitfires airborne. The squadron commander and a wingman. What the boys who were watching on the ground in the woods and from the slit trenches told me, these two Spits ran down the grass area and became airborne just as the Japanese fighters were coming over the field. The Japanese fighters were at relatively low altitude, and the squadron commander just pulled straight up right into them, and his wingman though went straight ahead underneath the Japanese. This British boy immediately began to turn, and they said he shot down two Japanese just one, two, and then they killed him. I think that was the end of the Spitfires behind the enemy lines. We just kept a few airplanes in there. You could react almost as quickly from Burma, not quite as quick.

T: What was the story behind Wingate's order not to fly over Burma?

A: There was never an order not to fly over Burma. We picked the landing areas at Broadway and Piccadilly. Once we had picked them, he said, "Don't go around looking at them and

drawing attention to these landing areas because we want this to be a complete surprise."

T: Didn't someone fly over just a day or 3 or 4 days before you made the landing? Didn't General Old send someone down?

A: No, Phil Cochran did. There was a lot of talk about violating Wingate's order, and I don't think this is so. I think Phil just took the responsibility for doing it, and it was a very wise thing to do. Right at the last minute, he sent a B-25 over that took the pictures. "Charlie" Rushon was in the airplane. When we took the picture of Piccadilly, we discovered the loggers had drug the logs out into the landing area. They were just lying row after row of trees. The initial reaction was that the Japanese had done it to block the landing area. I think you had to assume that.

So if you assumed that the Japanese had done it, then the next assumption was, "They are on the ground waiting for us." Broadway hadn't been blocked, and that's when Wingate made the decision we were going to put 40 gliders into Piccadilly and 40 gliders into Broadway. Piccadilly was going to be our headquarters. I was going to land at Piccadilly, and that's where we would have set up forward Air Commando Headquarters. We got the pictures, and we examined them. Wingate said, "What do you think?" I remember there were

some small areas where you could have put a glider into.

I said, "Well, General, I can get a glider in there." I really wasn't thinking because, although I might have been able to get my glider or one or two in there, it would have been a disaster to go into a landing area which was obstructed, particularly to try and do that at night. Because Broadway was unobstructed, we decided that we would put all the gliders in there, and that would become our central point of operation. It worked. We had some problems, but when the dust cleared we were there. We built an airstrip, and we brought in thousands of troops.

T: What were your feelings about the lack of RAF participation in the CBI theater?

A: Well, I didn't really see any lack of participation. The RAF Troop Carrier Command participated in the airlift just like the US Air Force. As a matter of fact, I think it was--well, I guess it wasn't a combined--but General Old was the senior airlift commander, and as a result, the RAF airplanes came under his direction, but the RAF provided a large contingent of C-47s, and the US Air Force provided a large contingent of C-47s, and they were the ones that did the work of transport and supply. As far as combat support for Wingate's troops, none of the British airplanes were

configured for air-to-ground like ours.

T: Strictly air-to-air?

A: Well, the Spitfire was strictly an air-to-air airplane. They may have had some air-to-ground airplanes, but I just think we had far better equipment. We really didn't need the RAF. The one time we asked the RAF to support us, they tried, but they were not successful for reasons which were beyond their control. That was when our fighters had been down over Mandalay. I guess they had been on a bombing mission, and they were on the way home. I never will forget, I was in the operations shack, and we had excellent radio communications. We had a radio that we kept tuned to the tactical frequency. As the boys were coming back, we were listening to them talk. Finally, one boy said, "What in the world is that down there?" They were passing over the airport at Shwebo. Another one said, "That's the Japanese Air Force." Grant Mahony was leading, and I heard him say, "Forget the fighters; get the bombers." The bombers had landed and were in the process of refueling, and the Japanese fighters were still circling the airfield. I guess there were probably 12 P-51s. They went in and strafed the bombers on the runway and the gas trucks. The gas trucks exploded, and the bombers exploded. They just had a field day.

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I don't know what happened to the fighters above. We lost one pilot, and we have to assume that one of the Japanese fighters killed him. We had gun cameras on these airplanes, and in the development one P-51 on one pass set five Japanese bombers on fire on that one pass. When the P-51s left, I called the bomber squadron and requested that they load the bombers with frags. Phil came down. We said, "Load the bombers with frags." We waited until the fighters returned because R. T. Smith was the bomber squadron commander, and Walter Radyvich was the deputy bomber squadron commander. Both of them were flying fighters that day. They were out with the fighters.

T: Did you switch like that?

A: Yes. We let anybody fly anything that they wanted.

T: That sort of kicks the theory of being a one-airplane type pilot.

A: Specialization is probably the best, but morale isn't as high if you specialize to that degree (laughter)

T: They returned?

A: Yes, and I announced to R. T. that his airplanes were bombed up and we wanted him to go out and drop frag bombs because

we felt maybe the fighters had landed by this time, thought the fighters would land there. Sure enough the fighters did. R. T. complained, "I have been flying for 4 hours. I am tired." But finally, we prevailed, and he got in the airplane. I forget the number of B-25s that he took. I think there were six. R. T. knew exactly where the field was--one of the reasons we wanted R. T. was because of his experience, because he had already strafed the airport. He knew where the field was. He came back over, and the B-25s spread out into a tactical formation. At about 1,000 feet, they opened the bomb doors and let their whole load of frag go as they crossed the airfield.

Apparently, the fighters had landed because they started lots more fires. We had alerted the RAF and asked them to also strike it. They did come down there, and I believe they had Hurricanes. When they got there, it was just about dark. R. T. went over; it was about dark and very difficult to see anything on the airport because of the smoke and the haze from the bombers and the fuel trucks and everything else that had been burning. The RAF said that the smoke was so dense over the entire area that they were not able to find the airport. Then the next day, the RAF took pictures and reported that they could count 100 burnt airplanes. That was the Japanese Air Force in Burma. What happened was they were staging forward, and they were going to run a big raid on us the next day.

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T: You got lucky and got them first. You broke their back.

A: It was just pure luck.

(End Tape 13, Side 2)

A: As I just said on the other half of the tape, this was just luck, and it was a great piece of good fortune for us. I don't know what their intended target was the next day. The Japanese were getting ready to launch a four-division invasion of India. Their target might have been Imphal. It might have been us. We don't know what they intended to hit. Getting these airplanes out of the way, really ensured the success of our operation into Burma because it removed a formidable threat. There were times when we were exposed. We had our transports all over Burma. I flew over Burma during the daytime in transports by myself and never had any real fear of being intercepted. First of all, there is a lot of airspace up there, and second, we had wiped out a good part of the Japanese Air Force.

T: One character if you remember him. Broadway, do you remember a character by the name of "Fatty," a bulldozer operator? He supposedly operated his machine for 42 hours without sleep. He finally collapsed; his machine continued to roll. Did that really happen?

A: I don't know whether it happened or not. I don't remember it. (laughter)

T: In my research I ran across that.

A: Phil probably told you about the famous glider accident, the last glider to get into Broadway. When the gliders began to pile into each other, one on top of each other and it was dark, and we had wounded and a few dead, things seemed just terrible. Although it wasn't panicsville, it was pretty tense in the landing area. I had run until I just couldn't run any more. My muscles in my legs were knotting up. I was carrying my carbine with me. I had fallen so many times that the muzzle of my carbine had dirt packed all the way up to the breech. (laughter) Finally, they said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "We are not under attack. We have all the gliders in here that we can possibly take. If the radio station is in operation, stop the gliders." So somebody carried the message way over to the radio station which had hit on the other side of the landing area. It was reasonably intact. It had been damaged slightly, and the radio gear had been shaken up, but the radio operator was good. He got it working to the point where he broadcast with two code words.

The code word for success was "pork sausage." They chose "pork sausage" because all the British had to eat was a synthetic sausage made out of soybeans, which they called soya link and which they didn't like. "Soya link" was the code word for disaster; "pork sausage," which was the real McCoy, was the code word for success. I really didn't know we had such a limited vocabulary. I had always expected that I would be able to pick up the microphone and talk to Phil, but it didn't work that way. The radio operator got out on the air, "Soya link, soya link, soya link." It didn't get back to India, but it was picked up by the C-47s that were pulling the gliders in. So the C-47s then radioed back to India and said, "We have got the code word for disaster; bring the gliders back." They did turn quite a number of gliders back, but many of them had already gone so far they couldn't carry them back. They brought their gliders on in and dumped them on us anyway. Phil and Wingate were just absolutely distressed. They could imagine all kinds of terrible things. They knew we were under attack. They didn't know what was happening in the landing area. They knew we were having great difficulties.

We were having difficulties, but of course, they weren't catastrophic. We just wanted a little bit of relief. As a matter of fact, we needed the relief badly. Finally, the airplane activity overhead ceased, and Mike Calvert said,

"Let's go to bed. It always looks better in the daytime." At that time, we were all discouraged because it's always worse at night. You imagine that there are a lot more people dead than there really are. You are thinking about the dead people, not all the healthy ones that are still walking around and have already gone to bed in the woods. So we walked over to the salient and rolled out our sleeping gear and tried to get some sleep. I know Calvert was about 4 or 5 feet from me in his blanket. I had my little sleeping bag that I was sleeping in. Charlie Rushon was there. Charlie was our photographer. He is the one who took the famous photographs of the trees on Broadway. Charlie flew in with the gliders. Charlie didn't want to miss any action. He always wanted to be where the action was. All of a sudden we hear the sound of a C-47 off in the distance, and it's coming to Broadway. Now where in the world this C-47 had been, I don't know. He comes overhead, and thank goodness, he has only one glider in tow although we don't know it at that time. I tell Rushon, "Rush, can you still walk?" He said, "Yes, boss, I can walk." I said, "Run out there and tell them to put out all the lights." We had used little flare pots to try and give the glider pilots some perception of the landing area. I said, "Go out and tell them to put out the lights. I don't want that airplane to land. I want him to take that glider back to India." Well, it was a glider with a bulldozer in it. So he runs

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out on the field and disappears. The C-47 goes overhead, and then all of a sudden we hear this glider whistling down on the wind. Then like a thousand kettledrums, just bloom! (laughter) I said, "Oh, God, it hit the trees." I remember Mike Calvert toting his blanket and saying, "Oh, my God." I know what he was visualizing--13 soldiers all just smashed to bits. So was I. Really my heart sank when that thing hit. There was no use to go up there; it was somewhere out in the jungle.

About half an hour later, Rushon comes back. I said, "How many people were killed?" He said, "Nobody." I said, "What do you mean nobody was killed?" He said, "You won't believe it but wait until you see it. Nobody was killed." I said, "How many people were in the glider?" He said, "There were only two. There was a pilot and a copilot, and there was a bulldozer behind. The way we rigged it, we had a cable. The cable, if you pulled on it, raised the nose of the glider so that the load could go out the front. Well, this cable went back over a pulley in the back, and they hooked it onto the bulldozer." What had happened, this glider headed into the jungle. The fuselage went right between two trees, sheared off the wings. The bulldozer, of course, broke its moorings and started forward, but fortunately, the cable was hooked onto the back. The cable broke the latch on the nose. The nose went up in the air; the bulldozer

shot out underneath; the pilots fell back in place, and one of them broke his thumb. That's the only thing that could have happened. They were two lucky guys, and so were we. The bulldozer was damaged beyond use. We couldn't use it, but it was a good source of spare parts.

The next morning we began to count noses, and we had an engineer company, airborne engineer company with us. The commander was Captain Casey. Casey was missing. We finally found Casey. He had been killed. He was in one of the gliders that hit the trees. We had a lieutenant who was the second in command of the engineer battalion. He was an impressive fellow, but he wasn't very impressive looking. We walked out on the field as soon as it got daylight, and we looked at it. I looked at it, and it just looked discouraging. There were holes and big clumps of grass. I said to the lieutenant, "Do you think you can make an airstrip here?" He kind of shook his head and said, "Yes, I think we can." I said, "Well, how long is it going to take you?" He said, "Well, if I have it done late this afternoon, will that be soon enough?" (laughter) I said, "Go to work."

About 9 o'clock in the morning, we finally got our radio gear operating, and we established communication with Phil and Wingate back in India. Calvert and I went over to the radio

glider. Of course, we just talked to them in the clear. They said, "John, how is everything?" I said, "Well, Phil, we are here, and we are on the ground." He said, "Are you going to be able to build an airstrip?" I said, "Yes, we will be ready for you tonight." They said when Wingate heard that he just started dancing. The night before he wept because everything was a disaster. The next morning we could get it on the radio, "Nothing has happened." I said, "We have about 60 wounded here, and we need to get them out right away. Mike Calvert is concerned. If for some reason we are attacked by the Japanese, he certainly would like to be unencumbered." Phil said, "We will have ambulance planes in there in about 2 hours." Sure enough, they came over, and we got all of our wounded out.

The bulldozers, the little scrapers, and the soldiers got to work. By that evening, we had an airstrip that wasn't very long. I don't think it was 3,000 feet long, but we had lights on it. I had an improvised control tower, and we were ready to receive the C-47s. I had told Phil, "Now look, we really need to get organized on the ground. Just don't send me more than one or two C-47s in the first hour. Let me work out the procedure." Well, just as soon as it got dark, and I looked up, and I could hear the sound of a motor, and here comes a C-47. Right behind him is another one, and right behind him is another one. I think he sent

in 12 C-47s the first hour. (laughter) It's a good thing he did. That night we landed 100 C-47s. At ten an hour, of course, that's 10 hours of landings and takeoffs. That first night we got in about 500 troops in the gliders. The next night they put in probably 1,000 to 1,400 troops in addition to mules, equipment, supplies. By this time we were beginning to feel secure. Just as soon as the troops hit, Mike Calvert started them off, and they headed for the railroad. We had to get out and get our work done so Mike left us. He left Colonel Roan to command the fortification there at Broadway, and we began operation.

T: The glider operation had to be termed a success?

A: Well, it was an education. Yes, it was a success. We got the bulldozers in. We made the strips. It was a shame that we lost any lives. If we had known--well, we didn't know. One, if we had really realized we had crippled the Japanese Air Force to the extent that they weren't any threat, we would have gone in there in the daytime.

T: A piece of cake?

A: I don't think we would have lost a man. We would have busted a lot of gliders, but it really didn't make any difference. We busted most of the gliders anyway. I think

we put 52 gliders into Broadway, and of the 52, only 3 of them were completely intact. All the rest of them had been damaged to some degree. Some completely, some with just a wheel off, some with a damaged wing. We thought of trying to move them out. We pulled out the ones that were in good shape, but most of the gliders we just left right there, and they became housing, storage areas.

