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Q: When you joined the Army Air Corps on June 17, 1942, where did you go for basic training and what was it like?

EG: Basic training was in southern Alabama [Napier Field probably]. The Air Corps was part of the Army at that time so we were taught Army rules—how to march and respond to orders. After basic, I was sent to radio operator school in central Florida for three months where I was briefly assigned to a flying group. At that time, I was accepted into Officer Candidate School at the University of Florida. In 1943, about a year after being inducted into the Army Air Corps, I was commissioned.

Q: What did you do in Officer Candidate School?

EG: It was a three-month program for enlisted personnel being trained to become officers. The program taught us the structure of the services, and chains of command, and the responsibilities of Junior Officers. There was an emphasis on history and what had happened from the time Pearl Harbor was bombed until the present. We had one course on military strategy, and courses on the geography and history of the European Theatre, the mainland areas of the Pacific Theatre, as well as the Pacific islands. We were preparing to be assigned to either theatre. My first assignment was at an air depot in Gadsden, Alabama, where I was a base adjutant.

Q: What were your duties?

EG: I was taking orders from my commanding officer, the colonel. On a daily basis, I was preparing orders for the colonel to sign, developing a calendar of events for the base, and completing questionnaires from headquarters. It was an administrative position.

Q: Did you attend any further schooling or job training after OCS?

EG: No, my work after I was commissioned was all in the field.

Q: During your four-year term, you were stationed in the Pacific. Were you glad to have been assigned there?

EG: I certainly didn't know what I was getting into in the Pacific. I had been stationed in the states for quite awhile in the Air Service Command at Mobile, Alabama, as an administrative officer for the commanding general. Again, I was preparing orders and reports. Then I was transferred to Hickam Air Field in Oahu, on the Hawaiian Islands. My assignment there was with an Air Corps Unit which was transferred to the US Army's 24th Corps—a combined group of battalions, army personnel, and air corps personnel. I was assigned as assistant to the commanding general and had very similar responsibilities to other assignments. The level of responsibility was higher and there were more people involved but all of these assignments were administrative. I had been editor of my college newspaper, and commanding officers were always looking for assistants who could write clearly and explain their instructions and expectations accurately. My assignment became largely communication.

Q: Who was your commanding officer?

EG: The one I remember the most was Commander Cheeves of the 24th Corps. The 24th went first to Okinawa after the battles had started there, and then, after the Japanese surrendered on August 15, 1945, the 24th was assigned to go to the Japanese island of Kikaijima. We had left Buckner Bay on Okinawa on a ship headed for Japan when Harry Truman dropped the two atomic bombs and the Japanese surrendered. The 24th was rerouted to Korea and became the occupation force for South Korea.

Q: When you traveled to Japan, did it feel odd to be in such a different country?

EG: We didn't land in Japan, but while we were in the occupation force in Korea, I was occasionally flown to Japan for communication with occupation forces in Japan. It was such a different culture.

About twenty years later, my wife and I had an exchange student from Japan who was going to the Rome Free Academy. His attitude was much different from the attitude of the Japanese I met in 1945 and early 1946. Yoshiro Goto was his name. He was a very interesting young man. After his time with us, he attended college in Japan. He still writes to us occasionally about his experiences at Rome Free Academy.

The Japanese had held Korea under significant suppression and they had banned the use of their native Korean language and of the English language, requiring all of Korea occupied by Japan to speak Japanese. The only exceptions were members of the underground Presbyterian Church. Dr. Horace Underwood, who graduated from Hamilton College and whose sons were my friends there while I was at Colgate, had been in charge of the Presbyterian Missionaries in Korea. As a result, he was sent to South Korea by the State Department to assist in finding the locations of underground churches. We worked together. He and I traveled through all of South Korea looking for these underground churches. My

assignment was to establish a network of English speaking Koreans who could be trusted during that period of occupation, men who were not Japanese spies or terrorists. Dr. Underwood and I went from Incheon to Seoul and down to Busan, locating English speaking Koreans and establishing a radio network and a weekly English newspaper. We found a substantial number of trustworthy English speaking Koreans that way. Dr. Underwood was very effective in helping the American troops establish these networks.

