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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF ROBERT CASEY

February 26, 2003

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COPY

1 Robert Casey - 2-26-03

2 (The interview commenced at 2:30
3 p.m.)

4 MR. RUSSERT: This is an
5 interview with Robert Casey. The Hampton Inn,
6 Commack, New York, February 26th, 2003. It is
7 approximately two thirty p.m.

8 The interviewers are Michael
9 Russert and Wayne Clark.

10 BY MR. RUSSERT:

11 Q. Could you give me your full name,
12 date of birth, and place of birth, please?

13 A. My name is Robert Charles Casey,
14 I was born in Brooklyn, New York and my date was
15 November 13th, '22.

16 Q. Okay. What was your educational
17 background prior to military service?

18 A. I went to a girl's high school.
19 We had four guys in the class. And we went -- went
20 to the eleventh grade. And my mother was a French
21 Wolferizer so we needed money so I went into the
22 city and I was working Wall Street as a clerk, and
23 I was going to night school in Jamaica High.

24 And when I got into the service

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2 it was about June -- it was in June of 1942. And I
3 didn't graduate because the exams -- I missed them.
4 As a matter of fact I just got a piece from South
5 Sayville High school a diploma.

6 Q. Oh.

7 A. From my Congressman and I guess
8 the other ladies. I forget what their -- what
9 their status is. But I got a new -- I got a
10 diploma from Sayville where I live -- where I'm at
11 now.

12 Q. Where were you and what do you --
13 what were your recollections or your feelings about
14 Pearl Harbor when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

15 A. That's what kept me to the
16 service. As soon as that -- I was -- I was really
17 going to -- I was toying with the idea of going to
18 Canada to take up flying and then go to RAF.
19 And -- of course when that happened, Pearl Harbor,
20 I immediately went over to White Hall Armory in
21 Manhattan or Brooklyn, in Manhattan on the
22 Broadway. As a matter of fact I found out my dad
23 was there too, first World War.

24 And I went to -- they gave me an

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2 eye test, I passed the eye test so they sent me to
3 Mitchell Air Force Base. Which was known as the
4 country club of the Air Force at that time. And I
5 took further tests, you know, figuring out all
6 these other things. And I had another test, an
7 oral -- it was a test -- fill ins -- multiple
8 choice type thing. And then they told me to wait
9 because there was a waiting list to get into the
10 air force.

11 And then down the road they sent
12 me a letter stating that there was a new program
13 starting, known as the Glider Program and if I was
14 interested let them know. I did that and I was
15 finished additional tests and then I went to get my
16 uniform and -- and shots and air-pak and that's
17 what my dad was for the first World War too, oddly
18 enough.

19 And then I -- then it was June
20 and I was sent to -- had to go to Wisconsin to fly
21 the L-4A the elite aircraft. Where we put
22 fifty-six hours of flying time in, part -- part of
23 it was TEC landings as they call it. They already
24 had flight gliders, I guess kill the engine.

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And when we finished that I went to a pool and I waited for the Glider Program to start which at Twenty-nine Palms California. I did my basic glider training down at Twenty-nine Palms California. I went to another pool and then I went to a base in California for flying CT-4A's.

And just yesterday I was trying to remember the name of that base. I can't think of it right now. I should have looked it up. But it was a big military flying school. They were flying bombers just prior to my getting there.

And the day we graduated, we were made flight officers and we were sent to Louisville, Kentucky at which time we had to learn ground work. We did everything from dig fox holes to fire ammunition.

In fact we had a black belt, I had never seen a black belt before until this guy came along and was part of our training.

We were training on hand to hand combat, you name it. And we were going to Fort Knox to do a lot of our work. Fort Knox was readily available in Louisville, Kentucky. So, we

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2 went from -- from that -- from that basic area and
3 that was after a couple months. And then we went
4 to Rockingham, North Carolina, which was a base
5 where they had all the other training -- final
6 training before you became a member of a group.

7 And paratroopers were there and I
8 can remember them running around at five o'clock in
9 the morning on a chase. It's kind of crazy. But
10 we did a lot of flying in gliders in day and
11 nighttime there.

12 And then I was assigned to the
13 438 and after two weeks they sent me to the 436.
14 So, I guess they were filling in some slots because
15 436 was prepared to go to -- they want to Indiana,
16 Fort Wayne, Indiana I think it was. And they were
17 getting new aircrafts, C-47's, and the C-47 pilots
18 and a lot of the other people like our adjutant and
19 executive officer and many of the other people, I'm
20 sure the mechanics were on board.

21 And we went to New York and we
22 stayed at a -- Camp Shanks -- we were at Camp
23 Shanks for a couple of weeks waiting. And then we
24 were sent down to -- by train to a place where they

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had a ferry that took us out to -- what happens to

3

be the Queen Mary. We were just lucky as hell. It

4

was fifteen thousand men on board that ship. And I

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was really amazed at the kind of service we had

6

even though our duty -- we had fifteen men to a

7

cabin. You can imagine taking a cabin -- a place

8

like this and making -- and they had teams of

9

eight -- I think -- no, five folding -- what do you

10

call those things.

11

Q. Bunks.

12

A. Bunks, yeah -- yeah bunks, but

13

they had -- we had three of those in the area and

14

we had a bathroom of course, so it worked out fine.

