

Walter Flynn
Narrator

Wayne Clark and Mike Russert
Interviewers

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WC: For the record, please state your full name and date of birth.

RB: November 30, 1920

WC: Where were you born?

RB: East Greenwich, New York

WC: What was your educational background prior to entering service?

WF: I just had a high school education.

WC: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

WF: I was sitting on a couch in my future mother-in-law's house with my girlfriend. It was a Sunday afternoon. We were listening to the news on the radio. That was all you could hear on any station.

WC: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was at the time?

WF: Well, some place in Hawaii. I had never heard of it.

WC: What was your reaction when you heard this news?

WF: I said "What's going to happen to us?" I knew we would have to be drafted or enlist.

WC: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

WF: I enlisted because I didn't want to be a ground pounder. I thought I'd like to fly.

WC: Have you ever flown before?

WF: Just as a passenger.

WC: When did you enlist?

WF: April 1942.

WC: Where did you go for your basic training?

WF: I went to Fort Dix, New Jersey. We had our basic there. Then we went down to Miami Beach, stayed in a hotel and drilled morning, noon and night . It was so hot there drilling, we would pray that it would rain. From there I was sent to Tyndall Field. Tyndall Field was more part of basic training.

WC: Where was Tyndall field?

WF: Panama City Florida. There I pulled KP and guard duty. Finally I was sent to maximum field for classification training to decide whether I was going to go to pilot school, bombardier or navigator school. I selected to go to pilot school but I was sent home on a 45 day leave until the class started. My class started around September so I was probably home most of the month of August. In September I reported to University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. There was a training field there. That's where I had my primary training.

WC: Did you have a ground school first?

WF: Well, it was all mixed in. You'd fly in the morning, go to ground school in the afternoon or vice versa. It was all blended in together.

WC: What type of aircraft did you fly?

WF: Stearman PT-17s. It was a bi-plane, a tail dragger.

WC: How did you like the Stearman?

WF: I liked it.

WC: How long were you there?

WF: I would say probably two and a half months, maybe 10 weeks. There I soloed the Stearman. I had eight hours shared with the instructor. I didn't think I was ready for solo but the instructor took us over to another auxiliary field. We landed there and he climbed out. I started climbing out and he said, "No. You stay there. You're going to fly." So I flew. After primary, we went to Newport, Arkansas for basic. That was in the BT-13. We use to call it the "Vultee Vibrator".

WC: Why?

WF: I don't know [Chuckle]. Probably because most of it was plywood. We were there for 10 weeks, completed some more phases of our training which was a little more advanced, a little bit of formation flying, cross county, night flying and night navigation. From there we went to Craig Field in Selma, Alabama where we flew the T-6. Again, a little more advanced. There we got gunnery, cross county, night flying.

WC: What did you think of the T-6? Quite a difference between that and the Stearman or the Vultee.

WF: It was a much better airplane. It was North American. It was a good airplane. Towards the end of our advance training, we got ten hours in the P-40. One of our pilots was a real gung-ho pilot. He was the first to do everything. He maxed all the tests. He was the first to fly the P-40 and he was the first to get killed in the P-40. It happened while we were there in advanced [training]. We finally got though, graduated and got our commission and our wings at Craig Field.

After Craig [Field], we got our leave to go home. I went home and in that time I got married.

WC: What was this time-frame?

WF: I got married in May of 1943 while I was on leave. Then I reported for combat training on the P-40. That was at Pinellas Army Airfield in St. Petersburg, Florida. There we put in about sixty hours training, getting us ready for combat. That was probably another six to eight weeks there. Then we got our orders, overseas orders, to go to Miami Beach. I sent my wife home and we sat around just waiting for orders.