Q: Did it take long to set up the network?

EG: Yes. I was in Korea from September of 1945 until April of 1946 and most of my time was spent establishing those networks with Dr. Underwood. That was my major assignment. The Army, the Air Corps and the State Department coordinated in this initiative in the portions of the Pacific that the Japanese had occupied.

Q: Did you ever suspect that an English speaking Korean was a spy?

EG: I wasn't in intelligence, but from my knowledge, no. We never had an incident where one of our network members was identified as a spy. There was concern about the Japanese having spies who remained in Korea but I was never involved in that threat materializing.

Q: Were you ever under any enemy fire?

EG: In Okinawa, we did get shot at occasionally by snipers. The Battle of Okinawa didn't end until early August and I was there for about three months before it ended. American troops had really pushed the Japanese back so the Japanese army was no longer very effective. The snipers still tried to disrupt us but fortunately they weren't all that accurate.

Q: Were there any casualties from the snipers?

EG: The unit that I was with didn't have casualties but other units did. The battle had started in April and the US Army had taken control by the end of May. My unit arrived in mid May. So, by June and July active warfare was winding down. Threats were just snipers, not combat troops. Then, by mid-August, the Japanese surrendered.

Q: Did you get any decorations or medals?

EG: I got one Battlestar for Okinawa, a Victory medal and an Army Commendation medal.

Q: What does it take to get those medals?

EG: For the Battlestar, you had to be in Okinawa during the months that battle was still going on. The Commendation medal was for my service in Korea. The Victory medal was given to everyone who had served in the Pacific Theatre at the time that the Japanese surrendered. Those medals were not indications of heroism but represented months of service in the theatre.

Q: What was your reaction when President Truman dropped the bombs?

EG: As I said, we were headed for the Japanese Islands and were scheduled to invade Kikaijima. I wouldn't have been in the first unit to land because I traveled with the General behind the invasion lines. But, we found out after the Japanese surrendered that our Intelligence Service had discovered that there were two more enemy divisions on Kikaijima than early intelligence had reported. The 24th Corps Units would have had severe casualties from being extremely outnumbered. The feeling among the troops in the Pacific was relief, though we regretted the loss of life in Japan. Just as with the world issues we face now with War on Terrorism, you have to balance the risks and losses. As it turns out, the Japanese would have lost many more people if the war had continued, both military and civilian lives.

Q: When you left the service, were you discharged?

EG: No, officers were given a leave of absence. Officers remained technically under the control of the war department, released from active duty but subject to recall. I was still in the reserves for another four and a half years while I studied at Cornell Law School. I also spent two summers at West Point studying the transition of the Air Corps from the Army to the Air Force.

Q: What was it like at West Point?

EG: It was certainly different from law school [laughing]. I was impressed. I thought the faculty members were very committed and the programs were effective. It was an interesting experience.

Q: Did you use the Montgomery Bill or your education?

EG: Yes, the GI Bill of Rights paid part of my tuition at Cornell Law School.

Q: Was there anyone other than General Cheeves that stood out?

EG: Colonel Orland was my first commander after I was commissioned. He was old school. He made the junior officers march to his tune. He was strict but kind. But General Cheeves was the commander I had worked most closely with and for the longest period of time in Hawaii, Okinawa, and then Korea.

Q: What was your reaction to Pearl Harbor?

EG: I was a senior at Colgate and was walking down Broad Street on a Sunday afternoon in December of 1941. There were three or four of us walking towards Hamilton College and a student came running out of a fraternity house yelling that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and we were going to go to war. That was a shock for all of us. We were deeply engrossed in our senior year of college, studying for our final exams, and writing term papers. But, almost ninety percent of my class at Colgate enlisted or was drafted, (including Andy Rooney who had been drafted in July or August of 1941 before he finished his senior year). I

enlisted because I was under draft age. I just felt like it was my duty to help my classmates and my fellow citizens win the war. At that point in time, I didn't know if I would be assigned to the states, the European Theatre, or the Pacific Theatre. It was my patriotic duty: that was the prevailing feeling at that time. It was the duty of service that we all owed to our country.