T: You didn't go to the CBI without a doctor?

A: The British had doctors. I had never flown a glider, but it had always been my belief the commander of an outfit ought to fly with his outfit. This glider thing was the biggest thing. Phil and I said, "We will send all the rank." Phil said, "Well, I want to go." I said, "No, you can't go. Somebody has got to mind the store. You are the commander. You have got to stay here with General Wingate." So I said, "I will go." I went, and I flew one of lead assault gliders. We had six assault gliders. Three were going to go into Broadway. Three were going to go into Piccadilly. No, we had eight assault gliders, I guess. I think that's the number. Four were going to go into Broadway and four into Piccadilly. The assault troops were specially picked and instructed in what needed to be done on the ground when we first landed.

I had Dr. Tullick as my copilot. He is the one that Ajax stabbed. (laughter) Tullick was sitting in the copilot's seat calling off the airspeed to me as we came into the field. I never will forget. He kept saying, "80, 80, 80," and I would look down at the instruments, and he was right, it was right on 80. I knew that I couldn't get that glider any slower. The reason it was coming in at 80--and it should have been coming in at 60 something--was it was just overloaded. I hit the ground and rolled straight ahead into the salient. I didn't hit a pothole or a trench. I knocked down a lot of bushes, but the glider just rolled right to a stop and right into the salient. The troops were out in the woods immediately. Of course, that was the plan. If the Japanese were anywhere, they were going to be in this salient. So the assault gliders were supposed to go for the salient. I had planned my approach so that I would go right to it. Well, it had to be luck. It wasn't any skill because the afternoon before I had them take me up and drop me three times in an empty glider. I glided the empty glider down and got the feel of it, and then the next evening, I took off with a heavily overloaded glider at night and landed behind enemy lines. It was not easy. It really was a very demanding flight.

T: Did you ever hear that term, the "Doodlebugs"? I took this from the unit history of the 1st Air Commando force, and

it said, "Commanders and advance party leaders noted and remarked to some of our boys about the increased inspiration and high morale since they knew the 'Doodlebugs' from the States were handling their men. They knew they would not be left to die if wounded but carried out in short order to a hospital."

A: That had to be the L-5s, but I never heard them referred to as "Doodlebugs" before.

T: That was a quote taken from the 1st Air Commando history. Do you remember bringing the -47 out with gear down? I think it was an RAF -47.

A: Yes.

T: That was when you were recalled?

A: Yes. These C-47s landed at night, and two of them ran together in a taxi accident. The damage was not major to either, but this one was damaged so much that the pilot left it. The leading edge was bashed in and cut open all the way to the main spar. There was a section of the leading edge maybe 2 or 3 feet that was bashed in. I guess the spar is about a foot behind the leading edge of the wing. One aileron had been crushed so bad that it wasn't effective.

I don't know how it got hit on the leading edge and the trailing edge at the same time, but it did. The aileron was still secure on the airplane, but it was badly deformed. I looked at it, and the hinges were still intact to stay on. I carefully inspected the leading edge, and I couldn't see any damage whatsoever to the main spar so I felt the airplane was safe to fly. I sent a message out to the RAF to send in mechanics and some sheet metal, and I told them about how much, to cover the hole in the leading edge and to bring in a new aileron and fly it out.

Instead of sending in the parts that I had asked for, they sent in a repair crew to make an estimate of the damage. I didn't want the airplane on the ground. It was just an open invitation to the Japanese to come over and burn it up. Finally, I said to the flight sergeant, "Why in the world didn't you bring in the material to prepare it?" He said, "Well, sir, I don't know. They sent me in to make an estimate, and I am supposed to tell them what parts they need." I said, "Well, I have already told you what parts. I am a little bit upset because I don't want the airplane here. Pull it over in the edge of the jungle and cut down some trees and try and camouflage it, which they did. We waited. I guess the airplane was there 3 or 4 days, and nothing happened. I kept asking the repair crew under the supervision of this flight sergeant, "When are we going to get

parts for the airplane." We didn't want the RAF crew in there or the airplane. He said, "Sir, I don't know." When Phil called me on the radio, he said, "John, you had better come out tonight. I would like to see you. I have a message here for you that I think you ought to read." This was around the middle of the afternoon. So I told the flight sergeant, "Take the shrubbery off your airplane. I am going to fly it out." He said, "Sir, you have no authority to fly it out." I said, "Flight, here I am the boss. I am in command of all air operations on this airfield. I control your airplane. I am going to fly it out." He said, "Sir, I can't let you do it." I said, "Flight, you don't need to take any responsibility. I will take full responsibility for the airplane." Finally, he found out or he decided that there wasn't any use arguing with me. I said, "The airplane is safe to fly." He said, "Well, I can't be sure." I said, "I am sure that it is."

So they pulled the bushes off, and they backed it out of the edge of the woods where it had been hidden. I climbed aboard, and Rushon, the photographer, said, "I am going with you." He was everywhere. He said, "I want to go with you." I said, "You know, I have never flown this airplane before." He said, "It doesn't make any difference. Let's go." So we got in, and I started it up, and I took it off and flew it to India. Just as I had predicted, the airplane

flew quite well. On an empty C-47 with half a load of gas in it, one aileron is plenty. The airplane has enough wing if you lose the effectiveness of maybe 2 or 3 feet of it, it really doesn't make any difference. I really didn't notice any problem with flight characteristics whatsoever.

The only concern I had, I got the gear up because there was a placard that said, "To raise the gear, pull up on the handle." (laughter) I was not sure of the instructions for lowering it because it had a great big hydraulic gauge on the side, and the pressure went up. It was on the other side of the cockpit, and I couldn't read it carefully. I was just concerned that I had the gear down and locked. So as I approached Hailakandi, which was our airfield, I called the tower, and I asked them to get a C-47 pilot in the tower that I had some information I wanted to check with him. I forget who the pilot was, one of the guys I knew. I said, "Say, I have got this gear down, and I just want to doublecheck that I have it locked." I told him what I had done. He said, "You're safe; come on it." So I brought the airplane in and landed it. I got out, and I gave it to one of our crew chiefs, and I said, "You've got yourself a new airplane." Then I think they took some spare parts off of it and then gave it back to the British. (laughter)

T: You had two messages?

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A: When I saw Phil, I said, "What's the message?" He said, "You have two now." I had two almost identical messages. I forget the exact wording, but one of them in essence said, "Report to me without delay," signed Arnold. Then the second message that came in was, "Report to me without delay," signed Eisenhower [Gen Dwight D.]. Arnold was my boss so I sent a message to Arnold, and I said, "I have received your message, and I have also received a message from General Eisenhower asking me to report to him. Am I authorized a delay en route to see General Eisenhower?" The message came back immediately, "You are authorized a 2-day delay in England."

I left India and flew to England. I went out to General Eisenhower's headquarters, and I reported to his office. His adjutant or exec was sitting in the outer office, and as I recall, he was the only person in the office. I went in and said--I identified myself--that I had received a message from General Eisenhower to report to him and said, "I am here." He said, "Fine, come on in." I went in and saluted and reported to General Eisenhower. I was most impressed. General Eisenhower was a true gentleman. He said, "Oh, Alison, I am glad you are here. The reason we wanted you, we are planning to cross the Channel, and we are going to use gliders. You have had a brandnew experience, and we would like to understand the problems that you encountered."

I said, "Well, sir, I will be very happy to discuss it with anyone that you want me to." He said, "Well, I want to take you around and introduce you to General Spaatz." I said, "You don't need to do that. I know General Spaatz quite well. I can find his office." He said, "Oh, no, I want to take you." I knew General Spaatz because he was a major at Langley Field, Virginia, when I was stationed there as a second lieutenant, and I knew all of Spaatz' children and Mrs. Spaatz, and I knew the general from those days. He said, "Oh, no, I want to take you," and his headquarters were in this old hospital unit which was just corridors spread out over several acres. He walked from his section of the headquarters down a long corridor and over to another section, took me into General Spaatz and said, "'Tooey,' this is Lieutenant Alison. He has come here to tell us about gliders."

T: You were a lieutenant colonel by then, weren't you?

A: That's right. I should have been a lieutenant. (laughter) I just forget that during the war I got promoted so rapidly. (laughter) I was a lieutenant colonel. He said, "This is Colonel Alison." He stayed and chatted for a few minutes. I was very impressed that this five-star general----

(End Tape 14, Side 1)

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A: Would get up from his desk and escort me a quarter of a mile over to see General Spaatz. He couldn't have been more cordial. He chatted all the way over. I said, "Well, here is a five-star general that the world can't help but like." That was true about General Eisenhower. That's one of the reasons for his great success in the European theater. His personality and his temperament were such that he was able to mediate between the conflicting philosophies, opinions, and desires of the Allies. I talked to General Spaatz for a few minutes, and he said, "I want you to talk to General Vandenberg. General Vandenberg is going to head up the tactical air, and he is very anxious to know about your experiences in Burma."

T: General Vandenberg had been associated with the outfit when you first began.

A: That's right. General Vandenberg was the reason Phil was with the outfit.

T: You thought you were going to go to Washington for a few days?

A: I didn't know. Arnold didn't explain it in the message. (laughter) Vandenberg got me together with the--I believe Mike Kelly was the glider expert in the Ninth Air Force.

He was a very famous acrobatic pilot. I told them that I thought our biggest mistake was trying to pull two gliders with a C-47. It would be much easier on both the airplane pilot and the glider pilot if you had one glider. That was General Old's recommendation. He didn't want us to pull two gliders. We felt that our C-47 pilots were a cut above all the rest. If the rest could pull one, ours could pull two without any difficulty, and they did quite well. Even so, we broke quite a few towropes that we would not have broken if we had had one glider behind the C-47s instead of two. The second error was that we did not have any careful load control. The gliders were heavy. This increased the drag, and made it even more difficult for the C-47 to pilot. We would have had a disaster if our pilots hadn't been very skilled and very seasoned and also very experienced in pulling gliders.

The glider is on two ropes. If you are flying in perfect formation and as close to each other as you can, the drag was tolerable, but we began to hit rough air. When you hit rough air, the C-47 would drop. This would give the gliders a spurt ahead. As you went ahead, you would run into your ropes. So then you had to move the gliders out and allow a big loop to come into the glider rope. The C-47 would then begin to pick up speed because the gliders are no longer exerting any drag. In order to keep the C-47 from jerking

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the ropes, which would pull the fittings out of the glider or the C-47--most of the time they would just pull the fitting right out of the tail of the C-47--the glider pilot would then have to move his glider way out and allow the tension to come back into the rope gradually. If you didn't do that, you would either break the rope or pull the fitting out of the airplane.

I must say our glider pilots did very well. I am an experienced pilot, and this was a difficult flight. At times it was a little frightening. Here you are up getting close to the C-47 and you have a rope looped over the top of your wing and way back beyond the rear of your glider. Now you have got to take the slack out of that rope without a jerk. You could do it, but when you did it, all of a sudden you had another big drag load on the C-47. When the airplane and the gliders got out of phase and started going back and forth, you broke the ropes. This happened to us. We lost 12 gliders before we ever got across the enemy lines.

Surprisingly, I don't think we had a casualty in any of those gliders. They went down in India. Then I believe we lost eight after we crossed the enemy lines. This was something that caused great confusion with the Japanese. We didn't realize it, but this was the greatest diversion. We had no sooner crossed the Chindwin when the airplane

pulling the second radio station--we had two radio stations--broke the ropes and lost its two gliders just after they had crossed the Chindwin. In the airplane that had the communications station in it, Arvid Olson [Col Arvid E., Jr.], who was a pilot--he was an AVG squadron commander--was the director of operations in our organization. Olson was in that airplane. In the airplane on the other wing, "Dick" Babel [Capt John S.], who was our chief administrative officer, was flying in that airplane. We had the deputy commander, the deputy for operations, and the deputy for administration all in the assault mode because Phil and I both felt this was the most dangerous thing we were going to do in that entire operation. We were not going to have the rank sitting back on the ground pushing the kids out ahead of them. We had most of the rank in the 1st Air Commando Group in the gliders on the invasion.

Olson and Babel went down and landed right in the middle of two divisions of Japanese. I believe there were two divisions there. Anyway, Olson's glider went down right near a Japanese division headquarters. They weren't out of their glider before the Japanese were firing at them. There were three Gurkhas in the glider, a glider mechanic, the glider pilot, and Olson. They got out and ran. The Gurkhas went back to set fire to the glider. I don't know what ever happened to the Gurkhas. I presume they escaped. They are

very resourceful little guys and particularly in the jungle, but the three Americans made it to the Chindwin River, and they got down and hid on the bank, and the glider mechanic couldn't swim. So Olson and the glider pilot started out to swim the Chindwin. The Chindwin is so broad that although it was moonlight they couldn't see across, but they took a sight on the moon, and using the moon to guide them, they started to swim across the river. Olson and the glider pilot were fairly strong swimmers, but before they got across the river, the moon went down, it set. I don't know how long it stayed. They must have been several hours in that river trying to get across. Olson said, "We really didn't know which way to go. We had to kind of feel the current and keep going." They eventually got across. It was almost a week before they were picked up by friendly troops.

T: What happened to the mechanic?

A: They left him on the bank, and he hid. I am sure the Japanese captured him. Then in the other glider, there were 13 well-prepared British troops. They stepped out of there. These were all guys with rifles and machettes, and they knew how to take care of themselves. They started off. They set their compass, and they started back to the Chindwin. They got to the Chindwin, and they decided to swim it. The

glider mechanic--I can't remember whether it was the mechanic or the pilot--was not a strong swimmer. Babel told him, "If you have trouble, let me know so I can give you a hand." They all stayed together and swam that river. Somewhere across they lost one of the Americans, and he drowned in the river. They never found him. He never uttered a sound. As Babel said, "He may have been concerned about alerting the enemy, but he just never said a word." He just disappeared in the night in the river. I think there were 13 men in the glider, plus the crew, 15 men. So they lost one. Fourteen of them got back across.

One of the gliders broke loose, and there was a major town the Japanese occupied on the Irrawaddy. This was Katha. One of the gliders broke its rope right over Katha. The pilot put the glider down on a sandbar in the river right at the edge of the town. They stepped out, and the water was shallow across to the mainland. They put some debris in it, set the glider on fire, waded through the water over to the riverbank, and walked off. About 15 days later they showed up in Broadway, everyone of them. They were a little hungry, but they made it. When they ran out of rations, they were very lucky. They came on a good stream, and they threw a couple of handgrenades in a pool, in an eddy, and they got plenty of fish. They ate the fish, but they were hale and hearty when they walked into the camp. One of our other

doctors was aboard that glider. That was a doctor who had one of life's experiences. (laughter)

T: After you left Eisenhower, you reported to General Arnold?