Finally the orders came. They flew us in a C-47 down to Natal, Brazil. There we waited for weather and an aircraft. The aircraft that flew us across the South Atlantic was a B-24, a converted B-24 with bucket seats. Our flight was uneventful but one of the flights before us, a B-24, lost one engine and then lost another and finally everybody on board had to throw away all their equipment but finally made it to Dakar. From Dakar, we flew up the coast of Africa in a

C-47 gradually working our way toward Algiers. There were about 30 of us P-40 pilots. We were supposed to go to Benghazi, which is in North Africa, and from there we were going to fly P-40s with the Ninth Fighters Command but when we got to Algiers, one of the fellows with us had been an instructor in the [United] States in the Southeast training command and he met a colonel in the latrine. The colonel recognized him and said, "Jim, what are you doing?" Jim replied, "Well, I'm with a group of pilots, we're going to the Ninth Fighter command in Benghazi." The colonel said, "Oh, I don't think so." Jim said, "Why not?" The colonel said, "Well, they've been deployed back to England." Jim said, "What's going to happen with us?" The colonel said there were three P-38 groups that need pilots and would you guys like to fly P-38s. We never had any thought that we'd get to fly a P-38 because we were training P-40s. We never had any multi engine time.

They split us up into three groups and luckily I wound up with the 27th squadron of the first fighter group. The first fighter group was formed in WWI in 1917 with men like Rickenbacker with the 94th Hat in the Ring Squadron, Frank Luke who was with the 27th Squadron, and the 71st Squadron which had once been called the 17th. Being with a unit like the 27th Squadron was a good factor in my surviving the war.

WC: Why?

WF: You got to fly with these people and there was such a camaraderie there. On days we couldn't fly because of the weather, we would fly locally. It got so that you would fly with any leading. You get with a unit and it's just like a family. That's the way we felt about each other. To get back to my multi engine time, we had to read up on all the idiosyncrasies of the P-38. We got our checkout by riding piggyback. Piggyback is a P-38 where they took out the radio and the armour plate, and with a backpack you could sit up there behind the pilot and watch him fly. I had this flight where I sat piggyback behind the pilot and he climbs out and says it all yours. I was about to fly a multi engine. I hadn't had any bit of stick time so I flew it.

WC: Did he sit behind you or were you by yourself?

WF: After he climbed out I was by myself. I had another good friend, Frank Lawson, who got checked out by the pilot standing on the wing. Frank is in the pilot seat and he's telling him what to do. But then he gets off the wing and Frank closes the canopy and away he goes. It was a baptism of fire.

WC: How would you compare your 38 to the P-40?

WF: The 38 was like a Cadillac. You had this twin engine, 1500 horse power in each. It was a lot smoother and you had the fire power right in the nose, 450s and the 20 millimeter, so you didn't have to worry about deflection. With guns in the wings they're separated and converge at a point and you had to figure that lead. The 38 was much better for fire power.

Finally I had to fly missions. I had about ten hours when I flew my first mission. We used to have four flights-red, white, blue and green. Each squadron was made up of four flights. We flew what they call "Finger-four" formation. My first mission I was red two. My flight leader was maybe three or four years older than I was. He called me son and said whatever you see, whatever happens, don't worry about it. Just stay out of my way.

We took off with one belly tank and a full complement of gas on the main tanks. Normally, when you would get to about a thousand feet or so, you'd switch to the belly tank and use that until you got to the target area. If you didn't check your tanks, sometimes the fuel from the mains would siphon out through the belly tank through the vent. Somebody on your wing would see it and ask if you were taking a leak or venting fuel. My job was to stay with Red Two on his wing. It was either full throttle or throttle all the way off but I stayed on his wing. I didn't see anything except his aircraft, but then two 109s made a head on pass at us. My leader is flying and firing at them. Here I am. A brand new pilot in a P-38 and I'd never seen a P-38 fire its guns. Here comes these pieces off the side of his airplane and I finally realized it's the shells coming off. We got through the target area. That time we were escorting B-26s to airfields and places to bomb around Naples, prior to the Salerno invasion. We get the bombers headed back home when Red One calls and says squadron, let's have a fuel check. I had to look at my gauge because when we got into action we had to drop our belly tanks unfortunately. I told Red One I don't have much fuel. He said ok, take it easy son. He sent the rest of the squadron ahead and he stayed with me and told me exactly what throttle settings to use. He got me into Sicily with ten gallons of fuel left. In a P-38, each engine burns thirty gallons per hour. Well I made it. That was the first mission. When we departed, we were stationed in Matruh. We didn't go back to Matruh. We went to Sicily because we were going to cover the invasion of Salerno. I proceeded to fly missions and get a little more experience.

