Harold F. Andrews
Narrator

New York State Military Museum
Interviewer Wayne Clark

Interviewed on February 6, 2009 at Veteran's Residence

INT: Would you please state your full name, date, and place of birth.

HA: Harold F. Andrews, my place of birth was Albany, New York on March 26, 1923.

INT: Did you attend school in Albany?

HA: No, I was born in Albany but my parents were living then in Bennington, Vermont. My father was a salesman for Warren-Marshall, a Buick dealer, and General Motors gave Dad a franchise in [Hooley?] Falls and I lived there until 1938 when my father sold his automobile business and went back to farming in Eagle Bridge. That's where I enlisted in 1943.

INT: What year did you graduate from high school?

HA: 1940.

INT: What did you do between 1940 and 1943?

HA: I worked in a factory and I also worked on the farm with Dad.

INT: What made you decide to enlist?

HA: The war started, as you know, on December 7, and a little interesting anecdote: Washington County had a draft board that was run up around Fort Ever by a fellow named Gill and I had to go see him in order to get released to go in the service. He didn't want me to, he said I was crazy because I had an exemption by staying on the farm. But I'd already made up my mind, so that was it.

INT: What made you decide on the Army Air Force?

HA: I'd always wanted to fly. I'd been an advocate of model airplanes for years. I built model airplanes from the age of eight or nine years old right up until I went in. It was a logical thing and besides that, they told me that I probably couldn't because I didn't have a college education and at that time you had to have a college education. I went to Albany and they sent me home and told me if it changed they'd let me know. Right after that, probably within a couple months I got a letter in the mail that it had been changed and that if you passed the exam, they would accept you into aviation cadet training. I went

down, took the exam, passed it and I think around January of ‘43 they called me and I was indoctrinated into the service.

INT: Whereabouts did you go for your basic training?

HA: Atlantic City. A whole trainload of us left from Albany, we went to Atlantic City and stayed there I think around two months and then they sent us to a classification center. We went to Nashville and they put you through the battery of tests and physicals and determined whether you went to pilot school or bombardier or navigator. I qualified for pilot training so then they sent me to Bennettsville, South Carolina.

INT: What was your training like there? Did you start off with a ground school?

HA: Bennettsville had a beautiful little field, it was all grass, beautiful barracks, it was a really beautiful place. We had pilot training, we had ground school. I think there was two classes there. I was in the class that was called 44-E, that means that you graduated in May of ’44.

INT: What kind of airplanes did you fly?

HA: There they had nothing but Stearmans, it was Stearmans all over the place. If you couldn’t solo within ten hours, you were out. So everybody worked like heck and tried to get through and most of us soloed, I’d say, between eight and ten hours. Your instructor stood on the ground with sweat all over him while you went up and soloed and you came back, if you made it back. As they said in those days, any time you could walk away from the airplane, it was a good landing. [laughs]

INT: Within that ten-hour period, did you learn any kind of aerobatics or just the basics?

HA: No, you did pretty near everything. They concentrated primarily, as an instructor will tell you, on looking around. That’s the main thing, you look around, you always look around for a place to land the airplane. Even when the engine is running fine, you always look for a place to set the old girl down because you never know when one of the engines is going to quit. But we did aerobatics, we did slow rolls, we did snaps rolls, we did loops, we did Immelmanns, you did the whole ball of wax and then you concentrated a lot on landings because you had to come back. It’s easy enough to get the old girl off the ground but to put her back on the ground sometimes was a little tough especially with the Stearmans because she’s a little bit high off the ground, but you could drop the Stearman in from ten, fifteen feet and she’d hit and keep right on going. I think everybody soloed, I can’t remember now because it’s been sixty, seventy years but I don’t think too many washed out. I think they had them pretty well weeded out by the time they got there. Coordination was a big problem, to coordinate the single engine.

INT: After you soloed after ten hours, did you continue to fly the Stearman?

HA: I don’t think we did too much, as soon as you got that done, because if I remember right, you were there for about two months. One group would fly in the morning and do

ground work in the afternoon and then the other group, it would just reverse. They'd fly in the morning and you'd study in the afternoon. I don't remember too much after you soloed, I think you went on to Basic. The Southeast Command didn't waste much time. They needed pilots bad all over the world and of course CBI (China Burma India), outside of the American Volunteer Group, was about the only thing that was going in China at that particular time. The Fourteenth Air Force was there but it was primarily fighters.

INT: Once you finished your Basic, where did you go next?

HA: That was Primary, then we went to Basic, I think that was Shaw Field, South Carolina. That was in the BT-13, I think it was made by Consolidated Vultee.

INT: That was a single engine?

HA: That was a single engine, low wing.

INT: How did that compare to the Stearman?

HA: It was like riding in a beer can full of rocks. It was that bad, rattled and banged, it wasn't a fun airplane at all but you weren't there to have fun anyway. You were there to learn how to fly that particular airplane. That didn't have a retractable gear either but everybody made it. Of course the ground school got tougher all the time. You had to learn your hydraulics, your electrical system, meteorology was a big thing. We all became pretty good at predicting weather. I think that was another two-month course, Basic.

INT: Once you completed your Basic, what happened next?

HA: I think we had a furlough some time in there but I don't remember quite when it was and we went home for a few days, usually seven days or fourteen days and then we came back. I think I came back and had to go to Advanced which was in Albany, Georgia, Turner Field. There they switched us over to twin-engine immediately. We flew AT-10s which was a plane similar to the Globe Swift, it was all plywood with rubber gas tanks.

