

**Gerald B. Edwards
Veteran**

**Mike [no last name given]
Interviewer**

**New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, NY
December 12, 2008**

GE: [shows photos and paintings] These are homecoming things. And they did the Iwo Jima and the B-29s and the Mustangs. [unclear] 2.50 and Eagles. This is the 4th Fighter Wing in England. These paintings are more real than real, they are beautiful. This is ours here. That's another one. It's not this one. That's the Germans Wolf Pack, the Band of Brothers. That's not this painting, but it's about that. Here are the Flying Tigers. They got the tail up so they can aim the guns at a target. And they're boresighting the guns. This is interesting. This tells more about this. They gave me these. Yeah, they're interesting. There's another one coming out that takes a lot of us, and there's some detail about our history. The 325th fighter planes, which these planes were part of. They had the hottest record in the war over there. I was in that output for two and a half years. I was a group operations officer. I planned all the missions, flew some of them. German helmet. Even a pack of Luckys sitting there. This is exactly what the photograph is. But it's more than a photograph. This painting is incredible. Did you see that thing? The English boy that's captured by the Japs in Tokyo and he's kept as a prisoner with all the British. John Malkovich is in this movie. [*Empire of the Sun*] And this kid, he made friends with the Japanese, the sacrificial pilots. What are they called? Kamikazes. He made friends with all these kamikaze guys over the fence. And in one scene in this movie, he's up on the top of the building and this Mustang came by like that, flew by and opened his canopy and saluted the kid and he said, P-51 King of the Airways. But this plane coming by is...the sound of that engine is very, very individual. It sounds like a giant Mack truck. The sound in that movie is very thrilling. I'm sure that's what that sounded over their heads. Of course, I don't believe this scene ever occurred.

Mike: Okay, need you to stand up for a second and put this on your belt. All right. Some of what I may ask you may be a little bit repetitive from what you

filled out. But we will go over it again for the sake of the tape. What I want you to do first is say your first name and your date of birth. I'll go through and have you tell your story rather than me asking just a series of questions.

GE: I don't know what you want me to tell.

Mike: Well, what I want you to do is start at the beginning and talk about what you were doing, what life was like prior to the service. What you're doing, and then when you enlisted and the whole process of what you did, and when you actually made it into the service.

GE: I have what they call Lipitor disease. I didn't even have a cholesterol problem, but my doctor, a PA, gave me Lipitor, and it crippled my legs, my memory. It's incredible. It finally got to my heart. I got a pacemaker. Three weeks before I had no sign of a heart problem. I went in, I had an EKG done because I wanted to see if it had affected me because thirty-one people on one of these statin drugs died from heart failure. There's more than one statin drug. Lipitor is one. One of them was taken off the market because it killed thirty-one people with heart failure. That was Baycol. That was one of the statin drugs. It seems to affect your voice a little. I'm a little hoarse. I never was hoarse, but I'm a little hoarse anyway. I went in, I had an echocardiogram, and the doctor said, boy, he said, I'll give you thirty-five more years. He said you got the best EKG I've ever looked at for your age group. And I said, hell, I'll be one-hundred-twenty-five years old. They said, well, that's how it is. Two weeks later, I'm in there with atrial fibrillation. A week after that, I'm in there with palpitations. So they put me on a monitor. At four in the morning. They came in, panicked. They woke me up. My heart was down to seven. Seven isn't any good, you know. They put in a pacemaker. Two weeks before, I had no sign of a problem. So that's when the Lipitor got me. It kicked all the protein out of your muscles. I'm still trying to figure out a way to fix it. Let me show you what I mean. [shows his hand and fingers] See my fingers, all the ligaments? There's no muscle. There's no muscle in among those. It's just like a skeleton. It's ridiculous. That's what it does to you. There's an expert in Boston who made a study of Lipitor and its effects. I've conversed with him several times. He's the one that's helped me with some of these supplemental medicines. Not medicines, but what do you call them? Food supplements. So I take several of those, it is supposed to help my heart out. My end goal is to find somebody in the world who will take my stem cell and teach it to fix me. They're doing it. There's several that have already been done.

Anyway, that's why if I run into a problem with memory, you may notice that you'll hear it because I'll say, wait a minute, Sorry, but I thought you ought to

know that. I built this farm. I built every fence, buried every pipe, buried every wire. My wife and I built the barn opposite here, the long one. We never built a dog house before that, but we built that and they're still there. It's been thirty-five years. I was Mr. Muscle Man. Now I'm not. I can't go up the stairs without hanging on a rail. So I'm not trying to get you sorry for me. I'm telling you, that's my situation. I can't even walk down to the corner without wearing out. I just can't do it. Before that, I really was a pretty tough, strong person. I built this whole place anyway, so let's go. Ask me again what you want me to start with.

Mike: Well, let's start with when you were born and what you did.

GE: I'm Gerald Edwards. I was born in Yonkers, New York in 1920. Went to the Yonker Schools, PS 13 [Public School] PS 13 Annex, and Yonkers High, which isn't there anymore. Although my name is on a monument down there as a war veteran. But I've never seen it. I know it's there. If I go back to Yonkers, I might see it. Just prior to joining the service, I was an ambulance driver in Yonkers Professional Hospital. And they decided to change our uniforms from white to gray. I resented that. So I quit. I didn't like the gray uniforms. I felt like I was being downloaded. [downgraded] I took a job with a garage. It was a big seller of cars in Yonkers. A five story building and cars on every level. We went on this big elevator up and down all day long, putting cars up and bringing cars down, pumping gas. One day an Army lieutenant came in and I was giving him gas. He had a yellow convertible. That really impressed me. Beautiful little car. All of a sudden we heard the announcement about Pearl Harbor on the radio, and he said, get that hose out of there, I'm going to war. And off he went. [laughs]

The next day I had a day off, so I went down and enlisted. I took a friend with me who had been drafted previously. I wasn't old enough for the draft yet. So he went down. I took him to Whitehall Street and I saw a sign [that said] "Be an Aviation Cadet". I said, that's for me, and I headed upstairs. He said, that's not the right way. I said, that's my way. I went upstairs and took the physical. There were about twenty-five of us there that took it. We were sitting on this marble bench afterwards, naked and freezing, waiting for the next thing to happen. One guy kept passing out and falling off. We had to keep picking him up. He was having some kind of seizures. Of course, he didn't pass, but he was there then. After a while, the civilian who was standing there came over and said to me, jot that down, you passed, I saw. I said, oh, how do you know that? He said, the doctor told me. I said, thanks. After a while, he came and said, how would you like to be televised? [I said] I know what you mean, but what do you mean? Remember what year this was. He said, I work for CBS, Columbia Broadcasting. We have this

office in New York and our studios, and we'll take you up there and you'll enlist over the air. We'll swear you in over the air. My friend said, that's fine. So we thought, that is great. We went up and we were given two packs of cigarettes. I did smoke then. I didn't quit smoking long after that, but I did then. We couldn't take money. We had to sign a waiver of money. Then we had two drinks and a lunch, and then we went to the studio. I never saw such a mass of wiring all on the floors. It was like snakes all over. We worked our way through there, stood still and they put a bright light on me. Some guy said, raise your right hand. I did, and he swore me in. Then the other guy that I spoke with said, that doesn't count. You have to come down tomorrow and be sworn in for real.

I went down the next day and I had to take the written exam. This lieutenant there wouldn't let me take it. He said, you don't have college. I said, I don't have to have college [education]. It said so, right in the newspaper. Well, he wouldn't let me do it. So I had to go down the street and enlist in the Army Air Corps to get in. He delayed me a while, but eventually things worked out. I went home that night. I was there about nine-thirty at night and my dad came in. He was an insurance man and he did his collections at night. He came in the door and he said, congratulations. I said, how do you know this? He said, I went to the bar with some of the boys for a drink after work and I saw your swearing in on television. [laughs] So there were no secrets from him. Then I enlisted in the Army, and a few days later they called me and I went to New York. I was put on a bus and sent to Fort Dix. Oh, that was bad news. Fort Dix was awful. I was there for about ten days. I had to go home once. I had an aunt dying in the hospital. Had to go home and see her and went back [to Fort Dix]. Then finally they put us on a train and we headed for St. Louis. That was a training base. It was run by acting PFCs with white handkerchiefs on their arm.

Mike: What was the white handkerchief for?

GE: Acting PFC. They were a bunch of...they beat up on guys, they were terrible. We were sleeping in tents and it was freezing out there. Almost as cold as Fort Dix. We went out in the morning. We had a guy from our hometown, Yonkers, who was our sergeant. He marched us off into the woods and we found a giant pile of leaves and burrowed under them and slept. That was how we spent our day. [laughs] Little columns of smoke coming up through the leaves. There was a guy who died, one a day in our tent city. They sent them to the hospital, gave them an APC, sent them back and then they died. At a very high rate. Anyway, finally I got to go to Chanute Field [Air Force Base]. Chanute Field was heaven on earth.

Mike: Where was that?

GE: Illinois, Southern Illinois. And it was a training field that had probably thirty-thousand people there at any given minute, training in all the specialties, aeromechanics, weather and so on. There was a big modern building there with a dining hall we called Buckingham Palace. We loved that place because it was so nice to be in and eat. We had to march to all our meals, especially after we were quarantined. We had to march every place we went as a group. We couldn't infect anybody else, you know. Finally one day they called us. They got a bunch of us. We had taken the cadet exams by then, the writtens. We had to keep taking them over. They kept changing them. They came and said, report out to the drill field. So we reported to the drill field. I forget how many of us there were. Thirty, forty. This sergeant got up on the platform that they used to direct exercises from. He said, "You's is the cream of the crop. You's is going to Kelly Fields." We looked around and said, God, if we're the cream of the crop, what's the rest of the world like? [laughs] That didn't impress us very much.

We went to Kelly Field and again got the physical. Took the speed and accuracy test in writing and spent time there in pre-flight marching around the drill field. Mostly picked stones and threw them in a truck. At night I think they dumped the stones out again. Then we went to what they called pre-flight. We had to move to another barracks. Out of the tents and into barracks. Took the training, the basic training. I met a friend of mine from Yonkers. He came in and he was my underclassman, his name was Murphy. And we both went to primary school together. That was in Corsicana, Texas. That was nice there. That's where we got our first look at the PT-19. A little low wing model plane, one-hundred miles an hour tops. But it looked like a fighter because it had low wings. It was a fascinating thing to look at. And we flew that. Finally we got to go solo. I got out on the auxiliary field and the instructor said, do you think you can land it? He didn't ask me if I could take off. [I said] I think so, sir. [He said] okay, go. I took off. Oh, I can't tell you. I sang all the way around, in the pattern. When I landed, it wasn't the greatest landing, but I did make it to the ground. I had to make a few more. That was my first solo. I knew then that was why I was here. That was what I was meant to do. I went up one day. There was a barn near us. When I learned to do spins, I went over to the barn. I was up solo and I was up at ten-thousand feet. I never got that high. I said, boy, it looked like a tree full of young owls, looking down there. I saw the barn. So I put myself in a spin. I counted that the barn went by ten times and I pulled out of the spin. I told my instructor and he had a fit. I was up there spinning. [laughs] But it worked anyway.