WC: In Salerno, did you do close combat support?

WF: We flew high cover. They had three levels of cover. Sometimes we would have one belly tank and one bomb and after we patrolled for our hour, the controller on a ship in the water would give us a target to go to inland. These targets we would dive bomb. The equipment at that time for our bomb site was a reticle, a circle with a dot on our windshield. That was used for firing your guns. We would dive bomb by diving down toward our target and when we got to about three thousand feet we would pull up and when the reticle would pass the target we'd

drop the bomb. The first time I happen to be toward the end of the bomb run, I looked down and 11 out of the 12 bombs hit the railroad yards. They were burning pretty good.

Most of my missions were bomb risk, very rarely dive bombing. At that time we were with the 12th Air Force or tactical fighters. As the war progressed, they had a lot more targets to take care of, and we became part of the strategic air force or the 15th. Then we started escorting B-17s and B-24s and going longer distances. We were still taking off from Matruh, Africa.

One of the real long missions was to Greece escorting B-24s. We took off from Matruh, landed in Sicily to refuel, and then escorted the bombers to Greece. I can remember on that mission seeing a lot of B-24s go down from anti-aircraft fire. When they were on a bomb run they were very vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire and we couldn't do anything about that. When you see the wings of a B-24 crumble, we would try to count the shoots. Sometimes there were nine and sometimes you didn't see any. That's what war is all about.

I continued to fly missions and gain some experience. Eventually I became flight leader. With more experience, flight leaders would rotate with squadron lead, and squadrons would rotate with group lead. Toward the last of my missions, sometimes I would have squadron lead and there would be forty eight B-38s up there.

WC: Was your aircraft ever hit by flak at all?

WF: Yes. Once on a mission escorting B-17s to a target in Ancona, on the Adriatic coast of Italy. We took off from Matruh and had to fly all the way Northeast across Italy to rendezvous with the bombers. We could see fighters taking off on the ground to intercept us. We rendezvoused the bombers at just about target time. What we would do if the enemy attacked us trying to get to the bombers, somebody would call them in, meanwhile your heads on a swivel checking everything around you, two of us would weave across, the other two would weave a little later so actually it was a constant weave, looking all around, trying to pick an enemy. We used to have a procedure when we saw an enemy coming in we would wing at the right time. Depending on which side they were on they would call a brake either right or left. We still had our belly tanks on, for some reason or other, somebody called a wrong break, and they called the wrong squadron. We were pet dog squadron and I happened to be flight lead at that time and all of a sudden I see these tracers coming in on my right boom. I said, "Pet Dog brake left now!" We broke left and dropped tanks at the same time. I had taken a lot of bullets into my right boom so I continued down, split ass toward the ground. On the way down I fettered up the engine and got it so I was able to fly on a single engine. There was a scattered cloud about twelve hundred feet and I figured I fly up under the cloud. At that altitude I headed out toward the coastline, near Ancona out to the Adriatic. As I came across Ancona, it was heavily defended

with anti aircraft artillery, like 88 mil or bigger than that. I could see them shoot at me. I could see the flash. Whenever I saw the flash, I would kick right rudder and skid it. They were tracking you on a straight line. By skidding, I was able to escape the flak. I finally got down on the deck heading back down the coast of Italy toward the bomb line, which is where our friendly forces were. I was following another aircraft and I wasn't sure whether it was one of ours or a German so I thought I would try to sneak up on him. On the other hand he may get a show at me. But finally they called me up and told me that was one of ours. I said ok, lead me to a strip. So they took me in and I landed. Walked away from it.

Spent the night with some guys I knew from flight school that were flying close support aircraft for ground troops. The next day I got a ride back to my unit in a B-26 to continue the war.