A: Yes.

T: What did General Arnold want?

A: General Arnold was so enthused about the success of this operation--we had received some tremendous publicity, maybe some that we didn't deserve. Well, it was a unique operation. Wingate was a unique person, and Phil Cochran was a unique person. Newspaper people liked to write about both of them. This was an ideal combination. We had moved 12,000 men behind the enemy lines. We were supplying them, and they were fighting. This was exciting news. This was all reported back to General Arnold, and he was just delighted.

I came back, and he was real enthusiastic. He said, "Alison, this has been such a success. I have given authorization to form four more Air Commando groups and the necessary transport. I have already implemented the organization of two of them." I said, "General, what are they going to do?" He said, "We are going to retake Burma from the air." I said,

"Whose troops are we going to use?" He said, "We are going to move the British Army into Burma." I said, "General, I don't think the British Army is going into Burma. From what I have learned, the British have no plans to retake Burma." This came to him as quite a surprise. He said, "Are you sure of that?" I said, "I think I am sure of it, General. One of Wingate's chief complaints was that there were only two commanders in that theater who wanted to fight--General Stilwell and himself. I know there is a great conflict between General Wingate and his superiors about the strategy. It is my impression the British are not going to provide the troops to retake Burma even if you provide these resources. I don't want you to take my word for it. Phil, as commander, had a much closer liaison with both Wingate and Mountbatten than I did." Phil for a time just kind of lived with Wingate. I was over behind the enemy lines working with the troops. I said, "I would like for you to have Phil's opinion." He said, "By all means," and he called out Gen "Bozo" McKee [William F.]. He said, "Get Phil Cochran here just as fast as you can."

About 3 or 4 days later, here comes Phil dragging in, having flown all the way from Burma. He got us both in the office, and he said, "Alison here tells me"--he told Phil that he was ready to commit these resources. It was a substantial resource. Not only the Air Commando group, but this was

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matched with four combat cargo groups of 100 C-46s. Four squadrons of twenty-five each. This is a tremendous amount of airlift. We could have moved the British Army into India with this, with 400 of our best tactical transports at that time. He said, "Alison tells me that he believes the British will not provide the troops to implement this operation." Phil is much more direct than I, and he said, "The British are not going to fight to retake Burma." He said, "Phil, how do you know?" He said, "We have discussed this. I have heard Wingate go on about this. I have heard him argue with other British officers. John is absolutely right. The British are not going to do it." Although I knew what Phil was going to say, I was relieved to hear him say it because it had to be said. Phil was more of an authority on the subject than I because he lived with the problem much closer than I did.

General Arnold said, "All right, come with me." He got up and got his hat and put it square on his head like he always wore it. We followed him out of the office. He walked down to the private elevator the Chief of Staff used, or the Chief of the Air Force, got on the elevator, and went down to the basement and got in his car, drove over to Combined Headquarters to British Field Marshal Sir John Dill. He and Arnold were apparently close personal friends. Arnold pulled us into the office, and he sat down and told

Sir John what he had in mind. He said, "Now here is what these boys tell me." Sir John Dill looked him right in the eye and said, "General Arnold, what the boys tell you is right. That isn't the strategy. There is no plan to use the Indian Army to retake Burma."

Maybe that was a very wise strategy. The end of the war came when we dropped the bombs on Japan. The decisive thrust was through the Pacific and directly at Japan. I don't say that these other operations were not without importance, but the resources and the energy that you would put into retaking Burma were probably not worth it simply because whether we retook Burma or whether we didn't wasn't a decisive factor in ending the war. Now General Arnold has already got two of these organized. He said, "What are we going to do with them?" We said, "Well, they can always use one more in India." I think it was the 2d Air Commando Group under Art Debolt [Brig Gen Arthur R.] that they sent to India. Then the 3d Air Commando Group, we brought Arvid Olson back and made him the Commander of the 3d Air Commando Group. The question was, "Well, what will we do with this one?" The decision was that, "Well, maybe it can be used in the invasion of the Philippines." So General Arnold said to me, "John, I want you to get on an airplane and fly to Brisbane, Australia, and describe this resource to Gen George Kenney [George C.]. Tell him what you have done in

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India and tell him if he wants the unit he can have it." I got on an airplane and flew all the way to Brisbane, Australia, in a C-47 across the United States.

I think they called it an LB-30. It was a cargo version of the B-24, a most uncomfortable way to travel. In the back end they had put great big leather seats, but the seats were such that they just weren't comfortable. I got on that airplane and went all the way to Australia, stopping for fuel and to change crews. We flew to Hawaii. One crew got off, and another one got on, and we flew down to, I guess, Canton Island. Then we flew to, I believe, Guadalcanal and finally ended up in Brisbane.

I stayed about 5 days at General Kenney's headquarters. I explained the whole situation to him. I said, "Would you like to have the unit in the theater?" He said yes, he would like to have it. So I got on the airplane, went back and told General Arnold. He said, "All right, we will send the 3d Air Commando Group to New Guinea, and we will send the 3d Combat Cargo Group to New Guinea. I believe the Commander of the 3d Combat Cargo Group was Colonel Bell [Maj Gen William J.], someone that I had known before the war, but as I get older, names become more and more vague. He said, "You go out, and I want you to go into the Plans Section of General Kenney's headquarters, and I want you

to assist the Plans officer in drawing up a plan to use this to go into the Philippines before the landings."

I got my affairs in order and got on another airplane and went to New Guinea. I joined the Far East Air Forces, which were General Kenney's headquarters in Hollandia. I was drawing up a plan to launch a glider tow from the Halmaheras, which were just south of Mindanao. We had about 400 miles of ocean, I think, to cross, which was no real problem for a C-46. We were going to fly inland and drop the gliders at guerrilla strips, organize the guerrillas, prepare landing strips, and then start putting an army into central Mindanao or wherever we could, the best places that we could. While I was in the process of doing this planning, the whole plan for the invasion of the Philippines was changed. They decided not to go into Mindanao, that they would bypass Mindanao, and land at Leyte. This accelerated the invasion of the Philippines by 6 weeks. There was no real opportunity for the Air Commando group then to participate because they had just arrived in the theater, we didn't have time to get them into position, and the range was too long. We would have had to move them up to Palau. We could have done it from Palau, but there wasn't enough room on the airstrip at Palau to really accommodate this kind of operation. Second, we didn't need it.

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When the plan was changed and when we went in and landed at Leyte, I was reassigned from the Plans Section of the Far East Air Force, and I became the Deputy Commander of the 308th Bomb Group. The 308th Bomb Group wasn't a bomb group. It used the table of organization of a bomb group, but it was the advance air force headquarters, and the Fifth Air Force had three of these headquarters organizations. It was a headquarters and a communications squadron. I forget what all the bomb group had in it. It had the resources necessary to support an advance command headquarters. This is the way the Fifth Air Force leapfrogged. One bomb group would go and land in Leyte, and then the next bomb group would be loading up to go to Mindoro, and then the next one would be loading up to go into Luzon. General David Hutchison [Maj Gen David W.] was the Commander of the 308th. It made the landing at Leyte. It was also chosen then to make the landing in the Lingayen Gulf.

Late in December 1944, I boarded the battleship New Mexico, which was my transportation to Lingayen Gulf. This was an exciting voyage. I had never been aboard a battleship before. We left Leyte. We went through the straits, past the southern part of Luzon, and went into Lingayen Gulf, and for 3 days the combat portion of the fleet bombarded the shore. I guess at the end of the third day or on the fourth day, the troop transports deployed the landing craft, and

they went ashore at Lingayen. I landed with the troops. There was no opposition. The Japanese apparently had pulled back. I don't know whether it was the Navy gunfire or part of the strategy. It could very well have been part of their strategy because the Japanese just weren't strong enough in that area to meet the troops on the beaches. I believe it was 10 days or 2 weeks before we really began to contact the Japanese after landing. Someone said the first casualty was a soldier who was gored by a water buffalo. That probably was true. We moved the headquarters of the 308th Bomb Group. I was on the New Mexico. David Hutchison was on another ship. He was the Commander of the 308th. I don't know what ship he was on. We moved ashore, and we immediately set up the operation and began to operate the Fifth Air Force from a headquarters that was right there with the landing forces. I stayed with the 308th about a month, and then I was reassigned to the Fifth Air Force, and I became the Deputy for Operations for the air force.

T: That was under General Whitehead [Lt Gen Ennis C.]?

A: That was under General Whitehead. That's an interesting story, but why don't we put it off until tonight.

(End Tape 14, Side 2)

A: In the Philippines, or in this particular part of the Philippines, the main Fifth Air Force Headquarters was on the water and in transit to its new location, which eventually became Clark Air Force Base. I believe I was with the 308th Bomb Wing for about 2 months in the Lingayen location. I guess early in March I received orders to report to the Fifth Air Force as the Deputy for Operations. General Hutchison, who had become a personal friend, of course, after I had served with him a little over 2 months, under the stress of wartime conditions, had an excellent sense of humor. General Whitehead was known as a fierce commander. (laughter) When I say fierce, I mean he was very demanding on his subordinates.

The story was current that the average survival of his A-3s was 6 weeks. I think it was longer. The troops had all kinds of names for him. His name was Ennis Whitehead. They called him "Ennis the Menace." (laughter) The Japanese "Tokyo Rose" labeled him as "The Murderer of Moresby." As an effective, a determined, and uncompromising commander, maybe he deserved some of this, but as a person, he was really an outstanding man. He was a brilliant commander, brilliant in the tactical sense.

General Kenney, who was the Commander of the Far East Air Force, was an excellent commander and military politician.

He was the interface between the air forces and General MacArthur and General MacArthur's headquarters. He was an outstanding leader. General Whitehead was the one individual General Kenney depended upon to implement the war. I don't know whether this is a completely valid description, but I used to say that General Whitehead was General Kenney's bloody meat ax because he really took the war to the enemy 24 hours a day. His philosophy was, "You fight the war every day, and you fight it 24 hours a day. The harder you fight it, the sooner it's over, and the fewer people get killed. It may seem cruel, but it isn't." When my orders came to the 308th to report to Whitehead, of course, they held a mock funeral, (laughter) and General Hutchison, who actually had great respect for General Whitehead, and General Whitehead also had great respect for General Hutchison, just kidded me unmercifully. He said, "Alison, you are dead. There is just no way you are going to be able to make it." (laughter) He said, "You won't be there 24 hours before the old man will have you on the rack."

Service with the 308th had been so pleasant. It was interesting and exciting and pleasant, and I really did, my heart sank when I got orders to report back to Fifth Air Force Headquarters. One, I knew the job in Fifth Air Force was demanding. I had a little concern because I knew Whitehead was a real difficult taskmaster. I think my principal

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reservation was I just didn't want to leave the 308th. At the time I received the orders, we had established the 308th Headquarters camp on one of the tidal rivers in the Lingayen Gulf area. It was just a beautiful spot. Our headquarters camp was on a little promontory that jutted out into the water. We were in a coconut grove. The coconut palms are beautiful.

Bill Dean [Col William E., Jr.], the intelligence officer for the 308th wing, and I lived together. Bill was a West Point graduate who had gone to flying school and then left the service very shortly thereafter. Bill had some kind of difference with his commanding officer when he was at Kelly Field. Bill went into the banking business in San Antonio and was very successful. Bill remained a Reserve officer and was recalled in World War II. He was a fine intelligence officer. He and I lived together, and when we landed in Lingayen, we decided to build a house. Bill was the contractor, and he got a contract for \$52 to build us a house. It was one of the loveliest houses you have ever seen. It was a Hollywood movie set. We engaged a carpenter. During the bombardment, many of the buildings on shore were destroyed. Apparently, he salvaged some lumber. He had teak timbers. He put a platform on the timbers up about 8 or 9 feet off the ground. We were right up in the palm trees. On this platform, he built a thatched

roof shelter with large screened windows with wooden shutters which we could drop down when the wind and the rain came through because it blew almost horizontally. We had a solid teak floor for our little abode. We had a shower. We had a balcony which went completely around the building, and then one corner of the balcony, we had a shower which was nothing more than a pipe where we could turn the water on and off, but it was a tremendously pleasant place, and we had many, many visitors.

We had one Marine wing attached to the 308th Bomb Wing. We were operating almost 20 groups through the wing headquarters. One of the groups was a Marine air group, and the commander was "Jerry" Jerome [Lt Gen Clayton C.], who later became the Chief of the Marine Air Corps. As a matter of fact, we had three very famous Marines in that wing--John Smith [Col John L.], who was a great Marine ace, and Keith McCutcheon [Gen], who became a lieutenant general, and I am sure Keith would have gone on to become Chief of the Marine Corps if he had lived because he was an outstanding officer. It was a privilege to get to know them and also a pleasure to associate with men of that caliber. Jerry liked our cabin so much that several times a week he would be over and spend one or two nights with us. We had lots of visitors, and we had lots of fun. Aside from the war, the personal associations and the pleasant environment in the camp at

this particular location made me reluctant to leave, but I went down and I reported into Fifth Air Force.

I had met General Whitehead, but I didn't know him at all. I sat at my desk. I was in one of the permanent buildings at Clark Field. The buildings had quite a few holes in them, which I guess they had received when we liberated them. In general they were in excellent shape. Bill Hudnell [Maj Gen William T.], who was the A-4 of the Fifth Air Force, myself, and Colonel Bryan [Maj Gen Thomas L., Jr.], who was the communications officer, had one of the houses, one of the bungalows on the base. We were quite comfortably set up. We didn't have any furniture in the house. It was a nice place to put your GI cot. I had an office and a desk and telephone, lots of telephones, one direct telephone to General Whitehead. I sat behind a desk and started learning about the Fifth Air Force. Fortunately, in the 308th Bomb Wing, I had an opportunity to get a fair background, but now I was responsible for the operations of the entire air force. I believe there were 24 groups, 22 or 24 groups in the air force--heavy bomb groups, light bomb groups, fighters, transports--and then quite a few specialized squadrons--air-sea rescue, in addition to truck companies and service companies and many other things I found out the operations officer had to concern himself with.