15

And -- and one of my charges was

16

to cut down and to just sit with a group of

17

enlisted people. I think I did it twice a day for

18

three hours, so that's six -- three and three is

19

six hours, I guess.

20

And then I spent my time in

21

the -- in the -- what do they call it, the big

22

place where they were -- with a stage up there. As

23

a matter of fact Mark Clark came and did just prior

24

to us getting off the ship, he was there to give us

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2 a talk.

3 But we had -- we had about
4 ninety -- I think ninety nurses there. And we used
5 to play cards at night. Then we went from there by
6 train to a base in the northern part of England
7 near -- what was the name of that base? Anyway, I
8 was on the northern part, and the weather was
9 terrible, and that's where I learned to fly a Horsa
10 and basically that's about all we did.

11 And the weather was so bad the
12 flying -- we could put up maybe one glider flight a
13 day and then eventually we were brought down to
14 Nappnee, which was a base was number four sixty-six
15 where all the troop carrier people were.

16 And we had four -- four squadrons
17 to a -- to a group. And there were four groups to
18 a wing. And we were in the fifty-third wing. One
19 part -- I was just reading something the other day
20 about the 33rd wing, where we did something which
21 was --.

22 We went over -- we went over seas
23 with 26th glider pilots in a -- in a group, though
24 we had sixteen aircraft. So we had crews for

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2 sixteen aircraft. And eventually we had forty-one
3 glider pilots and then we get up to fifty-six
4 glider pilots. And yet, going into Holland, I
5 didn't have a co-pilot. I had to put a trooper in
6 there in the front seat with me. So, we landed at
7 Market Garden with just -- with no co-pilots.

8 And we got back from there they
9 took us to -- what's that big -- hotel there, just
10 reading about it. My memory is -- I'm fifty -- I'm
11 eighty years old now. So my memory's not as good
12 as it used to be. But not that brutal, there's a
13 big hotel -- Betty and I visited there some years
14 later and we couldn't even get in there. But we --
15 we spent two nights in that hotel and then the
16 aircraft came over and picked us up.

17 And our aircraft, the C-47 when
18 they weren't busy dropping paratroopers and
19 bringing supplies like we did to France, medical
20 supplies, we were putting one hundred and ten five
21 gallon drums -- or five gallon Jerry cans on the
22 floor of the C-47 and flying -- I guess we went to
23 Cherbourg and picked up the stuff and came back.
24 And then we'd bring it to the front lines.

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2 Because I was a little surprised
3 at the last reading I made where -- we were in
4 Belgium after we came out of Holland and they --
5 and these guys -- there were six aircraft there and
6 they all had this -- this one hundred and ten
7 gallon drums of Jerry cans and instead of dropping
8 them off first, we went in with them there. They
9 could have dropped it off and come back and took us
10 back home. So --.

11 BY MR. CLARK:

12 Q. Were you involved in the Normandy
13 landings?

14 A. I landed in Normandy with the
15 325th regiment. The company Commander "C" of --
16 the company of the fourth -- what regimen was
17 that -- of the 435, the three -- 345 maybe, I
18 forget. I fairly remember, I hate this.

19 They were -- they were a glider
20 group. And you mentioned some of them were coming
21 in by group. But these guys had a lot of land
22 mines on board, my glider. Originally we had I
23 think thirty some odd men were going to be flying
24 in. We had seven thousand five hundred pounds

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2 of -- a weight and a board our glider.

3 And we wound up with this company
4 commander and about thirty-two men and he had a lot
5 of land mines on there. Because when we landed in
6 France, they had -- as a matter of fact, I remember
7 his name for a while there. He got hit on the --
8 on the -- on the 7th, June the 7th. We took off at
9 four thirty-two in the morning and we landed there
10 at seven o'clock. We were the first group in. And
11 our mission was Galveston.

12 And we landed and they said he
13 had to go up front, and he was hit somewhere up
14 there. And was captured by a -- and he was in a
15 German hospital and there was an American -- a
16 German -- a young man that was German, a
17 paratrooper and he was wondering how the reds made
18 out. And he was trying to figure out what is he
19 worried about the reds for?

20 And he was talking about -- he
21 came from -- his -- his father brought him from
22 Cincinnati and that's where he was a Cincinnati
23 Red's fan, wondering how the Red's were doing.

24 And -- anyway, after we went from

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2 there to -- oh and I -- then I met with -- I spoke
3 to this -- this -- this fellow who was captured. I
4 was telling you about the company commander, was
5 recaptured and he was made the executive officer
6 now. Because another fellow who I spoke with later
7 on took over his company and he became the Exec and
8 he went into the Holland evasion with the 82nd and
9 he got hit up there again. And I think that's when
10 he was out of war.