Then we went to basic at Perrin Field, Texas, and I met a guy from Yonkers there. He was already there as an instructor. He worked for the place I had worked. So it was nice to meet him and see there was another guy that was busy succeeding. He was already commissioned. The first plane we flew was the Fairchild PT-19. Then we flew the Vultee Vibrator, the Vultee BT-13. It had four-hundred-fifty horsepower, so you did a lot of things faster. My instructor taught me a lot of tricks, like how to stall the plane and walk it down. Kept it flying, but you stalled and kept walking it down until you were ready to land and then land it. Pretty tricky, actually. He also taught me how to clear ice from the carburetor by turning the mag switches off, which could blow your carburetor up, but it also kicked the ice out. [laughs] I saved the plane one day by doing that. I don't think we would have survived it. It was a C-47 flying out of Turkey with twenty passengers and going to Germany. We hit ice and this thing started to ice up. I reached up, [gestures turning a knob] bam, bang, it went. The ice flew out and went away. We went ahead and flew on to Germany. So he helped me.

I don't mean to get so verbose or. So then we went from there to advanced [training] at Foster Field, Texas, and they started to treat us like humans. They hadn't before that. We were just something, but we weren't human. There was a T-6 training plane. It was a six-hundred-fifty horsepower plane, and it had one single machine gun mounted on the cowling; it fired a .30 caliber. Boy, it felt like you were in a fighter now. I was lucky. My instructor had been an aerobatic pilot. Went around all over the country demonstrating. He carried his wife in the back seat with mechanics coveralls, and she went with him every place he went. We did aerobatics hour after hour, and it became second nature. It proved very helpful later.

Then we went to Tallahassee, which was a redistribution point for the students. They sent me to Sarasota, Florida, and we learned to fly the P-40s, the same kind that the Flying Tigers had. Two-hundred mile an hour fighter. Not very fast, but six guns, lots of firepower, and very maneuverable. That was what the Germans found out when we fought the Germans. They never knew how to deal with us. We could out turn them and we could fool them on their pass. We could turn so fast they were facing six guns on every airplane instead of the tails. And we shot them down on their own pass. Then they tried to fight with us, but they couldn't turn with us. In P-40s, we shot down ten to one. Later on we got P-47s which was a four-hundred-fifty mile an hour airplane. The heaviest fighter in the inventory. But had eight machine guns, .50 caliber cannons is what they were. And we shot

down eleven to one with them. Then we got P-51s, Mustangs. When I left the outfit, the war was about over. With them, we were shooting down twenty-five to one and maybe more. But that was how many we knew about.

We were fighting the Hungarians and they didn't want to fight us, but the Germans made them. So after the war we had a reunion with the Hungarian air veterans. They invited us for a reunion and it was a kick, a real kick. All we had to do was pay to get there. The air secretary for the Air Force paid the whole thing. We had two big buses and we traveled all over Hungary. We had wonderful food. We slept in two man chalets with sauna baths. We couldn't pay for a drink [they paid]. It was wonderful. I asked this one guy, Mike Churney [?]. He came to the States later. He was shot down three times by our Checkertail Mustangs. I said, Mike, when the radar said to you there was Mustangs overhead, what did you think? He said, my stomach turned to ice. [laughs] Their airfield had been beat up so badly that they had to fly off the main street of Budapest. That was where they were, on the main street of Budapest, taking off and landing. I didn't mean to digress there, but that was where we got to.

We went to Foster Field and then we had to do aerial gunnery down at Matagorda Island. Some Navy boat down there got excited and shot one of us down. [laughs] Whoever heard of shooting down a training plane? But that's what they did. It's like they did over Sicily. They had a bunch of them there. And the transports were going for the air invasion of Sicily. They shot twenty of them down at night. And the poor guys didn't even know where they were when they hit the ground. If they did hit the ground. Some of them didn't. But they say that friendly fire wasn't too friendly really. I could tell you one thing. At Matagorda island, we got to fire aerial gunnery too. We took our belt with a hundred shells and dipped them in paint, just the tips. I had orange paint on mine. Then we went up and we had to come to a target plane and make a pass so you didn't get behind and shoot down the leader, the one that was carrying this [target]. You came from the angle and quit before you got in. Anyway, I got twenty-one hits out of my one-hundred shots. So I made expert on the first day. Nobody else got any. One of those things. I guess I learned my deflection lesson as well. They came in handy later, too, I found out.

So then we were called back to the base and we each had to take a cadet with us. We landed at the base and the tower had us make a turn that they shouldn't have. And we almost all ran through another flight and we would have lost ourselves. But we missed them somehow. The last day wasn't very rewarding and we graduated. Then we went to the movies where they had an auditorium, and they

gave us our wings. That was a kick. Our wings and our bars at the same time. So we were second balloons [lieutenants?] and pilots. Then we went back to Tallahassee and went through some screening up there. Got our teeth fixed if they needed it or a filling. Got a bunch of bags to take overseas. We had an A bag, a B bag and a C bag. I never got the C bag until I was overseas for a year. They dropped one in my tent one day. It was full when I left it. All it had in it was a pair of pants. And there was a note that said, to a nice American boy. Signed from some of the girls from the Casablanca Depot. I don't have the pants anymore, but I had them. I think I gave them to my father. They were pretty nice, the green ones. The Army had green and tan.

I'm digressing here. One thing happened in Tallahassee was a friend of mine and I were put on guard duty. Patrolled the town and kept order. There were two of us patrolling around the town to keep guys out of trouble. And they called us down to the police station. They had a guy in there that had hit some guy over the head with an ax. He said, I didn't mean to hurt him. I didn't mean to hurt him. My friend said, well, then why didn't you hit him with a little axe? [laughs] I don't know what happened to him. That was our last night in town and off we went.

We were sent then to Camp Patrick Henry in Virginia, which was a classified secret camp. Nobody in the area knew it was there and apparently they didn't. I never met people that asked me if I was there. Had a lot of nice wooden buildings, no tents, and a bar which we went to at night. The airborne guys would get on the balcony, scream Geronimo and jump off and land on your table. [laughs] They were bananas. Those guys were bananas.

Then we got to go on a ship. It was called the Empress of Scotland. It was a Canadian Pacific liner, twenty-five-thousand tons, it went twenty-five knots and carried five-thousand people. That was a solo trip across the Atlantic. We were Air Force unassigned. That was our group. There were probably fifty of us that were Air Force and we all had .45s under our arms. They were our issued weapons. Nobody else had a weapon. So they hated us because we had weapons. Who cares? But they seemed to care. They gave us different levels. The GIs would be in a room on the fourth deck down. There were a hundred of them. They had tables and over the tables were hammocks. They slept in the hammocks or on the tables and ate on the tables. They were locked in that thing for several weeks. Well, after just the first week, they were not too happy. So I said, well, we're out of sight of land now. At least land can't see us because the sides of the ship were high. [I said] I'm going to take half of you up on deck for an hour and if you do

the thing right, I'm going to take you back down, take the other half up. We'll keep doing that. I'm sure you'll enjoy that. If you don't play the game right, we won't do it. We got up on deck. The bridge, the merchant marine people, howled, get those fellows off the deck. And we said, stick it. [laughs] We wouldn't listen to them. They never got us to do anything they wanted because we didn't believe in listening to the merchant marines.

One thing happened. I'm no hero, but this did happen. The call came down to me on the deck. They said, Edwards, they have ammo and the guy's going to shoot him. That sounded weird, you know. So I rushed in, I went down this alleyway and I looked. There was a guy with a gun on my friend. We studied the .45 pretty thoroughly. We knew how it worked. I just ran over and grabbed his wrist and slapped the barrel of the gun back. He couldn't fire it because I closed the slide on him. He couldn't get me off him because I guess I was stronger than he was. So finally he let go of the gun and I gave it to his first sergeant. I said, keep this till he's off the ship. I said to him, if you mess up one more time, we'll throw you so far back in the brig we'll have to feed you with a slingshot. We thought that was a pretty smart thing to say. We said it a lot. [laughs]

We continued on across the ocean. About the fifth or sixth night, there was an overcast all the way. It never rained. The sun was above it. It was a clear day, but the overcast was constant. At night it was there, too. This one night I was off duty. I had guard duty. We had different times of guard duty. Some of the guys were gunnery officers. We had the first gunnery drill after about five days. We learned how to shoot the Oerlikon cannons and then we gave them practice. Scared the heck out of the other passengers, but we got the job done. It had to be done. One night, I went up and I slipped out between the curtains so that we didn't let the light out. We could see Greek and Spanish ships. Not Greek, Portuguese and Spanish ships at night, music playing, lights on. Because they were all neutral. But we couldn't do that. We could see them passing by and hear them. I got out between the curtains, went up on the A deck on the starboard side and watched as we rolled back and forth. Every ten or fifteen minutes they made a turn, for evasion. I looked, and all of a sudden I saw a brilliant light in the water. I said, what? What is that? And it disappeared. Then I saw it again. I finally realized every time we rolled to the right, I saw it, otherwise not. But I realized the light had to be coming out of the ship. That was not so good. That was one heck of a light. So I ran up on the bridge and I got a ship's officer up there and I said, you better come with me. I showed him off the bridge what was happening. Oh, my God, he said, and went in and got a pistol from somewhere. He and I went down

about four or five decks. We were going along the starboard side and we came upon the carpenter's locker. Had a padlock on it as big as your head. Almost. He said, go around the corner there and get out of the way. I did, and he shot the lock off. We went in. There was nothing in there, but the two portholes were wired open. There was a giant light, like a rehearsal light in the theater, wired over and right in front of the porthole. And of course it was lit. That was the light we saw. He smashed it with his pistol and that was the end of that. I don't think he could lock the door again, but we went up, back to the bridge and we didn't see each other again. A couple of hours later, towards dawn, some guy, one of the watch officers yelled, hey look at the telephone pole in the water. I looked and it was a submarine right next to us, crash diving and pulling his periscope down. We almost ran him down. He [submarine] was looking for us. He didn't find us because the light was out. That was close. Because we were dead monkeys. If they caught us, what are you going to do? But he couldn't catch us either when we were still going twenty-five knots. He just submerged, got out of the way, and then he couldn't catch us. So I knew. I've known ever since that the submarine was watching for our light, but he never saw it. And we ran him down because he was where he knew where we were supposed to be but couldn't find us. So daylight came and a B-24 patrol plane came by, flying right down by the deck level. The bridge was yelling, bring that plane down. He hasn't given the right signal. I said, we're not going to shoot an airplane down that is ours. Hold your breath. After a while, he did give a signal and then he left.