My learning process was slow until it was stimulated by General Whitehead. I never will forget how it started. I had been there about 2 days, maybe 3 days, and he hadn't bothered me at all. The procedure was, we would have our operations staff meeting in the morning, at which General Whitehead would preside because in reality General Whitehead was the operations officer of the air force. He ran it. He had a mind that was able to encompass a great amount of detail without slowing down his thinking. In the morning staff meeting--it wasn't an operations meeting; it was a staff meeting, but it was principally an operations meeting because that is what General Whitehead was interested in. He was interested in operating that air force 24 hours a day. All of the other staff functions were there to support the operations because that was the bottom line of our business. Every day we would send out almost the entire air force, and it was difficult to keep track of them, where they were going and what they were scheduled to do.

I remember, in the morning we would set up the missions for the following day, and then all during the day, the orders to carry out the operational plan for the next day would be sent out to the units. It was not just a matter of sending out an order. You would get the message out to the group commanders. We had a bomber command, and we had a fighter

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command, but there was a lot of direct liaison between the air force operations and the groups themselves because they would have questions. Many of the questions were generated simply because when you sit in a room in Clark Field you don't know all the problems that the group has in implementing what you want them to do. Some of the things you would tell them to do couldn't be done unless other things were done in other parts of the air force. So all during the day, we would be getting orders out to the units and adjudicating those orders so the missions could actually be run on the following day. Then about midnight the field order would be published. We would have everything in bed, and usually I would go home around midnight. Sometimes it would take longer.

When I got home and got in bed, the phone would start ringing. I think my biggest night, I believe the phone rang--I went to bed that evening at 2 o'clock--and I believe the phone must have rung eight times before, in desperation, I got up the next morning at 7. Many of the phone calls which came in during the night were intelligence reports. We had reconnaissance airplanes out all over the South China Sea. The Navy did most of it with their PBYs and then later with the modified B-24. I forget what the designation was. They would pick up ship movements. This could cause you to change your whole operations plan. I wouldn't bother General

Whitehead unless it involved changing the operations plan, which it often did. Then I would call him on the telephone. I would say, "General, we have this report." For example, if it were light bombers, we might have the light bombers scheduled to hit a target actually in Luzon. I would say, "I think this target"--it might be Japanese shipping--"is more important. What do you think?" Then he would give me his views. If he felt as I did, then we would change the mission. If he felt otherwise, the mission would stay the way it was.

Very early in the game, the field order had been put to bed. The airplanes were taking off at daylight, and along about 10 o'clock in the morning, my special telephone rang, and it was General Whitehead on the other end. He was a heavy smoker, and he had a nasal condition. When he talked, it sounded very nasal. I got to where I could mimic him. When he talked, he was serious, and he was mean. (laughter) His voice came on, and he said, "Where is the 90th Bomb Group?" I thought real quick, "Where in the hell is the 90th Bomb Group?" I said, "We sent it to Hong Kong. It was sent to Hong Kong this morning, and it should be hitting the target about now." He said, "Don't you know exactly where the 90th Bomb Group is?" I thought I had better tell him the truth. (laughter) With General Whitehead, there was no alternative to the truth. I said, "No, sir."

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He said, "For your information"--and he gave a time hack exactly, whatever it was, 10:15--"they are over the target. They dropped their bombs. Eighty percent of the bombs were in the target area, 20 percent were over. You are the A-3 of this air force, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, sir, I am the A-3 of this air force." "Don't you think the A-3 ought to know where his air force is?" (laughter) I said, "Yes, sir." Then came, "Well, goddammit, you find out!" Bang! That's really a mild representation of what he said to me. I had never been talked to this way in my life. (laughter)

When I recovered, I called in my staff, my whole operations staff, whom I had just met. I didn't really know them. I also called in all the senior noncoms, and I stood them in front of my desk. I went through the routine. I said, "Where is the 90th Bomb Group?" They said, "You know where it is. We sent it to Hong Kong this morning." I said, "I know we did, but where is it now?" They said, "Well, it should have dropped its bombs and be on its way back." I said, "I am going to tell you where it is. (laughter) At exactly 10:15 it dropped its bombs, 80 percent on the target. Do you know how I know? Because some son of a bitch on the other end of that white telephone just told me." (laughter) They all laughed because they knew the routine. I said, "I want to know why he knew where the 90th Bomb Group is and I didn't. I also want to know why he knew where the 90th Bomb

Group was and none of my staff knew where the 90th Bomb Group is."

T: How did he know?

A: They said, "Well, Harry Cunningham [Col Harry F.] told him." Col Harry Cunningham was the A-2, and Harry Cunningham was an older man and a scholar. He was Whitehead's intelligence officer. Whitehead depended on him heavily. Harry Cunningham was great. He deserved General Whitehead's respect, and of course, he had it. I said, "Why does Harry Cunningham know where the bomb group is and we don't?" They said, "He has the teletypes in his area," which was adjacent to mine. They said, "The in-flight reports come in, and then they are put on the teletype, and Harry Cunningham gets them first." I said, "Tell me why the A-2 gets the intelligence reports before the A-3? Am I not responsible for communications?" They said, "Yes, but this is just the way it has been in the Fifth Air Force ever since we set up." I said, "Well, I can't move the teletype machines. They are all in place. The lines are strung, but I am going to have that information before Harry Cunningham does. I have a big staff here, and we are going to station somebody at the teletype machines. Whenever an in-flight report comes in, it is coming into my office, but I am going to have to have it so that I can read it immediately."

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There was a wall right in front of my desk within easy visual range. I said, "I want a map of our entire operational area put up there. I know this is going to be a little work, but it has to be done. It has to be done today because tomorrow I expect another phone call. He is not going to talk to me that way any more." (laughter) So I made them put up a map. Then I made them put an acetate overlay over the map. Then when the field order was put to bed, I had them draw mission lines for every group from our principal bases, the ones that I really needed to know. Then when the in-flight reports came in--and the groups did report their position as they went out and as they came back--every time they made an in-flight report, there was an X on the blue line, and then right next to the X in letters large enough so that I could read them from my desk was the essence of the report. Sure enough, the next day the phone call. I can't remember what group it was.

T: It may have been the 90th again.

A: I don't know which one it was, but he said, "Alison, where is such-and-such group?" I had the in-flight report before he did, and I just read it right off the board right back to him. He said, "You are right," and the phone went down very gently. I said, "Okay, I am on to the game now. What this man wants me to do is learn my job and learn how

to run this air force." There were many instances. He would call me, and he would deliberately ask me questions that he knew I didn't know. The expected answer was, "I don't know." If I said I didn't know, I got a chewing out. (laughter) At the end he would say, "Shouldn't the A-3 know?" I would say, "Yes sir." He would say, "Be sure that you do." He didn't use gentle language so I knew he meant it.

Several days later he called me and said, "How many 500-pound bombs have we got in the theater?" Lord, I said, "General, I don't know, but I can get that information from the A-4." He said, "No. I want you to tell me. I have read the operations order. You ordered out so many airplanes. Each airplane has to be ordered with 500-pound bombs. You don't know how many 500-pound bombs we have got. Maybe we don't have any. How can you order a mission carrying 500-pound bombs and not know how many 500-pound bombs we have?" I said, "Sir, I will find out." In his gentle way with emphasis, he said, "See that you do," and the phone banged down.

I went down to see Bill Hudnell, who was the A-4. I said, "Bill, how many 500-pound bombs have we got in the theater?" He said, "Oh, John, I don't know. Here is the table." He just flipped the pages. There's the bottom line, and he

read off the number. So I told him what had happened, and he laughed and said, "Well, that's just the General's way of teaching you." I said, "I expect a call tomorrow, and I am going to make a guess. It could be any of a number of things, but we drop bombs, and we shoot machinegun bullets. I will just wager that tomorrow the question is going to be, 'How many rounds of .50 caliber ammunition?'" Bill said, "Here are the ordnance tables." I said, "I might as well find out how many drums of gasoline we have in the theater." I started going down the tables, and I started making notes of the significant items that were essential to the operation of the air force.

Sure enough, about 2 days later, the phone rang, "How many rounds of .50 caliber ammunition do you have in the theater?" I read him the answer. He was very happy and put the phone down gently. That's my education. I will tell you, he gave you a powerful incentive to learn quickly, and it did take some concentration, and it did take some study. He never gave an inch. I wondered if he liked me. It took a little while before I found out that really he did. One of the things he did one day in staff meeting, we had moved the heavy bombers into Clark Field, and we had two groups of them. On a mission when we dispatched both groups, it was 4 squadrons, 6 bombers each, 24 airplanes, a total of 48 airplanes. Because we only had one runway, the tower operators

were being very cautious. It was taking well over an hour to get the whole group into the air. We had one big mission that we ran the two groups over Hong Kong hitting the shipyards. They took so long to get off and get formed in the air the fighters were over the targets before the bombers. They didn't have enough fuel and had to leave. The bombers got shot up badly by the Japanese fighters, and General Whitehead just hit the roof.

That morning at the operations meeting, he laid into everybody. In this particular instance he laid into the commander of the bomber command about not being able to get the airplanes off the airdrome. He said, "There is one man in this theater who can do it." Everybody wondered who in the world that man could be. He stopped to let that soak in. Then he said, "That man is my A-3. He is ordered to go up that ladder into that tower. He is going to sleep there. He is not coming down until this problem is solved."

T: You were sitting right there?

A: I was sitting right there in a state of shock. (laughter)
I knew what to do. By this time I had gotten to know him. We were right in the middle of staff meeting, and we hadn't finished. I got up; I saluted, and I walked out of the building. (laughter)

T: Hollywood couldn't have done it any better?

A: Oh, Lord. I could see him sitting there with that look on his face, "There goes the A-3; the problem is solved." I went down there, and I did, I stayed for 2 days. About 2 o'clock in the morning, I would come down and get some sleep.

(End Tape 15, Side 1)

A: One of the first things I did, I had the operations officer of the bomber command and the bomber group commanders and the bomber squadron commanders come down and meet with me. We sat down, and we worked out a plan. The runway was wide enough so that you could run one bomber down one side of the runway and one down the other and stay out of the wash. We had a procedure that if a bomber had to abort, he wouldn't stay on the runway. He would just let his bomber keep rolling. If he couldn't stop it, he would just roll it off the runway and trip the gear and stop it on his belly. We never had to do that, but the reason it had taken them so long, they were concerned about an abort and being able to clear the runway. Well, with a bomber on the right side of the runway, if he had to abort the takeoff, his orders were to go off the runway to the right. You might lose a landing gear you might have to retract a landing gear, but there

wasn't too great a hazard, and that was the only way you would get the bomber off in a short period of time. We worked out a system where we had the bombers so scheduled to the takeoff end, we could start one bomber down the runway every 15 seconds. That meant that we got all the bombers in the air in 12 minutes.

I was in the tower--I think it was the second or third day; I can't remember, but I was up there. He had given me orders that no tower operators would touch the microphones, that I was to do all the directions from the tower, which I did because I had the squadron commanders together and because I knew them--and the group commanders--I could talk to them personally. I guess it was the end of the second day or maybe the morning of the third day. I was up in the tower, and the phone rang. From the other end of the phone, he said, "This is General Whitehead. You can come down now." (laughter) It was in the morning because I went from the tower, and I went to the operations meeting. I walked in the operations meeting late. He called me from the operations meeting. When I walked in, everything was silent. I walked over and took my chair. He looked at everybody and said, "You see, the Fifth Air Force A-3 can do it."

Another interesting story on General Whitehead--and I shouldn't tell this--but I have been told that it is true. I asked him, and he said, "Oh, no Johnny, that wasn't true." Before

I told this story, of course, I had established myself in the general's confidence, and I felt I could tell the story about him. Carl Brandt [Maj Gen Carl A.] was the head of the bomber command. This was when they were down in New Guinea. The Fifth Air Force staged one raid which was really historical. The Japanese main base was at Hollandia. That's where they amassed their air force in the New Guinea area. It was just out of range of our fighters so our bombers couldn't go there unescorted. The Japanese knew it, and they felt quite secure. The air force had been experimenting with ways of getting more range out of the airplanes, the long-range P-47s and P-38s.

Lindbergh [Brig Gen Charles A.] had been out there working with them on extending the range of the airplanes. The Japs didn't know it, but the fighters were now able to go all the way to Hollandia so the Fifth Air Force staged a big raid on Hollandia. The bombing was perfect; the Japanese were caught by surprise, and I think almost the entire Japanese Air Force in that area was caught on the ground and destroyed. It was just absolutely a spectacular effort and really advanced the war in our favor in that area. General Whitehead was so proud of that mission and rightly so.

The story goes that Whitehead was talking on the telephone to Brandt, the bomber commander. The air force headquarters

and the bomber command were separated by some distance. They were discussing the routine problems. When they finished, Whitehead said, "Carl, have we got any other problems?" Carl said, "Oh, just minor ones, General. We caught a fairy in the outfit." As Carl tells the story, Whitehead came back on the phone after a minute and said, "Well, shoot the son of a bitch." (laughter) Carl said, "But General, he's an officer." Whitehead said, "I don't care; shoot him." He may have been pulling Carl's leg a bit. He said, "Carl, what does he do?" Carl said, "Well, General, he is a bombardier." The general thought a minute and said, "Is he any good?" (laughter) Carl said, "Well, General, he was the lead bombardier on the Hollandia raid." There was complete silence. Here was the best bombardier in the Air Force. All of a sudden, Whitehead came back in a soft voice and said, "Oh, now, Carl, we aren't going to let a little bit of homosexuality come between us and our best bombardier, are we?" (laughter) As I said, I never knew whether Carl made that story up or not so after the war I told the general the story, and I said, "Is it true?" He came back and said, "Oh, Johnny, of course, it's not true." Anyway, it was a popular story among the troops.

He was an effective commander. I learned a tremendous amount about running an air force just working for him. I must admit the first 2 months were traumatic. He was unrelenting,

but you responded, and you learned. For an officer who was as good in the operational end, it's unusual to find a great logistics capability, but I believe General Whitehead knew where all the supplies that affected the Fifth Air Force were in the theater, on the water, and on the docks back in San Francisco awaiting shipment because he was a real student of the logistics tables. This is tremendously important if you are going to run an air force. He kept driving it home. One morning the phone rang; we were moving some equipment from one island to another. He asked me, "How many cubic feet have we been allocated in the LSTs?" And how many cubic feet were involved in the units that we were going to ship. I didn't know, and he knew I didn't know. He said, "Well, how can you move this air force if you don't know these things?" I thought for a minute, and I said, "Sir, I can't plan to move if I don't know." He said, "Well, you see that you learn them." I began to get the tables on storage and the cubic feet involved. You learn a lot of things as a fighter pilot you were never concerned with before. Truck companies, I just never thought the A-3 of the air force would be involved in operating trucks. Somebody else operated the trucks. I had to learn a lot about the truck operations, particularly the statistics of truck operations. He said, "You can't run an air force if you don't know it." He didn't say it gently. So I said, "Well, sir, I will learn." He said, "You be sure that you

do." I learned because I knew that next week he was going to ask me a question. I was going to have the final exam. (laughter) When I would get over the emotional trauma that I had every time he talked to me on the telephone, I would sit back and reflect, "Well, there is no way I can learn this fast. I have got to learn, or I can't survive." That was the truth. I would have been one of those 6-week A-3s if I hadn't learned. I ended up the war with him. I went to Japan. From a hard commander we became close personal friends.

