Joe Matlock Oral History Interview

PETER RIESZ: Today is September 19th, 2002. This is Peter Riesz interviewing for the Military Order of World Wars. We're interviewing Mr. Joe Matlock at his home here in Victoria, Texas. It's 9:00 in the morning. Good morning, Joe.

JOE MATLOCK: Good morning to you, sir.

PR: How are you doing today?

JM: Top shelf.

PR: Good. I hear you had a birthday yesterday.

JM: Yes.

PR: Well, that's appropriate.

JM: Well, if I'd known I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself.

PR: Let's just start off with bare basics. What is your full first name?

JM: Joe Mallory Matlock.

PR: How do you spell Mallory?

JM: M-A-L-L-O-R-Y.

PR: Okay. And Matlock is...

JM: M-A-T-L-O-C-K.

PR: Good. Where were you born, Joe, first of all?

JM: Born in Red Oak, Texas. It's in Ellis County. Waxahachie is the county seat.

PR: Okay. Red Oak?

JM: Red Oak.

PR: Is it a going town these days or one of those communities that sort of dried up?

JM: Well, it's not that far out of Dallas. And all that country's growing up. Lancaster just to the north of it's unbelievably large. And all that area's practically part of Dallas now.

PR: Suburbs. Oh yeah, I've seen the name on the expressway, as a matter of fact, coming south on something, marked on 37 -- on 35, I think. What was your birth date, just to...

JM: September the 18th, 1916.

PR: Okay. And where did you go to elementary school and high school?

JM: I started out in Fort Worth. And then I lived with my grandparents down in Whitman and then later on went to -- he was in the farming business, and later on went to school in Tyler. And then I came back to Fort Worth and was in junior high and then graduated from North Side High in Fort Worth.

PR: North Side High, Fort Worth?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Okay. What year did you graduate there?

JM: In...

PR: Take the cobwebs back.

JM: Lord have mercy. Let me think about this. It was 1934, I guess.

PR: Oh, okay. What did you do after high school then?

JM: Well, I went to college for a little bit. And then...

PR: Where was that at?

JM: A&M.

PR: A&M? Okay.

JM: Then, the love bug grabbed me bad. And so, I married. And my wife and I had been married a little over 64 years when I lost her.

PR: Golly, that’s great.

JM: Well, we both must have been doing something right to stay married that long.

PR: Yeah. When did she pass away? What year?

JM: She passed away in March 19th. This coming March will be four years.

PR: Oh, okay. So you would have been married 68 years then?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Golly, that’s quite a record. And then, how did you get involved or introduced into the military? Tell me a little bit about that.

JM: Well, in 1933, of course, the Depression was on full bore. And I got first involved in the military joining the National Guard, the 36th Division there in Fort Worth, and first as a member of Headquarters Company 144th Infantry and then later on went into Third Battalion Headquarters of the 144th, still there in Fort Worth. During that interim, privates were making a dollar a day. And that's when the government cut it back 25 percent payroll and cut it back to 75 cents a day. And of course, the National Guard weren't there every day except when we went into camp. And when you went to camp down here at the other side of...

PR: [Round wood?]

JM: No, down here on...

PR: Oh, Palacios.

JM: Palacios.

PR: Oh yeah, Camp Hulen.

JM: Camp Hulen, that's correct.

PR: Well, you probably mustered with the group from Victoria here than in your summer camp.

JM: No, sir. We were from Fort Worth.

PR: Yeah, but these guys here went over to Hulen, too, in their summer.

JM: Well, everybody in the state of Texas, you know...

PR: In the whole 36th?

JM: even had a little bit of aircraft people that also came in.

PR: Really? Oh, okay.

JM: And they had the big parade grounds out there. And they had (inaudible) tents. And the first year or two I went down there was just over the dirt. But then later on they poured some concrete slabs and so on. But, when I was in the battalion headquarters, I made staff sergeant. And the only ranking enlisted officer we had was the first sergeant. And I was the staff sergeant. And then we had some buck sergeants and a few corporals and one or two PFCs and that sort of thing. And then, later on, it started building up, you know, little by little. And it looked like it was pretty obvious you're going to --

PR: Be at war?

JM: -- see war before too long. So I made the application to go into the cadet program. And as a matter of fact, when they hit us at Pearl Harbor, the next Monday, two of my brother-in-laws and I went to Dallas to try to get into something. And the oldest brother-in-law had been a Marine. But he had a child, and he had to get special commendation from the commandant of the Marine Corps to reenlist. And he reenlisted as a tech sergeant and finally wound up as a gunny sergeant. And the younger brother went

into the navy. And he wound up in Cuba on submarine patrol in an airplane. And I got into the cadet program.

PR: When did you enter active duty, right on that Monday? They take you right away or...

JM: No, no. There were so many people, they -- as a matter of fact, they didn't even swear us in, or didn't swear me in, at least. They were just overwhelmed with people, you know? They just couldn't handle it.

PR: This was on December 8th?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Next day, yeah. When did they actually call you up then?

JM: It was about a month or two later. And they sent me notice to come over to Dallas and swore me in and then cut me loose again and said, "We'll notify you when to report." And I've forgotten. It's been so long ago. But it was about a month later.

PR: Yeah. Well, that should be on your DD-214. We'll look at that.

JM: And so, went over to Dallas, and they had put us on a railroad car. And we wound up, rode all night. And the next morning we got into San Antonio, and they loaded us up on some trucks. And we went out there to Kelly Air Base. And that's where we started the -- that's where we started our examinations. Just the fact that you put in for pilot

doesn’t mean that you got it, you know, when you passed all those examinations and so on.

PR: So all of your group had some testing first to find out your aptitude and ability?

JM: Yes, sir. And that took several days. And then, by the grace of God and good luck, why, I managed to get into a pilot program.

PR: Yeah. So they call that cadet?

JM: Aviation cadet.

PR: Aviation cadet?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: And then, within that, you got into the pilot’s program?

JM: Yes, sir. So after they certified me eligible for pilot training, I had about -- I guess, about a month or two later we went out to Ballinger for primary training. That was the deal there.

PR: Yeah. Ballinger Field?

JM: It was Bruce Field.

PR: Oh, Bruce Field?

JM: At Ballinger.

PR: Okay. What time would you say that was? Are we getting onto the summer of ’42?

JM: It was in the fall.

PR: Fall of ’42?

JM: Yes, sir. And we were flying PT-19s.

PR: Primary trainer 19. Was that that...

JM: That was the low-wing monoplane powered with a Ranger 175-horse engine. But they had the thing wired back on account of the fuel shortage.

PR: Really?

JM: They had it wired where actually you couldn't get full-bore speed on it. But, it was a great acrobatic aircraft. It was great.

PR: Did that have two cockpits in it?

JM: Yes, sir, fore and aft. And they talked to you over the phones, you know?

PR: Oh, you have a phone connection?

JM: Well, yeah, those earphones. He could talk to you, but you couldn't talk to him.

PR: Oh. Did he sit in the front or the back?

JM: He'd sit in the back.

PR: In the back? Was it an open cockpit?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: How did they start you out? How many made pilot out of your group? How many were in your -- half of them, a quarter of them? Were they pretty selective?

JM: Well, when they lined you up there and swore you in, they said, "Look to your left and look to your right, because

two of you will be missing before you finish your training." Real encouraging. And so, at any rate, they had check rides. In primary training, as I recall, you had something like about 125 hours, something like that.

PR: Okay. Would you have classes at the same time?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: Part of the day?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Would you fly every day, do you think, Joe, or twice a day, or...

JM: Well, if the weather was good, you'd fly. You'd go to classes in the morning one day and fly in the afternoon. Then you'd fly in the morning and go to class in the afternoon, the way they had it broke up. They had two different classes there. And when we first went out there we were the junior class.

PR: What was your -- you gave me the class number before. What was it?

JM: I'm Class 43D.

PR: 43D they called you? How many in that class?

JM: January-February-March-April was the way they did it, and then the year. So that meant I'm supposed to graduate in April, which we did graduate in April 22nd of '43.

PR: After all the way through?

JM: That was when I was at Ellington.

PR: Okay. How many in your class at 43D to start, would you guess? 50? 100? 25?

JM: Well, some of those people were sent out to California. And the group I was in happened to stay here in Texas to start out with. And we went from Ballinger to Randolph Field.

PR: When did that happen?

JM: That would have been in the latter part of November.

PR: Okay. End of November, you finish your primary at Ballinger then and move on to Randolph?

JM: Yes, sir. And then we went from there directly to Randolph Field.

PR: Okay. And what did they call that training at Randolph?

JM: Well, that was basic training.

PR: Basic?

JM: And my class, I was over on the east stage over by Schertz on that side because Randolph wasn’t paved at that time. It was just tarmac. And we slid off down that hill towards the creek down there on that side.

PR: Really?

JM: Oh, yeah.

PR: You really had to watch it then?

JM: Oh, it was a doozy at night flying. When they first started that, I just didn't see any way that you could survive that.

PR: Golly. Oh, let's go back to Ballinger a second. How about when you did your solo? You remember the day you did your solo and what your feelings were that day, how you found out you were going to do it?

JM: I believe that I sent a telegram from there to my wife saying something to the effect that they're shoving me out of the nest today. I'm kind of under the impression it was around Armistice Day, somewhere along in there. I'm not entirely sure.

PR: Of '42?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Did you know you were going to solo that day? Or did he just go up and say, "You take it over now" or...

JM: Well, your flight instructor would decide when you were ready. And normally they'd solo you in about eight hours. I believe some of them may have soloed in seven hours. I soloed, I had about nine hours. I was a slow study.