Then we got outside of Casablanca within two more days. It was nighttime, so we couldn't go through. We had to wait till the morning because the submarine nets were up or down, whatever they called it. So the purser, one of the officers on the ship, was standing next to me. He said, I hate this. I hate this. Reminded me of some guy I saw in the movies. He said, I hate this, I hate this. He said, my brother was on the sister ship last year and they were doing exactly this, circling. He said, the first torpedo knocked out all the lights. The second torpedo broke it in half. It went down with all hands. All they found in the daytime was half the people in their life jackets. The other half was [gone because of] sharks [gestures lower half the body was gone]. I didn't feel so good after that either. But there was nothing I could do about it. Come morning, we landed in Casablanca. We were sent out on the edge of town. We were put in a field that had wire around it. We had wooden double bunks built up. That was where we stayed for the next couple of weeks waiting to be shipped out. After the first week, here came this B-24 crew. They had gone back to the States and were shipped overseas. They came into the replacement depot. So we found out about what happened to that submarine. He

said, we ran on that submarine a couple hours behind you. He was on the surface replenishing. We made a bomb run on him. His deck gun knocked out our number two engine and our Bombay doors. So he could only claim a probable. So that's what happened to the submarine. I was thinking this morning I could still find out about that submarine from the German's records. They know where all their submarines were all the time. There was a book written recently about a submarine. It was found sunk off New Jersey that they had lost. These American divers found it and they identified it. They actually went back to Germany with the things they took off the ship and got all the family's information about their loved ones that had gone down with that submarine. That was a great thing. I forget the name of the book, but it was pretty nice. My son knows, my son-in-law knows. He was talking about it last night.

Anyway, then we were sent...we had to go out to the airfield. Some of us went ahead of the others. One guy and I were the last two left. We went out and we got on a C-47, sat up on the bags of mail or something and he took us out of Casablanca. We stopped in Algiers and had tomato juice to drink and tomato soup to eat. That was really disgusting. Then we flew on to Algiers and there was a hotel there called the Hotel de Gink. Which was a military airlift command hotel. We were sitting at night up on the bombed out part of the building. They had barbed wire to keep you from falling off. We were drinking out of our canteens and eating cheese out of our K-Ration box. It was late at night, ten or eleven. Somebody grabbed my shoulder and said, are you guys fighter pilots? We said, yes. He said, follow us. So we picked up our bags and followed him. We went down and there was a jeep outside. Just two guys in it. They loaded us in the jeep, the two of us, and they took us fifty miles north to the 325th Fighter Group and turned us over to somebody. And we were there. The 12th Air Force never found out where I was for a month. I was flying missions up there and they still didn't know that I was there. [laughs] Because we were shanghaied. That outfit was really on the ball. They knew how to operate. So that was where acrobatics came in handy. One day the squadron operations officer said, you and [Eugene H.] Emmons, I'm going to give you a checkride today. They checkride you before they let you fly with the outfit. So Emmons and I went out and we had both flown with this instructor. This officer said, okay, Edwards, you fly the left wing, Emmons fly the right wing and we'll take off and we'll stay in that formation, we won't get out of it. We will fly that three ship formation the first hour and then you'll swap wings and you'll fly the next hour. Then you're out of gas and you land. We took off [in a] three ships [formation]. We flew, we did inside out. We did aerobatics for an hour without stopping. This guy was incredible. Then we swapped wings,

did another hour and we landed. We landed three ships. We came down, dove for the runway, pulled up, did a loop and landed three ships. I didn't know you could do that, but we did it. He got up on the plane and he was filling out his form and we stood there twisting our hats waiting for the word. He said, okay. That was all he said. We were accepted.

Then we started flying missions over Sardinia, Sicily, Corsica. There weren't any left in Africa. When the Italians capitulated, we got in a C-47 with a jeep and some other guys and we flew into Sardinia to meet the commander. The guy was meeting the commander and we had lunch with him. We told him that a few days before on the mission we shot down eighteen [eight] and lost none. And two days later we shot down twenty and lost one. He said oh, that's only twenty-eight, I lost thirty-eight. So we shot down planes we didn't even know we shot down. [laughs] But he was unhappy because he had thought he shot down our squadron commander. But he hadn't. He shot him up so badly that he changed airplanes. He wouldn't keep the same airplane after that. He had number thirteen and he switched to number seven. His name was Herky [Herschel H.] Green. He was one of the major aces. He had eighteen confirmed in the end. He just died this year, but his wife still comes to the reunions and his daughters, a sweet lady. So where are we at? Let's see. Oh, so we joined the outfit and we flew missions there. And then they said one day we had to send a bunch of guys up to...now I'm forgetting the name of the town. It's on the northeastern end of North Africa. I'll think of the name in a minute. [Bizerte] I'm sorry. We had to go up there. The airplanes had come in on boats and they picked them up and towed them through town to the airfield. That day, a guy named Cecil O. Dean was one of our flight officers. We had a number of sergeant pilots, but they couldn't fly in combat, so they made them flight officers. But it took so long to do it that the rest of us were sucking wind waiting for our own promotions. We couldn't get them until we got them promoted. Second lieutenant to first isn't that long normally. So Dean was shot. His tail was shot. Also his rear end was shot. So [when] he was flying home, his plane was dragging a little, and he said, "I'm a hit in the butt, but I'll be back. Leave my stuff alone." Because whenever a guy went down, boy, everyone divided his stuff as fast as they could. Things were in short supply, like air mattresses and stuff like that.

Well, Bob Hope came in at the same time as Frances Langford. She was so beautiful. She had a little foamy pajama suit on. This guy made a pair of wings. He tried to pin them on her shirt and he practically gave up. He finally pulled the shirt out, pinned them and let it go. Bob Hope knew where Dean was wounded.

So he said, Melvin, come on up here and let Francis kiss your wounds. Everyone howled at that because everyone knew he had been shot in the rear end, and she knew, too. That night, he played poker with the group squadron commanders. He didn't have any money with him. He had to borrow money to play poker. He had never carried any pocket money, as far as I know, but it was an interesting thing. I met him later at Lake Placid. My wife and I helped run the Lake Placid Horse Show for twelve years. Bob Hope came in. The leader of our group who ran the horse show was Mrs. [Ruth] Newbury. She was a powerful lady. She had a lot of money. Her daughter was an Olympic rider and they wanted her to run the horse show. They didn't realize that she was a dressage rider. She never worked on a horse show like that. But Mrs. Newbury didn't care. She knew who ran the horse shows and she got the guy. For twelve years, we had a ball. We had a guy named Gene Mische who came in there with his little group of helpers and ran horse shows for us. He ran them all over. So I don't want to digress here, but Mrs. Newberry was a major influence in our lives. She helped us run the League for Adirondack Citizens Rights. We were the anti-APA [Adirondack Park Agency] group and all. I don't need to go into that with you. But it was a five year struggle. We finally got the Senate to pass a bill abolishing it. And then some guy from the Bronx, the head of the assembly, wouldn't let them vote. One guy killed us. I met him one day. He was up visiting with his daughters. I said, you're out of your mind to come up here. Somebody could have shot you. I said, you better get on back home. I'm digressing. Forgive me.

Anyway, we got the P-47s and one interesting thing happened. I got my airplane and got in it and started it and it ran okay. I checked the controls. They seemed okay. I took off and when I pulled the stick back for takeoff speed, the nose went down. It was rigged backwards. The elevator was worked backwards. So I realized that. I stuck the stick forward and up it went. I had to practice flying it for a while, but it also was rigged backwards on the ailerons. It was really a pain. When I got home, I had to fly around for twenty to thirty minutes to get the feel of it. I finally made it and landed and they fixed it. It was quite a way to start a new airplane. Then we were told not to go too fast with them because they could come pretty close to the speed of sound, the P-47. We heard the guys flying over the desert all day long. You heard them. You heard the booms breaking the sound barrier all over the place. It broke the sound barrier, but, boy, it was pretty much out of control when it was doing it. I ran into that once over a target. I couldn't control it. When we dove, we dove so fast. I remember the airspeed was pegged, that was eight-hundred. So we figured out later I'd gone over eight-hundred miles an hour. I finally got to where...the control stick was bashing my legs and the plane was

trying to tuck under and cock over. I thought I was going to lose it. And then suddenly Rome was growing incrementally, major increments. So I gradually just eased it back about a half an inch and I got it...it still was going down, but I got it to change its attitude. After a while the wings took hold of the speed and I zoomed right up to twenty-thousand feet. That was a zoomy airplane, let me tell you. The squadron commander was with me. He got one and I was right with him and I got one. We shot down two airplanes and then that was the end of that day. Thank God I was able to pull the thing out of that dive. I didn't know what I was going to do.

So then we got the P-47s. We moved to Italy. In Italy we flew our first mission on Christmas Day 1943. We lost two planes over the mountain. And we had a problem. We were quite close to the bomb line and always had to spend time digging foxholes. They were never deep enough for the people watching you. You always had to dig them deeper, you know. We had a little, little bar there and a couple of belly tank boxes. That night, let me think. That night we heard a British [Bristol] Beaufighter come overhead. No, before that, we heard two Ju 88s, German bombers. They had just been bombing Bizerte [Tunisia], the town I meant to tell you about. They were bombing Bizerte and we could see them. We were thirty miles away. We could see the planes going down and balloons being blown up and going down. Here came two Ju 88s right overhead. You heard their engines. [mimics engine sound] They were never in sync. While we watched him, we all hid in this foxhole because we figured he was going to bomb us. Then the Beaufire came and shot him down. We watched the fire break out and we saw the two barrage parachutes blossom out. They came down on our mountain. That was Hill 609 [Tunisia]. Well, they stayed up there for a week and I guess they got hungry so they came out and gave up. They surrendered and they said they were heading for German headquarters in Tunis. There wasn't any headquarters in Tunis. These guys were misinformed. So you never know.