T: Primarily after the war?

A: Well, we really became friends----

T: Prior to V-J Day?

A: As close as you can come to your commander. I knew things were getting better when he would let me talk to him. At first, I couldn't talk to General Whitehead. He told you. You didn't tell him anything. People would say, "How do you talk to the man?" He had preoccupations. He wanted to drop big bombs. We were attacking targets on Formosa, and you would look and here was a target where obviously 100-pound bombs would be far more effective than 2,000-pound bombs. You couldn't carry very many 2,000-pound bombs, and

you just couldn't cover the area. The targets were principally area targets. Anyone who suggested that you change the bomb load got chastised. Anyone who suggested that it would be better to use 100-pound bombs than 2,000-pound bombs if he had said 2,000-pound bombs got severely chastised. I went to him one day and said, "General, tell me, this discussion comes up from time to time, why do you choose 2,000-pound bombs over 100-pound bombs?" He said, "Johnny, the reason I do, the target is not that important. The important thing is, when those 2,000-pound bombs start hitting, the Japanese know they are in a war." (laughter) "There are lots of ways to fight a war. What you want to do is discourage the enemy. You want to make him quit. Of course, I know the 100-pound bombs would do more damage, but I am sending the Japanese a message."

Another example, he fought the war 24 hours a day. We had as many airplanes as we had that could operate at night out also. We moved to Okinawa and started operations over Kyushu from Okinawa and as far into Japan as we could get with the range we had in our airplanes. Kyushu was our special province because it was the southern island and closer. He put out a directive, he didn't want a man, a woman, a child, or an animal to move in Kyushu. Anything that moved in the daytime was to be destroyed. There was an attack group, light bomb group, A-26s. They had been

attacking installations in Kyushu, and as they were crossing the island, on their return, they saw a group of people on a road, and the people were waving white flags. The boys didn't attack them. They wrote this in their combat report. I don't know how the combat report got on his desk. All I know is, the group commander and the squadron commander and the flight commanders and the air force operations officer were called in. We had to stand at attention in front of General Whitehead's desk. He said, "You know, I have an order out. Not a man, woman, child, or animal is to move on Kyushu. I read this report, and the airplanes didn't attack. That's a violation of my orders. I don't want that to happen again. If it does, I can get a new squadron commander. I can get a new group commander, and I can get a new group operations officer. Do you all understand it.?" We said, "Yes, sir," saluted, and went out.

The A-26 unit was new to the theater, and of course, they were just shocked. They were in a state of shock because the old man had been kind of rough. They got outside, and they said, "My goodness." I said, "Well, look, he has his reasons for this, and he has discussed them with me. His reasons may be wiser than our emotions. What he tells me, 'The most humane way to prosecute a war, the way to reduce casualties, the way to minimize death, both to our people, and to them, is to fight the war as hard as you can fight

it 24 hours a day. He says that if you do that, the war will be over in half the time and your casualties will be reduced by 50 percent or greater. He firmly believes that. He believes getting the war over is the most humane thing that can happen. He is firmly convinced, and he probably is right. I understand how each of you feel. If I were sitting in that cockpit, and I saw people on the road waving white flags, I couldn't do it. I would have been exactly like you. So the next time you do this and you have a problem with conscience, just don't write it up in your report. If you feel that you must tell someone, you come and tell me. Then if there is any heat, I will take it." I think that made them feel a little bit better.

If there were extenuating circumstances, General Whitehead would take them into consideration. He might not act as though he ever would, but he was a very humane man. He was a man with really a kind heart. I knew this because I got to know him extremely well after the war. I got to know his family. I got to know how he thought. He was a very bright man, but he was arbitrary, and he was quick. He spoke in absolute terms, and this is the thing that hid a side of his character from the people who worked for him. He was firm in his belief of carrying the war to the enemy. "Kill just as many of them as you can every day. If you do that, you won't have to kill nearly as many." We used to get in

discussions at the mess. He had a small mess. I was one of the privileged who ate with him. His senior staff officers did--Bill Hudnell and myself.

Incidentally, after I was assigned to this job, Gen K. B. Wolfe [Lt Gen Kenneth B.], whom you know of--I hope you have some tapes on General Wolfe. He could give you some insights into this. General Wolfe had a different kind of personality than General Whitehead. General Wolfe was a positive and very effective man also. General Wolfe came over as the deputy commander, and Mark Bradley [Gen Mark E., Jr.] came over as the chief of staff. This helped a great deal. Both Mark and General Wolfe had Whitehead's confidence. That made it easier when they arrived because I could talk to Mark and I could talk to General Wolfe. They felt the way I did. They understood General Whitehead. They recognized his genius as a tactical commander. There is no question, this man was a genius. They liked him; they understood him, and he liked them. It made a big difference if General Whitehead liked you or respected you. When General Wolfe and Mark Bradley arrived, they helped a great deal in the communication between General Whitehead and the troops.

General Whitehead was quite aloof. As a matter of fact, I would wager that there are many people in the Air Force who

didn't even know the name of the commander, but there was no question about who ran that air force and who ran it in every detail. This man did. Often that produces bad results, but for the man with unusual capability and a man who had the military insight and foresight that General Whitehead had, his dedication to the job and his interest in every phase of the operation of the air force contributed substantially to the success of the operations. The Fifth Air Force was a very effective and very successful air force.

I don't know whether you have talked to Major General Hutchison, but he was close to General Whitehead. General Whitehead really was one of our great commanders. He hasn't gotten that much recognition simply because of Whitehead's own personality. General Hutchison, who is still alive and is in Oklahoma City, can give you some very interesting insights into General Whitehead. He probably understood him as well as anybody in the theater. It would be worth getting a tape from Hutchison on Whitehead.

As I said, General Whitehead was fighting the war every day, and we would refight it at the dinner table. I never will forget when napalm was introduced into the theater. There had been one hill east of Manila that the infantry had been trying to take for 2 or 3 weeks. It was just bloody. The Japanese were just dug in, and there just

wasn't anyway to get them out. The casualties had been heavy. We got the napalm. This was the first mission. I would like to remember the numbers exactly, but I can't. We decided that we would use the napalm on this hill. It would be a complete surprise. We would have a good indication of what it would do. I believe we put about 150 fighters on the hill--P-51s, P-47s, and P-38s. Of course, the P-38s carried the largest belly tanks. I think they carried two 165-gallon tanks, and the P-51s and the P-47s were carrying 75-gallon tanks so they carried 150 gallons of napalm. The P-38s carried between 350 and 400 gallons of napalm. So we got this whole thing set up, and we got the fighters all airborne. Well, 150 fighters can't come in on one little hill at once so you had to "schedule" them in.

I don't remember whether the P-51s or the P-47s were in first. Of the 150 airplanes we had scheduled, it sticks in my mind that there were 165, but it's a long time ago, I can't remember. It may have been 120. It was a large number of fighters. I think 40 or 50 fighters dropped their napalm on the hill. They came down and dropped it at short range. We had the igniters in the tank so that the minute the tanks impacted they immediately burst into flames. Napalm put out a tremendous pall of smoke. When about one-third of the fighters had hit the hill, you couldn't see the hill any more. It was gone. Smoke just covered everything. There

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was no way the remaining fighters could drop their napalm so they brought them on home. The results were dramatic. I don't know whether the napalm really hurt the Japanese as much, but apparently this was a new weapon and the shock of the fire was such that the Japanese began to come out of the holes, and the infantry went up and took the hill without a casualty, didn't lose one man. So Whitehead said, "My goodness, we have got a new miracle drug." (laughter)

We recognized that we had a shortcoming. What he wanted to do was put all 150 fighters on there. Whitehead believed in mass. From a military point of view, there is much merit to that. So he said, "Well, we can solve that problem. We can just take the igniters out, and we can go in and put 100 airplanes on the hill and just drop the napalm on the hill. Then we will go in with 25 fighters after that with igniters, and we will just set the whole thing afire." We did use that technique on targets which were suitable for it.

T: How did it work?

A: Oh, boy, that napalm really worked. It had a frightening effect. Napalm is not effective unless you can get it on the target. The great flames give it the appearance of being more effective than it is. If you don't use it on the proper target, it has limited effectiveness. We used both

techniques. That became a great joke with Whitehead at the dinner table. He would say, "Well, what are we going to do tomorrow? Are we going to light the oil and then pour it on them, or are we going to pour the oil on them and wait awhile and light it?" (laughter) He had a new toy. At the dinner table, the principal conversation was war and how we were going to do it.

Bill Hudnell and I had a great game. Bill Hudnell also had General Whitehead's confidence. He liked the general, and the general knew it. Bill was the A-4 of the Fifth Air Force the entire time that I was the A-3. Bill and I used to say, "Well, when he gets on killing tonight, let's see if we can't get him off on a light subject." It was a great game. Bill and I would take turns interrupting. (laughter) Every now and then the general would invite the Red Cross ladies to come up and have lunch at the general's mess. Of course, when they would get there, he would immediately start talking about war. Bill and I would start talking to the ladies----

(End Tape 15, Side 2)

A: We would try to get them to join in with us in changing the subject. Sometimes it worked, and General Whitehead was interested in other things, but the thing that really occupied

all of his attention was the war. He stayed out there and fought it from New Guinea right into Japan. In my opinion, one of our most effective generals.

We moved from the Philippines to Okinawa. One of my pre-occupations or our preoccupations was the kamikazes. Bill Dean, the A-2 of the 308th Bomb Wing, as I told you about earlier, had two Purple Hearts, both from kamikazes, and both had been on ships. One was on a ship going into Leyte, and then the second time he was burned--and fortunately not badly--but he was burned enough to get two Purple Hearts. Onetime he got shrapnel in his leg. The second time, on the battleship New Mexico, he was burned. The kamikazes were frightening.

I was on the New Mexico, and I discussed this with Dave Hutchison many times. Dave made a trip to Okinawa before we moved up there, and he was in Okinawa at the height of the battle when the kamikazes were creating so much of a problem. He said, "John, you know, we have only been subjected to one-airplane-at-a-time attacks. They have learned a new wrinkle. When I was in Okinawa, there was an LST sitting right offshore, and three of them came down in close formation, and all three of them hit at the same time. When we go into Japan, just be ready to duck."

The kamikaze had impressed me. The first ones I saw were in China. The first one that I really saw was the one Tex Hill hit at 17,000 feet and pushed over at 12,000 and then dove into our airport. The next ones that I really saw close up were on the trip from Leyte to Lingayen Gulf. I was on the battleship New Mexico. I was just going along for the ride. My transportation to Lingayen Gulf was on the battleship. I had never been on a battleship before, and this one had twelve 16-inch guns. This was going to be a very interesting cruise. When I got aboard about 2 days before we sailed, I was the senior officer. The captain of the New Mexico was Captain Fleming [Robert W.]. When I came aboard, he welcomed me. He was very nice, and he was under the impression I was going to be his only passenger, and I was the senior passenger so he said I could have his quarters because he moved up to the nav bridge. When the battleship was in an operation, the captain always slept up on the bridge. So I actually moved into his quarters, and before the evening was out, I lost it. General Lumsden [Lt Gen Herbert], commander of the Australian forces, who were with MacArthur--he was a lieutenant general--came aboard. So I moved out of the captain's quarters, and I moved into the communications officer's quarters because the communications officer also moved up to the captain's bridge, the nav bridge. We also had Col Jerry Jerome, the Marine commander, and Col John Smith, a Marine ace, who was the Deputy

Commander of MAG [Marine Air Group] 24, on board, and Bill Dean, who was the A-2.

We left Leyte at night and steamed through the straits, got out on the other side of the Philippines, and started up the coast. We took our first serious kamikaze attacks when we were opposite Manila. I was down in the wardroom when the call to quarters came. Our guns got off a few rounds, and it was over. By the time I got on the deck, one of the aircraft carriers in the battleline was burning. We had 6 battleships, 6 cruisers, 12 aircraft carriers, and Lord knows how many destroyers and destroyer escorts and minesweepers that were with the bombardment force going into Lingayen. This was a very impressive sight to see 6 battleships, 6 cruisers, and 12 aircraft carriers all steaming together. These weren't the big carriers. These were the so-called jeep carriers. They carried fighters, mostly fighters, I think the Grumman F-4, but they probably had the Vought F-4Us, I don't remember exactly what airplanes.

On this first attack, I don't know how many kamikazes came in, but they came in very quick, and it was over. One got through the screen, dove into one of the carriers, hit right on the flight deck and, as luck would have it, went right through the deck and into the pump room. It killed all their water pressure, and they weren't able to fight the

fire so the carrier burned, and it burned, and it burned. They finally took everybody off. Then the hangar deck ammunition exploded. When this happened, it was one of the biggest explosions I have ever seen. I thought, "My goodness, when the smoke clears, there won't be any carrier there." The smoke cleared, and it was sitting up just as straight as ever, just burning merrily.

T: Had they abandoned ship by then?

A: I think so. I don't know the numbers. I heard there were some men left on it trying to clear the last that were killed when that happened. I also heard there was one long boat that was close to the carrier and the men in the long boat were killed. Most of the people were off. I don't know how many people they lost. We were about 5 hours circling this carrier, getting everybody off. It really slowed down the timetable getting into Lingayen Gulf. Finally, we couldn't wait any longer. They didn't want to leave the carrier just sitting there in the water. I had an opportunity to be impressed with what a torpedo can do. A destroyer came alongside and let two or four torpedoes go. Within 2 minutes, the boat was gone, just absolutely gone. It sank immediately when the hull opened up under the waterline. These were the Liberty ships that had been converted to carriers. There was no survivability if they were hit by a torpedo.