11 And -- but I met -- I had spoken
12 to him fifty years later and his eyes were bad. He
13 had cataracts I think. He was -- he was a chemical
14 engineer and his two sons were chemical engineers.
15 I have a daughter who is a chemical engineer so --.
16 BY MR. CLARK:

17 Q. When you went into Normandy, what
18 was the landing like? Did you find an open field?

19 A. We had no problem. We had a
20 great field, but I flipped a coin with a friend of
21 mind, I wound up in the right-hand seat and I could
22 really fly this glider. But this guy got in and
23 there was a -- there was a trip tab you know, what
24 an aircraft is, a big -- it's big like a wheel, a

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2 bicycle wheel I would call it. And we cut loose
3 and I realized as soon as we made our turn, that
4 was it. We were in this position and that was --
5 and the wheel was back there. So, I should have
6 yelled to him like turn the damn thing up, but I
7 knew from my training that when I brought it in and
8 I put eighty degrees of flaps out it would bounce
9 up and then we did that and we landed. But we
10 broke the nose wheel and we flew all the way across
11 the field. But nobody was hurt on my glider. And
12 the two pilots, we wound facing the -- the tail,
13 which was odd. I was trying to figure out what the
14 hell happened there?

15 And then I spoke to some British
16 people and they said the early gliders were made so
17 that they -- these things were like on pivots. I
18 was surprised. And I must have been -- and I must
19 have been shaken up a bit because some trooper came
20 up and we were -- if you know in France they have
21 these things before the head goes and we finally
22 fell in that. And there was a trooper looking down
23 to us and he's told us, the company commander's
24 said they've had it. Apparently we were a contest

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2 for a few minutes. And I came to and I was up and
3 about.

4 But my -- I should have learned
5 something from the troopers because they always put
6 some tape at the end of their M-1's. My M-1 field
7 stripped and all of a sudden we're catching some
8 fire and it was from 101st. Because originally it
9 was supposed to land at Sure-Mer-Eglise but the
10 German's had taken such control of it that they
11 told us to go over to the 101st and land over there
12 on June the 7th, which we did and --.

13 Q. Now, once you landed your job was
14 finished that you --?

15 A. Not really. Basically as a
16 glider pilot your job is to do whatever you can do
17 to help the troopers. But unfortunately two other
18 gliders came into the same field that mine came in
19 and one guy hit his right wing on a -- on a
20 telephone pole and the telephones poles over there
21 were concrete. And they told them not to worry
22 about trees, forget about it, there's plenty of
23 trees over there.

24 And he apparently came over and

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2 there was a glider here and he went right into the
3 glider where fourteen people were casualties. So I
4 was basically helping casualties. And when I
5 landed I can remember hearing mortar shells going
6 overhead but I didn't know if they were coming or
7 going. And I think they were going.

8 And -- and then shortly
9 thereafter that, on that same day of June the 7th,
10 three German aircraft came flying over very low
11 with a bunch of spitfires on their tail and one was
12 smoking already. And I think they were trying to
13 get down to Cherbourg where they could land in
14 their friendly territory. But they were all
15 knocked out and --.

16 Well, I'll wait for you to ask
17 the next question.

18 BY MR. RUSSERT:

19 Q. No -- no. I can tell you started
20 on being in the landing zone.

21 A. Oh. So, I was taking care of
22 these wounded and a couple other guys went
23 eventually -- went to -- because we had to -- two
24 pilots that were hurt in those three gliders. And

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2 the other two guys went and eventually picked up
3 some help -- this was towards the end of the day.
4 And we had a truck pick us up and take us down to
5 the beach.

6 But basically stayed with these
7 wounded people and it was a Frenchman who came by
8 and my mother having been a French War Bride I was
9 brought up speaking French, I had problems in
10 school because of that. Because when I went into
11 grade school I could only speak French. And they
12 left me back twice because of my language. But I
13 made amends about that.

14 But what was I saying?

15 Q. You were down on the beach
16 shelter taking care of the wounded?

17 A. Oh, it was -- it was -- yeah.

18 There was a Frenchman going by
19 and he was -- he a rope and a -- and a cow so I'm
20 thinking, well, let's make sure where we are. I
21 knew we were in the same area of St. Mere Du Hoc,
22 of course they were waiting to greet as we came in.
23 Because we went around Cherbourg and we flew --
24 flew -- we were four thousand feet above the water,

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2 which is really kind of close. And most of the
3 ships were behind so to be out of the range of the
4 guns on the coast.

5 And we made a -- we made a right
6 turn and went into Normandy and we went up to six
7 hundred feet before we cut loose. Because a lot of
8 people say who cuts loose? The glider pilot cuts
9 loose. The other guy would just put a light in his
10 astrodome to let us know when it was time to think
11 about it. When you're -- you know, because they
12 didn't want to go beyond, they're going to be in
13 German territory pretty soon.

14 So anyway, this Frenchman, I
15 think must have been -- and he couldn't speak
16 English. I don't think he spoke English. He
17 didn't say a thing to me. I knew basically where
18 we were but I wanted to make sure of this position
19 without my map. And he was of no help.

20 But then -- they said these two
21 other glider pilots went down and picked up some
22 help and they brought trucks in and we got onto --
23 onto the beach and it was LST going out, landing
24 craft tank that was -- and we got on that and then

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2 we got taken to a LST. And on that ship there was
3 two hundred and nineteen German prisoners. One of
4 them being one of the pilots was down there.

5 And they were -- this guy was
6 really bad news. And they -- they made sure that
7 he was out of the way because he -- these guys were
8 happy to be out of the war. And he was one of
9 those nuts that wanted to continue the war.