Then my friend and I were out with two nurses in a jeep and we drove out on the highway. We were going to take them, we didn't know where. He was driving, I don't know, forty miles an hour. Look, he said, holy mackerel. He hit the brakes and we came right up to some fifty-five gallon drums that were lined up on the road. He backed up and he said, hang on. He bashed, knocked them out of the way and we kept going. So we pulled into a little road and suddenly we were back in there a few hundred yards and we saw a bunch of geese, all different colors. We realized we were in a native village. Those were their geese. I think it was geese. Doesn't matter, it was a lot of animals. We got out of that village and headed

home again. And the barrels were up again. So my friend just slammed into them and knocked them out of the way. We took the nurses back. [Then] we packed, got a bunch of weapons and we headed back for the road again. We were going to do some damage. [laughs] Idiots. First born idiots. Got to the barrels, he stopped, slammed brakes, cut the lights off. We jumped out and we raked the bushes with our .30 calibers carbines and our .45s. We didn't get any fire back. We either got them or they weren't there and we came home. Nothing happened.

Then one night we looked at a field near the base. There was a big haystack. Oh God, it was big. And the farmers, of course, [unclear] 58.47 pulled them up. We were building a house. We had a wooden house. We even built a little back house [latrine] for the girls with a sheepskin seat. We were going to go and get the hay off that haystack, maybe make a roof out of it or do something with it. We drove down the highway and cut off when we saw it, cut the lights off and went around the field and couldn't find it. We had to turn the lights on again so we could find it. Then my buddy got up on top and he was throwing...there were hunks of dirt up there on top of it. Anyway, he was throwing them out of the way and he threw the bales down and he threw the canvas down to me. We had a giant canvas and we snaked it into the side of the weapons carrier. It was hanging out ten feet on each side. We brought that big canvas home. We were going to put that over the roof. I talked about hay before. I really meant I was going to take the canvas. The next day we got a command car with a trailer, and we drove up. We talked them out of a trailer full of belly tanks, and we took them back. We took the tanks out and put them on the flight line and saved the boxes for our building. The next day we went up and went with the same trailer and went to the dock in Bizerte and drove right on the dock. Went out and we found a lot of wood and we snaked it into the trailer and hung back on the trailer. About the time we were fully loaded, a sergeant came up and he said, excuse me, sirs, do you have permission to be on this base? We said, well, no. He said, I have to apprehend you, sirs. I said, how about this, sarge? You let us go and if we get out, you forget it. If they catch us at the gate, you come up and we'll give you credit for catching us. Oh, that's good. Okay, he said. So we drove up through the gate and we waited until the guy was climbing up on another truck. We went out of that gate [gestures moving very quickly] and they were shooting at us all the way up the highway. [laughs] They didn't hit us. Along the road, on the way back, we found this stuff stacked on the hillside, this outdoor depot. We got boxes of ammo and flares, stuff like that. Took them back to the base. Now we had enough ammunition for our .45s and our Thompson machine guns, and we also had some flares.

So we got a flare and we flung it over to the group area. They were out there smoking away, and some major came out with a gas mask on. He kneeled down and sniffed the smoke to see what it was. So we knew we got them excited. We didn't tell them who was doing that. Nothing happened. The flare smoked out and nothing happened. That night, one of the guys, Melvin, the same guy that was shot in the rear end. He got on a German motorcycle and rode it through the camp area, hooting and hollering. He was drunk as a hoot owl. So my friend got his .45 out and he stuck it out and he said, I've had all I can stand. Bam, bam, bam. He fired four shots in the air. They were going to court-martial him for firing a gun in the camp area, but he just promised he wouldn't do it again. [laughs] We had a back house near the entrance. It was just a tank box with a four holer. Someone could go and use that. So a guy named [William C.] Brookbank was out and he was naked as a jaybird. All he had on was his shoes. He was sitting on a back house and a jeep load of pilots and nurses came right by him. He went like this. [gestures covering his head with both hand and arms] He covered his head up while they went by. All those little things kind of stick in your mind, you know. He had the biggest smile you ever saw. When he smiled, the whole room would light up. Some incredible teeth he had.

So anyway, we got, let's see, we were in Italy then with our P47s. Then we moved to another base and I have a map of it here. Italy comes down like that and there's the toe of the boot and then there's the spur and there's a promontory there. There's a big mountain range there. And north of that there's a town called Lago di Lesina. And the whole area was owned by a baron who kept ninety-eight percent of all the inputs from this fish farm. He had a four foot deep fish hatching area. The town got two percent. He got ninety-eight percent. That was fair for the baron. All his family were members of the governing group. One was the doctor, one was the lawyer, one was the mayor. He had a nice little castle there too. We used to go up there and have dinner with him. I have pictures of that here too.

Oh, so we got orders to move up to Lago di Lesina. So we took off on a mission to Corsica. It wasn't to Corsica, it was to southern France. We flew across Naples, flew up the Tyrrhenian Sea and then climbed over the mountains of Corsica, dropped down, and went low into southern France. There was a mistake that the headquarters made that they sent seven groups up there at the same time. We all went through the same checkpoint within a few minutes of each other. And we all then attacked different targets. So we crossed the back of the American fleet, but we stayed away from them because they were liable to shoot us down as we were passing by. We got to Corsica and then I was leading a squadron, a flight of twelve

aircraft. We got behind the mountains and then we climbed up and dropped down on our target, an airfield. Well, as luck would have it, the P-38s had been there five minutes before, [they] went to the wrong target and strafed ours. So they [enemy] were waiting for us, they knew we were coming. We crossed the field with twelve and came out the other side with five. We lost seven planes on that one [run]. Never had a loss like that. And it was because they alerted our target. So it wasn't a good day when you got around to it. I remember one guy, he was flying with an Indian we had named Hiawatha Mohawk. We used to call him Chief. And this guy was going in. Hiawatha was flying with him. And he said, going in, so long, Chief. That was all we heard from him. We never saw him again. I don't even know if Chief answered him. [laughs]

Anyway, we came back to our home field and they had moved to Lago di Lesina. Now, what we had to do was land there. So we landed there. It had a pierced plank runway. You know, that's metal. If you haven't seen it, I'll show it to you. I got something. They put tar paper down on a muddy field. Then they have this metal pierce plank they laid on it, hooked it together and welded it together. Not weld, they hooked it together. When you land on it, it sounds like hammers of hell banging out there when you land. But it's a very effective runway. So we went to our mess hall that night. Someone tuned the radio in and Axis Sally came on the radio. And she said, "Greetings, officers and men of the 325th Fighter Group. Welcome to your new base at Lago di Lesina. By the way, the clock on your officer's mess is ten minutes fast." And it was. They said, who was the agent? How did she find this out? Someone in your field is informing on you. Who is it? The group commander? [laughs] Who knows. That happened. Happened to the British once. One of the commanders was doing that kind of stuff. And I hoped it never happened to us. But she knew. Didn't do her any good to know, except as a morale factor for us.

I flew sixty-one accredited missions. Most of them were escorting bombers, B-24s, B-17s. And I flew about forty missions I got no credit for. Because if the bombers didn't bomb the targets...we were members of the 5th Bomb Wing, so we didn't get credit for the mission. In a way that was a waste. Did we get credit even though we were there and even had fights at the target. We didn't get credit because they hadn't bombed there. When the weather kept them off the target or something.

A lot of strange things happened. Over Yugoslavia one day we came up behind a bunch of bombers. We looked and there were six or eight fighters hanging on the

end of them, shooting at them. I looked and there were checkertails like ours and red noses like us, but they were ME 109s. [Messerschmitt Bf 109]. They painted them like us to fool the bombers. And they were fooling them. The bombers let them in, didn't try to fire and shoot them down. We got nine of them, though.

Mike: Those were German planes?

GE: German Messerschmitts, yeah. We got nine of them. I could tell you the most memorable mission we had over there was January 30, 1944. We had to go over to the squadron commander's tent. They called us in for a briefing. He said, well, guys, he said, tomorrow it's either the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] or the Purple Heart. I want nothing but volunteers. Well, in the fighter group, everybody volunteers. There was nobody not volunteering. Believe me. So that was out of the way, he told us about the mission. What we did the next day and before we flew, we had to set all our altimeters so that when it indicated zero, we were actually at fifty feet. So we wanted to go not higher than zero. That would keep us at fifty feet. The reason was we were going to go three hundred miles up to the Adriatic Sea on the east side of Italy. You were going up at this angle. [gestures about a forty-five degree angle] You were not going straight north. We had to make the first turn out over the water this way, then another turn that way and continue for until we'd gone about two-hundred miles. Then we broke out and started climbing for the target. At that point, we turned our radios on. Meanwhile, in the north, the P-38s and B-17s were coming across northern Italy for this area called Udine [?]. 1.11.14 We were climbing up for Udine, which is where the concentration of planes were. So anyway, we took off, circled Foggia right down on the housetops, came out and we formed up. There were sixty-one of us. Twelve and twelve and twelve and twelve and dropped down over the beach. Stayed right down at fifty feet and headed out over the sea. We weren't ten miles off the shore, when we hit fog. Now we were in ground fog for the whole mission. We saw as many as five or six airplanes near us, but that was all. How that group commander led that mission, I'll never know. He must have been nailed to his spot, because otherwise he'd have thrown us all by some maneuver. He would have just thrown us all out of array. But you looked ahead of you, and you saw the guy ahead of you was leaving bow waves in the water from his tanks. You saw the tank depressions in the water. And he was leaving wake behind him from his engine. We were all leaving wake and bow waves. We were really low. Finally they made a turn. They didn't say anything. They couldn't talk. They might give your position away. So we made this first turn, and after another hour, we made that turn. After, I think almost an hour, we all climbed up at once on the

clock. What a sight, to see sixty-one birds come up out of that fog to two-thousand feet. And they were all there.

We met the enemy while we were over Udine, they were climbing. The first guy that we started with... my flight leader, Benoit [?], used to change places. He was leading the flight, and I was number two or number three, actually. I saw him fire, and he hit this guy's wingtip. I just saw one flash on a wingtip. Then he went past him, and the guy went down. I rolled over and went after him, and we were going down. He was fighting like mad to avoid being hit, and he was all over the sky. But suddenly he pulled up in front of me, so all I could see was his cockpit and engine. I said, oh, and I fired. It must have been fifty shots that hit his wing and canopy. And of course it must have hit him because there was an awful lot of lead there. Then he spun around like this. [gestures downward spiral] Kept all the way to the ground because he was apparently driven to the far side of the cockpit and it rolled him, and he was going down. Later on, I came across a bunch of planes going down like this. There were Messerschmitts, [unclear], 1.14.19 P47s alternating. There was a big space there and I looked and there was one ME 109 there. I was coming around this way, and I saw he was way ahead of the American. So I pulled. This is where deflection comes. I pulled through him like this. [gestures maneuver] I used my gun sight. I put four ship lengths ahead of him and went down the line with him and open-fired. Then I rolled around and I watched him blow up. So that was where the deflection shot worked. I never got credit for that because they lost our gun film. I never got my films back. That happened a lot of times. Early in the war, our intelligence officers didn't have cameras at first in the P40s. We got some. We didn't have them then. We came back and we claimed this, claimed that. And they said, well, wait a minute, wait a minute. [They asked] You don't have a picture of it? [I said] No. [They asked] Well, did you see him crash? [I said] No, but I know he crashed. [They said] Well, we can't give you credit for that. Later on we got the cameras and we started showing them what was happening. He said, you guys really are doing all that. [laughs] But that's the way it was. That flight there, where I know I got two, I only got credit for one because my gun film on the second one was destroyed in processing. But I often wonder. I'm going to go back and try to see it again. There was a picture made called *Thunderbolt*. I saw it once and I realized later that I was seeing some of our planes and I think the camera unit guys must have swiped our film and then later on made a movie.