WC: Did you fly the same plane all the time?

WF: Yes, but this day I had somebody else's.

WC: Did you ever name your planes or anything like that?

WF: I named it after my wife, Eleanor.

WC: You talked about a boom, what do you mean by that?

WF: [Points to a picture of an aircraft]. The bullets went into the right boom. These are liquid cooled engines. When the cool up line goes, that engine is going to get very hot and all you can do is shut it off.

WC: You mentioned here in the form that you filled out that sometimes your equipment was inadequate, other times superior.

WF: For pure flying equipment, it was superior to what the enemy had. As far as our instruments for flying instruments or instruments for navigation, they were inadequate. For navigation, it was time and distance dead reckoning. ??What your air speed is. For instruments all we had is a needle, ball and airspeed. That's about all we had. Today they have much more equipment for navigation and for instrument flying.

WC: You received the Distinguished Flying Cross. Can you talk about that?

WF: One day we had a maximum effort to try to knock out the Ploiesti oil fields because the oil and fuel is part of war. They tried various methods. They had Rogers' Rangers that went on the

deck of B-24s and lost a lot of the equipment and men. They would put up these maximum efforts where you'd probably have hundreds of bombers in the sky and hundreds of fighters, all going to Ploiesti. This one day the target was Ploiesti and I happened to be leading a squadron and it was our squadron's turn to lead the group. Nothing eventful happened. We were climbing to altitude. The weather was pretty bad so we were VFR on top [of the clouds]. VFR means Visual flight rules, you can see. Instrument flight rules are used when you're in the clouds and you can't see and you have to navigate by aircraft instruments.

Most of the bomb groups had turned back because of the weather and all the other fighter groups had turned back. I was still leading, I was VFR on top, had plenty of fuel, and had no enemy action. I decided to keep going. I saw a hole in the clouds and through the hole I could see the Danube River. I saw exactly where I was because the river made a right angle bend. I made a slight correction in my course setting. In twenty minutes we had picked up the whole bomb group that stayed there so we proceeded to help.

WC: Did you know they were out there?

WF: I knew if somebody can get there, to the target area, and I knew where I had to go to rendezvous, so I just kept going with the squadron of forty eight P-38s with me. Sure enough we found this whole bomb group getting shot up pretty good. They lost six bombers before we got there. We got them all back safely and only lost one pilot. We lost the airplane but he ditched in the Adriatic and air-sea rescue picked him up. That was a good mission for us but not for the 15th Air Force because they didn't have any more luck in knocking out the oil fields in Ploiesti. Once they did get Ploiesti knocked out, then the war was almost over. Without the oil, they [the enemy] couldn't fuel their airplanes, their tanks, their trucks. It was a turning point in the war.

WC: Is there any one mission that stands out more than others that you haven't told us about?

WF: [Chuckle] The first one, you're so busy and flight formation, it comes to you after a while but we didn't have much of that training before we got overseas. We didn't have much instrument training either. A few missions that stick in my mind like the first mission were the 21st mission which happened to be on the 21st of November. That was when I had an engine shot out and of course the mission to Ploiesti. A lot of them, they used to call them Milk Runs.

WC: How many missions did you fly all total?

WF: Fifty one. That includes some over the Alps. We went from Foggia where we were based towards the latter part of the war. When we went to Germany, we got a double credit for that. In the Mediterranean theatre, we rotated. You had to complete fifty missions to rotate, where as in England, after twenty five, they could be rotated. I was sent home on a second group of