10 But they took us to an LST and
11 spent the night on deck because I was talking to a
12 deckhand on the LST and he said the Germans at
13 night were dropping mines into -- into the channel
14 and one hit a -- a ship hit one of them and went
15 down in three minutes. So I figured, well, I
16 figured I'd sleep on the deck. The other guys I
17 think were down below.

18 Anyway, I'm so pooped from that
19 day I was just laying down on the deck because I
20 hadn't slept the day before and the night before an
21 unusual thing happened. I was trying to fix
22 something on the glider and had a problem, and I
23 saw a fellow on the runway. And this was -- was
24 June the 5th. And I saw this lonely person down

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2 the runway. I said, "Hey, you," and I kept running
3 towards him. When I got there, he had a star on
4 his hat. And I asked whereabout who that might
5 have been. I thought it was Jim -- James Gavin.
6 It was James Gavin, because it was his habit to be
7 there. And he was leaving a few hours later to
8 make the landing with his paratroopers. And so I
9 thought that was kind of a unique situation. But I
10 didn't get much help, I don't know what we did.

11 But anyway, we got onto this LST
12 and they took us to Portsmouth and at Portsmouth
13 they had a place where we had coffee and donuts and
14 all that jazz. And then trucks came and picked us
15 up and brought us back to the base. So, basically
16 that was it. I was going field strip by M-1 too.
17 It was all a part. When the -- when the hard for
18 shooting a little resentment there. But I liked
19 that M-1.

20 As a matter of fact I was just
21 reading something where I had shot expert -- with
22 the M1 -- I had a twenty-two and later on we spent
23 five weeks with the seventeenth airborne just in
24 this November and December. And flew -- we were

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2 firing, we're using all kinds of weapons. I
3 couldn't believe this. They had made -- using, I
4 don't know that small gun they had.

5 Q. Bren gun?

6 A. Huh? No, they --

7 BY MR. CLARK:

8 Q. The Carbines?

9 A. The Carbines -- the Carbines,
10 they shot one seventy-five, they said that was
11 expert. Then we were shooting -- oh, they trained
12 us on so much stuff. I was trying to tell the guy
13 I'm an M-1 person and I had a Thompson submachine
14 gun too at the Holland, which was my mistake.
15 Because when I was in Normandy, the M-1, I thought,
16 jeez, you know, we can use it in Holland and --
17 because there were just so small fields around
18 there.

19 And then when -- when it's
20 appropriate so I took a Thompson in there and with
21 all the extra paraphernalia you had to carry with
22 all that stuff.

23 BY MR. RUSSERT:

24 Q. How did you as a glider pilot --

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2 how did you cut loose from your -- when you were
3 being towed?

4 A. What you'd have to do is hit a
5 little thing and it opens up the connection.

6 Q. Which type of advanced glider
7 did you prefer to fly in? Did you have a
8 preference?

9 A. It didn't matter to me. But I
10 flew the CT-4a on two missions. The one into
11 Market Garden and the last one with the 17th
12 Airborne over the Operation Marseine (phonetic
13 spelling) which was the British -- the British were
14 always saying things up there. They're the ones
15 that got Market Garden going.

16 As a matter of fact one flight we
17 were dropping a Tornette and that was from --
18 blocked off a whole army in there. I forget how
19 many it was.

20 But at one point when I was
21 overseas let's see -- after Normandy a lot of guys
22 went down to -- to Italy, my squadron including the
23 executive officer anyhow. And the adjutant was
24 down there. And we were going to fly with the --

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2 with the 82nd Airborne and 101st I think as well.

3 And also a -- there was a great
4 Polish Brigade. We were going to block off the 7th
5 army -- they called it the Falaise gap. I was all
6 set to go on that mission and we had our glider
7 loaded up. And the night before somebody told us
8 forget about it. General Patton had come in and
9 closed the gap. So, we didn't have to do that. But
10 that's two missions I could have made, that would
11 have been a tough one in that Falaise gap.

12 Q. Well did you -- which of the
13 gliders did you prefer? Did you --?

14 A. CT-4A was -- it didn't matter to
15 me, CT-4A either one. Yeah. Unfortunately though
16 in -- in Market Garden, they would have had a much
17 better time or something so you could tell where
18 this wind was coming from.

19 Well, to start with went into --
20 we went into Market Garden on the -- let's see, the
21 thing started on the -- on the 17th. I was a -- a
22 Sunday, when they dropped the paratroopers,
23 supplies. Then on the -- the gliders started come
24 in on the 19th. I took off on the 19th and we --

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2 we became into an awful lot of cloud cover over
3 the -- over the channel. So bad that -- I mean, I
4 could only see two feet of my -- of the rope, but I
5 was just following the rope. And we finally -- my
6 CO who was relatively new brought us back. He
7 recalled us. The weather was so bad for the next
8 three of four -- five days even, I don't think we
9 went in until the 21st.

10 So, now we're flying in, and it
11 was a Saturday and we went right up the main road
12 what they called -- what did they call that road,
13 Hell's -- Hell's Highway, Hell's Highway I think
14 they called it.