A friend of mine just became Lieutenant Colonel and he was working up in an office on the fifth floor somewhere in the Pentagon. He said, why don't you come

up and we'll go have lunch together. I went up there and he said, hey, before we go, let's come on in and I sat in the office with him. He said, what do you think you want to do next? I said, well, I think I'd like to be an attache or maybe military advisor or something like that. I'd been in the Pentagon quite a while then. Oh. He said, well, where do you want to go? Ankara [Turkey]? Lima? I said, why? He said, well, I'm in charge of that. Tell me where you want to go and I'll set you up. So I picked Ankara because I didn't have to go to language school. Before you knew it, I was with my family and off to Ankara for three years. I was on a diplomatic passport, which is first class. That was the way to go. That was why I got away with that planeload of people that I had when we got rid of the ice in the engine. I was taking them all to Germany. I got into Germany with them and their baggage on my passport. So my passport had a lot of advantages.

I was a military advisor to the Turkish Air Force and I taught them management. When I first got there, I went to Ankara. I flew into Greece and then took a plane out of there to Ankara. My family was with me. To put them in a guest house, they just built or bought this guest house on the main street at Ankara, Ataturk Boulevard. It was nice. It was nice. I met my new boss. He was a lieutenant colonel. But I found out I wasn't really going to be working with him. He was just nominally my overseer. A Turkish officer came in and [said] I'm so glad to meet you. I've been through statistical school and I can't wait for you to come and join us and he took me down to their headquarters. I didn't even ever come back to the American headquarters, except occasionally. I had an office there, but I worked with the Turks. I made the first NATO briefing. When they joined NATO, there were fourteen nations. They came and sent all their commanders to Turkey for a briefing. I helped the Turks prepare the briefing. They didn't know how to do it. We got a whole bunch of glass, plastic glass, and we made big sheets and we made big charts out of them. Each one of the officers had a chart to show their organization on. I showed them how to do that. It was funny, I was in there saying...because we were actually building stuff. We were putting the frames together. We had a big curtain. In fact, the curtains caught fire one day from the high powered lights up there. Someone almost tried to put it out with a can of gasoline. [laughs] Fortunately, we stopped them. But I said to this guy, Major Itak [?]. I said, Major Itak, I need a drill. And he yelled out the window, the American major wants a drill. I said, don't say that, they'll hate me. If I didn't say you wanted it, they wouldn't give it to me. He said, that's the way they operated. They washed my car every day. I drove down there. Every day they took my car and washed it. It wasn't bad. It was a nice thing, nice favor. There was one lieutenant colonel. He and I got together and went out and inspected the bases.

He was in operations of the Turkish Air Force. He and I flew the C-45. It was about a seven passenger [plane]. And we took turns landing to see who could make the tightest pattern. We checked our watch to see who got on the ground quicker than the other. He was a funny man. I said to him one day, Neha [?], his name wasn't Neha. One day you'll be chief of staff or head of operations and I'll be the attache and we'll really get together. He said, if you're the attaché, we'll never get together. The attaches were illegal spies. You're on our staff. That's different. So I realized I never thought about it, but that's how it was. Attache's always had to have an appointment to come. I just walked in and out anytime of day or night.

I was there when [Mustafa Kemal] Ataturk died. He was the one that founded the Republic of Turkey. He's the one that eliminated the Caliphate. He had been an officer with the Army, and he was with the winner of the battle. Have you ever seen that film about the Australians at Gallipoli?

[tape change]

...as part of the job? And then I saved twenty-five acres of it because I knew sooner or later we were going to use it for another purpose. And one day I was out at [unclear] talking to the commissioner, and he said, what's on your wishlist, Jerry? I said, I'm tired of driving people from Keeseville to Port Henry every day, there and back for their training. We were wasting two hours a day and two hours worth of gas a day. I want a training center in Keeseville, and then I want a string of residences up the valley. We have about seventy residences. Lately we've gone through what we call down right sizing. And we have houses with only four to six people, mostly four. Bigger, better houses. We had houses with thirteen before. Now we have more houses, fewer people. And the staff doesn't even live there. They come in and work in shifts. No staff is living in any house, which we used to have. So he said, you don't have the employment base for that. I said, well, listen, when we put Tampax into Willsboro, I had eight-hundred-seventy-five applicants for the first forty-five jobs. Half men, half women. All drivers were ready to commute. All have three years of good employment records. The next day, he called me on the phone. He said, you got it. So I built this training center over here. If you haven't ever seen it, drive in there on the way out. If you go down Dugway Road and out, you cross the Northway. Right after that is the entrance to the industrial park. Go in the back to the industrial park, you'll see the training center. It's worth looking at. It's worth seeing the inside. It cost five and a half million dollars. After we built it, the state approved it and they reimbursed us.

Now our budget in the ARC, like I said, I've been president up until two years ago. I've been president for thirty-five years because nobody wanted the job. All my board members take this job and that job. They don't want to be president. So I kind of fell into it. Two years ago a woman, who owned the Port Henry Oil Company, had a disabled child, down syndrome. And her husband had died. So I told her, you know, nobody ever wants this job. She said, oh, I wouldn't mind. So I kind of backed off for a minute and I said, yeah, why not? So the next time it came up, I didn't run. She ran for office and she's been the president for three years. But she has to get out of it now because we have a three-year term limit. She's a nice lady and she's doing a good job. My executive director is from India. He was in the Merchant Marines. When he graduated as a captain, they had to make him a special small uniform because he's so little. He's a little guy. He's got about five or six degrees. He's the most educated guy I know. And he's been the director for eighteen years. The former director that I hired was named Chuck Hayes [?]. And Chuck unfortunately got into internet gambling and he blew a million dollars. Not ours, his own, his kids' college money and all that. So he shot himself. I couldn't believe it. It was a sad day. So this other guy we hired about fifteen years ago, his name is Dipu Basu [?]. I said, I'm not going to hire anybody from outside. If you want this job, I want you to have it. So he took it. And it was never a mistake. It was the smartest move I ever made.

So I'm a member of the state board. I go to the state board meeting and I like doing that. I have so many friends down there because I've been down there for thirty-five years. I got one award from them. They give one a year. Outstanding Volunteer Award. That's a pin with a diamond. Oh, it is so...I've never had a diamond. It felt so good to get that. This year, all of us that have it, we always wear the pin. And we all know each other. [laughs] It's just an honor to have something like that.

So the only other thing I can tell you, I was an Eagle Scout and my best friend was an Eagle Scout. He was a few years older than I. He enlisted and he graduated in pilot training and he was out in the Pacific. He was at Rabaul. There was tremendous action at Rabaul. He was going in on his [Navy] PBV [Catalina] and landing and rescuing people. He rescued seven groups of people who were escaping off the island. Then they got him on the eighth time. He got the Congressional Medal posthumously. Boy, oh, boy. This is my daughter, Tara. [points at interviewer]

Mike: Mike

GE: Mike. Sorry. [points at another person]

Chris: Chris.

GE: Chris.

Tara: Hi.

GE: Sorry, Chris.

Tara: Should we get out?

GE: I didn't hear you.

Tara: I wasn't sure if we shouldn't be in here. I just have to get some water.

GE: She can be here as long as she doesn't sing. [laughs] I had a few other jobs. Weren't important. One thing that did happen was that when I first came here, I took Command of the 26th Military Airlift Squadron at Plattsburgh. A young man there was a captain, and he has a house in Keeseville. He bought this place. forty acres and a house. And the original post office from Keesesville is there. They bought the house and two barns packed with antiques. You couldn't see the building for the antiques. Plus what wa's in his own house, stuff from the Revolutionary War period. [He paid] seven-thousand dollars. That was when the housing market wasn't very good, I guess. So here he is. Now he is in my squadron. So I said, how can you live down there? How can you get...I was living on the base. How can you get here in time? He said, I can get there in time. I said, okay, tomorrow we'll time you. So he told me when he left the house, and we timed him and he made it. I said, okay, you can live there. Well, he turned out to be such an effective officer that I promoted him. Because you can get a hand in on promotions, you know, when they happen. You can make them happen. I promoted him twice. He came to Harmon with me, and he was head of my simulator. And he was so good at that job that I promoted him again. Then we both wound up in Dover, but he was flying another airplane. One of the slow ones, only goes to ten-thousand feet. But I was flying the big ones and I was going up to thirty-thousand. When they took off, usually we went at the same time. If he was ahead of me, I'd be behind him. I would catch up eventually, but I was behind him. I kept him advised of the weather on the route. Weather he couldn't see. I helped protect him on the route. When we both got out of service, I hired him as my deputy in the county, job in direction and development. Well, he turned out to be the best thing I could have done. Some other supervisor tried to get me to hire his relative. I said, if you don't take my man, you're not going to have me either. So he backed off. Well, when Fred, for example, was down at

Willsboro, he was the one that helped. We were both in on it. We rebuilt the Willsboro Dam. They had a lake there instead of a bunch of rocks. So they had a skating area, too. And then we made the state put in a fish ladder. Now they have an endless attraction. People come here to Willsboro just to see the fish ladder. The salmon every year come up and you see them jumping in. It's really pretty to watch. But he had a lot to do with that. He also built a map and connected all the snowmobile trails in the county.

[unknown female speaker]: In Essex.

GE: Essex. He passed away very unexpectedly with Lou Gehrig's disease. It turned out that about four in his family had also. Now it looks like one of his sons has got it. Doug Knight. He's in a music group, Three-Doug Night. Does all this country music. We had a big celebration at the school two weeks ago. Everyone in town was there and about eighteen musicians had volunteered their time. They had the auditorium full with two or three-hundred extra seats. It was full. So they built an audience into the dining hall. They had all of the performances come and repeated on that screen. We're all going to get a copy of that repeated screening. But the one guy that has Lou Gehrig disease was playing. He's just begun to feel it.

Mike: How old is he?

GE: Probably forty by now. His wife plays the bass fiddle. And Speedy Arnold from the Arnold Store, he plays the guitar. He was a master of ceremonies that night at the school.