PR: Slow and steady. That's a lot better sometimes.

JM: So we flew around there a little bit and made two or three landings. And we got down at the end of the thing to take off again. And he climbed out and said, "It's all yours."

PR: Wow.

JM: I thought, “Lord have mercy.”

PR: What are your feelings then?

JM: Well, I’ve done it before. I’ll just play like he’s back there in the backseat and act like I knew what I was doing.

PR: Did you make a good landing?

JM: Yeah, it wasn’t bad. All of my landings were semi-controlled crashes as far as I was concerned. But it was good enough to get by. And then they had regular -- these were all civilian instructors. But they had some regular Air Force people there, or Air Corps then. And they’d give you check rides. They’d give you a check ride at 40 hours and 80 hours and then just before you finish the thing up. And of course, you were more or less like a prisoner, you know. It was yes, sir, no, sir, no excuse, sir, and so on and so forth.

PR: How did you live at Ballinger? Were there barracks there, or were you in tents?

JM: Yes, there were barracks. I’ve been to Ballinger a few times since. And they had one hangar left that they used to turn it into a local field. But, then there was one or two of the buildings there. But I believe all the barracks were already torn down.

PR: Was that a paved airfield or just a grass strip?

JM: No, it was grass. And it was out of Ballinger to the southeast about three or four miles out of town. And Henry Wolff, you know, that writes for the paper, he lived at what they call Dry Ridge, which was right adjacent. The farm was right adjacent there to the airport. And we was flying right over his house when we'd take off to the north.

PR: He was probably a little squirt then.

JM: Well, he told me one time he and one of his friends would run out there with bb guns and shoot.

PR: Oh well -- part of the battle, I guess.

JM: Oh, yeah.

PR: And when you went to Randolph, what kind of plane were you flying at Randolph?

JM: Flying the BT-14. That was a North American. And the BT-14 looked just exactly like the AT-6, but it was 450 horsepower and the AT-6 was 600. And the only difference was it had -- the AT-6 was rigged up for machine guns and had the retractable gear. The 14 had fixed gear on it.

PR: Okay. Was it a single cockpit?

JM: No, it was a double cockpit.

PR: So you still had an instructor?

JM: Yeah. It had -- oh yeah, they sure did.

PR: Was it a closed-in cockpit?

JM: Well, it was one that would slide back and forth.

PR: Oh yeah, and a single wing I'm sure.

JM: When you first started -- yes, sir, low-wing. And when you first started flying you had to slide that cockpit cover back until they decided to cut you loose and you're flying solo. And then you could close the cockpit. They had some good reason for it, and I guess I knew at the time what it was. But I've forgotten now.

PR: I'm sure you had your parachute with you.

JM: Oh yeah, sure did. In fact, I always used an extra pillow in there so I could get full rudder control on the airplane because I'm kind of short-legged. But, it was a great airplane.

PR: And what kind of flying did you do there -- more cross-country?

JM: Well, yes. We started doing cross-country, some night flying.

PR: Oh, some night flying?

JM: And formation flying. And the first flying we did at night, there was no runway lights. They just had gas-wing flares that they'd set out. And we made three or four of those. And they'd stack the airplanes up about 500 feet above each other and bring them in one at a time, basically. And then, they finally got all the flare pots

down entirely except just two at one end. And then, finally they did what they call battlefield landings and had no lights at all. You couldn't use your landing lights or anything else, just fly and touch it down.

PR: Yeah. How do you get a perception of where the field is?

JM: Well, of course they had lights on the field and so on. And you could kind of keep your perspective with (inaudible).

PR: Okay, yeah. That was a good test of how good you were.

JM: And you knew which way you were supposed to be flying with your compass, you know, and so on. But it was just, like I say, I didn't see how anyone could survive that, period.

PR: And you did.

JM: Well, Lord. In the entire there at Ballinger we lost one pilot, also lost an instructor.

PR: From a crash?

JM: What the instructor do, or they don't if the cadet will do it, you had to wind those PT-19s up with a handle and engage the starter. And then, when you got the engine started, whoever's out there and wound the thing up was supposed to come down the edge of the wing and keep your hand on the edge of the wing and stay away from that prop. And then, had a place at the back of the second cockpit that this thing fit in with a ratchet deal to put your

handle. And I'll be damned. This instructor, apparently he was thinking about something else. And he started that thing, and he just turned around and walked right into that prop. He was beheaded in the accident. It was a mess. And then we had one pilot that, after he was soloing, no question he was shining his rind out there someplace, you know, and horsing around. And he let the plane get away from him. And he cracked up about 15 miles away from the field. We had an Army pilot. It was one of the check pilots out there at the base. And he had a little habit of flying around out there. And he'd see some cadet horsing around with an airplane. And he'd rope his airplane over upside down and fly by you upside down. He was quite a fellow.

PR: Talk about horsing around, eh? Did you have a feeling you were pretty hot pilots, all of you?

JM: Oh yeah. They had the old saying, "Hot spaghetti, I'm a flying cadetti."

PR: That's a good expression. Now, did you still have classes while you were at Randolph?

JM: Oh yes, you bet.

PR: That was a pretty well-established field, wasn't it, from World War 1 time or early Army flying days?

JM: You bet. And they refer to that as the West Point of the air. And it was strict, strict, strict. They had pilots stay down there in what they called Boys Town, with the headquarters unit kind of on a quadrangle down there. And they'd shoot the cannon off, you know, for reveille. And they had a series of lights that they'd show, and they'd show you what the uniform of the day would be. If it was raining, you need to take a raincoat with you and that sort of thing. But they were tough, tough, tough.

PR: Everything was marching in formation?

JM: You bet. And they'd come and inspect your rooms. And if things weren't just absolutely tip-top, they'd give you demerit. And after you got five demerits you'd go out and go up an hour on the ramp out there in uniform and gloves and so on. Somebody one time, I heard him say it's a military school that just happened to have a landing field nearby. But, I always wanted to go to Randolph ever since I could remember. And it's not every time that you do some of the things you want to do.

PR: Yeah, that worked out.

JM: So I enjoyed it.

PR: Now, you said you were at Randolph East, the runway that went towards Schertz?

JM: Well, they had one on the east side and one on the west side. I was on the east side. That's the one that sloped down toward the creek down at Cibolo Creek there and the little town of Schertz just across the creek from it.

PR: Is that runway still there, do you think?

JM: Yeah. Well, of course they've got runways in there now. They're using jets off that thing now, you know?

PR: Oh yeah, on top of the old one.

JM: But it didn't have any runways, period, when I was there.

PR: Yeah. What was your rank, by the way, while you were in training? Did they have a rank for you or just cadet?

JM: No, you're just a cadet.

PR: Okay. What color were your uniforms? Do you recall?

JM: Well, they were brown uniforms.

PR: And with your cadet insignia on them?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: Nametag?

JM: They weren't using nametags at that time. But you had that cap with the prop on the front of it, you know?

PR: Like that overseas cap type?

JM: Well, and it also had those, too. But, usually you wore the garrison cap. And you couldn't take the grommet out of them either, you know. That was quite the thing to take the grommet out of it and have the 50 Mission Crush in the

deal, you know? But, that was strictly a no-no at Randolph.

PR: Not military?

JM: You bet.

PR: When did you finish up at Randolph then?

JM: I soloed the day after Christmas at Randolph.

PR: Oh, you had to solo in the BT-14 also?

JM: Oh yeah. And then, that was in December. And then around the first of January, then we transferred to Ellington Field down from Houston. And then we went into twin-engine training down there.

PR: Oh, okay. What did they call that, the advanced?

JM: That was advanced.

PR: Advanced and twin-engine?

JM: Twin-engine scoop. Excuse me.

PR: Yeah, I'll just stop this. Ellington, was that a big field at that time already, Ellington?

JM: Oh yeah. You know, it's still a big field down there. And I flew on the north side. It had two sides there, too; one on one side and one toward the Houston-Galveston highway on the other. But I was on the...

PR: On the north side, they call it?

JM: I was on the northeast side there toward the bayou and down through there.

PR: Oh, okay. Joe, tell me now. Somewhere at the end of your basic there must have been a choice -- single-engine fighter pilot, multi-engine bomber pilot. Was there a choice that men made? Or did they just assign you?

JM: Well, you...

PR: Or was your class supposed to be multi-engine right from the start?

JM: They cut the class right in half. Everything from A down to the first of M's went out to the West Coast. And the others all went into multi-engine school. You didn't have any...

PR: Was that at the end of Randolph?

JM: Yes.

PR: So they just split you arbitrarily then?

JM: They sure did.

PR: Not by choice or ability, just by the alphabet?

JM: They sure didn't. That's when they were doing their best to -- they needed bomber pilots. They also needed fire pilots, too. And in the interim they built the plant there at Fort Worth, which is Carswell Air Base now, built B-24s there. And Carswell Air Base is named for Horace Carswell. He and I were in school together at North Side. And I knew Horace well. I'm probably one of the few people that know that his name is Horace S. Carswell, and that S stands for

Seaver. I'm probably one of the few people that ever knew that, because for some reason or other, he didn't like the name.

PR: Oh. The field was named for him or for...

JM: Yes.

PR: How did it get named for him?

JM: Well, he went over in the Pacific side, and he got the Congressional Medal. He got the airplane shot up pretty bad. And he gave his jump sack to the copilot or the navigator or somebody. And they bailed out, and he stayed with the airplane that killed him.

PR: Where did you know him from, your training?