INT: Was that a lot more challenging to fly than the single engine?

HA: Actually no, it was easier to fly. The only thing is you had to coordinate both engines. A single engine was susceptible to ground loop and a twin engine, back in those days, the tail draggers, were all subject to ground loop.

INT: What do you mean by ground loop?

HA: That's when the wind say is coming from the starboard side, the plane wants to turn to the starboard side, which means you've got to put on right throttle. You've got to put on right throttle to hold it straight down the runway. In the air, the twin engine is easier to fly than a single engine. With a single engine in the air you've got to coordinate rudder with

your stick so you don't skid. With the twin engine, no problem at all. You just sit there and just turn the wheel and she flies like a bird, it's just beautiful. It was a good little plane. That's when we learned how to do night cross-countries and that separates the men from the boys. You really sweat those out because they put two cadets in a plane and turn them loose at night and all you've got is a little light in the cabin, a little light to run your maps and to find and stay on your beacons. We did a triangular course from Albany, Georgia to Macon and I can't remember what the other leg was.

INT: Were there any training accidents that you recall?

HA: Yes, there always was. We had a close call, the fellow, he was also my roommate and I can't remember his name but he was from Texas. We did a cross-country at night and we had a hell of a time. We weren't sure where we were, you can't see anything, you can't see railroad tracks, you can't see rivers, you can't see barns—down there they had the name of the town on a lot of the barn roofs. At night time you can't see anything so you'd better pay attention to your radio. But we made it and got back but then we flew a daylight thing and we had a fire in one engine. I was the pilot and he was the co-pilot and I think the fire was in the starboard engine, the right hand side. We had an oil leak, we called the tower and they said to turn around and come back. My friend says, "Harold, I hate to tell you this but the right engine's on fire." In a plywood airplane you feel like you're in a pile of firewood. We managed to slip the airplane, got it in and landed, fire trucks came out and we did well. From then on we didn't have to worry about graduating, it was all set. I'll never forget that. Our instructor said, "You two guys sure made it back good." That went down, that was a breather.

INT: How many in your class graduated?

HA: I'd say darn near all of them. I've got pictures of that class.

INT: Do you recall when you graduated?

HA: May 23, 1944.

INT: Once you graduated, did you get any leave time?

HA: Yes, I got leave to go home.

INT: You were commissioned at that point? Received your wings?

HA: Yes, right. You were commissioned, you were discharged as an aviation cadet then they swore you in again. They wouldn't let you out of the room, you went out one minute and five minutes later you were re-inducted back in as an officer. Serial numbers changed, everything.

INT: Did you have any family members present at all?

HA: No, at that time I was single and my father and mother were up here in New York state. I came home right after that, I must have had probably seven or ten days. They sent me back to Albany, Georgia and I think, if I remember correctly, they told me I was going to be an instructor. There was a turn of events, they put me in temporary duty in engineering. I wasn't there that long and then they told me that I was going to St. Joseph, Missouri to take Transition in C-47s which is the Douglas DC-3.

INT: How many hours did you have at that point?

HA: Not too many. I would say 100 or maybe less.

INT: So then you went to Transition school?

HA: I went to St. Jo to take Transition in C-47s. I not only took Transition there, that's where I met my wife and we became married.

INT: How long were you there for?

HA: I'd say about another two months.

INT: What was that training like?

HA: That was a lot more severe and stronger than training we had while cadets. There we were indoctrinated into hydraulic systems, electrical systems, safety systems, the whole thing. Contrary to public opinion, they think you walk out and get into an airplane and take off. You don't do that. You've got to learn how to fly the airplane but you've got to know the plane in and out. You've got to know the hydraulic systems, the emergency systems and the whole thing and then you have to have a check ride, as you well know, with a licensed pilot or an instructor pilot or a chief pilot or test pilot and he marks you one way or the other.

INT: How did you like that airplane?

HA: The C-47 is beautiful, still is and it always will be.

INT: Once you completed that phase, what happened next?

HA: Then they decided they'd transition me on another school so they sent me to Reno, Nevada where they had a big base and that's where they had the C-46, the Curtiss-Wright, made by Curtiss. The C-46 was a twin belly, beautiful airplane. The reputation it had was not that great, everybody was a little leery of it but it turned out to be a hell of a workhorse, carried a lot of freight, did a lot of work. That's the same airplane we used in India to fly the Hump for all those years.

INT: Was your wife with you?

HA: No, my wife stayed in Missouri. She was still in school and I went on to there and took Transition and that worked out alright. Of course the electronics and the hydraulics

in this plane was a lot more complicated than some of the other planes because it was bigger. When that was completed, they gave me a leave and told us that probably would be our last leave and when we came back, we'd probably head for overseas. So Shirley and I, my wife and I, came back to St. Jo where her home was and we left there and came to see my parents, spent a couple weeks, took her back, and then I left for Nashville. My orders came through and I was to report to Nashville. I met there with a pilot who was a service pilot and he was to be the first pilot and they told us we'd pick our airplane up in Miami, Florida.

INT: Do you want to explain what a service pilot is?