Always a wonderful program. They had auctions, silent auctions, raffles, and fifty-fifty. They raised about ten-thousand dollars that night. The teachers in the school got together and gave him about twelve-hundred dollars just for him. But the other money was going to be divided between their family and the group that handles the illness. So it was pretty good. Boy, we're really digressing here, aren't we?

Mike: That's alright. Is there anything that you wanted to add that I didn't ask you? Anything that sticks out in your mind?

GE: Yeah, I claimed ten victories. I didn't get them for various reasons. [excuses given to him] Sorry, your film was destroyed in processing. Oh no, you had no gun camera film or you didn't have a witness? [I said] Forget it. You only live once. It's not going to change the world if I get more credit. I know what I did. I don't care. I could tell you about some remarkable escapes. [laughs]

I'll tell you one. When we flew out of Italy. I don't know if it's here or not. [looks through papers] There's an aerial picture. There's our [unclear] stands where the planes parked. See the little holes? The planes parked along there. The runway had to be here, like this. [shows an area of the photo] This was actually taken over there. A satellite photo. Anyway, this shows we were there. You can see part of that one just by looking at this picture on the wall. [points to picture hanging on the wall] You can see the pierced planking [Marston Mat]. I was taking off uphill one day. We were ninety feet higher or lower, depending on one end from the other. The end by the lake was ninety feet lower than the end up by the road. The P-47, when you went to raise the landing gear, you just picked this round knob handle and pulled it up. But they had a latch on them. It was like a can opener. If you didn't take that latch off, that was a problem. So we took the latches off. But one day I had another guy's airplane. I was taking off with three tanks, two wing tanks, each one one-hundred-sixty-five gallons, a seventy-five gallon belly tank. And I'm almost to the end of my uphill run and I realized I'm not going to get off the ground. The plane was not going to fly. It was losing power. So I jerked the handle. I'm going to belly it in. I cut my hand really badly here. [points to side of hand by pinky] The guy hadn't taken that latch off it. I didn't have a chance to get the latch or get the handle up at all. I just went barreling over the road and down this incredibly rocky hillside. The gear folded up and the thing got down to the bottom. From one-hundred-ten miles an hour, it's down now to finally at zero. I stopped and I looked and I got nothing but fire all around me, coming around under the wings and over. I unlatched everything, pulled the canopy back, leaped out and ran down the wing between the fire, which was going like this. [gestures his hands, from his hip to over his head] But of course I was pretty low. Got off the end and kept running until I got to a bunch of rocks. Then I heard the ammunition cooking off, so I hid behind some rocks. Meanwhile, the firemen came down the hill. They got fire bottles, but they couldn't bring a truck down the hill. They stood on the other side of the plane shaking their heads. I said, here I am over here. Boy, they couldn't believe it. That I got out of that sucker. I don't have a picture of that here, but there are pictures of it. What I have to do is there are two books that some of our guys have written and have pictures of things in the group. I have two crashes there. I'm going to get those pictures because I think I'd like to have them. I have that picture. The plane just destroyed. You wouldn't believe the way it looked.

And the other one was a P-51. I came back from a mission and I was leading the squadron, but I got hit by flak and .20 millimeter fire. So I said, you guys land. I'm going to check the plane out before I land. I checked it out and seemed okay.

Gear up and down. So the way we used to land was we dove for the runway and pulled it up at two-hundred feet and cut your throttle right here. [gestures just after bottom of lower arc]. That slowed you down. Came right around here, and here you dropped your gear [gestures just over top of upper arc] and here you dropped your flaps [gestures near bottom of lower arc] and you landed. So in other words, you can come back without power and still always make the runway because you're doing this special pattern. I landed twelve planes that way one day. We had been in, not Yugoslavia, over near Greece. We were up to forty-thousand feet, those bombers. Every time we turned, we lost five-thousand feet. I couldn't wait for the P-38s to get there so I could take my guys home. I didn't want to fly around that high all the time.

And this is digressing a little bit. We got across. I was looking, I was in the clouds and I was above them. We were flying about twenty-five-thousand and I couldn't see the sea. This was not good. We must have a headwind here. I was bad. We didn't know much then about jet streams, but that was probably what we had. I called the homing station called Big [unclear] and said, this is Mayfair three-eight. That was me. Heading and fixing a steer. They said, your steer is two-five-nine degrees, but can't give you a fix. You're off our charts. Well, that didn't feel good. Pretty soon we were out over the Tyrrhenian. It's not the Tyrrhenian Sea, it's terrible, I forget the name of the sea, but that's the sea anyway, the one that's on the east side of Italy. So we got about halfway across and everybody started running out of gas. Pretty soon we had twelve ships out of gas. We were all in a one-hundred-sixty-five mile an hour glide, all in formation, but nobody had any gas. But they were still high. Pretty soon we crossed Italy and there was our base. I cut the first four loose and they went down and made their pattern. I cut the next four loose, they went down and us, we went down, we all went. We had twelve ships on the runway that couldn't move off the runway. They just got to where they could go and stopped. That was some kind of a record. We never claimed it for a record. [laughs] It was neat that they sent this. [looks at photos] There's other pictures. That's how they get when they're ready to move. [points at a photograph]

We have so few left. The last reunion we had was in Portland, Oregon. It was a very beautiful and a very hospitable place. We took a trip. We rented a bus big enough for our group, which wasn't that many, I think eighteen. We went up Mount Hood and there was what had been built by Roosevelt's Triple Cs, the most beautiful resort you ever saw. The buildings had two foot square columns.

Everything was built to last. It was a beautiful place. So we enjoyed that and some other things about it. Well, we've come a long way here.

Mike: So what was your actual unit name?

GE: Checkertail Clan. 325th Fighter Group. I think I've got one thing here you might like to see. [pulls out a large envelope of papers] The reason I had this together was that I had to go down to...that is my grandson. [shows photo to interviewer, but not to the camera] That's him. Isn't that a cute picture? God almighty. We had another one of them. He's out on a trampoline and he's bouncing high enough to where he goes into a lotus position. And you see him in midair in lotus and it is a still picture. It's beautiful. This is my. Oh, here, this came. This came in one of these. Someone sent me these. Well, that's the day I got the DFC. That's my wing commander. Nicest man that ever lived. I came home one day. My uncle said he came home and he looked in the local paper and flipped it open and he looked. He said, there's my picture. [He thought] Oh, my God. It was on the obituary page. He almost fainted until he realized it just happened to be on that page right next to where the obituaries were. It was this article. I don't know if this would help you. You can tell me.

Mike: What is it?

GE: Something like. [looks at a paper] What's the date? Well, this is the 28th of September. Oh, no, that's my birthday. It's terrible. I thought this had a date on it. Yeah, the 31st of July. That's why we got here on the 1st of August. I was down there. My commander said, when are you leaving, Jerry? I said, tomorrow. Oh, he said, meet me at the club at three o'clock. When I got there, he had every officer on the base to say goodbye. That was nice. He was a good man. He's passed away now.

[looks through papers] These are just different schools and stuff. I went to a lot of schools. The Air Commander Staff, Industrial College of The Armed Forces. That's where they send all the congressmen when they're on the Armed Services Committees. They put them through that. So I went to a lot of schools. Is that what I was going to show you? Here. Remember I told you about the mission where we flew on the water, not over fifty feet? [shows an photo to interviewer] Well, that's our squadron and our victories that day. That's all the ones that got victories on that one day from our squadron. That's me there. Emme [Emmons] there. This Herky Green, he got six. I said, what's your secret, Herky? He said, [checks to see if anyone else is in the room] stick your guns up their butt and twist them. Blow them off, he said. [laughs] Well, I gotta mention this guy. This is

[unclear] Dean. He's the one who got shot in the butt. This is Emmons. He's the one. I saved the guy from shooting him on the boat. Dory, I just heard from him. [George Peter] Novotny, he got nine. [John L.] Brower, That's a nice picture. You see the wingspan of the jugs behind him. I thought I had another one. [looks through photos] There's a takeoff. Good picture of me taking off. The gear was just coming up. I thought I was going to wind up giving some of these pictures to the interviewer. I didn't know how that was supposed to be. This is me flying in Vietnam in a [Douglas Cargomaster] C-133. They sent a reporter that day because of the mission we were on that day. Can you visualize? Here is the Mustang that I told you about. The Mustang was...what I didn't tell you. I came back to the field and checked the plane out and I got around, got the gear up. [gestures how he was flying] I mean, I got the power off, got the gear down. I came here, put the flaps down, the plane did two rolls and crashed. One flap came down and the other didn't. I crashed right in front of the fire truck. They had me out in less than a minute. I had hit my head on the gun sight. So I was stupid. [waves his hands] Get out of here. The night before was when I said to them, you gotta wear your fire retardant suits all the time when we are taking off and landing. You can't have them hanging on the rail. That was the first day they had them on. That's why they got me out. I must have known something. [continues to look through photos] [laughs]

See the amber lenses, they're the best lenses you can wear flying. But you have to take them off for landing. They hurt your depth perception, but you can see everything in the sky. Look at how big that P-47 is. [shows photo to interviewer] I kind of like that one. That's my crew chief. [shows photo to interviewer] She's pretty small, if you figure it out. I came back with this P-47 one day. At the tail, in the low part of the tail, it had a round extension like it was from a turbine. All the gases came back from your engine and went into the turbine and it was kicked back to give you added boost. But this thing sticks down about this far. [gestures about a foot] I came back one day. My crew chief, after I landed, went up to my tent. My crew chief came up with a jeep and said, come down, I want you to see something. This round bucket was flattened and it was smeared with Messerschmitt paint. [laughs] Somehow in the middle of the combat, somehow we touched briefly. I'll tell you, he couldn't believe it, but there it was.

This is the 325th [shows photo of group's emblem] Oh, here. [shows photo to interviewer] This is the only picture I have like this. This is me here. And someone was for some reason looking at something. This was a target. See the line to the target? Well, this was coming out near Foggia [Italy]. This is actually

the map that we use for our briefings, where we drew our lines on. You can see how Italy runs this way. So when we went up there, we were going there that day. Did our big mission. Went out over the water up here and did two turns over the water. I don't know what he's doing. He just came up to ask a question, I guess.

[shows a photo of himself] This is bad. This is primary. I had a cigarette. You can cover it up. [shows other photos] This is when I was commander in Dover. And this is my daughter. She's in Kauai. That's my wife. This is the one [daughter] you just talked to, Tara. My son Ken, and my daughter. She lives near Atlanta now. That was when I was the commander of the unit. The last twenty years, I was a commander of something. This one is the commander of the First Military Air Squadron. The one with the P-47 I don't have. It's in one of those books, a magazine. I can't think of anything else. What else did I do here? [addresses question to someone off camera] Where else did I work?