pilots that were sent home after combat to have thirty days at home and then come back over and fly some more combat. I came back to Foggia and my unit had just come back from an invasion of southern France. We had a new squadron commander. We were met at the Post of Naples by General [Inker]. The first group did so much bitching about having to go back. They were a sorry mess, I was embarrassed to with them. He met us and he said I realize this is pretty crappy deal. You've been to combat and then you're back home state side and then you have to come back and combat. It's war, right? He said I'll give you a choice. You can go back home or you can stay and fly more combat, it's up to you, it's your decision. It'll take thirty days to get the ship made up so you can go back to state side. In the meantime, you can stay with your units. So, I went back to the unit and we had a new CO, Major [Pulp]. The guys had flown the southern France invasion and had gotten a lot of time, a lot of missions, but not much action. It cost a couple pilots an accident. So when I got to the squadron, I was greeted by Major [Pulp] and [Tom Rufello], who was a good friend of mine. He had been operations officer. Major [Pulp] says, "Flynn, what are you going to do?" I said I don't know. I was married, that was another factor. He asked, "How would you like to fly some more? I'll put you in for a promotion and make you deputy squadron commander." I said "How long do I have to think about this?" He said, "Take your time." I went over to the tent and said down and said to myself, "Flynn, I think you've used up all your luck." I went back and said, "Major, this is a great deal. It sounds good but I'm going home." I think that was probably a good decision because a lot of guys that went out got it on their first mission. A lot of guys had accidents. I felt it was a good deal to go back home.

WC: Once you went back home, were you discharged or did you stay in the service?

WF: I was first sent to Cochran field in Macon, Georgia. They wanted us to be flight instructors. I think it was in a bamboo bomber. My friend and I were a little dissatisfied so we wrote letters. We thought with our experience as multi engine fighter pilots we were begin wasted. Finally, they agreed and shipped us to Naples, Florida where we flew P-39s and P-63s as target aircraft for B-17 gunners. Initially they would fire a gun camera. We would make passes and let them fire at us with the gun camera to train the gunners how to track the aircraft. Then we got these armor plated p-63s. They were orange with a ¼ inch steel plate on vulnerable parts of the aircraft. They fired thirty caliber plastic bullets at us. That was sort of fun.

Finally, we got a chance to get out and we got out. Went back home and started settling down. I didn't fly for about eleven years. This friend of mine, who was an automobile dealer, had his own aircraft. He had a Beech Bonanza at an airport in East Greenbush. One day after church, I took my daughter Eileen down. She was about three years old. I was talking to a fellow and he said come on, I'll take you for a ride. So he took us for a ride and I got the bug back again. I used to see these army aircraft flying over. I knew a friend that was a lieutenant colonel in the

AAA in Albany. I called him and asked him who owned those aircraft. He said they were part of the National Guard. I said how do I get to fly them? He said I'll give you the name of a colonel and he can tell you. I called the colonel and he said we have one opening in Glens Falls with a German battalion. So I went up to Glens Falls and they swore me in. I couldn't start flying until I had been checked out and had federal recognition as a pilot. I finally got that and I was flying [unclear], occasionally, I got a Beaver to fly. Meanwhile I had new qualifications for my rank as a captain in artillery. I had to start the education process by doing sub courses at home. I completed them in ten months. You've heard of ROPA which is Retired Officers Personnel Act. So many years of grade you had to get promoted. So I had to start more courses. One thing led to another and I decided I should get some refresher training in the aircraft so I applied for instrument school. I went to Harbor Field in Baltimore, Maryland and completed a course of instruments there. Anytime there was a chance for me to go to school, I would apply for it. I finally got my qualification in artillery, and continued to fly with the [National] Guard. I spent twenty three years with the guard.

WC: Did you fly any other type of aircraft in the Guard?

WF: I flew the Beaver, the Bell Helicopter

WC: So you went to rotary wing school also?

WF: Yes, I went to Texas, Fort Walters. I went there for rotary wing training. We finally got Hueys. I checked out locally the Huey. They would have a month's school. We would take leave from our jobs and spend the month flying trainings. Finally I qualified the Huey. As part of the instrument training once a year you had to take your instrument flight check written test. I wound up being an instrument instructor in a Huey. That was my last assignment.

WC: You left the Guard in 1908?

WF: 1980, yes. When I reached the age of sixty.

WC: You wanted to show us some photographs that you brought in?

WF: [Shows picture] This is the 27th Squadron of the First Fighter Group, January 1944 in Foggia, Italy. I am the first one on the bottom.