15 Q. Yeah, I think that's what they
16 called it.

17 A. Yeah. Hell's Highway. And we
18 went over Nimegan and up near the -- there was a
19 Javit (sic) canal that they were trying to save.
20 And I made a left turn going out and then I made
21 another left turn a place where I was going to
22 land. And the wind was so bad -- of course they
23 told us don't fly too far over land where those
24 trees are because the Germans are setting up with

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2 **machine guns.**

3 And so I thought about that but I
4 didn't know the wind was as bad as it was, so by
5 the time I made my next turn I was behind the
6 houses that I wanted to land in behind. And so I
7 came in and I landed in a turnip patch. So bad I
8 had -- I had a jeep trailer filled with 81
9 millimeter motor shells aboard and two five hundred
10 pounders. One right there, one over three.

11 And when we hit those turnip
12 patch, it was a plowed out field. And then we
13 stopped -- well, I was going really slow anyway
14 because I -- I had just about made. And we -- I
15 had rigged up the things so there was a prior
16 hooked up to the -- to the trailer and we stopped
17 so fast the front went up and the load went out and
18 it spilled out. So, it was half out. I was
19 surprised when they didn't blow up. I wouldn't
20 have known about it anyway.

21 Q. What was the normal landing speed
22 for your glider?

23 A. My glider would land probably
24 eighty miles an hour, air speed, yeah, air speed.

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2 Q. Were any of them ever reusable or
3 were they just made for one flight?

4 A. I landed and they're basically
5 made for one flight. But there was a lot of them
6 that could be salvaged. As a matter of fact the
7 one I landed and it was the last mission I made, I
8 landed in somebody's backyard in Germany. And --
9 and they would have had to take it apart just to
10 get it out of the damn field, because it was in
11 somebody's back yard. But It was perfectly fine.
12 No problem at all.

13 But we -- well I guess they had
14 enough gliders. What they lacked was glider
15 pilots. They were very short in pilots for some
16 reason.

17 **BY MR. CLARK:**

18 Q. Now, when you went into Market
19 Garden were you under fire when you landed or --?

20 A. No. No fire. I was under no fire
21 going into Normandy either. We went in at six
22 hundred feet and we flew up this highway going
23 right up to -- near Carentan I guess it was in that
24 area and we never drew any fire there. And I don't

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think -- I did drew -- dry -- catch some fire coming in -- we had such an unusual -- we're flying double Pelow going into Varsity. And two -- one aircraft went over this way and those guys really got hurt. We went straight ahead and I saw one guy who took gliders, peeled off in his airplane, went straight up in the air, apparently it was Captain Fry (phonetic spelling) was his name. He was in the 81st squadron. And he -- apparently twenty millimeter shells were being fired from this guy and he was just sitting there just shooting like pigeons up above.

And what happened was I could see my CO get hit, hit right in back where he was flying and that's where he would throw his hat, this guy. And then as I peeled off, to make my turn, not even thinking of that, this guy got hit, and we came into land and he went flying right in -- right under me as we came in for a landing. But he was behind me all the way. And then when they saw we were going land, and I was amazed because I saw his two wheels go flying. I never saw that before. And we made a good landing. And

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2 we had all troopers on board from the 17th
3 airborne, and they went into action.

4 I had a camera with me and I was
5 taking pictures. I took pictures of -- what they
6 did there in Germany was evacuate every house in
7 our area women, children, whatever, everything.
8 And they put them someplace I'm not sure where. Of
9 course I took a picture of some paratroopers with
10 some woman on their knees in the backyard. And in
11 the basement they had smoked hams and smoked
12 whatever, they were really fantastic.

13 But I went to a German house and
14 I saw a guys hat and I put my hat on -- I have
15 pictures taken with the hat on. And I went back
16 and put it back. I just felt bad about going into
17 somebody's house. I didn't give a damn where it
18 was.

19 BY MR. CLARK:

20 Q. When you were in Market Garden
21 did you do any fighting on the ground or?

22 A. You have to remember, we were
23 there on the 21st.

24 Q. Right.

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2 A. Which was a Saturday.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. We were supposed to go on
5 Tuesday. So, by the time I got there it was just a
6 matter of getting a load there. And then I met a
7 young man who was sitting in the window and he was
8 Dutch but could speak perfect English. He was a
9 school master and he was from -- he was from the
10 Hague. And apparently he was trying to avoid the
11 Germans because he was an underground person. And
12 he was -- and his family was living in the basement
13 and we slept upstairs in his room because he said
14 hey, the beds were open, you know, if you want to
15 sleep with us. So, I slept in his house with
16 another fellow, and then I went to church the next
17 day with that family.

18 And then that day we were sent
19 over to Belgium.

20 Q. France?

21 A. Is it France?

22 Q. It was in Paris I believe.

23 A. Yeah. Yeah -- yeah. That was
24 a -- they had a -- we had a -- we had a man who was

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2 a -- a Sergeant in the 81st squadron. He could
3 have been a Tech Sergeant I'm not sure who he was.
4 But he -- he went to Fountainsbleu, that's right in
5 France which was not far from where we were
6 stationed at the time. And he went to OCS there,
7 which they had in 1945. And small -- short story,
8 he came out as a major general, two star general.
9 And he was one of our tech sergeants.

10 Q. Did you ever hear of gliders
11 being used resupply in the bulge? During the war?

12 A. In the bulge? In the bulge? Oh,
13 yes. They had the 434th I think it was. Flew
14 about fifty gliders and first of all the first
15 glider that landed in -- in the bulge or where the
16 conflict was, was a man who volunteered to fly, was
17 a medical supplier.