[Unknown female speaker]: Texas. We had a gas station.

GE: Oh, yeah. One summer. There's a Sunoco down here. Across from it is a veterinary office. Over there used to be a gas station. So one summer, I bought the gas station and I hired a couple of kids to run it, plus one of my nephews. Because I was selling Texas refinery products. No, I was selling fuel filters and stuff like that. I wanted to see how they sold. Well, I found out. Yes, sell them. You sell them, but you show them. That's how you sell them. So I guarded the gas station, and at the end of the summer, I sold it back to them. I made a couple thousand dollars for the summer. [laughs] Oh, I think that I've used enough of your time.

Mike: No.

GE: I thought I had a picture here of my one thing I really like. [rifles through a drawer] I'll just show you one. I showed you that.

Mike: What was Conroy's first name?

GE: Oh, wait a minute.

[Tape change]

GE: Can you run? And he said, as fast as a leopard. And then he said, run. Well, this is part of the movie. The Turks are up on the hill. Every time a Turkish ship came down from Istanbul and it came down from the Black Sea, it came down through the Gulf. It collided with a Danish freighter, except for the four people on

the bridge who were saved. The ship sank and it was down maybe one-hundred feet. So, of course, everybody was alerted to this. We were listening to it on the radio and got reports on it. They sent a diver down, and the currents were sweeping him away from the ship. He finally got on the ship and he talked to them through a phone that he had. He said, the rescue ship is coming down from Istanbul. It will be here tomorrow and we'll rescue you tomorrow. They were happy. The next day, by the time the rescue ship got there, the ship had washed off the ledge it was on and was another one-hundred feet down and laid on its side. A diver had to go down and tap on them and say, we're sorry, but we're unable. We are not able to rescue you. They didn't have enough equipment on hand soon enough to do anything. They tapped a message out and said, tell our friends and our family that we're proud and happy to die for Turkey. They all died, eighty-nine of them. The pride of Turkish, you know, all these young military men. One night, I was going up on a ship coming from southern Turkey back up to Istanbul. I was going to drive home from there. I had my car on the boat. We were all in the lounge. It was terribly smoky. Everyone was smoking. This one general got up. He saluted. He said, they said the name of the submarine, and they all stood up and saluted the submarine crew. It was pretty touching. Did I say the name of it? Because I think I forgot it. But it was a sad day for Turkey and for them.

I spent a lot of time with them. The Turkish sent me to England. One time they had a standardization conference for NATO. Of course, there were all these reports being sent and multilingual reports, so they were trying to establish a system. So Turkish sent me as a Turk, they paid me with lira and they sent me as a Turk. I sat in this meeting up there for a week, and we made two propositions. That they have a statistical officer assigned to every NATO country to monitor the reports to be sure they knew what they were reporting on and to have the reports only in three languages. All of them. I meant seventeen or eighteen nations involved. The American officers that were there said, Edwards, don't do that. We can't send all that many statistical officers there. I said, you're talking to a Turk. I can't answer you. I won't answer you. I'm a Turk. [laughs] Just for fun. But what I was telling him was that I was working with the Turks and not for them. And that's how it was. So we jotted. It all happened the way we wanted it. When the Turks came in, when all of the people came in from the various NATO countries, all these brigadier generals and air marshals, and the Turkish commander was there. His name was Muzaffar Goksenin. And he was a big man, and he sat on one big easy chair and put his feet up on the other. He was half asleep during this briefing.

Oh, there was another briefing. He said, Major Edwards, in the back, he's the one that helped us with this briefing. And this British Air Marshal said, oh, yes, I recognize the pattern, The American pattern, he said [laughs] Later on, when we created the first readiness report, what it did was evaluate ten functions of the Air Force, night flying, instrument flying, number of personnel and so on. The ten units that you evaluated, you gave a score to from zero to ten. Well, they had nothing ready yet. This was just a briefing to tell them what it was going to be. We sent the report out in the fields and briefed the tech school on it and the officers college about it, and they were ready to go. I said, now, this is the first report, but remember, it's going to be better. It's going to change. So the general looked at that and went [said] zero, one, zero, one. He said, Edwards, it will improve, will it not? I said, yes, my general. He said, okay, [he went] back to sleep. But he was quite a man. He ran for governor later of Izmir. He was a very popular man in Turkey.

I remember one time General [Hoyt Sanford] Vandenberg came in on his last trip around the world. He was then the commanding general of the Air Force. They were all on the roof of the Turkish headquarters. We watched some planes land or take off over there. The P-47 is to celebrate the general watching them. One guy almost crashed, but he didn't. It was pretty close. Everyone took a deep breath on that, you know. So then he said to Vandenberg, Vandenberg said. I'm trying to remember the question. Oh, he said, well, how did you like our airplanes? How did you like our formation? He said, very good, my general. But he said, if you don't start getting more night flying and machine gunning, I'm going to take those planes away from you. So that put the lesson hard right to him. But that was what he said to him. I talked to his sergeant that was accompanying him. He said, I feel so bad every night he's down in the kitchen. He's throwing up and he's having pain. He was dying then. He was a great man. When I was in the Pentagon, I used to brief him about every other day. I was in charge of operational statistics. Like in Korea, I briefed him on all the Korean information. It was interesting. The Navy had carriers out there and every day we got the report on where the carriers were and they said, no sorties, lack of wind force. No sorties, lack of wind force. Because they had to have twenty-five knots water speed, twenty-five knots of wind before they could actually get off the carriers. So that was a limitation on their forces. But they kept claiming combat missions when they had booze runs into Tokyo. [laughs] Perhaps, I shouldn't tell you that. What we carried, like our airplanes on our bases, you might have seventy-five percent in commission or eighty or sixty-five. They always had one-

hundred percent. Because any carrier, any plane on the carrier that wasn't ready, was below decks. They just counted the ones on the deck that were ready. They got away with one-hundred percent in commission every day. Oh, my. Vandenberg was a good man to brief, though. He was patient and I enjoyed that.

I wrote a book about the Korean Air War. The first year of Korea. I titled it *Korea Year One*. And I've always wanted to go back to the Pentagon and get it. It must be declassified by now. I'd like to get a copy. Because one of the middle pages, I had a double page made and had the artist draw an American jet shooting down the Russian jet, the MiG. It was a beautiful picture. The artist put his own name on the plane. Here you had this MiG blowing up and the American plane shooting him down. So it's there if I can go get it. I tried to go to Korea and there was another guy working the same section I did, and he had flown Mustangs in World War II. And I had. The other guys had. So we volunteered because they said they wanted statistical officers who were Mustang pilots. He and I volunteered. This was like a career move for me. I intended to get to Korea and get to fly the MiG killers. That was what I wanted to do. And it was a career move. But all of a sudden the general said, I'm going to Korea and check things. They went to Korea and came back and said they don't need them. So he took us off orders.

Mike: Is this after the war now?

GE: This was during the Korean War. That made me angry, but I couldn't change it. I found out later that this other guy and his wife lived next door to the general. She cried at him all the time about him going to Korea. So the general got tired of it and took us both off the orders. We were both on the same order. Anyway, life's little disappointments. The way I got to Vietnam later, I was at Newfoundland and I was Deputy Wing Commander of the Air Base at Newfoundland, Ernest Harmon Air Force Base. By then I was a lieutenant colonel. One day they came in from SAC [Strategic Air Command], a bunch of colonels and had a classified briefing. The staff went up there for a briefing. He said, you're closed, here's where you're going. He threw the orders on the table. That violated a treaty we had with Canada. We had a treaty with them. All the Newfoundlanders there worked for us, drove the plows, worked in town, did all the jobs on the base, ran the hospital, ran the theater. We had beautiful homes there, very nice homes up on the hill. I found out I was going to Dover, Delaware. I asked if I could call. I called and I got the director of personnel. [I said] this is Colonel Edwards. I want you to know that you're getting eighty-seven new officers. This base is closing. He said, boy, thanks a lot, I'll tell the general right away. He told the general and then the vice wing commander said, when do you want to go? I said, I'm going

tomorrow. He said, you can't go tomorrow. We still have to close this base down. I said, I've got the close down procedures right here. I've got them all written up in advance. It tells you what to do with each crew, when to take them off the line, how to faze down, nothing to worry about. But he still didn't want me to go. So I talked to the flight surgeon and he told him my wife had to go if she's pregnant. You can't keep her here. So that was the end of that story and we went to Dover.

We got to Dover and I met the general. He thanked me for giving them an advanced warning about the change of personnel. He said, you know Colonel Edwards, I don't know what I'm going to do. I got eighty-seven new officers here. I don't know where I'm going to sit you. I said, tell you what, get checked out in the bird and let me know when you're ready. The bird I had never seen was C-133. There's a picture of it in there, you can see it. Really the biggest aircraft in the inventory except for the C-5 which had a wire fuselage. But it really wasn't longer than the C-133. We carried eighteen-thousand pounds of fuel across the wings. It was two-hundred feet long and a two-hundred foot wingspan. I went out on a snowy day with this guy and got in the nose dock to look at the airplane. I'd never seen it. I looked around and said, where is it? He said, look up. I looked up about fourteen feet. The nose of the C-133 was up there. I said, holy moly. Then I got a look at the rest of it. Incredible. I flew it for six-thousand hours in Vietnam. The year before I took that squadron over, they had lost five airplanes and eighty-seven crew members. They always had extra crews on the board [unclear].

2.11.09 And they didn't know where. They had no inkling. They had no survivors, nothing to say how they lost them. I said, I've got this squadron now. I want you to know we're going to find out what happened to those other planes, and we're not going to lose anymore. We're not going to hurt anymore. So I was lucky. Five years, I never had an airplane scratched, except one where a helicopter landed nearby it. Its blade went by and clipped its wingtip when it was spinning. That was the only thing that happened. One of the planes from Travis Air Force Base went in at Okinawa and crashed after takeoff. The crew escaped. One was injured. They got the plane up out of the ocean and they found out what had happened to it. Then they realized that probably was what happened to the others. Way back in the fuselage, almost to the end was an electrical bus for propellers. All four propellers went through the same bus. What happened to that crew that day was that the bus went. They lost four engines at once. It was too much to handle. The whole thing went out to Vandenberg Air Force Base. The test pilots out there got to work on it. First of all, they came up with a new procedure. We had to start carrying chutes. We never had them at war, but we had to start carrying them underneath our seats. [laughs] And then we had to all go through a checkout

period. If we were in a plane that experienced that failure, by then we should know how to identify it. We were to find the nearest visual base, VFR, and then, providing we could find one, if not, I know what you would have done then. [gestures procedure] Then fly over the base at five-thousand feet until you get to the center, and then cut all your engines, drop your gear, drop your flaps, and start a diving turn to the right, come out around here at twenty-five-hundred feet, turn inbound, come across the end of the runway, and touch down on the number two marker. We had to do that two or three times before we were cleared to go off base again. It was pretty interesting. Actually, it wasn't that difficult as long as you knew how to fly the airplane. But it was an interesting thing to do. The reason you didn't want to have engines. When you had that four engine, four prop failures, if you advanced the throttle, it overspeeds. If you retarded the throttle, it quits. So you couldn't touch the throttle. When you had that condition, you had to leave it. It'll hold what you got as long as you leave it. As soon as you moved the throttle, you were wiped out. The crew wasn't able to catch on to that, that fast. It was too bad. I enjoyed flying that airplane. I don't know if I was supposed to talk about that or not.