We sailed on into Lingayen Gulf. Then we began to take kamikazes in earnest. The cruiser Australia, which was the flagship of the limited Australian fleet that was with us, was directly behind the battleship New Mexico in the battle-line. Anytime you wanted to see any action, all you had to do was turn around and look at the Australia. It was hit, I believe, five times. It was a four-stack cruiser. One kamikaze came right in and took one of the stacks off, completely just knocked it off. The last kamikaze that dove on the ship was very early one morning. The sun wasn't up, and it was just gray dawn and a haze. I was on the aft deck of the New Mexico just before or after breakfast, I can't remember what. No general quarters had been sounded, and all of a sudden, just directly over the airplane, I saw six .50 caliber tracers. You couldn't see the airplanes. They must have been up about seven or eight thousand feet. But I saw the tracers, and I could hear the engines. The tracers were the characteristic six .50s in an American fighter plane. I said, "Well, some American pilot is shooting at something."

Of course, we didn't have to wait long because here comes down this twin-engine airplane. It was a light twin-engine fighter or attack bomber. He passed over the New Mexico; he rolled over and started over in kind of a half roll and a steep dive toward the Australia. Right behind him is this

little F-4 firing all the way. (laughter) I don't know whether he hit him or not, but the Japanese started to level out to go into the side of the Australia. The Japanese boy must have been pulling with all his worth, but the airplane didn't quite make it. It hit the water 50 or 75 yards short of the cruiser Australia, and it skipped right into the side of the ship. It splattered on the side, and the flames went up. The cruiser sides were armored, and I am sure the airplane did essentially no damage to the Australia, but that was the last time that I think she was hit. I think that was the fifth kamikaze strike on the carrier. That doesn't count the ones that dove on the ships and missed. Many of them missed the ships. Many of them were destroyed on the way down by the antiaircraft.

T: I wonder if the Navy fighter pilot took him as a credit?

A: Oh, let me tell you about him. He followed him. When the Jap hit the water, he pulled up and went right over the Australia and did a left turn and right up between the battleships and cruisers. As so often happens, there was no warning. There was no general quarters, and the antiaircraft crews, you know, they see all this fire and everything, and now they see an airplane. They know the fleet is under attack so they start to shoot at him. I mean they have him covered. I am standing on the back of the ship

saying, "Don't shoot! He's ours!" Of course, nobody could hear me back there. I must say the antiaircraft directors on the New Mexico held their fire. We didn't shoot at him, but he turned left, and he was coming up, and he had gotten almost to the New Mexico when he was hit. I didn't see the pilot jump out, but he jumped out and was picked up by a destroyer and brought up and put on board the New Mexico.

T: Did you talk to him?

A: No, I didn't talk to him. They had him down in the ward. He was injured, but I don't believe seriously. They were really shooting at him, and of course, the antiaircraft fire from the United States fleet was just formidable. It was an amazing display of fireworks. It just never ceased to amaze me. He jumped out, of course. There is the airplane, and it is out of control. It does a left turn and starts down and starts right toward the New Mexico. I said, "Oh, my Lord," and I am getting ready to run behind one of the 16-inch gun turrets. I said, "We are going to be kamikazed by our own airplane." It hit the water maybe 200 yards short of the ship; the airplane hit the water. It's like anything else. I was concentrating on the airplane so when the boy jumped out and the parachute opened the airplane had gone, I was looking at the fighter and concerned that it was going to hit the New Mexico.

I just never ceased to be amazed at the kamikaze attack and the antiaircraft fire the fleet would put out. The main battleline was established with the battleships and the cruisers. We were firing. I don't know, we fired 2 or 3 days off the shore in Lingayen Gulf. The destroyers and minesweepers were the screen. The kamikazes would come in low on the water; they jump over the destroyers and the minesweepers and get back down on the water and come in. It was very interesting when they were picked up on the way in. Almost before the eye could detect them, the battleship was shooting at them and shooting over the destroyers. Then when the kamikaze passed the destroyers--of course, the fire control directors had the ranges set--our guns would stop. After they passed the destroyers and they were on the deck heading toward us, then we would start firing again. When they got in range, the 40 and 20 millimeters would start to fire. It was an impressive amount of firepower the ship could put out. It just wasn't our ship. All the others would be firing too. That created a hazard for everybody.

T: Especially those destroyers sitting out there on the picket line.

A: Yes, and even the battleship. They stopped a lot of them by the 5-inch guns, the shells hitting the water and causing the geysers. The kamikaze would run into the geysers. You

would see him tumble into the water. Boy, you talk about shooting geese. There is no thrill shooting geese because that guy is coming in on the water. He is already dead. He has made his decision. His life is over.

I am standing on the deck; I am not dead, and I don't want to die. So you are sitting there saying, "Hit him, hit him." Then when he blew up, what a great relief it was.

During the day, I spent most of the time on the aft mast. I got to know the fire control directors who were up there. They were brave young Navy guys. They would stay there with a kamikaze coming right directly at us. We took one; one came in over the stern of the ship. He was about 6,000 feet, or 7,000 I guess. He may have been higher but around in that altitude when we saw him. The guns were on him, and they started the fire. Along about 4,000 feet, he was hit, but he wasn't hit badly enough to stop him. He started pluming some smoke, and it was obvious that he was hit. The cameraman was standing right there on the steel platform with me. He was standing there taking pictures as it came down. As it gets closer and closer, I am looking for the foxhole, but of course, there is no foxhole on a battleship. It is 60 feet down the steel deck, and you can't jump. Here this thing is coming right directly at the aft mast. I watch him and say, "This is going to be it."

An airplane just has difficulty coming down vertically. It tends to come down in an arc because of the lift on the wings. The faster you go, the pilot has to compensate for it. I saw him riding up. When he got quite closer, I said, "He is going to miss; he is going to miss; he is going to go over the whole ship!" He went right over our heads. Then apparently the pilot must have pushed forward hard on the stick because he cleared the aft mast. There was the aft mast, and then there was the stack. Then there was the navigation bridge, the foremast where the captain's quarters were. He went right into the rear of the navigation bridge right at the captain's station. Captain Fleming was killed. The communications officer, whose quarters I was staying in, was killed. General Lumsden, the Australian lieutenant general and commander of the Australian forces, was killed. "Bill" Chickering [William], the Time correspondent for the Pacific, was killed. I thought I was killed.

Bill Dean, who was on the foremast, was in the level above the captain's bridge. He had gone up there so he could see the battle. When the kamikaze came, Bill had one arm over the shield, and of course, when the kamikaze hit the shield, he flinched and dropped down, but he didn't pull his hand back. When the kamikaze hit below, it exploded, and the fireball came up. As a matter of fact, the fireball, I believe, enveloped us on the aft mast. Of course, it's

hard to tell. You are blinded--he had a small bomb, maybe 200-250-pound bomb. That exploded, and most of the shrapnel went down below and killed about 30 men in the gunpits down on the deck. When the smoke cleared, the platform that we were on had no shield. It just had an iron railing. I looked, and the railing was cut in several places where bomb fragments had gone through it. The only person that was hit on our platform--they had a big searchlight, and even though it was bright daylight, when general quarters were called, everybody had to go to their station.

I believe there were about 3,000 men on this battleship. So the searchlight operator was up sitting at the searchlight with his feet in the stirrups. There was one bomb sliver that hit him in the shoe. It went in between the sole and the upper part of the shoe. It was red hot. This boy jumped up out of his seat on the searchlight and was stamping the platform and just screaming bloody murder because his foot had this red-hot piece of steel giving him a hotfoot. (laughter) It took a few minutes before they realized what happened. Then they had to sit on him on the platform while they took his shoe off. That was the only way. You couldn't reach down there with your hand and pull that red-hot sliver out. Finally, they pulled his shoe off, and he had a bad burn on his foot. That was the only injury.

T: What about Dean, he didn't get his hand off?

A: He didn't get his hand off, and the fireball came up and just cooked his hand. He had it all bandaged up. It was burned but not seriously. That gave him his second Purple Heart, both the results of kamikaze attack. His first one he had been hit in the knee with shrapnel.

T: You went on then from Okinawa and made the landing in Japan. Did you fly into Japan? How did you get to Japan?

A: No. Just one commentary on the conclusion of the war. We were scheduled to land on the island of Kyushu, the Fifth Air Force. We were moving our headquarters. I think early in November was the scheduled landing. Of course, as the A-3 of the air force, I had no flying duties. I was to go in with the advance party of the Fifth Air Force Headquarters and set up the operation. I was scheduled to go in with the first wave on the beaches. I was really frightened. I had seen Captain Fleming killed. I had seen kamikazes hit, and there is no place to hide on a ship. You stand there, and if the guy kills you, he kills you. There is not a thing you can do. Psychologically that's kind of hard to accept that you are now the sitting duck and you can't fight back. I knew when we invaded Japan we were going to take lots of kamikazes. I just said, "The casualties on board the

ship are just going to be terrible." They would have been in Okinawa and other places if the Japanese--and it would have been in the Philippines. The Japanese didn't hit any troop carrying ships. They hit nothing but the warships. Of course, you can sustain the damage on a warship. If they had hit the troopships, they would have been far more effective than hitting the warships. I was concerned. I knew we were going to go through a very difficult time landing in Japan.

When the atomic bomb was dropped, that was a well-kept secret. General Whitehead knew, but I imagine he had been told just shortly before it happened because that secret was well kept. We had been ordered not to go near the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They gave us an order not to fly within a certain radius of Hiroshima for a certain number of days, and then they raised the order. I don't know whether it was a week later, they came back again, "No airplanes in the Fifth Air Force are to fly within a certain radius of Hiroshima." On the day the bomb was dropped, we had missions all over Japan. I began to get the in-flight reports back as the operations officer. The pilots reported, "Tremendous explosion." They would give a direction. One hundred miles to the north they could see it. It came from several different positions so it was obvious it was Hiroshima.

When the report came in, "Tremendous explosion, smoke and flames 50,000, 60,000 feet," and it came in almost simultaneously from a number of airplanes, I called General Whitehead. I said, "General Whitehead, I don't know what happened over Hiroshima, but apparently all hell has broken loose. We are getting reports from everywhere. Our pilots are reporting smoke and flames at extreme altitudes over Hiroshima." He said, "Johnny, they have just dropped the atom bomb." I said, "General, what is the atom bomb?" He said, "Well, it's a new weapon that we have, and it is very effective." I said to myself, "Oh, thank goodness, maybe we won't have to land in Japan." I was happy that we had dropped it. The landing would have been very costly.

Looking back and reading history, maybe we could have gotten by without a landing or without dropping the bomb if we had been able to communicate directly with the Japanese, but we depended upon our communication with our friends, the Russians, and of course, the Russians didn't want the war to end. They wanted to be able to exploit our victory in the Pacific, and they did exploit it extremely well. We made it possible for them to exploit it at Yalta, and we gave them an advantage in the Pacific that has cost us lives and treasure since then.

Getting back to Whitehead and his philosophy and talking about the end of the war, I talked to him about that on a number of occasions. He said, "Johnny, the war is not over. We shouldn't stop fighting. When we defeat Japan, we should march, and we shouldn't stop until we get to Moscow." Then his comment on what we were going to do after the war--and this was while the war was going on. He said, "Johnny, I predict that we will save the poorhouse of the world, and we will let the booty fall into the hands of the enemy." I didn't really understand what he was talking about, but since then, I know.

Since then, I have had a chance to read some of the Russian philosophy. I am particularly interested in the philosophy as expressed by Stalin and has been expressed by other Russian leaders and demonstrated in the Russian plan for wars of national liberation. Stalin said in effect in the war against capitalism Europe and America are the front and the colonies are the rear. You can't win at the front until you neutralize the rear. He said, "We will get the colonial nations of the world into the Socialist camp and deny the industrial West the raw materials, the fuel, and the markets without which industrial societies cannot survive." I have to assume that when General Whitehead said we have saved the poorhouse of the world and let the booty fall into the hands of the enemy, he was saying we would

save those nations that don't have an abundance of natural resources, and we would neglect the Third World where the natural resources are, and we would let them fall into the hands of the enemy. That hasn't happened completely, but it has happened in some instances, and certainly you can see the Russians concentrating on getting control of the resources.

(End Tape 16, Side 1)

A: Without which industrial countries such as Western Europe will have difficulty surviving without making accommodations to the Russians, and to some extent the same applies to the United States.

T: Why did you resign from the military?

A: I stayed with the Fifth Air Force. We landed in Japan. We set up headquarters, and I stayed there about 30 days. I returned to the United States, and I never really went back into the service. I had personal reasons. I am not sure they were good personal reasons. I was married at the time to a girl who had been born and raised in New York City. She didn't want to move, and she didn't like military life at all. I saw that it was going to be very difficult to stay in the Army and stay married. I was a little too young, I guess, to realize that it was going to be not only

difficult to stay married to that girl, but as far as she and I were concerned, it was going to be almost impossible. Anyway, I got out.

T: More than one senior officer thought very highly of you and wanted you to stay in the Air Force. That's the reason I asked that question.

A: I hope that my peers and my superiors felt that way about me. I know some of them did because I had many personal friends. I would have been completely happy in the Air Force. I loved it. It was a great life, a great service, and I had adapted to it. I would have been most happy to have stayed in, but I thought my personal situation was such that I should make a move.

I got out, and I am a fighter pilot standing in the middle of New York City saying, "Now what am I going to do next?" Phil Cochran, myself, and a small group of our friends decided we would start an airlines. We went through a study and actually were allocated seven C-54 aircraft by the United States Government. We had arranged some preliminary financing, and we did a study. It was an excellent study. As a matter of fact, of all the early airfreight airlines that were started, Flying Tigers and Slick, none of them had the equipment we had. I don't believe the other two

had the operational plans we had.

We depended upon a group of New York and Chicago financiers who had the resources to start this. They were interested, but they also had other preoccupations. When I finished the study, I had a cash flow requirement--in hindsight--which, I believe, was about as accurate as you could have drawn up. I stated though that I didn't want to start the airlines unless I had \$5 million cash resources. What I wanted them to do was float a public issue, which we could have done. We could have sold the stock, particularly with the people we had in this group. We would have had no trouble selling the stock. I said, at the end of 5 years, I would lose \$2 million, but at the end of 5 years, I would deliver them an effective airlines. I would have done it. I would have actually done a lot better simply because events turned out in a way which no one could see.