Q: And did that feeling continue throughout your time in the service?

EG: My experiences during the war were interesting. They weren't heroic but they were interesting—the assignments I had, the people I met, the locations where I was stationed. We were all committed to making certain that the war would go on in Europe until the Nazis surrendered, and in the Pacific until the Japanese surrendered. Ninety-nine and one-half percent of the American people shared that view. We were victims of an attack. The military was committed and the people at home were committed, The civilians worked at factories performing jobs that were supportive of the military missions.

Q: Did you have any family members who served with you?

EG: No. I didn't have any brothers and my sister didn't enter the service. My father was an immigrant from Wales and most of my cousins still lived in Wales. They served with the British army in Europe but I didn't know them well and we didn't share experiences.

Q: Did you keep up on news in London like the V-2 rocket? Were you scared for them?

EG: Yes, and yes.

Q: Did you ever fear that Germany was going to take over Britain?

EG: I am an optimist and in my mind I was quite certain that the British would survive but, there were reasons to question that theory. The war in Europe was more complicated than the war in the Pacific. The strategies were more complicated and the desired outcomes were less clear.

Q: Did you travel to Okinawa by boat or plane?

EG: We traveled by boat during the war but after the Japanese surrendered, I would occasionally fly from Seoul, Korea, to the American air bases in Japan.

Q: Before the Japanese surrendered, were you worried about Japanese submarines?

EG: The ships I was on were never threatened by a submarine. The Hawaiian Islands were protected and were not in danger of submarine attacks in 1944, but as we approached Okinawa, there was the possibility that the Japanese subs would attack the American ships there.

Q: Was there anyone you admired the most who you served with?

EG: I admired and respected all of the troops in combat because they were putting their lives at stake and protecting us, whether the troops were in Europe in the Battle of the Bulge or other battles, or in the Pacific in Okinawa or Guam.

Q: How long did it take you to achieve the rank of major?

EG: I enlisted in June of 1942 and was commissioned in June of 1943 and made major in either August or September of 1945, so I took two years and a couple of months to go from 2nd Lieutenant to Major.

Q: What did it take to get you all the way to major?

EG: Hard work, doing your duty, following your commander's orders, and having an interest in the missions that you were assigned to perform.

Q: What did you do after the war?

EG: I went to Cornell Law School for three years and then practiced law in Lockport, New York, for two years. I returned to Rome, New York, in the fall 1952, opened my own law office, and I have been here for forty-nine years practicing law. I was on the State Board of Regents for twenty-three years representing the five counties of central New York. That job was time consuming. The Board of Regents job supervised all education in New York State from kindergarten to postdoctoral. They are responsible for setting policies for elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities. In the course of governing the elementary and secondary schools, the Board oversees the Regents Examinations. The State Education Department staff write the exams, but the Board of Regents oversees the exam process. The Board also charters private and public colleges as well as governs thirty-eight licensed professions. It was a very interesting, fascinating experience. I was the only Oneida County resident to serve on the Board in the 20th Century.

Q: Did you ever think about going back to active duty?

EG: No, I found practicing law, serving on the Board of Regents, and community service to be very worthwhile and never considered rejoining the military. A couple of times I considered going into the Judge Advocate General's Corps portion of the reserves [JAG Corps] but my law schedule prevented that. The other factor was that I didn't have the compelling need to be a part of the military that I felt in 1942.

Q: Was there ever a possibility of being called up for the Korean War?

EG: Being a field grade officer, I was not subject to recall and I had just started practicing law which I wanted to continue.

Q: When you were in Korea as an administrative officer, did you have any notion of the brewing conflict between the Soviets and US interests? Were you involved in that in any way?