HA: A service pilot is a civilian pilot who has been rated by the government and approved. Some were indoctrinated as flight officers. They were not military pilots but they were excellent pilots, at least the ones I was associated with. There were some that were taken that weren't as good as others. The one I happened to be with was named Milton O. Hopper and he was originally a Pan-American pilot and probably one of the best. Breaks my heart a little bit [chokes up] because I learned so much from him. Hoppy was a first pilot for Pan-American, he was older than the military pilots. At that time I was only around twenty-one and Hoppy, I would say, was almost forty but he could land an airplane like anybody I've ever seen. Anyway, we went to Miami and they told us we were going to take C-46s and fly to Africa but we weren't going the way we thought we were going. They sent us, and I can't remember how many there was of us, there was probably at least four or five planes, each with a full crew—pilot, co-pilot, radio op, crew chief and navigator. Each one had one. We flew from Miami to Trinidad, spent the night, then flew down to Belem, Brazil, stayed there because the weather was not good. We were to fly to the little island of Ascencion in the South Atlantic. We stayed in Belem I'd say four or five days until the weather cleared and then we took off and flew across the South Atlantic. Our navigator was good, he hit the island square right in the butt. We stayed there overnight and took off the next day. One peculiar aspect of Ascencion was the end of the runway was at a cliff and the cliff was about 500 foot straight down into the ocean. If you didn't get off the end, you were done. We didn't know that until we flew out over the end of the runway and looked down. We flew from there right into Dakar, French West Africa, delivered our airplanes in Marrakesh in French Morocco and then they took us by vehicle to Casablanca where we were barracked. Each crew was there and then they split us up and then they put us on a flight plan to fly from Casablanca to Cairo, Egypt. At this time I was in the Air Transport Command which was part of the Ferry Group, I believe. It was our job to transport people, freight, and all sorts of goods, war materials from Casablanca right on through to Cairo. We even carried passengers. Hoppy and I, that was his nickname, the first pilot, we even flew some USO (United Service Organizations) people. We carried Pat O'Brien from Casablanca to Algiers, I remember. We flew from Casablanca to Tripoli, Tunisia and spent the night there and then we'd take off, fly across the Bay of Benghazi and land in Cairo. Then probably the next day or two days later, they'd call us again and we'd turn around and fly

back to Casablanca. We even flew hospital ship once or twice. Hoppy was a good pilot and he got some tough jobs.

INT: What was your impression of the countries in Africa? Did you enjoy your time over there?

HA: Oh yeah, beautiful. One of my favorite places in Africa, and Hoppy's, too, was in Tunisia. We used to stay in Tripoli and the Italians had had airplanes there before the war. I love the weather there, it was 70 degrees the year round. It was just beautiful and the ocean was right there, just beautiful. In fact where we stayed the British were already in there driving Rommel crazy. Rommel's headquarters, they pushed him out of the headquarters then the British took it over as a mess hall. It was a beautiful white marble building, I remember it perfectly, we used to go there for mess once in a while when the British would let us in. [smiles]

INT: Did you have much contact with the civilian population?

HA: No, very little. We used to see them on the streets of course and the little kids followed you around. We always managed to have a candy bar here and there. The poor little kids, they didn't have much. It was the same in Casablanca. At that particular time, Casablanca was a refuge for the French people. A lot of them escaped from France, all they had was money; they took diamonds because the Germans wouldn't let them take anything else. They couldn't buy anything because there wasn't anything to be bought. They were just living from hand to mouth and a lot of these people that were in Casablanca, which in some sections was a beautiful city and then it had its poor section, too. We used to meet and visit with them and a lot of the women would give anything to buy a pair of silk stockings. Some of the boys would try to find them in Cairo and take them back and they were grateful but it was a tough deal for them. At that particular time I think the one thing that ruined a lot of soldiers over there was the fact that champagne was fifty cents a bottle. It seems like the French got out champagne, I don't know how they did that. [laughs] I remember Hoppy was still there and I was still flying with him, that's where I learned to fly through thunderstorms.

INT: You flew with a navigator, too?

HA: No. After we got into Africa and delivered the airplanes, the navigators all disappeared. Then you did your own navigating, your own radio work, you did everything yourself. You would carry a radio operator with you sometimes, most of the time you had a radio operator because if you had passengers on board you had to have a pretty decent crew. Coming back we carried some officers that had been in China and India before I ever got there and they were a pretty tired, pretty wore out bunch. Pretty scared because they didn't want to fly, they didn't think they were going to get home. I remember once Hoppy said we had to pick up some returning vets from China and one of them I think was a brigadier general, he was a nervous wreck. He kept coming up to the cabin wanting to know if everything was alright because there was a lot of turbulence that day, it was raining and a thunderstorm. We had St. Elmo's fire bouncing off the wings

and the props and he was scared. Hoppy told me "Harold, for God's sake, see if you can quiet the general down." We got him back to Casablanca and I remember when he got off the plane, Hoppy and I were walking into the Operations and the general came over and said "I really want to thank you for what you did." I'll never forget that.

INT: Did you do much night flying?

HA: Yeah, we flew a lot of times at night back and forth from Casablanca to Cairo. That's where you hit these thunderstorms, you can't see them that much at night so you fly into them and you're into them before you can do anything about it. In the daytime you can skirt around them a little bit and pick up your course and keep on going.

INT: Normally what altitude did you fly at?

HA: We weren't that high, probably four or 5,000 feet. We flew over the Sahara, of course when you fly across the Bay of Benghazi in northern Africa, that's where Rommel and the British had a hell of a time. We were just south of El Alamein and we could see trucks, gas dumps, airplanes, some good, some smashed. A couple of times Hoppy and I went down, flew right off the desert, I don't think we were fifteen or twenty foot off the desert.