JM: No, I knew -- he and I lived about two blocks apart when I was raised up in Fort Worth. And we went to North Side School together.

PR: Okay, good. That's interesting. Now, what was your training like at Ellington?

JM: Well, we had three or four different types of aircraft that we flew -- all multi-engines. One of them was like the Beachcraft, you know? It was basically the Beachcraft the way we know it now. Of course, then they had one, I've forgotten what they call the thing. It looked like a fish out there from a distance. But, the instructors were still tough on you on those because the things were bad news

about -- you get the air speed cut under them a little too much, and the thing would spin out on you. And somebody once said you flew at 120 miles an hour and you land them at 140.

PR: You want to keep your power up.

JM: Well, the instructors were (inaudible) quick, particularly at night flying. Oh, they were strict about that. They'd tell you right quick, "Mister, you let this airplane drop under 120 miles an hour, I'm going to wash you out right here and now." But, it probably was good experience in the long run.

PR: Was that a hard transition to the multi-engine?

JM: Well, the hardest part about it was turning the thing. I didn't see how in the hell you'd ever be able to turn the thing. You had the throttles up there, you know. And you'd get on one brake and turn it the other way. And I managed to go around in circles there for a few times. And when I finally learned how to get it in gear and go the way I wanted to go, but it wasn't bad. It was like anything else, getting used to something and learning how.

PR: Did you have an instructor with you there all the time?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: I guess you were sitting side-by-side in the cockpit now?

JM: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And you were sitting over in the pilot's seat. And he'd be sitting over in the ignorant seat.

PR: What'd you call it?

JM: The ignorant seat.

PR: Ignorant seat?

JM: And one thing that Ellington had -- and I guess as far as I know all the other twin-engine schools had them, too, you had an opportunity to fly the AT-6 Texan. They called it the BC, the Basic Combat. And you had an opportunity to shoot 1,200 rounds of ammunition at air-to-air and air-to-ground targets down at Galveston Island. And I probably had more pure pleasure doing that than any time I ever flew an airplane.

PR: That made it fun?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: There was a range on Galveston Island somewhere?

JM: Yes, sir, down toward the tail end down there.

PR: Oh, really?

JM: It was where they had the air-to-ground targets. And you refueled there at Galveston, at the field there and rearm the weapons. We only had one machine gun, the one that shot through the cowl, through the prop. It was rigged up with one in each wing and two through the prop, but we just

had the one. But, when you'd comeback to Ellington, fly back from Galveston, you always had some officer that was with you. And he'd fly up and watch this operation and all and so on and so forth. And he got your back up to the field. And he'd say, "Get them on the ground." And it'd be in trail formation. And everybody would try to outdo everybody else -- you know, roll it over and split S out of the thing. And I'm mad because you knew all the cadets on the ground are watching. And they'd cheer for good ones and boo the bad ones. And it was a lot of fun. I could say I had a minimum of 1,200 rounds and sometimes had an opportunity to do a little more than that. But, 1,200 was the absolute minimum that you used. So it was a lot of fun. And then, that's where we graduated from, from Ellington.

PR: You got your commission?

JM: I graduated and got commission on April the 22nd.

PR: Okay. What was your rank, the commission?

JM: Second lieutenant.

PR: The 22nd, did you say?

JM: Second.

PR: April 22nd of -- this is '43 now?

JM: '43. That was the class of 43D.

PR: 43D was the April.

JM: It was April the 22nd.

PR: Well, you graduated right on target then.

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: were all the classes designated that same way, I guess?

JM: Well, the next class would be -- A, B, C, D, E -- 43E and so on and so forth.

PR: How many were commissioned that day from your 43D? Do you remember?

JM: I believe everyone combined, there were somewhere in the neighborhood of around right at 200.

PR: Oh, okay. Was that a nice ceremony?

JM: Yes.

PR: They pin your wings on you, whatever?

JM: Well, they presented your wings. And my wife actually put my wings on. And my mother was there, and she buttoned on my second lieutenant’s bars. And you know the old -- the enlisted people would be right there close by. And it’s customary when you return your first salute you give them a dollar. It’s amazing how many dollars some of those guys collected.

PR: They were right there to...

JM: Oh yeah. And you knew it was coming, so you already had the dollars stuck in your pockets, you know? And man, in

fact they had a little pushing and shoving a time or two, too.

PR: To be the first salute?

JM: Yeah. Well, you know, with that many people you could sure gather some coin in a hurry if you acted a little rough and tough.

PR: Potential 200 bucks. Joe, you were married now. What had your wife done with all this time during your training? Did she tail along, or did she stay at home?

JM: She stayed in Fort Worth. And occasionally we'd have what they call open post. And she'd come down. They had a train running down from Fort Worth to San Angelo at that time, boundary on the back of San Angelo about 30 miles. So she'd ride the train down. And then, when I was at Randolph Field, sometimes you could get the train, or they had buses running. She'd come down that way. And then, we got to Ellington. She moved to Houston and got an apartment and lived there in Houston. We had a little more freedom and time there, among other things. We had to have opportunity to get measured up for uniforms. And they had two or three different people that were authorized to make uniforms. And so, I could say that we were getting pretty close to getting commissioned, too. And it wasn't just as tight as it was in the primary and basic.

PR: Did you get extra pay for being married?

JM: No.

PR: No allowance for being married, housing allowance, anything like that?

JM: No. After you made officer, you had certain allowances and so on and so forth. And you had your flight pay, too, after you became an officer.

PR: What was flight pay to start with? Do you recall?

JM: It was, I believe, $75 a month. I believe that’s correct.

PR: That probably felt pretty good, especially being married.

JM: Oh yeah. It made a lot of difference. And you were entitled, of course, to, you know, funding for quarters if they didn’t have funding quarters available. And any base I was ever stationed on before I went overseas, there wasn’t any quarters available for what they call transit officers, you know? So you had to make your own arrangements to live in a hotel someplace or rent an apartment or something.

PR: What did you do after you finished at Ellington now and got commissioned?

JM: Well, we went up to Austin to take transition training. And we started taking transition training in DC-3s.

PR: Oh, okay. What that at...

JM: At Austin at Robert Mueller Field.

PR: Oh, at Mueller?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Oh, okay. That was a military field?

JM: No, it was a municipal field. But that's where they -- well, they had the field out there, you know, out --

PR: Bergstrom?

JM: -- at Bergstrom. But, we went into Austin there at different times for different reasons and so on.

PR: How did you get picked for DC-3 training? By the alphabet again or by choice?

JM: Well, we -- everybody knew in my group that that's what it was going to be, period. Now, we had one man that his brother was a general. And he had enough influence, or his brother had enough influence, that he went into B-26s over at Shreveport. And that's the one they call the Baltimore Whore because it didn't have visible means of support. And that's the one --

PR: A B-26?

JM: -- that they killed 22 pilots in slightly over a month over there at one time. And he was one of them.

PR: Really? That was a poor choice to pull rank on that then.

JM: Oh, yeah.

PR: So you knew pretty much from the start you'd be going into -- once you got picked for multi-engine you'd be...

JM: A lot of the people thought that was great because they could be airline pilots for the experience they had. So the aircraft that we were training in, basically all of them had belonged to different airlines. In fact, the one that I soloed in, you got to solo that. And I'll tell you, that was a job in a big airplane, getting started and handling the gear and everything. It was one of those airplanes that American first started using as a sweeper airplane that they had long years ago.

PR: Really?

JM: Sure did. Still had the berths and everything in it.

PR: I'll be. Now, what was that? The DC-3, was there a nickname for that?

JM: Well, that's the one that they called the Gooney Bird.

PR: Gooney Bird? Okay. And that had two engines?

JM: Yeah, 1200 horse engines on each side.

PR: Was that Pratt and Whitney or something?

JM: Pratt and Whitneys.

PR: And that had two landing gears, retractable?

JM: It had retractable gear, but it was the conventional. It didn't have the one in front, you know.

PR: Okay. What did it have in the back, a wheel or a skid?

JM: A wheel.

PR: A wheel? When it landed, would it be level then or at an angle?

JM: Well, theoretically you could land them in a three-point landing. But, depending on the wind and so on, you could make wheel landings on them real well, too.

PR: Two wheels and then gradually decrease?

JM: Yeah, then just suck it back in your lap and get the tail wheel down.

PR: And then you ended up...

JM: And the tail wheel had a lock on it to where when you were taxiing you could unlock the thing and let it go the way you wanted it to go.

PR: To help you turn? Oh yeah.

JM: It was 17 feet from the top of that airplane to the ground when it was up like that. The airline deal just had the door back at the back and the little door there by the pilot’s side.

PR: How did you get in and out?

JM: Just get back there at the back, just climb up. It had some steps that the crew chief would put in there just like they were loading the airlines in those days.

PR: You’d get in through that rear door then and walk up to the pilot’s compartment? And that door in the pilot’s was just for emergency escape or something?

JM: Well, yes, in case you had to land in the water or something you had a little escape door. Then, the combat aircraft had the jump doors back at the back for paratroopers to jump out and had an astral dome up there that you could look back to the tail section also. Your navigator could make sun shots out of, your navigation person.

PR: Where was that, partway back of the body?

JM: It was right after the cockpit section. The regular configuration was the pilot on the left and then the copilot, the ignorant seat on the right. And right behind the pilot was the navigator's desk. And right opposite him was the radioman's desk. And then the crew chief, it would depend on the circumstance. Usually he'd stand back there in the doorway behind the cockpit section.

PR: Oh, okay. There was a compartment behind the cockpit area?