Because we were veterans and because we knew how to do this, we were allocated seven C-54s when the airlines couldn't get them. I still have in my file offers in writing from the airlines to lease everyone of my airplanes without my ever having to touch them. The airplanes were put on the surplus market at \$90,000 apiece. That was in 1947. Along about 1950, the Korean war--the price of those airplanes went from \$90,000 to \$750,000. So just the increase in my capital

account would have not only offset any losses that the airlines would have had, but would have more than ensured the solvency. When the Korean war occurred, I would have been in a position with a fleet of long-range transports, and the airline would have prospered. The airline would have done exceptionally well. These are things that you can't foresee, but when we came down and I said, "Okay, I need \$5 million," it just came at a bad time.

For reasons that I won't go into, some friction developed in my backers. They said, "Well, John, you have never had, you or your group"--and in this group I had "Art" Salisbury [Maj Gen Arthur G.], who went on and became a general in the Air Force; John Henebry [Maj Gen John P.] of Chicago, who later became a general in the Air Force Reserve; Phil Cochran, one of the best transport pilots we had in the Air Command Group; Tom Baker; and Charlie Rushon. I believe that was the group. Our backers said, "You haven't had any experience." I pointed out to them that there was no one in the United States that had experience in operating a freight airlines. I found this out very early because I had the money to do the study. I had enough money to do an in-depth study, and I went to Cloverdale and Colbitz to do an engineering study for me. I went to other people, and they all came back with the same answer. "This is a new business; you know as much or more about it than we do."

We ended up--this group that I had--doing our own study. In hindsight it turned out to be a real fine study. We put a lot of thought into it. We put a lot of thought particularly into the traffic--what would be required to generate the traffic to fill your airplanes? Because of the problem within the financial group and the fact that this was an unknown business, they said, "Well, we really, maybe this is something that we ought not to undertake." So here I am with seven airplanes, a study, and without the kind of financial resources that I wasn't willing to undertake the job. Then the question became, what are we going to do with our airplanes because the financial group didn't own--we owned those. My little group of veterans--they were our airplanes. It was just obvious that we could turn a quick profit with them. As a matter of fact, we could have gotten rich. All I had to do was respond to TWA and say, "You can have the airplanes. I will lease them to you on this basis," and 3 years later I could have sold them for several million dollars profit.

I discussed this with Phil, and like many officers, not only Phil, but the others in the venture with us, very honest and honorable people, they said, "Look, we got these airplanes through the War Assets Administration, and the administrator is a personal friend. He gave them to us, and it was completely legitimate for him to give them to us, but

he gave them to us for a purpose. If we don't use them for that purpose, if we now use our position and our friend to get our hands on an asset that the airlines need, and if we use them to turn a quick profit for us, we are going to create problems, and we are going to create problems for our friend who gave us the allocations. Maybe that was a little naive. Maybe it would have been better to be rich, but none of the gang wanted to do it. So I had to go back to General Mollison [Brig Gen James A.], who ran the War Assets, and explain to him, "You have got airlines waiting to take the airplanes. Make the assignment." Probably there would have been no problem, and we would have all been rich, and that probably would have been bad for us. (laughter)

T: After this, you became Under Secretary for Commerce?

A: Just about the time I terminated this, one day in New York, I got a call from Mr. Harriman [Governor William Averell], and he asked if I would come down and see him in Washington. He said, "I want to talk to you about being the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Aeronautics." I really wasn't anxious to go back into the Government, particularly on the civilian side. I didn't know much about the job or the requirements, but I went down to see Mr. Harriman. He explained to me what my duties and responsibilities would be, and he urged me to accept the position, and I did.

The reason he asked me is very interesting. William Burden had been the Assistant Secretary of Commerce, and he had resigned. Two replacements for Burden had been suggested, and these are all run by the Senate because the position had to be confirmed by the Senate. Somehow or another, neither one of them was politically acceptable. One evening Mr. Harriman was having dinner, or he had an occasion to visit with Phil Graham [Philip], the publisher of the Washington Post. Phil and I had gone to the University of Florida at the same time, and we both had been in the Air Force. Phil was in the Far East Air Forces in the Pacific at the same time I was there. Phil and I were friends. Apparently, the question of a candidate for the Assistant Secretary of Commerce came up, and Harriman said that he was having difficulty. Phil said, "Well, have you thought of asking John Alison? I know he is politically acceptable in Florida." Harriman said, "No, I haven't." He said, "I believe we can get you through Senate confirmation without any trouble." As a matter of fact, I think he had already talked to the Senators from Florida, and they had said that there was no problem. At that time Spessard Holland [Senator Spessard L., Dem-FL] and Claude Pepper [Senator Claude D., Dem-FL] were the Florida Senators.

So I accepted the job, and the Senate confirmed me, and I stayed almost 2 years. It was interesting. I enjoyed it.

I learned a lot as usual. It's a shame that I didn't stay longer because when you have served about 2 years you have learned enough then to become really effective. It wasn't that I didn't understand airplanes--the operation of the airplanes, the requirement for communications, and those things, those technical things. The importance is to learn the political relationship between the development and promotion of aviation in the United States, learn the political relationships between government and industry and the public. It takes awhile. That was a strange area for me. I had been sheltered in the Army, but you learned those things fast. You get out and talk to people.

In some respects I wish I had stayed longer, but having been a poor Army officer, I received a request from another friend of mine to join a research and development company and be the president of a small subsidiary in California. I felt I had to take that.

Next, I spent between 4 and 5 years as president of Transit Van Corporation, which was doing development work with transportation equipment. Then Gen Oliver Echols [Maj Gen Oliver P.] had become president of the Northrop Corporation, and he asked me to come with the corporation as the vice president, and I accepted his offer, and I have been with Northrop for 26 years. I guess that's it.

T: When you resigned, did you automatically pick up a Reserve commission?

A: It wasn't automatic. I had to apply for it, and I applied. Somehow or another the application got lost. So I had about an 8-month period when I was out of the service. I didn't hear from them, and I was busy, and I was traveling. Finally, I went back and said, "Look, I have heard nothing about a Reserve commission." So I made another application, and I was then commissioned in the Reserve. There should have been no interruption in service, but there was.

T: Were you commissioned again as a full colonel?

A: Yes.

T: Why did you want back in the Reserves?

A: At that particular time I knew it was going to be difficult to be active in the Reserve, but the way the Reserve was set up that wasn't a requirement. I wasn't interested in particularly gaining points, but I said, "Well, I have 11 years of experience. If there is a requirement and we do go to war again, I certainly want to be part of it, and I want to be available." So I really joined the Reserves just to be available. The Reserve was not organized in

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those days the way it is today. You were just a Reserve officer, and you could be called up. If you wanted to, you could work and get points for retirement. I wasn't able to do that.

When I got to California and my business was in Redwood City, I went up to Hamilton, and I said, "Can I participate in the program?" They said I could. When I looked at the amount of time that was required, there was just no way for me to do it. In this particular job I traveled at least 70 percent of the time. I was away from California so there was no way for me to meet the Reserve requirements for training, and the program was structured at that time in such a way that that was not a requirement. So I said I would leave my name on the Reserve rolls.

I really became active when I moved to Los Angeles, and General Landry [Maj Gen Robert B.] was the commanding general of the Fourth Air Force, and the 452d Wing which was at Long Beach needed a commander because the commander at that time reached retirement age and retired. So Bob wanted me to take the wing. I said, "Gee, Bob, I don't know whether I can do it." He said, "Well, go talk to General Echols. Tell General Echols I want you to take the wing." So I talked to General Echols. General Echols was a little reluctant because he felt that it would take more time than

he wanted me to give to the Reserves, but he agreed. He said, "Okay, go ahead and take it." So I became the Commander of the 452d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing.

T: What kind of aircraft did you have?

A: When I took it, we had B-26s--A-26s, they were just being designated B-26s--and F-80s, but we were in the process of getting rid of the F-80s and becoming an all B-26 wing. I believe we were a tactical reconnaissance and tactical bomb wing, and we stayed a tactical bomb wing for about 2 or 3 years. Then the Air Force changed their Reserve wings to transport wings. The first equipment we got was the C-46. We kept those, I believe, for a year, and then all of a sudden, we got C-119s, and we had the transition problem all over again from the C-46 to the C-119. Then they gave us a squadron of C-124s. That squadron was based at Hill Air Force Base. The three squadrons I had at Long Beach were C-119s.

It took a lot of time. It took a tremendous amount of time away from my personal life. I never took a vacation. I felt that the 2 weeks I got from Northrop--those were the 2 weeks that I went on active duty with the wing. I planned it that way. Then the flying time I managed that mostly at night. In transport aviation that's not too difficult to do

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because you can train just as well at night as you can in the daytime. Once a month, a weekend for the wing drill and maybe one or two trips down to the wing at other times during the month for administrative work. Then the flying time I did after duty hours. I would leave Northrop at the end of a workday, go down and do my flight planning, and maybe fly until 1 or 2 in the morning, and then come back home and get as much sleep as possible. I did that for a long time.

T: You stayed at Long Beach with the Reserve unit for how long?

A: I guess 5 years or so. While I was there, the Air Force promoted me to brigadier general, which is the wing commander rank. Then sometime later they promoted me to major general, which promoted me out of my job. When that happened, I was made the mobilization assignee to the Fifteenth Air Force. I like to fly. I flew as much as I could there, but of course, it isn't like a flying job.

T: You would go out to March?

A: I would go to March regularly.

T: You have seen the Reserves come a long way since World War II. What are your feelings toward the Reserves and their role?

A: The Reserves are a very effective part of the Air Force.

It's a resource. We have a lot of people getting out of the Air Force who are highly skilled. The Reserves are a mechanism where you can trap those skills and have them available in case of an emergency. The Reserve is different. Today the Reserve is kept at a level of readiness that is higher than when I was flying. That has its advantages, and it also has some disadvantages. I think all of the Air Reserve units are transport units. There is a large number of airline pilots assigned to the Reserve.

When I had the transport wing, they tried to discourage airline pilots from joining because they felt if there was an emergency the airlines were going to be used by the military and in order for the airlines to be effective you had to keep your pilots. I had a few airline pilots who had been in the service in the war and had stayed in the Reserve. They said, "Look, we were Air Force officers first and airline pilots second, and if there is a war, we want to serve in uniform and not in the airline cockpit." I had three or four of those. They were patriotically motivated, and they wanted to wear the uniform. Generally, we didn't encourage airline pilots coming into our Reserve wing.

T: Did you ever have any conflict of interest as you were a star rank in the Air Force Reserve and an officer in Northrop corporation?

A: No. I took special care not to have any conflicts or to avoid any appearance of conflicts. I never would mix Northrop business and Air Force business, and I kept them separate. Some people might think you could use that position to advantage. The only advantage I got from it was my understanding of the military requirement. There is nothing like knowledge in any business. As far as influence, there are several programs. Northrop, for years, had problems with the Air Force, and the people who gave Northrop the most problems were my close personal friends. The last thing in the world that I would try and do would be to use my personal friendship to get them to take a position. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't have worked. It just wouldn't have worked. If I had tried to use my Reserve assignment to give Northrop any leverage, it would have been counterproductive. I would personally have been discredited with the friends in the Air Force that I respect the most, and I just wasn't going to let that happen.

T: In 1954 you were named president of the Air Force Association?

A: I had been active in the Air Force Association right from the beginning. Being asked to be president of the Association was flattering.

T: What were some of the issues in 1954?

A: The issue was basically what it is today--trying to support the United States Air Force, number one, but more generally trying to support the United States military with the American public, saying it's tremendously important, this is the only way to keep the peace. I am a firm believer in that because I saw it firsthand. I know the speeches that I used to make--I had one theme to the speech. I called this speech the "Altar of Unpreparedness." With our unpreparedness, we sacrificed thousands and thousands of young Americans on the altar of unpreparedness. People forget. People don't want to think about things that are uncomfortable or cost money, but people forget that we were completely disarmed prior to World War I. We had a fine President who campaigned on a platform to keep us out of a war in Europe, and he failed, and he failed in another respect. When he failed to keep us out of a war, he also had failed before that to prepare the boys for what he was going to ask them to do.

Prior to World War I, the United States Army didn't have one fully organized division. We had lots of military units, but we didn't have a fully organized division. Everybody remembers that the troops trained with wooden guns----

(End Tape 16, Side 2)

A: And imitation tanks. The famous French 75, which became the standard artillery piece of the United States Army, and was the most effective weapon of its kind, we got from France. We went into the war. We had no airplanes and really no pilots. When the boys got to France, they flew French and British airplanes, Nieuports and SPADs [Societe pour Production les Appareilles Deperdussin]. Although the American had responded marvelously to World War I, we were fortunate we got in it at the very tail end. Even so, the casualties were far higher than if we had had troops well trained and well prepared for that war.

Then World War II, the same thing happened. I won't say it was the fault of the President of the United States but probably just something he had to accept in our democracy with our form of government. Everybody remembers his famous speech, "I hate war. My wife Eleanor hates war, and I say to you again and again and again, I won't send your sons overseas to fight." I don't know how long it was after that speech, but it wasn't very long before I was there. I never will forget on my way to Europe on the boat, I read Clare Boothe's [Luce] book, Europe in the Spring. Here is an American girl saying, "We are in a world war." Yet I had been in the military back in the States and although some

concern we were going to get into a war, I really didn't realize the world was as committed as it was at that time to World War II and neither did many Americans.

When the war broke out, I went to China. We didn't have enough airplanes to fly. We didn't have enough gasoline to burn; we didn't have enough ammunition to shoot. As I told you, I went through the first winter of the war without a wool uniform for a single American, and snow fell. I started the war without a doctor. I was wounded, and I had to go find a missionary to sew me up. I hate to think what would have happened that night if the food poisoning to my outfit had really been more serious than it was. I thought they were all going to die, and they could have died easily. I hate to think what would have happened if we had had some serious casualties without any doctor. It is awful hard to see your friends without proper attention. That condition kept up for almost 2 years before the factories of America really began to turn out the material of war which changed the tide of World War II. People remember how formidable America is after it's armed, but for almost 2 years, there were a lot of young Americans that were out on the edges of that war holding on with their teeth, and thousands of them died because they didn't have the proper equipment or the proper training. So the Air Force Association, oversimplified in general, was trying to point out that the best

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deterrent to war is a strong America. If we had been as prepared at the beginning of World War II as we were 2 years after we got into that war, Hitler probably wouldn't have done what he had done. If he had done what he had done, we probably would have beat him in half the time and would have had less than half the casualties and far less expense.

Most everyone in the Air Force Association felt very strongly on this subject, and the feelings were patriotically motivated, and they resulted from our own experiences in a war that we had no responsibility for getting America into. If I have a son that has to go to war for America, I don't want to see him sent to war improperly trained and led by amateurs because if you want to kill your children quick just send them to war without proper training, without proper equipment, and led by people who don't know what they are doing. I do have two young boys, and they are just the right age. I just don't want to see them go through what we had to go through early in World War II.