INT: Did you have any close calls?

HA: Never. Never had a single engine in North Africa or a blessed problem. I think the name of the field in Cairo was John Payne Field but I'm not sure. There were British planes there, too. We spent a lot of time in Cairo because we laid over there once in a while until we'd get either freight or people to go back.

INT: Did you ever fly back to the States?

HA: No. When we left the States that was it until we came back after the war.

INT: Eventually you started flying into the CBI Theater?

HA: It was Christmas Day 1944, they posted it on the bulletin board. Hoppy, my first pilot, came in the barracks and said, "Harold, it looks like we're going to split up, I'm going to lose you." I couldn't believe it, I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "You've been posted to go to China." Everybody said that was the worst place on Earth you could go. They sent a lot of the co-pilots to China. I don't know what happened to Hoppy, he stayed there. I think they eventually put him in C-54s which was the four-engine big sister to the C-47. The flew us right into Chabua Air Base, I didn't do any flying there, they got us ready, indoctrination into India, told us what to expect in India. At Chabua they had a base hospital which I think was the only one in that area. I think within a couple weeks they transferred me up the road a few miles to a little base at Mohanbari in the Assam Valley. It was the 1332d Army Force base unit, that was its name.

INT: That was in China?

HA: No, this was in India. We flew from India over Burma right down into China.

INT: What was your impression of India?

HA: Well of course India was controlled by the British, it was pretty sad. Our air base was right in the middle of a tea plantation, we had tea all around us growing in the fields. There would be everybody out there picking tea at certain times of the year. The base was nice but the food was marginal, that was the hardest part about it. If we had anything good it came out of a can. I remember for Thanksgiving once we had canned turkey. We never had much of anything fresh, we had powdered eggs. I managed to get into town and that's where I got a full indoctrination into Chinese food. There was a Chinaman in town and we'd get a Jeep, head to town and get some decent food once in a while. Once in a while we'd make a raid on our food officer, a gentleman by the name of Captain [Tebay?]. Quite frequently a can of food would come up missing and we'd have it in the tent. [smiles] I don't know how many pilots we had on this base, we had fifty-five C-46s, three or four or five maybe C-47s, a couple B-25s that were there. They also used the base as a stopping point for Chinese pilots and French pilots, I don't know what they were doing over there but they would bring in P-51s and they were on their way to China with them.

INT: Did you ever have to transport Chinese troops?

HA: Yes, we had to evacuate Chinese troops. Shirley will tell you about that because I told her about it. She was talking about it yesterday. The Japs got the Chinese backed up and got them trapped in Paoshan [spells], China and our CO (Commanding Officer) was Colonel Rice and he said we had to evacuate these Chinese. He said they were trapped and the Japs will kill them all. I think we had four or five planes go down there, C-46s, and we flew them out. All we could do was load them in the plane and have them sit on the floor and they'd have their kettles. Two or three of them would carry these great big iron kettles, that's what they cooked their rice in. None of them could speak Chinese [sic] and there was usually one officer. I remember the Chinese lieutenant who came with us carried a Mauser machine pistol. There's not many of them around and today they're a collector's item. But he could speak a little English. The hardest part was to keep the buggers in one spot because you couldn't fasten them down. We had about fifty of them in there and you had to get off the ground and you had to make sure they didn't move around or it would change the equilibrium of your airplane. They wouldn't do as they were told and they got sick. We had one hell of a mess. When we got to where they were going you'd have to take a hose and clean the plane out, it was a mess. But we got out between 500 and 1,000 of them. It didn't take us that long, I made two to three trips. The Japs were advancing against them so we got them out. We also took out some Merrill's Marauders out once.

INT: What was it like flying the Hump?

HA: Flying the Hump could be beautiful or it could be a thrill, it was a combination of both depending on the weather. The weather was the killer. We flew night and day, rain

or shine, fog, there was no such thing as a cancelled flight that I can remember because the boys in China had to eat, we had nurses in China, they had to have supplies, we had to get the bombs over, we had to take over the gasoline. At times the C-46 would be full of drums of gasoline. The C-46 was designed so they could strap the barrels of gas down onto the floor, they'd have rods with a certain leverage that you could stick into a hole in the floor and clamp it down. Going from India to China we flew probably around four to 5,000 feet. Coming back was a different story. Ninety percent of the time we came back empty. Of course they would give us just enough gas in China to get back because they didn't want to waste it. We had to carry the gas over and then we'd have to use gas to get back so they didn't want to deplete their supply that we brought over.

INT: At that point were you the first pilot?

HA: When I first went over I was a co-pilot, naturally. You have to fly with a pilot to learn the routes, learn the radio frequencies. We hit not only one base in China, oh lord, I think I've been into probably four-five-six. The hills in China are not like mountains in this country, they can come right out of the ground like rocks. It's almost like a miniature Grand Canyon in a sense except that you haven't got the canyon. But you've got rocks and have to fly between them and hope to God you could get through, and if the wind was blowing you had another problem. We flew into Kunming, Luoyang, Chanyi, Chen Kung and there's some more that I can't remember, of course Chang Wah but there were other bases too that were going into China all the time.

INT: Did you normally fly with the same crew?