JM: Yes, sir. We didn't have any doors. We just had a curtain that we could draw across there.

PR: So you had a crew of five then?

JM: Yes -- pilot, copilot, navigator, crew chief and radio operator.

PR: Okay. How was the visibility in the DC-3 when you taxied on the ground? Your nose was a little up, wasn't it?

JM: Yes, it was.

PR: Any problem with visibility?

JM: Well, like any airplane that's rigged up like that, what you do, you do the elephant walk.

PR: Oh, okay.

JM: So you could...

PR: Twist back and forth?

JM: So you could see where you were going. Now, when I came home, we were in France. And I flew that airplane back without a navigator coming back across the south Atlantic. We'd been doing our navigating anyway. When they assigned a navigator to us, they were always a little suspicious of him because we'd been doing our own for so long. And so, when the war was over, I'd been over there since way before D-Day until the whole shebang was over with. I was over there basically two years. And we were having to wait around for navigators. And I talked to the crew chief and said, "What do you think about us flying back across there without a navigator?" He said, "If it suits you, it suits me." So I said, "Well, I'll ask the old man about it." So I approached him, and he said, "I don't think so." And I said, "Well, first, there's two different reasons I'd like to do it. Number one, we talked it over with the crew already, and they're ready. And I'm sure ready as far as I'm concerned. And it'll relieve the congestion here on

the field." "Well," he said, "All right." But he said, "I want to talk to your crew and see if they're really willing to do that." Not only that, when we got ready to go, they decided to put some additional people in there. And every man in that squadron who was going to be part of the airlift wanted to go.

PR: Really? They were ready.

JM: We had a system as far as I was concerned. It was always used after I got in command, that we did this like the cavalry used to do. We took care of the airplane first. And then we took care of the enlisted men. And then what time was left, well, the officers took care of themselves. And it sure worked out great. Like I say, that was real gratifying to me that so many people wanted to go aboard. So we flew across here. We flew from -- we were there in France at Reims. And we took off from there and went over there at the edge of France. I can't think of the name of the town now, but it was right there.

PR: Le Havre?

JM: No, it was the other side. And we cleared out through there. And then we flew across to Gibraltar and then flew across the Mediterranean. Spanish Morocco, you know, was still neutral at that time. So we went into Marrakesh and then from there on down across the country there into the

other side of Africa over there at that little -- before the war. Goodyear had a strip in there. And they enlarged it to make a military strip out of it.

PR: Yeah, I've seen the name. I'll look it up.

JM: Yeah, I'll think of the name of it later on. And then we flew from there. We took off. You hardly got the gear sucked up until you was out over the water. And then we went to Ascension Island.

PR: Oh, okay, Ascension.

JM: That's the only one I really sweated because that's a damn little place out there in the middle of the ocean.

PR: Yeah. How were you doing your navigating?

JM: Well, I was doing the navigating.

PR: By compass?

JM: Oh yeah, sure.

PR: Or would you shoot the stars sometimes.

JM: Oh no.

PR: Just strictly by compass and maps?

JM: We were flying in the daytime. And time, speed and distance and wind drift, you know?

PR: Did you hit it right on the nose?

JM: Lucky.

PR: Do they have any sort of a beacon there or air...

JM: No. They had -- that thing sits up real high. And you come in and you landed across that way like that base up in Greenland there at that fjord, up against that glacier there. You landed one way and took off the other. But then when we left Ascension Island I figured sure as hell I would hit South America someplace. So we went into just north of Buenos Aires, hit the Amazon River there. You could see that mud coming out of that deal 100 miles before you got there. We were flying up pretty high. Flew across the Sahara Desert there, through on across there, and had to get up pretty high. They was having high wind, and that sand could sure do a lot of damage to your engine unless we climbed up pretty high.

PR: Did you still have all the men in the back?

JM: Sir?

PR: Did you still have the crew of men in the back?

JM: Oh yeah. We had extra gas tanks back there, too.

PR: Oh. What did they have bottled oxygen they used or something?

JM: No, we didn’t get up that high. However, we had oxygen available.

PR: In case? Where did you land after Ascension when you went into...

JM: We went into -- let me get my logbook and see.

PR: Oh, you have a logbook?

JM: Well, I've got a piece of a logbook.

PR: Oh, okay. Here, I'll put it on pause here.

(break in audio)

JM: We went from Reims to Marseilles.

PR: Oh yeah. Okay, I think we're on again. Okay, to Dakar?

JM: Okay. We went from Dakar to Roberts Field -- they called it Wide Awake.

PR: Where was that?

JM: That's that field in that little old country there, the one that I still can't remember the name. Hell, it was Liberia. That was the name, Liberia. Yeah, Lord.

PR: Wide Awake Field you call it?

JM: Yes, that's what -- and then Ascension Island to Natal, Brazil.

PR: Oh yeah, Natal.

JM: And then, went from Natal to Belem and from Belem to -- well, let's see. We went from there to Puerto Rico.

PR: Yeah, Puerto Rico.

JM: Puerto Rico. And then from Puerto Rico we came into the US.

PR: Okay. Would you fly each leg in a day and then stay overnight at the base?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: And then fly another leg?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Well, that's interesting.

JM: This thing started out in Reims on June the 6th. And we got into the United States on July the 1st.

PR: Did your navigation work the whole way?

JM: Yeah.

PR: I'll be darned.

JM: We made it.

PR: Well, good. You might have been another month waiting for a navigator.

JM: Oh yeah. And they sure did, because they were having a hard time with navigators. A bunch of them had been killed, you know, at one time or another, running shorthanded. So it was an interesting deal. It's like going to the circus. You only go once, but that's plenty usually.

PR: Now, from Puerto Rico you hopped up to Miami, I guess.

JM: Well, we went into -- we came across and hit the States right there in Florida and then went up to South Carolina at that field up there. And then we went from there back

up to the old base in Fort Wayne. And then that's where we disbanded, from there.

PR: Oh, okay. Your crew, were you with the whole crew throughout the war?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: The five of you?

JM: Well, we lost -- I got a different copilot. And I had a navigator that got hit, didn't kill him but it took him out of service. And he's lucky as hell. Maybe we ought to cut this thing off here a minute.

(break in audio)

PR: The same crew, you got to know each other pretty good and know to depend on each other.

JM: Well, we had an ironclad rule in my squadron, at least. If the airplane didn't fly, the crew didn't fly. And if the crew flew, it was the whole crew that flew. And so, that's the way it went. And that's the reason it just -- like I say, I had a crew chief. He was known as Big Joe, and I was known as Little Joe.

PR: Oh, really.

JM: We had the camaraderie there and being close like that.

PR: Is he still alive?

JM: I have no idea. He was one of the best crew chiefs that we had in the squadron. While some of them are lying around the barracks, Joe down was there doing something to that airplane all the time, all the time.

PR: Now, you had a flying crew, Joe. Would you have a ground crew that did all your maintenance and repairs?

JM: Well, yeah. Now, the crew chief ramrodded that. But they also had regular repair people there, too.

PR: Would there be one assigned to your craft, or were there sort of...

JM: No, all those people were tech sergeants. And they had assistants. I don’t think any of them were lower than buck sergeant. But they worked on airplanes.

PR: They wouldn’t just work on your airplane. If you had an engine problem, they had an engine crew?

JM: If you got one shot up, why, you didn’t know for sure who’d be working on it. Somebody would be working on it.

PR: Yeah, repair the skin and the controls and hydraulics.

JM: We didn’t have bulletproof tanks in that airplane until the last mission we went on. And in fact, on D-Day, they were supposed to hit the beach at 6:00 AM in the morning. And we dropped paratroopers at H-Hour minus 6, which was at midnight there over Omaha Beach at Sainte-Mère-Église. And we got back after the drop was over with. We got back to

the base there in England. And I knew we'd been hit a little bit here and there. And I discovered I had a gas tank small arms fire, probably a rifle, machine gun or something had penetrated the gas tank. So I had to put a crew of people around it to keep the guys from walking by and smoking or throwing a cigarette down or something. So we had them there --

PR: So you got all the way back with that gas leak?

JM: -- all night until we could get something done about it. But, like I say, we didn't have bulletproof tanks until the last mission went across the Rhine.

PR: Yeah. Well, let's go back now. Where are we? You finished -- okay, you got your commission. Is that where we were at? And then you went on to Austin, Mueller.

JM: Well, I thought we were pretty well up until the war was over.

PR: Oh, no, no, no. We've got lots to do.

JM: Okay. Where are we going to start out?

PR: You're at Mueller Field transitioning to the DC-3. How long did you stay at that assignment?

JM: Thirty days.

PR: Thirty days?

JM: And then we went up to Fort Wayne, Indiana. That's where the group was formed, up there.

PR: Your group that would fly together on the missions?

JM: Yes. That's where they put it together.

PR: So Mueller was just training and getting...

JM: That was transition training on the aircraft.

PR: To know the DC-3?

JM: And that's when they put together the 434th troop carrier group with three different squadrons from 71st, 72nd, 73rd, and 74th, controlled by below colonel.

PR: Okay. 434th?

JM: Four hundred and thirty-fourth troop carrier group.

PR: Troop carrier group with three squadrons in it?

JM: Four squadrons.

PR: How many in each squadron, how many planes?

JM: We started out -- when we went overseas we had 12 aircraft. When the war was over we had about 27 or 28.

PR: In each...

JM: In each squadron.

PR: Each squadron? Oh. Now, that was formed at Mueller or in Fort Wayne?

JM: No, at Fort Wayne.