EG: Not directly, but part of getting the network of English speaking Koreans together was related to the challenges posed by the Russian troops in North Korea. I was stationed at a base that was the headquarters for the occupation force, located between Incheon and Souel, only about four miles south of the 38th parallel. We had reason to think about the possible threats of the Soviet troops but that never materialized. The top staff of the occupation forces in South Korea did a good job communicating with the Russian troops but the tensions that evolved into the Korean War were apparent in even in 1946.

Q: Did the people of the Korean underground have any particular role in the South Korean government that the United States supported after the war?

EG: Yes, some of them became involved.

Q: You mentioned that at West Point, you were involved in the transition of the Air Corps from the Army to the Air Force. Can you tell us more about that?

EG: The transition started in 1946 and it was predominantly an administrative process— changing the chains of command with more emphasis on the flight mission and less emphasis on the ground missions.

Q: Was it a smooth transition?

EG: I didn't sense any controversy. It became apparent that the Air Corps needed to be an independent agency because the air missions are so different from the ground missions. The chain of command in both organizations needed to be separated. There was consensus about separating the two agencies.

Q: What kind of work did you do in that process?

EG: The summer school for Reserve Officers dealt with history of the different units and the mission statements but the students weren't involved in the negotiations which went on in Washington DC.

Q: Do you recall General Cheeves first name?

EG: I think it was Adam, but I haven't signed his name for forty-five years.
[laughing]

Q: Do you recall any significant historical event that crossed his desk and your desk while you were working on his staff?

EG: Not in Okinawa, but when we were in Korea, the tension that was created by the 38th parallel dividing the Russian occupation forces from the American occupation forces was obvious and we dealt with that. The real mission of the American occupation forces in Korea in 1945 through to the beginning of the Korean War was to rebuild the economy and the political structure of South Korea. The Japanese had dominated Korea, controlling their economy and their government.

Q: Did the Koreans see you as liberators?

EG: Yes. I think they did. Many Koreans have come to the United States and are living in our area of New York. There is a sizable Korean Presbyterian congregation nearby. American soldiers brought home Korean wives and sons of Korean parents immigrated here. Their stories about the results of the American occupation of South Korea are very positive.

Q: As a student of history, I look at World War II as a time that was filled with many larger than life figures like Churchill, FDR, MacArthur, and Eisenhower. Do you have any thoughts about that, especially with MacArthur being in the Pacific Theatre?

EG: I wasn't at the command level where I was dealing with those people. FDR and Churchill had very positive images. I met MacArthur once but didn't really deal with him, and of course General Eisenhower was in the European theatre. In wartime, the commanders are in charge. The civilian commanders, our President or the Prime Minister in Britain, and then the military five-star and four-star generals are all the commanders during war. The lower ranking officers and the enlisted personnel don't have personal interaction or contact with the decision makers.

Q: What was your reaction to General MacArthur?

EG: I had a positive reaction to him. He was in charge! But not having regular dealings with him, I didn't have a definite impression but I accepted his role and thought he was making the right decisions. As you heard me say, when Harry Truman made the decision to drop the two bombs, we all agreed that was the right decision.

Q: Any other comments or thoughts about your service?

EG: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this era of history with you. I think it is important for Americans to have a better understanding of the events of the past because they help us put the challenges of the present in perspective. The War on Terrorism is an example of why we need to look at the options that were available in past history, why they were implemented, which ones worked, and which ones didn't. I think history gives perspective on current challenges that people in the United States and countries around the world are facing. I applaud the Rome Free Academy for having this program [with Veterans] and I hope it enables students of today to understand the decisions of the past and to understand that oftentimes decisions are difficult to make and difficult to implement. We have to look for what is in the best interest of the general public and then participate in our government and our economy. We must remember that America is a nation of many different people with many different backgrounds and we need to come together in times of crisis. I think this [2001] is a crisis time. We must look back at the decisions made in WWI and WWII and to some extent in the Korean War. As I said, the lessons of history help us develop perspective for the present and the future.