HA: Not really, no, that was one thing that was a little tough. You might have a different co-pilot on each trip, you might have a different radio op and this way you had to get to know each other and it was a handicap I still say. After a while we asked. A friend of mine by the name of Bill [Schomer or Schumer] who was a first pilot [breaks off] I took my transition and learned how to become a first pilot and was approved by the check pilot and then I flew as a first pilot. After a while we realized that there were certain times that we couldn't get the tonnage and of course our general in command out of Calcutta, he kept pushing to increase the tonnage of goods and supplies to go to China. I think the commanding general of the Pacific Command, I think it was [General George E.] Stratemeyer kept pushing him to increase it. This friend of mine who was another pilot, we came up an idea that we could fly more if we put two first pilots in the same plane. So we flew constantly. We'd get back, take a nap, it was about four hours going over and four or five coming back and we'd probably take our time, take a nap, and take off again. We got a lot more time in by doing it that way and we requested that we have the same radio operator.

INT: Did you usually fly the same aircraft?

HA: No, it was an impossibility to fly the same aircraft some of the time because these poor planes had a habit of breaking down a lot. Service in China, of course spare parts were rare and I don't know how in heck the crew chiefs in the engineering department

kept these planes in the air. Quite frequently the plane would be loaded and you go out and get in it and you'd have to check it out and if you didn't feel as though it came up to specs, you would refuse it. Of course the engineering department wasn't happy but you weren't about to take a plane up that you didn't think would make the trip. So then you'd have to cancel that flight, pick up another plane and go, then they'd have to repair that plane and it was a constant battle. Everybody loved Pratt & Whitney engines, Curtiss-Wrights were good engines but the Pratt & Whitney, those old girls would run whenever they could and they did. It was an 18-cylinder engine, a little over 2,000 horsepower and it was a beautiful engine. I will say the crew chiefs and engineering did a good job, I don't know how the hell they did it. They talk about fixing up Model Ts and Model As with baling wire, I think they did the same thing with C-46s.

INT: What sort of unit insignia did you have on your jacket?

HA: All of the CBI pilots in the area had the A2 leather jacket and most of us had the flag on the back that told, in case we had to go down, or bail out, or we crashed and managed to survive, it would tell the natives who we were and that we were not Japanese and to please take this pilot to the nearest base or notify them or whatever.

INT: Were those flags made out of leather or were they silk?

HA: They were a form of leather. I've almost got a feeling that they were goatskin or something like that, I don't know where they came from. I can't remember but I don't think they were furnished by the Air Force. I think they were something that we put on with their approval of course. That's about it outside of the insignia on the sleeve, your CBI patch and your Air Force patch on the other sleeve.

INT: Did you sew that patch on the back of the jacket or was it on the inside?

HA: It was on the outside on the back. I've got one but I don't know right where it is but I think there was a replica of the Chinese flag on it and maybe the Stars and Stripes. Some of the pilots did get back that bailed out. Fortunately I didn't have to. A couple times I thought I'd have to, we had some single engines. Some of the pilots got back and of course the biggest problem was their shoes were gone, they wore out and their feet were a mess because the jungle just tears everything up and that's all we had. From Burma right down to the edge of China was jungle.

INT: Were you over there when the war ended?

HA: Yes, that was in August and we kept right on flying the Hump. I remember there was times we didn't think we would have to but the Air Force says we've still got to the feed the boys in China, we've still got people over there. I remember once, this is kind of humorous in a sense, I went into the Operations office to get my manifest, you had to sign for the airplane. The co-pilot and the radio operator were with me, I signed for the manifest and I got on the plane and I had a plane full of Kotex. I said my God, what the hell's happened? I went up front and turned up the radio and picked up the mike and I

called the tower and said what's going on? My plane's full of Kotex. The tower operator said, "Don't get excited Lieutenant, they need bandages in China, they ran out of bandages." That put a different light on it. I remember taking over a whole load of peanuts once. You felt good about that because you knew the boys were going to have peanuts and cigarettes. It was a labor of love.

INT: Did you ever haul beer or whiskey?

HA: I might have. It was a funny thing, I didn't see much whiskey although the colonel brought back some whiskey once in a while when he flew his B-25 down to Calcutta. At that time I wasn't a drinker, I didn't like beer. I might take a little shot of whiskey once in a while but of course that was something else. When you came off a mission and you landed you went to Operations to check in, you were required to go through the flight surgeon's tent, or in some cases he had a little bamboo [bacha?] they called it and he gave everybody a shot of whiskey. That quieted you down. I don't know how many pilots we had on that field, I can't tell you for sure.

INT: With your resupplying did you ever have to, instead of landing, just push the cargo out with a parachute hooked to it?

HA: No, we never did a drop. The only time we pushed stuff out the door was when we had a single engine and we didn't think we could maintain altitude. It depends, if you're over 10,000 feet you need a lot of air to run those engines and if you can't go fast enough to get the air, then you've got a problem. What happened was, quite frequently, as I told you earlier, those engines were tired. They were all running good but some of them weren't as good as others. Once in a while one would skip and buck and pretty soon it would quit. You had two choices—either feather the engines so the blades were parallel to the wind or let them windmill and maybe it would restart. Whatever the case was, it slowed you down which means you're going to lose altitude and if you can't get the blessed thing started, you're going to lose your plane, the crew, the whole business. So you had to tell the co-pilot and the radio operator to go back and start jettisoning stuff right out the door. It didn't make any difference where you were which was probably over the jungle and maybe some natives got it. When we hauled gasoline we'd have to unhook them and roll them out. Once in a while, one of those barrels when you got up to 10,000 foot, the pressure would create a leak and you'd have to throw it out because you can't have gasoline running around the floor of the airplane.