PR: Fort Wayne? Was the name of the field Fort Wayne? Probably, but we'll pop to that later. Now, how did you start your -- do you want me to just pause it?

(break in audio)

JM: I believe that's just what we called it. It was just right out there.

PR: Fort Wayne Airfield?

JM: It was right next to the golf course out there.

PR: Yeah. What squadron were you in?

JM: Seventy-first?

PR: Seventy-first?

JM: Seventy-first squadron.

PR: And you stayed in the 71st right on through?

JM: The whole time.

PR: I'll be. Now, did they have all the airplanes in or just part of them?

JM: Well, like I say, we had 12 aircraft at that time. When we left, we left from Fort Wayne to go overseas from Fort Wayne.

PR: From Fort Wayne?

JM: Yeah, we went from there across to Maine and then from Maine up to Goose Bay, Labrador. And then from Goose Bay we went across to Greenland and then from Greenland to Iceland, and from Iceland into the United Kingdom.

PR: Okay. Where did you land there, in Scotland or Ireland?

JM: Well, Nutts Corner.

PR: Oh yeah, Nutts Corner, yeah.

JM: Normally they go into the base there squadron, at Scotland. But one of the few times it was socked in, so we went into Nutts Corner. And then we had a so-called guide airplane the next day while we went down to a base just outside Lincoln (inaudible).

PR: Okay. You're in the Fort Wayne. Your practice there was how to fly in formation together, integrated as a squadron flying?

JM: Well, not really. We were just getting the aircraft together and getting the equipment together. We didn't know at Fort Wayne whether we were going to go to England or the South Pacific. We didn't know which way we was going. And so, they were getting the equipment. And then, when it became obvious that they were having to fix footlockers and stuff like that, your B-4 bags and so on and so forth, it became apparent from the uniforms that they were saying that you had to have that we were going to go to England instead of the South Pacific with the heavier gear and so on. We didn't know exactly where over there, but they already had the 14th over in Italy, I believe, at that time. But we knew it was going to be in that area someplace.

PR: Okay. So then, your equipment in your plane, did you have life rafts, by the way, in the plane?

JM: We had those little individual things that was attached to your parachute rigging, you know?

PR: Mae West vests or something like that?

JM: Yeah, we sure had those.

PR: And you had a good radio, I guess.

JM: Well, of course, you had your radio operator and then, of course, your radio pilot and your crew used.

PR: Oh, for communication inside the plane?

JM: Yeah, we could talk back and forth into it.

PR: Were you equipped with oxygen?

JM: Well, we had one or two walk-around bottles. But we didn't have to use them. But we had it if we did need it.

PR: The DC-3 usually didn't fly up at 30,000 feet, did it?

JM: No.

PR: What was your usual flying?

JM: Well, I believe the absolute ceiling on DC-3 was somewhere in the neighborhood around 27, 28,000, which is not a drop in the bucket.

PR: No. You'd need to be sucking oxygen there for sure. What would you usually fly at?

JM: Well, our flying was low and slow next to the ground and towing gliders and dropping paratroopers.

PR: No, I mean, when you're in transit as a group together.

JM: Well, it depended on the weather conditions and so on.

PR: Okay. Under 10,000 feet though?

JM: Normally. And of course, if you had to hit the instruments, why, you geared up to do it, of course.

PR: Yeah. Now, from Fort Wayne, how did you fly, in a group, your whole squadron at one time, or individually?

JM: Well, basically, they had squadrons of three aircraft each. And basically we didn't always hang very close together. But that's basically what we did.

PR: By the way, did you have running lights on your airplane or no illumination?

JM: Oh yeah. Well, you had your landing gear, and then you had your wingtip lights and your taillight back at the back.

PR: Okay. Were they different colors or just white lights?

JM: Well, it's like on a boat -- red and green on the wings and just regular white landing lights in the front and one on the back.

PR: Top of the tail, somewhere on the...

JM: Right at the very top.

PR: Okay. Were they steady lights, or did they blink?

JM: No, they were steady.

PR: Steady? Would you have them on all the time or just...

JM: Well, after regulation when you were in the combat zones, from sundown to sunrise.

PR: You used the lights?

JM: Well, yeah. You turned them on at night. Some nights you didn't use your lights, period.

PR: Yeah, depending on the mission you were on?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And the weather.

JM: But if it was nights, you'd have your lights on.

PR: Was the DC-3 an easy airplane to fly?

JM: Well, it was a stable airplane. Probably one of the most stable aircrafts that they made was the B-25. That was a wonderful airplane. Of course, the DC-3, there's still plenty of DC-3s flying around.

PR: Oh yeah, sure are. Did you have any such thing as automatic pilot, or were you it?

JM: You had automatic pilot. But coming back, when we came back after the war was over, the automatic pilot went out, and you had to hand-fly it, which made it a little difficult, too, of course.

PR: When you flew across, now, you're on the way to Europe, when did you find out -- how did you get your orders? Fort Wayne, they gave your orders to the next field and that's all you knew?

JM: Well, no. We knew the ultimate destination. But, when they cut orders and said, “This is when we depart and so on,” that was it right then and there.

PR: Oh, okay. And did you have a briefing, all the crew together? Was that standard before every flight to have a briefing?

JM: Well, yeah, so everybody would know where they were supposed to be and what was going to go on and so forth.

PR: How about the maps and things? Were they always reliable? Did you always have maps with you?

JM: Well, I’ll tell you what. The United States has wonderful charts, wonderful charts. And when I was flying for fish and wildlife service, of course, flying up to Canada and up in the north country and so on, we’d probably have better charts than anybody in the world.

PR: Yeah. Well, that’s comforting.

JM: Oh yeah, you bet.

PR: And that was part of the job of your navigator, to have all the charts assembled?

JM: Well, he had all the charts that he needed and everything.

PR: Yeah. And then, okay, you flew from Fort Wayne, you flew to Bangor, Maine?

JM: It wasn’t Bangor. It was where the fellow has the sporting goods store.

PR: Oh yeah, oh really?

JM: Yeah. What's the...

PR: Yeah, I know.

JM: Yeah, you know -- Bean's. And then, we went from there, like I say, up to Goose Bay, Labrador.

PR: Were those flights you just take one flight a day and then overnight and then take another leg and then overnight?

JM: Well, we tried to fly during the day and go in from Maine up to Goose Bay, went across -- one way you could tell you were right on course is if you cut across the bay there at St. Lawrence there, cross there and cross the little island out there. You knew you were right on course.

PR: Oh, okay. You knew you were on target?

JM: You could look down and know you was on course. And they had there at Goose Bay, the British had some fighter airplanes there, too. And they were loaded for bear because they didn't know for sure, you know? And it really wasn't -- as far as we were concerned it wasn't a combat zone. But the Canadians, as far as they were concerned, it was a combat zone.

PR: Yeah. Now, your 214 says you left September 27th and got there October 6th. Does that sound about right for that, for the timing?

JM: You mean when we got into England?

PR: Yeah.

JM: Our entitled flying time was 26.5 hours going across there. And it was broken up into several days.

PR: Yeah. Ever have any harrowing experiences on that section -- bad weather, winds, off-course, engine problem?

JM: No, none of those. We went into Greenland, went up to (inaudible) and had a briefing in there. There was two places where that thing split. And if you didn't take the right one you was dead because if you got in the other one there wasn't any way of getting out of it. And going up and taking the proper one, we was flying down in that canyon-looking deal, and I -- well, we all saw some mountain goats up there on the side of the thing when we were going by.

PR: Looking down at you, huh?

JM: And you go across that water, and you land uphill into a glacier. And you land uphill regardless of the way the wind's blowing. And taking off, you take off down the thing regardless.

PR: Forget the wind.

JM: That can be a rich emotional experience once in a while. And you had as much as 12,000 feet when you fly over the top, but if it was less than 12,000 feet, then we had to go back down the fjord and around. And it added about an hour

and a half's flying time. We went from there to Iceland and to Reykjavik. And you know, Reykjavik, we went in there. We apparently never received too much publicity, or a lot of people don't even know about it. But, we took that by force, you know. We lost a general there in that battle. That was a German deal. And hell, when we was there, they had help, and they was flowing, showing swastika flags hanging in the windows and so on.

PR: I didn't realize that.

JM: Their main source of income was selling codfish to the Germans.

PR: I guess we changed that around.

JM: Damn sure did.

PR: That became a big base, didn't it?

JM: Well, yeah. That was the -- lots of aircraft came in there.

PR: Last hop before you got to the British Isles.

JM: And then, we went across there. And the Germans had set up false homing beacons, you know, trying to lure aircraft off over there. And then, first thing you know, you're looking down the barrel of bad-looking machine guns from Germans flying.

PR: Yeah. So you had to be careful how you navigated.

JM: Oh, yeah. And then we went, like I say, over -- instead of flying into Scotland, we flew into Nutts Corner there.

PR: That was a tricky base, too, something about going uphill to it or something?

JM: Well, it was a slope sort of a deal. And we had -- we didn't have any difficulty. But it'd been a dandy if we had to go in there on the instruments, I'm sure.

PR: Might have been a hard landing.

JM: Oh, Lord.

PR: Then you went right on to Lincoln?

JM: Yes.

PR: And that would be your home?

JM: We left from there and went into Lincoln, to that field. And we moved around to two or three different bases there in England. That first base we went to, we inherited from the British. And the reason they gave it up was because the weather was so bad it wasn't very operational. So it's like we were selling them gasoline for 90 cents a gallon, our gasoline. But when we had to refuel at their base we were paying $1.50 a gallon for it. And when you're putting 5, 600 gallons of gasoline in a plane at a time -- that was lots of scratch. Good old British -- they'll take a good cut at you every chance they got. It's like the French.