18 The first thing that happened in
19 the bulge was the Germans captured an entire --
20 entire medical group. And so they were short of
21 medical people and this fellow flew I think four or
22 five doctors in there and other medical people into
23 the bulge. That was a single glider.

24 And then another -- I think forty

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2 gliders went in from -- I think it was 434th. The
3 guys -- the CO was Young, his name was Young. He
4 wrote a book as a matter of fact. I've got it at
5 home. And then they flew a couple of missions. As
6 a matter of fact they wanted to fly -- there was a
7 mission where -- of C-47's had dropped some
8 parachutes -- supplies, and they told them they
9 should take like the southern route. And they
10 said, no, we can't. This Colonel said, "No, we
11 can't do it because our top cover was planned
12 already for the other way." And they apparently
13 got a lot of flak and lost several gliders and
14 their loads on the way in. But a majority of them
15 went in and did what they had to do. They were
16 bringing in ammo as I recall. They were short --.

17 Q. Gliders did land?

18 A. Yes, they landed in the bulge
19 at -- at -- I went to that town at one time. What
20 was the name of that town?

21 Q. Bastogne.

22 A. Bastogne yeah, right -- just
23 outside of Bastogne.

24 Q. What did you think about the

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2 whole concept behind Market -- Market Garden?

3 A. As I said it was -- it was a
4 British plan and it was planned in two weeks. And
5 his plan was to go -- well they said a bridge too
6 far which it was because the 82nd airborne took
7 the -- the bridge -- the main bridge. As a matter
8 of fact I'll tell you something that happened
9 there.

10 Those people that went across the
11 water to get on the other side of that bridge, what
12 was the name of that bridge?

13 Q. It was --.

14 A. Nimegan -- Nimegan bridge.

15 Q. The Nimegan bridge.

16 A. Yeah. Well, they took one
17 hundred and twenty-four glider pilots and put them
18 in the line and those guys came out and those were
19 the soldiers that went in, crossed the -- they were
20 waiting for the -- for the British to bring up
21 their tanks and -- or their equipment. And they
22 used these boats which were wooden base and -- and
23 canvas, and they went across using the butt -- the
24 butt of their guns I think as oars. And they're

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2 the ones that get on the other side and captured
3 the Bridge.

4 Which was unique -- the unique
5 part was that they had one hundred and twenty-four
6 glider pilots covering for their company over
7 there. And that was our job basically, was to fill
8 in wherever we could.

9 Q. Okay. Did you see any USO show
10 while you were over there?

11 A. Oh yeah, I saw several. As a
12 matter of fact I was just reading about one. I
13 don't remember if I was there. But it was the base
14 there and on at least two -- at least two occasions
15 when we had -- when we had USO there, maybe three.
16 And we had a USO show on the ship when I went
17 overseas in the -- what do they call it, the big
18 open place. It was a big lounge -- I guess it was
19 a lounge we were in. And we used to go play cards
20 there at night and the nurses were there and -- so
21 we had some -- and we had a black group of
22 musicians that played one night. So -- and we were
23 only five days on that ship with fifteen thousand
24 guys and we had two meals a day.

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2 Q. You had mentioned before that --
3 before we put the camera on, you helped assemble
4 gliders at one time?

5 A. Yeah, in December -- I spent at
6 least four days -- they were breaking in these
7 crates to our -- to our airbase and we were
8 breaking down these crates and assembling gliders.
9 We had glider mechanics all the time but now they
10 needed help. Because generally I guess they get
11 the gliders -- we used to fly the gliders in from
12 other airbases. And we were helping, I guess we
13 were helping putting the -- holding the wings up
14 and getting bolted down. But I spent about four --
15 four days as I recall. I just did that. I think
16 that was in December of '45. And the only -- only
17 mission that we ran after that was the mission into
18 Barby in March -- March 24th of '45.

19 But as I said, half of my
20 squadron went down to Italy and they flew into
21 Southern France. And they had gliders over there.
22 And -- and I think our C-47 people were flying
23 paratroopers in -- in their -- well they were
24 trying to cut off the Germans -- and they had

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2 **terrible frontal attacks. So they went around them**
3 **and they dropped the 82nd in back of them. And**
4 **they started another front back there. I think our**
5 **C-47 -- I know our C-47 people were dropping**
6 **paratroopers back there. Yeah.**

7 **BY MR. RUSSERT:**

8 Q. What was your reaction to the
9 death of President Roosevelt?

10 A. Well, everybody felt bad about
11 that. And -- including myself. It was -- it
12 was -- the main -- the bad part was it was the end
13 of the war, when he died.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I think the war ended on the 8th
16 of May and it was just before that that he had
17 passed away. And I'm sure he would have loved to
18 have seen the end of it, but four terms, it was --
19 of course I don't -- I don't know how far into that
20 fourth term he was. Because that's when --.

21 Q. And what was your reaction to the
22 dropping the nuclear bombs on Japan? Did you have
23 any --?

24 A. I thought it was a great idea.

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2 They weren't going to stop the war. When I came
3 back in '45, I was at home and I was going to get
4 together with my group. And my group was supposed
5 to go and land in -- you would have had a lot of
6 glider pilots and airborne people dropping into
7 Japan. It would have been bad news. We would have
8 lost a lot of men.