INT: How often did you have to jettison cargo?

HA: Probably of all the missions I had, I probably did it about three or four times and that was because of single engines, otherwise you wouldn't throw it out. All those times, we got the engines running again. It wasn't that bad, that low, flying at 10,000 feet or below because it was warm temperatures but coming back at night we might be up to twenty odd some thousand, we'd come back the northern route. A couple of times I saw Mount Everest off to the north, it wasn't any problem to see it at 28,000 feet. But there your

temperatures are down, it wasn't that far from zero. The planes all had heaters but none of them ever worked. I never remember one plane with heaters that worked.

INT: Were you ever involved in any crashes?

HA: I crashed up one airplane, I think it was in 1945 around in June. What happened was I took off in China and came back and when you raise your wheels you tell the co-pilot "gear up" and he reaches down and hits the lever which brings the gear up. As you're bringing the gear up you hit the brake pedals because you don't want spinning wheels going into the nacelles because it could, if it happened to hit a brake line, it could rub right through it. So you'd hit the brake pedals and she'd go into the nacelles. When we came back to India and I put the wheels down, and I don't why I didn't do a wheel landing with the C-46 that particular day. For some reason I just kept pulling the wheel back, cutting my airspeed down and I brought the tail down for a three-pointer. Just as the darn front wheels hit, the back end came up and we somersaulted down the runway bottom side up. When we got stopped the first thing I noticed the trucks started coming out and they started spraying the dirt in front of us in case of fire. We could see right out the bottom, it wore the top of the plane right the hell off. We unfastened our seatbelts, the three of us, and fell out through the hole.

INT: Did you get hurt at all?

HA: No, I don't think I did. It bothered me for a long time because it was such a surprise. I didn't know anything was going to happen. The funny part about it was Engineering thought it was my fault and they were going to do an investigation and see if they could find pilot error which was quite common. I said to heck with it and kept right on flying but every time I came in for a landing I was a little skittish because you often wonder. It took about a month and one day I was sitting in the Officers' Club having a sandwich there and the Engineering officer, his name was Zero [Beale?], never forget it, hell of a nice guy, he was a pilot, an engineering officer. He said, "Harold, guess what? They found dirt in the brake [mirroring?] valve. When you braked in China that pressure built up and never released. You landed with full pressure against those wheels. You're home free, it wasn't your fault. The engineering records show that that valve wasn't cleaned." So that was the end of that.

INT: So after the war ended how much longer were you over there before they sent you back to the States?

HA: The war was over in August and we just kept right on flying. Nobody was very happy because nobody wanted to die after the war was over but we didn't have any choice—you're an Air Force officer, you do as you're told. You gripe but as everybody knows, everybody's happy when you're griping. If they're not griping, watch out.

INT: So when did they send you back home?

HA: I would say they told us we were going home sometime in November. They asked us how we wanted to go, if we wanted to fly back or take other transportation. We didn't know what in hell they meant by other transportation, whether it was donkey cart or horseback, but it turned out they said we could go back by ship. When we got to the ship Karachi, India there was about 1,000 of us that boarded that ship.

INT: Did your whole unit go back at the same time?

HA: A lot of us went back, a lot of them decided to fly back and they went sooner. You had to get in line and I forgot what schedule they used to send the boys back.

INT: The point system?

HA: It might have been but it wouldn't have done much good back then with the war being over. They flew us to Calcutta and then to Karachi, India and then we got on a Swedish freighter, the HMS Torrens [spells] and we came back through the Indian Ocean, up through the Red Sea, up through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean, past Gibralter, came across the Atlantic, and landed in Camp Shanks, New Jersey on December 7, 1945.

INT: At that point was your wife still in Missouri?

HA: She knew I was coming home so she left Missouri and came to my folks' home here because I would be coming from Camp Shanks to home.

INT: What was it like when you reached the shores of the United States?

HA: I'm glad you asked that. It was a peculiar thing. We came into New York harbor and everybody was on deck, everybody. I think the poor old ship had about a five, ten degree list. Everybody was looking at the Salvation Army (sic) and the loudspeaker system was playing "Sentimental Journey."

INT: You said Salvation Army? You mean the Statue of Liberty?

HA: Statue of Liberty. Salvation Army comes a little while later, I'll tell you about that. They were playing "Sentimental Journey" all the way in and guys were crying, ships came out with the water. All we had on board were Air Force, outside of a few Infantry officers. I had made the acquaintance of three great guys, they were attached for three years to the Chinese infantry. They were from Ohio, all three of them, and if I remember correctly, they were all captains.

INT: What rank were you at that point?

HA: First Lieutenant. We landed at Camp Shanks. It took about a day, I don't know how they do things so fast. They got us all orientated, called us in, they asked if any of us lived in this part of New York state. Hands went up, mine went up, they said, "You gentlemen leave, go home. We'll call you when we want you, we know who you are,

we've got your records." I went home, I was home for Christmas and I didn't hear from them until February. They wanted me to stay in and I found out I would be stationed at Floyd Bennett Field. I didn't really want to stay at Floyd Bennett Field because there were already pilots there and some of them were emptying wastebaskets. They didn't have anything for them to do. My wife wanted me to stay in but I got out. I probably should have stayed in because I loved the Air Force.

INT: What did you do in civilian life? Did you make use of the GI Bill?