As Eisenhower said, Americans were on the continent nearly 24 hours before the French started cheating them.

PR: They caught on in a hurry. When did you move from Lincoln, the base at Lincoln, then, do you recall?

JM: We moved out to a little base.

PR: That’s all right. Maybe we can look that up.

JM: outside of London there at...

PR: Near London?

JM: Yes, sir, at Aldermaston Court.

PR: Which was it?

JM: It was...

PR: Maston Court?

JM: Aldermaston, A-L-D-E-R-S-T-O-N Court.

PR: Now, was this your whole squadron or the whole troop carrier?

JM: The whole group.

PR: The whole group?

JM: Four squadrons went down there. And that’s where we were when -- where we left from for D-Day.

PR: Oh, I see. What was your routine when you finally got to Aldermaston, your final field?

JM: Well, then they started doing group flying, the whole four squadrons did. They were getting ready for invading.

Didn’t nobody know when it was going to take place, but they knew we was going to have to do it sooner or later.

PR: Yeah, learning how to coordinate all your squadrons together.

JM: Yeah, get them together.

PR: Would all 12 plans go up and fly in their group of 12? Or would you break down into four groups of three?

JM: From there you’d take off a squadron at a time and make a big, wide circle until the field until we got them all connected and take off wherever it was you were going to go.

PR: Would there be one lead plane that you’d know to follow on, to guide on?

JM: Whoever was the old man usually led the thing, the colonel, and he and his...

PR: Was his plane marked up a special way?

JM: No, no.

PR: You just knew which one it was?

JM: You knew what number it was and so on.

PR: What did you have on your -- in the way of markings on your plane?

JM: Well, my airplane, the nose of it had CJ, and back on its tail section it had the number of the airplane. Mine was 343-W for Willie. And it was back on the tail section.

And then, of course, those airplanes were camouflaged. And that khaki paint, you know, it slowed them down. It wasn't like they were slick, you know? And then, just before D-Day, that's when they painted those white stripes around the thing. They did that the night before we were taking off.

PR: Why did they put the stripes on?

JM: So they could be identified flying over ships at sea and so on that was coming across there, getting ready for the invasion.

PR: That was the indication it was friendly?

JM: And you had what they call IFF identification, friend or foe, that you cut on, too, you know, in case you flew over ships or something and they'd hear the aircraft. They wouldn't open up on you.

PR: IFF was a beacon that went down to identify you?

JM: It was an electrical signal kind of like a transponder on an airplane. And they had an explosive device. If you got on the ground, you could blow them up so that the Germans couldn't duplicate them.

PR: Oh, I see. Huh. They guarded that like that northern bombsite then.

JM: Yeah, that's right.

PR: Did you have United States markings, a star, or anything like that on your wing or no markings?

JM: Well, yeah. Back at the back they had the big wings on the side, you know?

PR: Uh-huh. A big star?

JM: I've got some pictures around here someplace in an album of the thing.

PR: What was the CJ in the front for?

JM: Well, that was a designation there.

PR: Oh, okay. You didn't name your plane and decorate it like some of the hot shots did?

JM: Well, we didn't. We thought about it a little bit. I had a pilot from Denver. He and I got to be good friends, and one from New Orleans. And Paul from Colorado and I joked a good bit about naming one of them Guano -- bat shit, you know? But we never got around to doing it. Some of these guys had some pretty decorative deals on them.

PR: Where did you pick this plane up, back at Fort Wayne, and flew this plane all the way across? Or where did you pick up your final plane?

JM: We went down to Hunter Field in Georgia. They had the airplanes down there. We went down there, and I went down, and we picked up -- take an airplane down with several pilots. And these were all basically brand-new airplanes.

And we flew them back up to -- oh, Lord -- flew them back up to -- it's before we went to Fort Wayne. It was north of Denver there about 150 miles.

PR: Oh. Colorado -- no, not Colorado Springs. Fort Collins?

JM: No. It was in Nebraska.

PR: Oh, okay. Omaha maybe?

JM: No. It was east of Omaha.

PR: Okay. So you flew from Georgia to Nebraska?

JM: Yeah, we flew them back.

PR: Then Nebraska back to Fort Wayne again?

JM: Well, we flew from Nebraska. Those were new aircraft we were getting to ready to take overseas. And then, that's when we went to Fort Wayne, from this field in Nebraska. But that's where the squadron and the group really formed.

PR: Where you formed? Oh, I see. So you picked up your planes, then went into Fort Wayne and formed a group, and then left for overseas?

JM: We were all training in the aircraft we'd been using up there, so we went and got brand-new equipment.

PR: So that plane you picked up and took to Fort Wayne eventually, that's the one you kept all the way through the war?

JM: That's right.

PR: I'll be darned. You got to know that thing pretty good.

JM: Yeah, I sure did, sure did.

PR: Lord. How many total hours would you estimate you flew in that plane? You ever figured it out?

JM: No, but it'd be a bunch. I don't know for sure. My total flying time when I started flying for the fish and wildlife service, I was averaging over 400 hours -- I mean, over 500 hours a year. And you make 22 or 3 trips to Canada, you stack up. You know, I have slightly over 13,000 hours altogether.

PR: Wow.

JM: That's a long time to have an airplane strapped to your fanny.

PR: It sure is.

JM: I think it's somewhere -- it was 13,120 or something like that.

PR: That's great.

JM: But this covers over lots of years, too, see?

PR: Yeah. Still, that's a lot of time.

JM: Well, yes it is.

PR: Now, did you ever have any gliders you pulled along? Did you practice on that?

JM: Oh yeah. D-Day plus 3 we towed gliders. And we towed gliders a lot.

PR: Before that even?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: Okay. Would they be loaded with the troops?

JM: We were using CG-4A gliders. And we tried that British Horsa glider. But, it was just too much. In fact, the British finally wound up using four-engine aircraft on them.

PR: They were big, weren't they?

JM: Oh, they were terrible. But, the squadron operation officer and I flew when they were first making up their mind whether they were going to try to use them or not. We saw right quick that wasn't going to work even just empty with just the crew in there and when you loaded them down. But they killed lots of British people in there because it was so damn hard to get that tail section off of it when they landed in combat conditions. It took so damn long to get the people and the equipment out that Germans killed them unbelievably (inaudible).

PR: Isn't that something?

JM: In fact, the First Polish Air Brigade lost damn near every man they had on that operation.

PR: So at Aldermaston Court, you would have some glider takeoffs and releases there?

JM: Oh yeah, we were practicing that all the time.

PR: What was it like taking off with it? How many gliders would you pull behind your DC-3?

JM: Well, we pulled two on lots of different occasions, sometimes one but a lot of times a double tow.

PR: On D-Day was it two?

JM: We dropped paratroopers. It was the third day we did, plus three.

PR: So you were set to go both ways, gliders and paratroopers?

JM: Yeah. We had paratroopers right there by the base. And we also had glider pilots right assigned to our squadron. They were part of the squadron.

PR: Oh, they were airmen?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: What was it like to take off with a glider behind you?

JM: Well, it wasn’t really that bad. Of course, a glider pilot is at the mercy of the pilot towing him. You’d ease down and gradually take the slack off those tow ropes. And you could tell, you know, when they got to the end of it. And you’d give her the needle then. And you’d get them off the ground pretty fast. In fact, the glider would get off the ground before the airplane did. Your tail wheel would be up, but you hadn’t actually broke ground with your landing gear.

PR: But the glider would have it off the ground already?

JM: Yeah.

PR: What size rope was it? And what was it made out of?

JM: It was made out of nylon. And it was about that big around.

PR: Three or four inches across?

JM: Two point five at least, maybe more.

PR: Okay. And that would be hooked onto the nose of the glider?

JM: The nose of the glider. And it had a place in the tail of the aircraft to hook on.

PR: Once he released, would you pull the rope in somehow?

JM: Well, you dropped the thing.

PR: oh, you dropped the rope?

JM: Yeah, because it’s just a drag to you.

PR: Oh yeah. So that was a one-way trip for the rope.

JM: Yeah. And you were under fire by that time anyway. And you didn’t want any more drag (inaudible).

PR: Didn’t want to fiddle with that thing?

JM: But when I had that mid-air collision with that fighter pilot, I didn’t know at the time what had happened. I thought maybe the glider had flown into the ground. At first, when it first happened, I thought I’d flown into something. But I knew instantly that I hadn’t. And I could tell instantly that the two gliders wasn’t behind me

anymore. I didn't know until about ten days later that what it was, was a German fighter, ME-109. And when it hit that thing, it just -- that airplane just stood practically straight up. And I snapped the thing forward to see if we're still going to fly. And then, when I realized we did, I gave her the needle and climbed out on top. We were in instrument conditions at the time. So I just talked to the glider pilot and asked him how he was doing. He said, "I'm on the low tow to stay out of the prop wash." And he said, "I'm doing fine." Because, like I mentioned a while ago, the glider pilot is at the mercy of the pilot. If you start screwing around like this, why, he's doing the same thing. Only he doesn't have -- he can't control. He just has to do what he can. And so, when this thing hit, I thought that he had flown into the ground or a building or something. And when I got up I had the crew chief climb up the astral dome and look back. And I said, "What do you see?" And he said, "I don't --" he said, "We've got part of the tow rope." But he said, "I don't see that we've got anything else." And I said, "Well, for God's sakes," I said. "Don't anybody even come close to touching the release here because he'll think we turned chicken and turned him loose under the circumstances." So when we got back to the base, I told the tower, I said, "I'm going to

drop this tow rope right out here in front of the tower. And I want to examine it real well." I said, "We lost the glider." So after I had a chance to look at it I could see blue-black markings on part of this towrope. It didn't mean anything to me at the time, but that's where the fighter hit the damn thing. And he cut off part of the wing of that glider. And the glider pilot told me later that it took him just a little slant in a little old hill there. This was over in Holland. And he said he hit the thing just right, and it just slid off down that hill just like he'd done it on purpose. And he had a...