The situation has changed now. I recognize that. But fundamentally, the same principles of power relationships exist. To some extent it's a big poker game. We saw it in Cuba when John Kennedy [President John F.] told the Russians to move their missiles out of Cuba. We are going to see it again now that the Russians are getting parity,

and as some say, they now have superiority. I can see many places in the world where if we have a confrontation the Russians are going to be able to say to us, "Don't do anything because we have the advantage." The Russians seem to know how to play that game very well. It is my belief the reason they have built this great army, this great military force at tremendous expense to the Russian people, at the expense of human progress in Russia, they have done it just so they will hold the winning hand when the poker pot is big.

T: Any other comments?

A: The human interest stories about troop life in China. Even then many Americans back home didn't understand the conditions of life in China. They weren't nearly as hard as most people imagined. As I said earlier in the tape, the Chinese took excellent care of us. Our sanitation left a lot to be desired, but the food tasted good. The Chinese cooks were good, and they tried to please us, but there were hours and hours of sheer boredom which had to be relieved by interests which you would invent.

Poker was a big item. In my squadron, the 75th, the boys began to play Red Dog. I didn't play Red Dog, and I really didn't know much about it. All I knew was the boys were

running up big debts. Some boys were in debt two or three thousand dollars because Red Dog was such a wild game. Well, I stopped the Red Dog by order. I canceled all debts. (laughter) I just canceled all debts, and they accepted it. I said, "Back to poker, it is far less dangerous. You know, it's ridiculous because this lieutenant can't pay that captain two or three thousand dollars. I am not going to allow it. Red Dog is over, and the debts are forgiven." (laughter)

One of the funniest incidents, I have mentioned Sergeant Ervin, Red Ervin, and what a great American he was. He was a diamond in the rough, but when it came to patriotism and love for his country, Red Ervin was right up there with the best of his peers. He took good care of me. One day he came in to see me, and he said, "Suh, we have a problem." He wasn't from the South, but he said, "Suh." "Suh, we have a problem." I said, "What is it, Red?" He said, "Well, Sergeant"--and I am not going to tell the name. The sergeant was killed later. He said, "Three of the men have bought women." Lord, this was just beyond my imagination. (laughter) First of all, I didn't know that women were being bought and sold in China. The only thing I could think to say was, "How much did they pay for them?" (laughter) He said, "Twenty Dollars apiece." I said, "Lord, where do they keep them?" He said, "Well, down the hill from the

hostel here, they have built three little shanties. They have the women in the shanties." I said, "Well, I guess they are giving"--he said, "Yes, they are giving them food, but that hasn't caused the trouble. Sergeant"--the senior of them, and incidentally, these were three of my most senior men. Two of them must have been 60 or pushing 60. They were not only excellent and very important to me, but all of them were old enough to be my father. He said, "The senior one has given his woman a sweater." I told you we had 13 sweaters, and I let the men wear the sweaters when it was cold in the morning. The senior sergeant had given one of the sweaters away, and the men were complaining because they didn't want to go down to the line and have to warm up the airplanes without a sweater. I said, "Oh, gosh. Well, I guess I will have to talk to them." He said, "Yes, sir, you are going to have to talk to them" I said, "All right, bring them in."

A little while later they came in. My office was in just a small building, a room. They came in through the front door, ducked their heads down, and they were kind of scraping their feet. Before they could snap to attention, I said, "At ease." I didn't want this to be an attention lecture; I didn't know what to say in the first place. (laughter) They stood in front of me, and they weren't at ease; they were very ill at ease. I said, "Fellows, Red here tells me

you have bought yourselves some women." They said, "Yes." I said, "You know, you are a lot older than I am, and I don't want to tell you what to do, but you know this is going to cause a lot of trouble." They said, "Yes, we know that." I said, "As a matter of fact, it is already beginning to cause trouble. You got yourselves into it, and I am trying to figure an easy way out. I haven't announced this to the squadron yet, but I just received a message from General Chennault"--we were at Chan-yi at the time--"and we have got to move. We are going to move over to Yunnani." That was about 90 miles away, I guess, as the crow flies and maybe 140 or 150 by road. When we moved, we always moved our men by air transport, and then we had trucks that came along behind and carried our heavy equipment and our generators that gave light and power and shop equipment. I said, "We are going to leave." I think it was about a week. "What I want you to do is prepare your girls. I want you to give them some money and give them back to their families. When we leave here, you will never see them again." All three of these men were married, and they knew they had their hands full. So they all decided, "Okay, that would be a very happy solution." That would let them get out of the situation they had gotten themselves into with a reasonable degree of face. So my painful meeting was over, and it ended happily.

A week later we got in our airplanes, and we went over to Yunnani. We had been there about a week, when all of a sudden Sergeant Ervin comes storming into my office and says, "Suh, guess what?" (laughter) I said, "Oh, Sergeant, I can't guess." He said, "Them women are here!" (laughter) I said, "Oh, no. How in the world did they get here?" He said, "They came on the trucks." I said, "Well, Sergeant, I am going to give you an assignment above and beyond the call of duty." He said, "What's that, suh?" I said, "When those trucks leave tonight to go back, I want you to be down there and personally see that the women are on the trucks." He said, "Yes, suh." I was in my office working that night, and all of a sudden he comes back in, a big smile on his face, and he said, "Suh, did you hear all that screaming?" I said, "No, Sergeant, I didn't hear the screaming. Who was screaming?" He said, "It was them women." I said, "What were they screaming for?" He said, "They didn't want to go." (laughter) "Not only had they never had it so good in all their lives, but they lost face." I said, "Well, I hope that you stayed firm and got them on the trucks." He said, "Yes, they are gone. I don't think we will be bothered with them any more." Well, we put the poor girls on the trucks and sent them home. A few days later, one of my sergeants came down with a case of gonorrhea. I guess that was the end of that. (laughter)

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Another incident, when I said I never had any disciplinary problems, the closest I came to disciplinary problems was when we were at Chan-yi. From time to time Chennault would send us out. We would fly to Kweilin and then run a mission against Canton or Hong Kong, or we would fly to Heng-yang and shore up the squadron and fly a mission north. I had been over in eastern China for about a week, and I returned to base. We had taken off very early in the morning. I guess we landed in Chan-yi at about 10 o'clock. I got out of my airplane, went up to the hostel. As I came into the hostel compound, the door of the little office right next to mine opened. When we landed, the C-47 that Chennault used for communication back and forth was at the airfield. This was routine. It would bring in supplies and people. It had kind of a milk run between the bases at which the squadrons were stationed.

As I walked into the little area where my office was situated, these two men were coming out with a stretcher. There was a blanket over this body, and feet were sticking out. I said to Sergeant Ervin, "Sergeant, who is that?" He said, "Well, that's Sergeant so-and-so." I don't remember his name, and he didn't belong to me. He was one of the communications men that ran the ground communications station. I said, "What happened to him?" He said, "Suh, he moved." I said, "What in the world are you talking

about? What do you mean he moved?" He said, "Well, suh, last night, they were playing poker in the mess hall, and Captain Carney got drunk, and he announced that the next man at the table who moved he was going to kill, and suh, he moved." (laughter) I said, "Oh, Lord." I said, "Where is Captain Carney?" He said, "The doctor has got him in the infirmary. He has him all doped up. He doesn't know what happened, and he doesn't know what happened last night. He was just blind drunk. We are taking him down, and we are going to put him on the transport and send him down to Chennault."

Well, Captain Carney wasn't mine. I don't believe he was even in the military. He had worked--maybe he was. He had been one of the AVG. Over there he had gotten to drinking heavily and apparently had an alcohol problem. He was married to a Chinese woman of some influence. First, they said I was going to have to try him. I said, "I am not going to try him. First of all, I am not prepared, and I am not qualified, and I can't take on a case like that." Well, when we got down to the serious part, I am sure they never intended that I try him because we didn't even try him with the legal machinery we had in the theater. They got a Federal judge out from Washington. He stayed in confinement in his quarters for almost a year, and the judge came out from Washington and tried him. I don't know what the eventual

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outcome was. I don't believe he ever served any time. They probably counted the year he had been in confinement in his quarters, which was no hardship, and then took into account that it wasn't deliberate murder, that it was manslaughter. I didn't hear the final outcome of the case, but I don't believe Carney ever served any time.

Whiskey or alcohol is a bad thing when you are in a far away remote area like that and it gets in the hands of people whose physical system is such that they can't handle it. Alcohol can be a troublesome thing. We didn't have much alcohol trouble. There was very little heavy drinking, but several of the boys and some of the men, several of the pilots and some of the men had alcohol weaknesses. It reduces their effectiveness.

T: They used it as a crutch?

A: Yes. When a guy said, "Gee, isn't it great? We are having fun; let's have a drink," that's one thing. But when the guy said, "Gee, I have been over here in this godforsaken place now for 6 months and I haven't been promoted, I think I deserve a drink," watch that guy. Other than the Captain Carney incident and Ajax, we didn't have any serious alcohol problems. Some of the boys were mentally disturbed, none in my squadron. One in one of the other squadrons committed

suicide. I understand one of my pilots whom I liked and who was quite good, Don Brookfield, committed suicide, but this was after the war. Don was my intelligence officer.

There was one gorge on the Salween where we had taken some photographs, and the Japanese had a ferry point on the river. In order to prevent strafing, they had stretched cables across the gorge. Brookfield had that photograph on the operations board, and he lectured every pilot to be careful when they attacked the ferry point, be careful and avoid those cables. You can imagine who ran into it--Brookfield--but fortunately it didn't bring him down, but it did bang up his airplane a bit.

T: You told me the other night you were never superstitious.

A: No.

T: You never carried a rabbit's foot?

A: No.

T: Was that type of thing big in World War II?

A: I don't know of any of the guys in my outfit that were superstitious.

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T: General, I have gone through my questions. I attempted to cover all your accomplishments including since you got out. You have come a long way as they say. You have been with Northrop for about 25 years?

A: Almost 26.

T: What is your official title now?

A: I am Vice President of Customer Relations.

T: What does that entail?

A: It's hard to describe. I am really responsible for the corporate relationship with our customers. It is a job that is so big I can't cover it all. I do what I can.

T: Before I came up, I mentioned to a few generals that I was going to interview you. They all said I would have a grand time and I would learn much about Air Force history. Not only that, I have yet to meet anyone that has ever had any association with you to say anything less than that you were a very fine and gracious person. I just wanted to say I have certainly found all of that to be very true. I do appreciate on behalf of the Office of Air Force History your taking this time. I know I have been a thorn in your

side all week, and I apologize for that. It has been an education. I certainly appreciate your time.

A: Well, Scott, you are flattering, and it has been pleasant being interviewed by you. I have the feeling we have covered a lot of trivia. I don't know whether we have covered anything of real historical importance. As I say, because of the passage of time, these are really recollections. I think most of them are reasonably accurate. I wish I had remembered more names, and I wish I had remembered places and dates, but I never kept a diary. It wasn't my nature. Maybe that has its advantages too because I guess the importance of the experience is, does it give you historical experience, does it give you an experience which helps you understand better what's happening in the world today and what may happen in the future? I am not sure anyone does.

Certainly, you have seen things happen in history, and then you see history repeat itself, and you see it repeat itself again. One of the things that concerns me, I have reached the conclusion that diplomacy is one of the most difficult jobs in the world. We see generals win their wars and then diplomats lose the peace. So superficially you could say, well, generals must be a lot smarter than diplomats. The

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problem of diplomacy must be a much tougher job than winning a war, and yet there are times when I wish our diplomats would be what I considered to be more realistic about the nature of the threat. I think one of our problems is American leaders and American people just haven't understood the nature of protracted conflict as the Communists define it.

We seem to think everybody is good. The Bible says that you are not. The Bible says that you need to be saved. My own experiences lead me to believe that is true. You know, people seem to have the attitude, well, the reason that we haven't been able to get along with the Russians is that the Russians haven't met me. When they meet me, my sweet personality will make them love me, and then we will begin to get some results. You actually saw that in George McGovern [Senator George S., Dem--SD]. That was his philosophy. That was the way he was going to make peace with the Russians.

(End Tape 17, Side 1)

A: There are a lot of people who say, "We are just as cynical as the Russians; we help others because that helps us." It is true. It does. There is nothing wrong with that. When Mr. Hopkins went to Russia, certainly he went to Russia because it was in the US interests, but the United States extended the hand of friendship to the Russians, and we

extended it to them in an honest and genuine fashion, and the Russians never took it. We gave the Russians \$11 billion worth of lend-lease in World War II, and they were never anything but cynical about that. I think I said earlier in the tape, my guess is that maybe \$3 billion of that equipment was necessary, and the other \$8 billion of the military and industrial equipment which we gave the Russians they have used to get ready for the war against us. Maybe those figures are not right, but we certainly strengthened the Russians for the conflict which they had in mind following World War II.

Time after time I have seen our country make genuine gestures after World War II. We rebuilt Europe, and we offered to help Russia financially and materially to rebuild Russia. That was a genuine offer. America defeated Japan and Germany, and then instead of harnessing them with a yoke, we rebuilt both nations. Never in the history of the world has a people been as generous and as good as the people of the United States. Now you can look and pick it to pieces.

Every society has its share of sons of bitches, but America is a great country. Our people are good. Just look at the kids who go out to fight the wars. As nasty and as terrible as the war in Vietnam was, I talked to my friends who were over there, and they say never has the United States fielded

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a better army than the one we fielded in Vietnam. It's just a crying shame that we fought it the way we did. It was not only a crying shame but it was an injustice to the youth of America to send them into a futile, divisive struggle and have no plan for ending it to the advantage, not just of America, but to the advantage of freedom and free people in the world. We have a great country, and people say, "Well, you know things are going so bad. The Russians are building this mighty army. We are disarming; what are we going to do?" I say, "Well, there are three plans. There is our plan; there is the Russians' plan and the Lord's plan. We may have a pretty good idea of what our plan is, and we may have a pretty good idea of what their plan is, but we don't know what the Lord's plan is yet. We have troubles, the Russians have probably got more."

"This is no time for the faintheart; this is no time to be discouraged. This is a time really for rejuvenation and faith in America. Our system is the best that has ever been devised. It gives the individual and the human spirit an opportunity to do things that can't be done in other systems, and of course, that's the great hope of the future."

End of interview.

T: Thank you, sir.

(End Oral History Interview #1121)