HA: I did for a while. I took the readjustment allowance for a while until I could get a job and I worked with my father on the farm, and I went back to Missouri and became an insurance investigator, went out to Shirley's home. That's where our first child was born. Eventually I came back here, been here ever since. I would have liked to have stayed in, in fact, I was going to go to work for the airlines but when you discharge a million and a half pilots, there's no jobs available with the airlines. We had a hell of a mess of pilots in the Air Transport Command that were qualified to fly twin-engine and four-engine both.

INT: Did you stay in contact with any of the fellows you were in the service with?

HA: I did for a while and then it kind of petered out. I had some friends who weren't too far away. I had one who was up in Glens Falls that I used to go see once in a while and then there was others. I had one that was the briefing officer at Mohanbari and he lived in Springfield, Massachusetts. Last I heard, somebody said he passed away.

INT: Did you attend any reunions?

HA: No, not a one.

INT: Do you belong to any veterans' organizations?

HA: I did, I belonged to the Legion for a while and then I dropped it a while back. But we went to Florida. I used to belong to the Masonic order in Cambridge. [Discussion about tape getting low.]

INT: Briefly, how do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

HA: That's a good question. It's a peculiar thing, it's had great bearing on my life, everything it's done. When I say I'll be there at 9:00, I'll be there at 9:00 or five of. It bothers me for people to say that they're going to be at a certain place at a certain time and show up an hour late. I wish my son would have learned this, too. I liked the discipline in the service but I was lucky. I was with aviation cadets and they were different people—you know what I'm talking about, don't you?

INT: Yes.

HA: Going in the Air Force was something I wanted to do and I had friends tell me I wasn't smart enough to go, you've got to have a college education. I remember a close

friend of mine, he might have been jealous. I didn't really know whether I was qualified or not.

INT: Were you a good student in high school?

HA: I could have been a better student, let's say that. I enjoyed myself in high school. I passed, I never had to stay back a year in any grade but my teachers always said, "Harold, you're too darn nonchalant, you could do better." I was pretty sure I could have done better too, but then I wanted to fly and all you have to do is have someone tell you that you can't do something you want to do it. That's also an attribute that a lot of females have. But when I passed that test down in Albany at the post office, I knew I was on my way. I didn't realize how hard it could get after that. I loved the discipline. I can remember my drill master in Atlantic City just as though it was yesterday. Here he is with a bunch of kids that just left home, their mother had to tell them when to brush their teeth, when to go to the bathroom, when to do this and when to do that and he took over that job. A lot of these kids, they didn't know what the hell was going on, I didn't either. Here I was with a bunch of strangers, at that time I was nineteen or twenty. I can't remember his name but I can see him just as though it was yesterday. You could see your face in his boots, he walked erect, he wore the campaign hat, he wore the dark greens all the time, dark greens with the campaign. And he had a voice. We stood outside the Hotel Traymore at 5:30, 6:00 in the morning, pouring rain, waiting for breakfast. Nobody griped, nobody bitched, you thought what in hell am I doing here? I could be home sitting at the table with Mom giving me bacon and eggs. We all got through it I really enjoyed the discipline. I liked it, I liked the Air Force, I enjoyed the people and I tried to learn what was taught to me. I think that most people, including you, will say that's how you got home. If you paid attention and did what you were supposed to do, if you knew how to fly your plane, you did your emergency procedures as they were called for and it helps you in later life. If you're going to be a doctor or a lawyer, you'd better know darn well what the hell you're doing or you're in trouble. It doesn't make any difference whether you're a clerk in a store, you do the best you can.

INT: Do you want to show us your photographs and tell us approximately when and where those were taken?

HA: [Shows two formal shots in dress uniform.] I'm pretty sure these both were taken after graduation on May 23, 1944. They wanted pictures to put in certain books, I guess, and they said you'll also want them to send home to your loved ones. A lot of the boys left immediately, some got furloughed, I was lucky I did. A lot didn't and they were just transferred out. You asked me earlier about people that that didn't make it. One thing about the Air Force was if they had one that wasn't going to make it, or he acted up, or he did something he wasn't supposed to do, you didn't know about it. His bed just became empty. He left in the middle of the night. They were very careful about this and why, I don't know. We just accepted it that he didn't make the grade, something happened, they never advertised what the problem was, never said anything about it. That just came to me a few minutes ago, so that's about the best I can do.

INT: Do you want to show some photographs in that album?

HA: [Opens and shows photo album.] This picture here was taken of the four pilots I was with in North Africa. Hopper is the one that's sitting down. The one to the left is Phillip Q. Cheshewalla, he was an Osage Indian chief from Oklahoma. He was a great pilot, he was just as good on his off hours. Being an Indian, we had to watch out for him when we got into the fire water. The other one is Ward, he's another Indian from Oklahoma, a peculiar coincidence. But Cheshewalla, I understand his grandmother owned two or three oil wells in Oklahoma so "the chief" as we called him, was pretty well set. Whatever happened to him after the war, I have no idea. Let me see who the other one was—well, believe it or not, it's me. It's the one on the right hand side. We were all buddies. My first pilot, Milton O. Hopper, is the gentleman sitting down. This over here is another pilot, his name is Joseph Gillis, I understand he ended up as some sort of judge in Detroit, Michigan. Joe was a service pilot, a captain, and a damn good pilot. Not many service pilots became captains, most of them were flight officers, some were second lieutenants but most of them were flight officers. The rest are just pictures of the people I flew with—Tony Gabriel, he was from Michigan. There's the CBI patch, down in the left hand corner. That's a little paper patch that my wife put in there. I think everybody that was in the CBI was pretty proud of the CBI. There's some natives that we had on our base. They came to work in the mess hall, some of them did the wash for us. We were instructed by our CO that we could not pay them too much because the British didn't want us ruin their pay scale which was about two annas a day which was about five or ten cents. The British didn't want us to corrupt their morals. There's a picture of the bottom, underneath the C-46. And this is in training, these are primary pilots that I was with in Bennettsville, South Carolina when we were flying other planes. Those four, one of them is me and the other three are my roommates in Bennettsville, SC in mid '43, early '44. All four of us were flying Stearmans. I think that's about it. These pictures are my family that remained home on the farm during the war.