PR: And they survived it?

JM: Well, they had some airborne infantrymen in there and a jeep. And that jeep broke loose from its tie-downs and killed one of the airborne infantrymen in there. It killed him. And the airplane was -- it hit the ground over just, he said, about 200, 300 yards from where they hit. And I asked him if -- I felt like at that time the war was ending. And the Germans were putting pilots in those airplanes that had hardly done more than solo on them. And I knew within reason that it wouldn't have been an older pilot because they had a bird's nest on the ground. All they had to do was just stay up above that fog. And when we broke out of there he'd just make a pass down through

there, and God knows how many of us he could have killed, you know? But the glider pilot said the guy was burned beyond recognition. He couldn't tell anything about that. But, I know within reason it had to be a young man.

PR: So the plane, the German ME-109 crashed close to where our glider landed?

JM: Yeah, he said about 2-- 300 yards away.

PR: I'll be. Had you seen him coming at all? Or was this just boom, all of a sudden something hit?

JM: No, no. We were on instruments. Hell, I didn't know what had happened. And it never occurred to me it was an airplane. It was quite an experience.

PR: Did the glider pilot see him coming?

JM: Oh, no. Hell, didn't anybody see him. He'd come across, and he clipped part of the wing off the CG-4A glider. And that's when all this took -- it hit that towrope.

PR: What day was this now?

JM: The tow rope actually is what killed him.

PR: Yeah. This was part of that Arnhem Market Garden operation?

JM: I believe they called garden basket in there somewhere.

PR: Garden basket, yeah.

JM: I believe that's what -- you know Churchill liked to name all the stuff and things.

PR: What was that, December of ’44? You probably have that date down. Look that date up for me. That’d be interesting. You don’t have to do it now. You can do a little research on it.

JM: Well, let’s see. It may or may not be in here. I don’t know.

(break in audio)

PR: Let’s go back to your training. Your training, you have some exercise out of England, out of London Field, with gliders. And they made actual landings, release and the whole works. Is that right?

JM: Well, we’d release them on our own base, you know?

PR: Yeah. And they’d land back on that?

JM: Yeah. And they didn’t have to land on one of the runways, you know? They’d land them out there on the infield or someplace so they wouldn’t tie up the runways for the aircraft.

PR: How many trips like that would you guess you made -- dozens and dozens or half a dozen?

JM: When we were training paratroopers up there in Nebraska, we’d pick up a string of paratroopers, take off and drop

them and land and pick up another string, just do this hour after hour.

PR: Oh, really? Now this was in Nebraska?

JM: Yeah.

PR: You did some paratrooper training?

JM: Oh, hell yeah.

PR: Oh, okay. So that's after you picked up your plane in Georgia. You went to this field in Nebraska?

JM: No, we were still using the trainer airplanes. We didn't pick up the new aircraft until we got over to Fort Wayne.

PR: Oh, okay.

JM: This was in Nebraska. And they had a simulated village out there right off the edge of the field there. And these paratroopers would use that for mock battle practice and so on. And like I say, we just picked up one string after the other and drop them.

PR: Now this was after you finished at Ellington Field?

JM: Yeah.

PR: You went to Nebraska for this paratroop before you got your regular plane? Oh, okay. How do you coordinate with the paratroopers? Who's in charge of the release or telling them...

JM: Well, the jumpmaster now. In combat, they had the lights back there in the back that the pilots could turn on. And

they had the line running down the length of the fuselage there that they'd hook the parachutes on. And prior to getting into the area, you'd notify the jumpmaster. And it'd be a stand up, hook up deal. And each man would examine the equipment of the man in front of him. And the jumpmaster would come back, went to the back. And then, he'd be the tail end. But, they got ready to jump, you turn the light on. And they'd hit the silk right then and there.

PR: Away they'd go? Well, you were in charge of turning the light on. You're flying and you're navigating.

JM: Well, we let him know three or four minutes ahead of time so he'd have plenty to time to gear up.

PR: And then you release?

JM: Usually he would know it by that time anyway because they'd already be shooting, you know?

PR: Well, you practiced this in England with paratroopers, too?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: Jumping, quite a bit of that?

JM: Yeah, we sure did. We had part of the 82nd stationed right there next to the field.

PR: Which one?

JM: The 82nd.

PR: Oh, okay.

JM: Well, we had the 82nd and 101st both. You know, they were all intermingled.

PR: But the 82nd is who you dealt with?

JM: Yeah, basically that's who we were with.

PR: What was living like there in London, or at that base near London? Fairly comfortable living?

JM: Well, not really. Oh, it was comfortable. It certainly beat the stretch out there that the GIs were using. But, we were in some old Nissen, that deal, you know?

PR: Oh yeah.

JM: And the doctor, group practice squadron flight surgeon and I had a little room about the size of this couch over here and from here to that cabinet there.

PR: Mm-hmm, 10x10 special, huh?

JM: Yeah. We had a bedroom, a double bunk and a little field desk there and a place to hang our uniforms and equipment. And his office was down just about 100 yards away, the medical office and so on. And we had 15 or 20 officers in two or three of these different things there. You know, they were actually compacted together. You could go from one to the other, but it was under -- it was all enclosed. And the places where you could take a shower or a bath was a different place entirely. The English people built all these. But the latrines, they had latrines there in the

building. But, as far as taking a shower or a bath, they had some bathtub deals there.

PR: Really?

JM: But they only had those in operation two or three hours a day because of the fuel supply.

PR: Yeah. They'd tell you hot water on from 5:00 to 8:00 or something, huh?

JM: Yeah. And our Nissen huts were heated with coal stoves. And coal was hard to come by. They used coke and clinkers. That's what the Yankee boys called them.

PR: Stink and smell, smoke?

JM: Yeah. And they were hard to light, you know, and this, that and the other. But it was war. Like I said, the GI had to put up with the pup tents, you know, and that sort of thing.

PR: Was your food pretty good? Did you have a mess, a regular officer's mess?

JM: The food was so bad. And our mess was about a mile from us where we were actually living, and bad weather. We just started using K-rations. It wasn't worth the trip. Brussel sprouts, they'd be frostbitten to start out with. And they weren't worth a damn. And if you wanted to have some rust in a canteen cup or something, well hell, you'd

pour some coffee in there and eat the rust right out of it without any trouble. It really wasn't too good.

PR: Good old days.

JM: We had some fine cooks. As a matter of fact, when we got over to France, the headquarters staff all had -- they ate at our mess because we had some good cooks. And they could do wonders with what they had to do with.

PR: Fix an egg ten different ways, huh?

JM: Oh yeah. Of course, it was powdered, but...

PR: While you were there in England, did you have any enemy air raids or hear or see V-1 activity at all?

JM: The first night we were there, you know, they had that (inaudible) over in England, you know, the propaganda.

PR: Lord Haw-Haw?

JM: Yeah. It was after getting pretty close to dark, you know? At that time of year it gets dark pretty early there, like in summertime it stays light, you know? At any rate, they had the radio on, and here comes this joker. And he says, "Welcome the 434th." He said, "We're going to pay you a visit tonight and give you a good welcome." And damn if they didn't. But they were about three miles away from us. They were off somehow.

PR: Thank heaven.

JM: Of course, we were in a total blackout.

PR: Isn’t that something?

JM: So the first night we were there, they didn’t do any damage or even come close. But, it sure got our attention fairly well.

PR: Yeah. It got you thinking, hey, is this going to happen every night? Did you see any V-1 bomb activity at all?

JM: Yeah, we sure did. The V-1, you could tell when that motor cut off it was going to be about three seconds before it hit. Now, the V-2, you couldn’t hear it. It was already exploded before you even knew it was around. And we had some near misses with the V-1s. Those British fighter pilots developed a technique that they’d go up and take a wing tip and tilt that thing over and try to drop it in the --

PR: Flip it?

JM: -- in the water before it ever got to England. Damn, they had some pilots deluxe. On the ground, they’d have the handkerchiefs tucked in their sleeves and act a little sissified. But they strapped that airplane on, they were killing mothers, I’ll tell you. Damn, they were bad.

PR: Did you have any V-2s also?

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: Really?

JM: Like I say, you couldn’t hear it coming. It’d hit the ground.

PR: Yeah. Boom.

JM: We were in a hotel just down from the palace there about three blocks the day that that V-2 hit the -- where the guards were having their church services there.

PR: Oh yeah. The guard chapel?

JM: It killed a bunch of them. And it blew every window out in that motel, in the hotel, even away from the blast site. It blew every damn window out. We had heavy curtains in there. And there was some glass come in the room, too. But it didn’t...

PR: That’ll rattle your eardrums.

JM: Oh yeah.

PR: Did you get much chance for leave time to visit?

JM: Well, like I say, the airplane didn’t fly. So we were about -- on the train, we were about two or three hours out from London. And so we’d get in there every once in a while.

PR: Take the train in? Were there specific hotels they had designed to the Air Corps officers?