WF: [Shows picture] This is the G6 which I flew in advanced training. It happens to be out at the air force museum in Ohio.

WF: [Shows Picture] This is what they call a hot pilot scarf, the white scarf. Everybody had to have them. This picture was taken in 1944 in Italy.

WF: [Shows picture] This is yours truly as an aviation cadet.

WC: Do you want to hold up your Jacket and tell us a little bit about that?

WF: Do you want me to try it on?

WC: Sure! Will it still fit?

WF: No [chuckle]. [Puts arm into sleeve] What's inside here? These are gloves that the British gave us. We used to fly these P-38s at high altitude with no heater and the temperature got pretty low. I can't zip it. I weighed one hundred and forty one pounds at that time.

WC: Is there anything on the back of it?

WF: No

WC: Can you hold the gloves up?

WF: These are a story in itself. They gave us these and the English knee length zipper boots, fleece lined. They were trying to keep us warm at high altitude. It didn't work. We froze and had to keep moving our hands and feet. Finally we got baby blue flying suits, two piece that would hook together with an electric cord. You had boots you'd insert inside your main boots and they were hooked to the pants. You had a plug in there with a rheostat and you could turn the heat up. It really made it much nicer to fly.

WC: You brought a parachute. How did you get to keep that?

WF: That was a goof off. WE were flying down in Naples, Florida driving gunnery targets for the B-17 gunners. We had straight 63s down there with no armor plate on them. The P-63 was an advanced version of the P-39. It had a bigger engine, better flying. This friend of mine came in to fly operations. He said we have two 63s out there, do you want to go fly them? I said yes, ok, I'll fly your wing. This guy was a frustrated flight instructor. He had never been to combat. He was really gung-ho. He really loved to fly, in fact he sued to take the T-6 out and get it up to altitude and practice doing a roll at take off speed. One day he came to me and said, Walt, I'm going to slow roll a T-6 on take off. I said you're nuts. Sure enough he did it and lived through it.

To get back to this day when we were both flying the P63s, it was a typical Florida after noon with a lot of cumulus clouds. He's flying my wing. We take off and climb to about twelve thousand feet and do a loop. We do a couple more. The last loop up we go into a big old climbing turn and at that point I lost my horizon. I wound up in a spin upside down, tumbling. That was one of the traits of the P-39 and P-63 because of the position of the engine. The engine was quite a ways back, almost at midships. So there I was in an adverted spin tumbling at about eleven thousand feet. At fifty-five hundred feet I am still spinning upside down so I decided to get out. I pulled the release on the door and the door would not come open. So then I got my feet against the left side of the aircraft and pushed and held the door handle. I came out. The chute opened. My wife at that time was pregnant with Bob, my oldest son, and they couldn't get to me in the everglades. They kept dropping me notes from an airplane. When they dropped the note the wind would blow and here I am chasing the note. Meanwhile I had taken the parachute and cut everything off except the shroud lines to the parachute so when I stopped I spread it out and they could keep track of me that way. So finally I get this note and it says hold your position, there's a guy on horseback coming in. So sure enough, here comes a guy on horseback. They got me to the ambulance and I didn't realize I sprained my ankle. When I hit the ground there was a small pine tree and I put my foot down so I didn't get impaled on the top of the pine tree. They kept me for observation overnight. After I was back at base, I called my wife and told what happened.

WC: After you left service, did you make use of the GI bill at all?

WF: I started night school and I really didn't persue it that much.

WC: Did you ever use the 52-20 club?

WF: Yes, that's where you got twenty dollars a week, but I went back to my job. I didn't really want to be an airline pilot. At that time, they were starting at about \$250 per month. I opted not to do that.

WC: Did you ever join any veteran organizations?

WF: Yes, I joined the reserves but they had no facility around here. You had to go down to Stuart Field or something like that so I couldn't pursue that.

WC: Did you stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

WF: Oh sure. We have reunions every two years. In fact I am going to a reunion in September but our numbers are diminishing due to old age and illnesses.