9 My plan was not to go. My plan was to go to
10 another flying school. I wanted to get into
11 fighter planes. Yeah. But -- but -- no I was happy
12 that they dropped those bombs. And that stopped a
13 war in a big hurry. Of course, I think they could
14 have done it with one city. They didn't have to do
15 two cities. But those Japanese people were kind of
16 stupid. Hard nose that's there big problem.

17 Q. When you left the service did you
18 join any Veteran's organizations?

19 A. I didn't join the American Legion
20 until I came out of South Sayville and I retired.
21 I was too busy working. I worked with -- I went
22 to -- the chairman which is across the street from
23 where I used to work. When I -- I don't know when
24 I went to the other place -- place.

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2 And then I went -- got a job -- I was going to NYU.

3 Q. Did you use the GI bill?

4 A. Yeah, and I was going to NYU
5 studying accounting and whatever. Because my
6 father was an accountant, my mother was an
7 accountant. My grandfather was a -- was a teacher
8 in France. And I think he must have been teaching
9 academy because my daughter -- my -- my wife is --
10 my mother was an accountant, and I didn't know that
11 until some years later. And of course that's when
12 I -- my father who was in the first World War was a
13 Sergeant Major and he was in charge of a -- they
14 call in the Air -- not the Air Force. It was the
15 Air Service in those days. Yeah. And he was in
16 charge of the base. And they used to hang out
17 together I guess, and then they got married at the
18 end of the war.

19 He was sent to Paris for the
20 Peace Commission because he stayed. He went -- he
21 went -- I guess he went to -- he was born -- raise
22 in Brooklyn and he went to Pace University I guess
23 and he started shorthand typing and all that
24 material -- and bookkeeping and the whole thing.

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2 **And -- and she was married and -- first in this**
3 **accounting as well. I don't remember where I was**
4 **going from there. But --.**

5 Q. Were you in the Fifty-two twenty
6 Club.

7 A. No -- no.

8 Q. Have you Joined or gone to any
9 reunions or have you kept in contact with anyone
10 you served with?

11 A. As a matter of fact I think I
12 told you -- I told you I just got a call yesterday
13 from the major.

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. Who was a pilot of some kind. He
16 was going -- he was writing a article he said. And
17 he was going to send me some materials because he
18 wanted some pictures and I had taken pictures
19 during the war and in the service. And he didn't
20 know what a glider looked like. And I have pictures
21 of both the Lawson and the other one. And he was --
22 he was referred to me by Chip Randolph (phonetic
23 spelling) who was basically the head of our -- what
24 do they call it, silence -- silence, it's an

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2 organization of glider pilots anyway. And we have
3 a big -- we have the best well organized group of
4 anybody -- anybody in the Air Force because they
5 were in and out in two months. And down in the --
6 we were in the ninth Air Force by the way, when we
7 were in the service. We were attached to the ninth
8 Air Force. but we were troop carrier command which
9 was pretty big.

10 BY MR. CLARK:

11 Q. How did the glider pilots get
12 along with the traditional motorized airplane
13 pilots? Was there any kind of ribbing or rivalry
14 or?

15 A. No -- no we can copilot with
16 them. As a matter of fact we had a -- in France we
17 had a C-109 which was a B-24 converted for flying
18 gas. And I went and flew Copilot for a little guy
19 named Murphy, I think his name was. He was a
20 little guy. And I don't think anybody else was a
21 pilot to go with him, so I went with him. They used
22 to do all these crazy things. And we went flying
23 this B-24.

24 And at one point we were

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2 flying -- we went out -- I was just writing about
3 this recently. We flew up to Scotland and picked
4 up some L4-A's, I think they were. And we had to
5 fly them back. We were bringing them over to
6 France because they needed them for -- what do they
7 call those guys, the observers I guess.

8 BY MR. RUSSERT:

9 Q. Forward observers.

10 A. Yeah. So we were --.

11 Q. Forward observers.

12 A. Forward observers, yeah. So, we
13 were -- we were ferrying these and the wind was so
14 bad it took us -- the first day we had to stop and
15 get gas. And then we made another stop. And then
16 we went out to the coast and then we went into
17 France eventually. So, it took four days just to
18 get there with these L-4A's.

19 Q. Could you tell us when this
20 photograph was taken?

21 A. Oh, you got that, huh?

22 Q. You sent it to us.

23 A. Oh, I did? When was that taken?
24 It could have been taken in London.

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2 Q. Could you turn it toward the
3 camera please?

4 BY MR. CLARK:

5 Q. Yup. But -- but hold it back.

6 A. Yeah, I'm quite sure -- I was
7 just reading where I made a stop and had pictures
8 taken to be sent home. And I -- of course I was
9 probably in my uniform so --.

10 BY MR. RUSSERT:

11 Q. Well, you haven't aged that much.

12 A. I don't know about that. I
13 had -- I had black hair at the time.

14 BY MR. CLARK:

15 Q. And this one?

16 A. Oh. Yeah, this was taken just
17 before Market Garden -- you see I got the Thompson
18 submachine gun.

19 BY MR. RUSSERT:

20 Q. Now, why did you not like
21 reassign the Thompson with you. You said you were
22 sorry you took that instead of an M-1?