INT: Do you want to show us your log book that you kept?

HA: [Opens and shows log book.] Here's the log book I carried in India. I've got another log book for China, starting January 19, 1945 right until I finished in late August or September of '45 when the war with Japan was over.

INT: How many round trips?

HA: Eighty-five round trips flying the Hump. [Repeats story about two first pilots and increased operational efficiency.] We requested also that we could keep the same radio operator because we became accustomed to him, he knew us. In fact once he even offered to act as my co-pilot. I had a co-pilot that slept the whole damn trip and was not much help to me coming back. He was a flight officer and I remember his name but I'm not going to mention it. I told the radio operator that I needed some help when we get there because the weather wasn't that good and he was sound asleep. I said, "Get him out of the chair and you get in there." So my radio operator acted as my co-pilot, called the

tower, put the wheels down and did everything that I needed to be done. The other guy woke up and he was madder than hell and then when we got off the plane he had the nerve to ask me if I would recommend him for first pilot. I just turned around and walked away in disgust. I would have recommended my radio operator for anything.

I forgot to tell you earlier that when we went to Atlantic City for basic they had a new program. They sent us from Atlantic City to a college training detachment. As luck would have it, they sent me to Amherst Massachusetts. I'd say there was probably 75 to 100 of us, we took over two barracks at Massachusetts State College, beautiful colonial brick buildings, two floors and there was at least two of us in each room. We had desks, everything to study, we went to Massachusetts State College, they taught us mathematics, meteorology, and they started us on code. We didn't know dit from dah or dah from dit. By the time we left there, we had to take and transmit so many words per minute or we couldn't make it.

INT: How long were you there?

HA: About two months. It was a beautiful thing really, it was just gorgeous the campus. Amherst College is still there and I think it's now called the University of Massachusetts but I'm not sure. Back then it was Massachusetts State College.

INT: Did you attend classes in uniform?

HA: Yes, we were all in uniform. It was just like the Army, the barracks, we were called out at a certain time of the morning. It was a little bit more relaxed, we ate in the college mess hall, it was heaven really. Of course camp down in Atlantic City was tough. There was a lot of rain because we were there in January and February. After we left there, that's when we went to Nashville. I remember one boy committed suicide down there, nobody ever knew why. I don't know whether he just got discouraged or what. He just jumped out of the second floor. These colonial buildings were brick with kind of a gambrel roof with a cupola on top and a weathervane. At the end of the top floors there was doors that went out onto a little balcony, he jumped from the balcony. I don't remember who it was or whether I even knew him, I don't think I did. I think he was in the other barracks that I wasn't in. From there they sent us to Westfield, MA to fly in Piper Cubs and Porterfield-Turner planes. They'd take us down by bus to the field in Westfield and we had instructors there.

INT: What did you think of the Cub?

HA: I loved it, still do. I've flown in the one down here at Chapin Field in Cambridge once in a while. I used to have a close friend that belonged to the club down there who wanted me to join. I said no, I'm not going to join. He joined and got his private pilot's license. He'd have to take me up and we'd go up together, it just so happened that he died of a massive stroke. In fact he was a biology and Phys Ed teacher in Cambridge High School. He died on his birthday in 1971. But I liked the Cub, the Porterfield-Turner I don't remember too much about. It was a little different plane than the Cub. The

instructor I had was a dim wit, he evidently had a good thing working for the government. I wouldn't have minded that but I was there to learn how to fly and he used to come in sometimes and he'd have a hell of a hangover, in fact he'd still be half in the bag. He'd go up with me and sometimes he'd even fall asleep. I'd turn around and his head would be hanging down on his chest. Nothing ever happened, he always got back and landed the plane but I got fed up with it so I went to the office and turned him in. Nobody ever said anything, they just gave me a different instructor that knew what he was doing. I figured as long as I was there, I was going to make use of it. When you're flying in an airplane you're flying with some angel anyway.

INT: Before we close, is there anything else you'd like to touch on?

HA: There probably is but I can't think of what it might be. I appreciate this, I'm glad they finally decided to record some of the experiences that people have had before we lose them all. It's been a wonderful experience. I was fortunate to receive a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) and the Air Medal for our work. Quite a few of us in China got it, in fact more got it than didn't I believe, as long as you paid attention. I didn't realize that after I smashed up that one airplane, I thought maybe, but I received a promotion from second lieutenant to first lieutenant and then before I left I got the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal and that was quite a surprise, too. It never had much bearing on me, I just thought it was so much hot air but they told me at Floyd Bennett Field that if I had stayed in a little longer, come back and didn't take my discharge, that I probably would be eligible to be promoted to captain within a year but how many times have people heard that and it didn't work out anyway. I didn't let it affect my final decision to take my discharge.

INT: Thank you very much for your interview.

HA: Thank you very much.