My unit, the 27th squadron, is still flying along with the 94th and 71st. They are part of the first tactical fighter wing stationed at Langley. They had been flying the F-15 Eagle. They had been rotating with one squadron over in the Far East. It is a fourteen hour flight for them but that means three midair refuelings. Right now they are the newest recipient of the F-22, the Raptor, which is the brand new fighter plane. The 27th was the first one to get it. There's always been a competition between the 27th, 94th and 71st. In fact overseas when we came back from a mission or departed for one formation was critical. The crew chiefs on the ground were always proud of their squadron so we would try to form up with the best formation. Then coming back when we were coming in to land, we had the four flights echelon right and stack down just to give the last flight enough room above the ground. We would come in at the end of the runway and peel up and see how quick we could land.

Sometimes there would be sixteen, sometimes there would be a few missing. Part of the Air Force *is* show. You're part of a unit that you think is the best and you try to look like you're the best. That's how we would peel off when we came back from a mission.

WC: I have a couple of questions that I didn't ask you earlier. Did you ever have any confirmed kills?

WF: No, I didn't, but I had some damage which you can't claim. One of my wing men said I would claim it for you but it was over and done with, ipso facto. The important thing was doing the job and looking out for myself. My major victory was that I survived.

WC: Did you ever encounter jets?

WF: The ME 262s. Once in a while we would see them. They wouldn't stick around long. One P38 shot one down once. [Name unclear] didn't pursue that because he wanted bombers. If he had pursued jet aircraft innovation, I don't think it would have made a difference.

WC: Were you still in when the war ended or were you out by then?

WF: October, 1945. Yes, I was still in. I was in Naples, Florida when victory in Europe was celebrated. A few short months after was victory in Japan.

WC: Were they ever training you to go to Japan?

WF: No but if the war stayed long enough we might have assigned to something like that. A lot of people volunteered for another tour or to go to Japan.

I didn't tell you about one time when we came back from the invasion of Salerno when they had the beach at Anzio. We were still in Matruh. We got an assignment to go to Alexandria, Near

Cairo. The British had some fleet there. They were trying to secure these islands around the Dodecanese Islands. Our assignment was to help the British in that operation. We landed just about dusk at a field called [Ambuk 3], which is near Alexandria, Egypt. It was such mass confusion. There was no real landing strip there. They has a search light at each end of the runway shining straight up. We finally got down but there's a story where one P38 taxied right through a hut of some natives there. I don't know how true that is.

Our mission there was to go patrol the Dodecanese Islands to help the British. We are in the desert and it is sand. To get the aircraft off, we had to take the whole squadron abreast! If you took one or two planes off it raised so much dust that nobody else could get off the ground. We were there a couple of weeks. I only got one mission in. We got off and patrolled and we landed at Cypress due to weather and lack of fuel. That was like a resort in The States. A paved runway, Taxi came out to meet us, spent the night in the bar, it was great. Then we had to go back to that desert again. If you didn't fly and the wind came up, there was nothing to do read or sit in your bunk. If you reading, before you turn one page, the sand. If you go thru the tail line with your cup, you'd have sand in your cup. The wind was so hard and so much dust, we were glad to get out of there. That did damage to the aircraft too. They had to practically disassemble it to clean everything.

WC: Did you ever get to see any USO shows?

WF: Yes. They had a club in Foggia and we used to go down there.

WC: Did you ever have and named entertainers that you saw?

WF: Not really.

WC: How do you think your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?

WF: It had an extreme effect. I don't know where I would have wound up if I had just been at my job. I don't really know but the war gave me a chance to do things I would never do. Because of the war and the schools I went to, I got a college degree without going to college. For every position in the military there is an MOS. Each MOS satisfies some educational requirement. I was a pilot, flight instructor, instruments instructor, rotary aircraft [unclear]. I got a lot of college points for that. The last school I went to in the military was command general staff College. I got thirty upper level college credits for that. With all those schools I got a college degree in liberal arts. Also, for the years in the military I was entitled to a pension. The pension comes out very nicely.

WC: Thank you very much for the interview.