23 A. Remember, I got there on the 21st
24 and all the fighting was really done. And I would

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2 just carry it around. And they had -- besides that
3 you had to carry the clips of that all -- and those
4 clip things were heavy.

5 BY MR. CLARK:

6 Q. Now, were you issued a forty-five
7 also?

8 A. Oh, yes. We also had -- besides
9 the M-1, I used to carry a Colt 45. What's that?
10 Oh, this was in basic training. This is in
11 Twenty-nine Palms California, while learning to
12 fly.

13 Q. Now, did you keep a flight
14 jacket? Did you keep your flight jacket?

15 A. I did, but I had two brothers.
16 One was -- when I got home one was twelve and one
17 was ten. Forget about it. They -- they -- I
18 noticed all my greens were gone. I just realized
19 that recently. And my kid brother told me that they
20 were short -- because my mother had eight kids.
21 She had ten, lost one at birth and one at a year of
22 age. So -- and we had -- all eight of us are still
23 alive, I'm number three. But these kids -- of
24 course these kids is now -- one is going to be

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2 seventy -- he's going to be seventy and the other
3 one is sixty-seven I think. Now, they took all my
4 clothes. And they -- and the flight jacket was --
5 I've got another one at home, but it doesn't fit
6 like this one did. This was great.

7 BY MR. RUSSERT:

8 Q. How do you think --?

9 A. What was it the 02 or the --

10 Q. The 8-2.

11 A. 8-2, 8-2.

12 Q. How do you think your service
13 affected your life or changed your life?

14 A. Well, how did the service --? I
15 was so fortunate. I can't believe what a racquet I
16 had in the service. I really had a -- I mean, I had
17 the rank, I became -- as a matter of fact I'm just
18 writing now where my executive officer's calling me
19 in and saying hey, would you want to help --?

20 Our base got so big because
21 besides having a group there we had some other
22 organizations there, including our own hospital
23 there I think. And they had a Repple Depo down
24 there where these P-47's would come in and get the

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2 Tally count put on their aircraft. And so I think
3 we were servicing other types of aircraft as well.

4 And -- I -- I really think I had
5 a real good racquet. I used to sleep in until
6 noon, half -- half of my life. I mean -- and I
7 would stay out until midnight. I was going -- I
8 was always going to Oxford. I was telling my wife
9 recently when I -- we went -- we went some years
10 later we went to Oxford. She said she's never been
11 to Oxford, it's great. Four times I was there in
12 the war -- during the war to see a girl by the name
13 of Jo Oath (phonetic spelling). Which was -- and
14 she was from Ireland. And but I used to go -- I
15 used to go to London frequently. And I used to
16 stop in and the grown now, it was lunch, dinner,
17 fifty cents. And they had the Jewels Club
18 (phonetic spelling) which I spent a lot of time in
19 London, fifty cents for the night, two men to a
20 room. And down below they had a place where you
21 could get waffles and snacks at night. I went to
22 movies. I -- you wouldn't believe, my wife was sick
23 and tired -- I -- Names of big pictures I went to
24 see. Because she said out of all those it was a

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2

great place to kill time and to -- you know, get
your mind at some place else, other than the war.

4

And the movies were really a big help.

5

But I was going to -- traveling to Swithsen,

6

Belgrade, Oxford, and Redding, I had a girl -- a

7

girl I knew there and Lieutenant Gibbons (phonetic

8

spelling) he was -- there was a nurse the 304 I

9

think was there. And I was in London quite

10

frequently. On three -- three day passes and seven

11

day passes.

12

And when I was asked about this

13

job, one of the things I said, if I'm going to be

14

the Executive -- no, I was going to be the

15

assistant mess officer, would that affect my --

16

my --

17

Q. Free time?

18

A. -- free time. That's the main

19

thing that would bother me, you know? Can I still

20

take leaves? But anyway, that's a consequence I

21

think I wound up as a first lieutenant because most

22

of the guys -- a lot of the guys I went overseas

23

with is first -- as flight officers -- were still

24

flight officers and I forget how many second

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lieutenants they made. But we only had a couple first Lieutenants and the captain was the guy that was in charge of the whole group. And in Varsity we lost Major Brown (phonetic spelling), he was the group Fire officer, and so our man went up there to cover his job and some of us took over the 436, which I was in. And I was a backup. I just found out recently -- because I was trying to figure out why don't I get first lieutenant? I didn't know why ever until fifty years later I was talking to this guy Dick Levy (phonetic spelling) who was the guy who was our -- our guy. And he said no, I made you the backup man. And I didn't know that for fifty years.

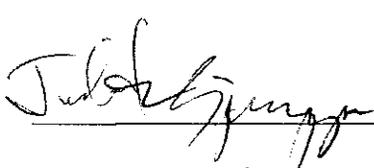
MR. RUSSERT: Okay. Well, thank you very much for your interview.

MR. CASEY: Yeah.

(The interview concluded)

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2 This is a transcription of the audio
3 provided to us. It is completed to the best of our
4 skill and ability. The transcript consists of
5 pages 1 through 45 inclusive.

6  5/2/2006

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8 Judith Spriggs

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