Mike: That's fine.

GE: Anyway, my great grandson, that's this boy here with the military uniform. He's in the ROTC. Air Force. ROTC. That's his sister over there. They both are. He's graduating this year. He's going to go to ROTC college and he's already got his pilot's license. My daughter and her husband paid for him to get his pilot's license. I went down there last year and I watched an award ceremony. He won every award they had. It must have been twenty-one of them. There wasn't an award they mentioned that he didn't have. In the end, we have two more awards, they said. I said, what are they? I said, well, we're going to make him deputy wing commander. One other promotion they gave him that he could have as a student. So he got those two, as well as all the other awards. I still remember when he was a little boy, he pointed at airplanes all day long and he knew all the airplanes. He's a good man. It's nice to have a great grandson. Even at my age, it's nice to have a great grandson that old. He's going to be a pilot and a second lieutenant next year. Well, when he gets out of college. It'll be four years, I guess. The daughter is planning on getting in. She's planning on a career. And that's my other grandson, the surfer. Look at that wave.

Mike: Where is that?

GE: That's in Kauai. That wave down here, you can almost see the bottom of the sea there because the wave sucked it away. I said, what happened to the

photographer? He said, oh, she got knocked on her butt. He's a wonderful surfer. I used to watch them all surf over there. I go to Hawaii every year. One of the kids that surf with them all the time, I met her again. She's the girl who had an arm bit off by the shark. Boy, there's a girl. There is a girl with guts. She has a handle screwed to her surfboard now, and that's how she surfs. She goes out and hangs on to that until she's out there. She doesn't wear a prosthesis. She goes in all the surf contests without a prosthesis. She has no arm there at all. Her family and she were going out paddling one morning, a place called...right off of Kauai there, and she had a wristwatch on. And suddenly the shark came by, swiped her whole arm off and took it with him.

[tape change]

When I got back from Vietnam, I was stationed here. I moved up here. I found a home. I wanted to find something not in New York City or Yonkers, where I was born. I had lived up here when I was in the service. I loved it here. I saw this farm. In fact, I never knew I was going to live here. I drove down Route 9N and wondered what it would be like to live here. Two years before I retired, my wife and I drove up. We started way down below Ticonderoga, stopped and looked for farms or property or whatever. Finally one day I got up as far as Keeseville. I met a guy that had been one of my officers. In fact, I'd promoted him twice. Good man. Wonderful guy. He had a dentist and his wife and another couple for dinner. The dentist is the doctor in Keeseville. He was the dentist during the Battle of the Bulge. And one day he was driving around in his ambulance and he took nine prisoners. They surrendered to him. [laughs] How many dentists do you know that have taken nine prisoners?

Mike: What was his name?

GE: [Harmon T.] LaMar. Dr. LaMar is a dentist in Peru. His father is in Keeseville. Tom Lamar [Harmon's father], by the way, he's a painless dentist. He's incredible. Incredible. I can't advertise him, but he's wonderful. Where were we?

Mike: Retirement. Yeah. So we came here, and that night there was another guy there who said, oh, there's a farm over there by Clintonville. They want to sell that. So we went over the next day to see it, in the rain. I went to his back door and a woman had a .45 revolver hanging up there and of course a telephone cord around her neck. Every place in the house she went, she plugged herself in. I said, I understand this place is for sale. She said, yeah, he's selling it. He just moved

here because he wanted to hunt and she didn't want to be here. She's afraid to be out here in the country. To her, she lived in Keeseville. Probably just went to a bar some night and hung out. I checked everything and it took me a while to accomplish it, but I bought it and then moved up here. The first couple of months my sister-in-law and her husband lived here before we got here. Planted a little garden and helped to get the place ready for us a little bit. She's passed away now, but she was here then. Hi, sweetie. [greeted someone off camera] That's my granddaughter. They live here. She's the head of her class. She and her brother do really well in school. There are her Readers and Leaders. [points to something off camera]

[tape change]

Bought the farm. We built the first barn there. I got a cement mixer from a neighbor, gas driven and talked to a friend about a few things about building and we built that barn. It is still there. It's been thirty-five years. It's seventy-two feet long, thirty-six feet wide. There are twelve stalls. [greeted someone off camera]. Hi, Eleanor, these are my friends. You can take that with you if you want. She draws all the time and sings. I said, what are you singing? I'm not singing. She sings all the time. I said, that will happen. I've got a couple of singers in the family. So she's libel to wind up the same way. I don't know. So anyway, I came and I did actually move here. I took a job selling for Texas Refinery. I never saw the product, but they sounded good. I sold roof coatings and roof sealers and all that kind of stuff. I went to a meeting one time in Vermont. They had a big sales meeting up there. They had two classes, one for smokers and one for non-smokers. That was the beginning of the end. I was a non-smoker by then. I remember the guy got up and said, look at Edwards here. He said he's never even seen the product and he's already selling more than the rest of you. Well, I didn't know that, but I found out. Then later on I got to work for an insurance company, Combined Insurance. They sell a very inexpensive policy with very high benefits.

Mike: I have it.

GE: You know about it?

Mike: I know. I am a member.

GE: I sold it for five years, and I sold six-thousand policies a year. Because I found I could sell. I went to the school in Albany, and I believed what they told me. I came up here beating on the side door of my car. Couldn't wait to get to Plattsburgh and start selling insurance. Ridiculous. But I broke all the records as

a salesman. I don't mind saying it, because it really happened. But I had a problem. In the end, I was made a manager. That helped. It gave me higher value for each [one] and also value from each salesman. But my manager wouldn't promote me beyond that because then he'd lose me. I didn't realize that I was a big part of his income, so he wouldn't promote me. So I left. I was with him for five years. I went to Chicago one time, and W. Clement Stone was the president. What a fireball he was. He wrote this book along with a guy that [wrote] *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. In Chicago, he gave a big speech at the big auditorium. All the salesmen in the country were practically there. He said, you know, they're giving away some nice prizes on this thing. I hope I get some of them myself. And I laughed, really laughed. Then he took five of us into town in Chicago. Go down the street selling and renewing. That's the word. You sell. If they have it, you renew it. If they don't have it, you sell it. So we stopped by this big drugstore. He said, who wants to go in? This guy said, I'll go in. He said, okay. And he started in. As the guy walked into the store, he said, "Get Excited!" [laughs] That was the whole thing for him. He said. I wake up every morning, I look at myself in the mirror and I say, I'm healthy. I feel happy. I feel terrific. And that's how he made his day. His mother was with him when he first started selling in Chicago. He took his role of policies, went to this big office building, went to the top floor and worked his way down. By the time he got to the ground, he sold all his policies. He did that two or three days in a row. [He said] I don't know, I can't sell enough. I know. I'll multiply myself. He put an ad in the paper for salesmen, and that's how the whole thing started. Now it's one of the biggest groups in the world. I had a meeting with them in Albany one time. We had a big awards meeting. All the salesmen in New York State were there. Must have been a hundred people in the room.

Anyway, back in the Pentagon, after the one time when I came back from Germany, I decided I better get some more college education. So I went to the woman in charge of the education office. [She said] take these five or six tests here and then we'll see what you can do. I got one-hundred on all the tests. She said, you've done well. You've earned two years of college right now. I got two years of college credit just by taking those tests, which I didn't know initially. So then I went to the University of Maryland at night in the Pentagon and I got my degree in municipal service type stuff. A few years later I was in Barksdale. I was in a special planning group in Barksdale [Air Force Base] for SAC and they said, do you want to be evaluated for more education? I said, sure. So they [the education office] came back to me. This was the education office. They said, you're eligible for management or international relations. I said, well,

international relations is what I want. I spent most of my time overseas. I'm best in that area. So they sent me into management. I went to the University of Pittsburgh and got my advanced degree in advanced management, which turned out to be pretty good because you worked at all these companies and you actually played a part in the company. You did projects for the company which helped them. So you weren't just a dead leg out there. The University of Pittsburgh, they called it The Tower of Learning. It's a forty story building, beautiful. All around the square at the bottom they had a classroom all over the place. Each classroom was furnished with the furniture from the country that it represented. It was pretty neat, very nice. One thing I found out in a building I was in, you saw all the plumbing, it was visible. They forgot the plumbing until it was done. All the plumbing is external to the walls. [laughs] Would you believe that? It really was. Pittsburgh was nice. I liked it. We had a big flood out there. We lived in Carnegie and the Johnstown flood was repeated that year. We had four feet of water all in Carnegie. But I didn't have a problem. I was up on a hill. Except going to town, you had to go through the water. But I liked Pittsburgh. What did I do? Oh, yeah, I came here and I was director of development. I was supposed to be head of social services. But they had someone else they wanted for that, so they made me director of development. That, I liked. I managed to get a few companies going there. Got a load of stuff done. Maybe one of the good things was...

[tape change]

The circus or the rodeo. The people always came and they thought I was Jackie Coogan. Said they wanted my autograph. I wasn't Jackie Coogan. but even when he was old enough to be old and I was, we still looked alike. [sorts through a box of photos] It's just one picture I want you to see. We made the World's Miniature War Birds. And they made this twice in Florida. We won Top Gun. We beat one-hundred other airplanes for Top Gun with this airplane model of mine. It's a six foot model and it flies by battery.

Mike: What's it made of?

GE: Plywood and other things. This guy. This guy built it twice. I mean we showed it twice. He's a winner though. He's a wonderful model pilot. Here he is. [sorts through a box of photos] I'm sorry, there was just one picture here I wanted to show you. That's a good shot of the plane. [shows photo to interviewer] It could drop bombs, drop tanks, and fire machine guns. I have a friend, Tom Lamar, the dentist. He makes cockpits for these airplanes. He makes machine guns for them. He sells stuff all over the world to modelers. There it is on the

ground. See, all the people had these little...wow, I'm just wasting your time now. I was just going to show you a picture that had all my eight kids in it.

[tape change]

GE: [shows and talks about photographs and paintings hanging on the wall]

[shows articles and photos]

Video has no sound.