JM: No, you just had to do the best you could. It was sometimes a little difficult. Now, they’d give preference to the people that they had to room with sometimes

(inaudible). An officer named Jack McMillan -- praise the Lord, in New Orleans, he's dead now -- he and I were in London the last major raid that the Germans had. And we knew they had some ack-ack batters up on top of the roof of this hotel we were staying at. We were staying right there at Picadilly. And we were in twin beds. And when this thing first started, the siren started, we were sitting in bed. We were just about as close. And when that thing started, even shouting to each other we couldn't hear what the other one was saying. And that was the last major air raid that the Germans did.

PR: Did you have to go down to a shelter? Or did you stay above?

JM: No, we were on about the sixth or seventh floor. And we decided we'd just stay hitched the way we were. Unless we got more or less direct hit it wouldn't have made any difference anyway. And those German aircraft, you couldn't synchronize the props like you could American. So you could hear them. You could recognize them because they'd go whump-whump-whump-whump.

PR: Oh, really? I'm going to stop this now, I think. And we'll continue another time.

(break in audio)

PR: Today is September 23rd, 2002. This is the second of two parts of an interview with Mr. Joe Matlock. This is Peter Riesz interviewing for the Military Order of World Wars. We're at Joe's house here in Victoria, Texas. Okay, morning, Joe. How are you doing?

JM: First rate, thank you.

PR: Glad to hear that. We had a nice discussion of your events getting you trained for that DC-3. By the way, did you call it a DC-3 or a C-47?

JM: No, they were DC-3s. These were all airline craft that we're using.

PR: Okay. The C-47 is a totally different airplane then?

JM: Well, yes. They had a different configuration on the back door and for the jump door and that sort of thing.

PR: Okay. So your DC-3 was a military?

JM: The DC-3 itself, American Airlines, Continental, everybody had DC-3s. They gave up some of their air fleet, and the military took them over.

PR: They donated them to the military?

JM: Yeah.

PR: We got up in our discussion of -- you arrived at Aldermaston Court and the field there and were doing training, pulling gliders and dropping paratroopers.

Describe a little bit of the feeling as we led up to D-Day. By this time it's the early part of 1944. Did you have the idea an invasion was coming? Was there an inkling?

JM: Well, it was -- unquestionably it was coming. There's just some question as to when it was going to take place.

PR: Did you ever have any hint when it might happen?

JM: Well, not really. But, on one occasion we made a mock invasion deal. And we went out into the English Channel. I don't know how many groups participated, but there's a bunch of them, enough that the German observers and radar certainly thought unquestionably there's an air fleet coming across there. And then we turned and went back to England just to kind of wear on their nerves a little bit. I don't know how much they actually did it. But we knew it wasn't a for sure deal.

PR: The Germans had radar on those islands?

JM: They had some radar. Of course, it was a little primitive to what we call radar now. We had some homing devices that were actually radar that they'd put up at the end of a runway or a strip someplace. They were only good for about 25, 30 miles. But you could home in on them.

PR: To guide you the landing if it was bad weather?

JM: Yes.

PR: Did it tell you anything about height or just distance and direction?

JM: No, it just said, “This is the end of the runway.”

PR: You do the rest on your own?

JM: That’s right. Well, by that time everyone who was first pilot was instrument rated. And we thought we knew what we were doing, whether we did or not.

PR: Did you have plenty of practice in the fog over there, bad weather?

JM: We had more accidents due to fog in England. And we had casualties. We had a tremendous amount of bicycle accidents, people riding bicycles. Of course, they just had that little old bitty light that really didn’t show you much. And the fog would be so bad that they kind of forget which way the traffic was supposed to do since English were on the wrong side of the road. And we had some serious accidents with our people getting run over.

PR: Would you say more bicycle accidents than airplane accidents?

JM: Yeah, we sure did.

PR: isn’t that something?

JM: We sure did for a while.

PR: By the way, you were in the 434th air carrier group.

JM: 434th troop carrier group.

PR: Troop carrier groups scattered around England?

JM: Oh yeah, there were a lot of them.

PR: How many? Ever heard any estimates how many you were?

JM: Oh, I think in there on that presidential citation, when we went in over there on D-Day I believe it says something about the largest [airmada?] that ever existed at the time.

PR: So there were many more groups than just your group then?

JM: There were lots of them. We dropped there at Omaha Beach. And of course they had those other beaches strung up down there, too, you know? But Omaha was the one we dropped to.

PR: Okay. Did you see the troop build-up and increased presence of all the troops there as it got toward June?

JM: They brought equipment of all types including tanks and every fighting equipment of all kinds and personnel. They just had them lined down the roads there in England.

PR: Really, just one end to the other?

JM: You'd have thought that they'd have sunk the island, there was so much stuff.

PR: Really? All the roads were just lined with all this equipment?

JM: Oh yeah. They tried to put as much of it under trees and stuff. Of course, there's lots of trees in England and camouflage netting has us sort of under.

PR: To try to hide the intentions?

JM: Well, the Germans, of course, knew it was a build-up, too. It was another one of those guessing games of when it was going to take place.

PR: Yeah. As it got toward June, when did you first hear what your mission was going to be?

JM: We didn't know for sure until about 24 hours before we were going.

PR: Really?

JM: And they restricted everyone to the base, no one in or out. And we didn't even know until we got down there that they painted those white stripes around the airplanes to identify them, you know?

PR: Where did they put the white stripes, around the body and the wing?

JM: Yes. They started just about halfway up the aircraft, went back to the tail section.

PR: Any on the wings also or just the body?

JM: No, just on the body?

PR: Just the body? So even 1st of June, 2nd of June, 3rd of June, you had an inkling things were getting busy, but no guesses?

JM: No, not really. But then, like I say, they just locked the thing down completely.

PR: Yeah. What day do you think that was? Any -- remember?

JM: Well, that was the 6th when we went in there. So it was the 4th, I guess.

PR: Well, they were supposed to go on the 5th, but they had a cancellation. Were you all loaded up to go on the 5th, or didn't they get that far?

JM: No, we never made a move until the time came.

PR: You were all locked down and tight, and you knew it was going?

JM: That’s right.

PR: Now, how did they -- on the 5th then, sometime during the day, they took you in for a briefing and showed you the...

JM: Well, we had our briefing the evening, I guess, after chow time in the evening. I guess it was after that we had the briefing.

PR: That’s the first you really -- concrete thing you knew?

JM: That’s the first that we knew where we were going to go and what time it was going to take place.

PR: Yeah. Golly. Did they give you a special meal that night or any special consideration?

JM: No.

PR: Just business like usual except you were locked in?

JM: I don’t recall anything special about it. All was still the same old frostbitten brussel sprouts and that sorry coffee.

PR: What was your feeling when they unveiled -- what did they do, unveil a map or just do talking?

JM: Well, when they had the briefing, that's the first we knew that Omaha Beach was where we were going to go. We didn't even know it was called Omaha until that time.

PR: Really?

JM: And they had the whole thing laid out there and showing where the other place was going to be on up the coast there.

PR: A big map on the wall or a model on the floor?

JM: No, it was a map on the wall. And then they give us briefings considering known places where they had ack-ack fire and that sort of thing. Like I say, we took off about -- well, it was shortly after that briefing because we were supposed to be over Omaha Beach at midnight. The seaborne troops were supposed to hit the beach at 6:00 AM in the morning. That was H-hour. And we were H-hour minus 6, would put us in there at midnight. And we were about five minutes off of it, as I recall.

PR: Really?

JM: It was about 12:05, I think, when my airplane got there, at least. And with everything considered, you know, that had to be some meticulous planning and getting all that stuff together and all those times. Lord, the work that went

into that must have been ferocious. I don't know how they did it, actually, but it went pretty well.

PR: Yeah. So you had your briefing after chow time.

JM: And it was about time to get suited up and get geared up.

PR: What kind of a flying suit did you wear?

JM: I just wore an ordinary flight suit.

PR: Flight suit?

JM: It zipped up and had the pockets and so on.

PR: Did you have to have a special warm?

JM: No, we didn't.

PR: You didn't need that?

JM: It was warm enough we didn't need that. However, those heaters in those airplanes would run you out of the cabin if you wanted to go that strong.

PR: They worked too well, huh?

JM: Yeah, it came off the exhaust and plenty of heat.

PR: Yeah. It was like an old Ford car, huh?

JM: Yeah, Lord.

PR: So you loaded up with your paratroopers loaded on board?

JM: We met the paratroopers. They were on the ground. And they were gathered around like one of those pictures. You saw them standing around the aircraft. And we had practiced so many drops that we knew we'd let them know about five minutes ahead of time. They'd stand up and hook

up, you know, and that sort of thing. Some of those paratroopers -- and I don't remember a time when it didn't happen that way. Some of those paratroopers wouldn't even use their chest chutes, the auxiliary chutes. They preferred to use it for extra grenades and ammunition and that sort of thing. And they just left the auxiliary chutes there in the aircraft and didn't use them.

PR: So they loaded up with extra ammunition in their auxiliary pack.

JM: Yeah.

PR: Was that carried on their chest?

JM: Well, they used for the most part that M1, you know, the short barrel (inaudible). It had the 15-round clips. And they'd tape two clips together so it actually had 30 rounds, one underneath the other one. Drop down -- of, the officers had -- some of them had -- well, they all had pistols. But a lot of them had carbines. And then, of course, they had machine guns with them and that sort of thing that the crews would drop.

PR: Did you carry any supplies on your plane or just the paratroopers?

JM: No, we didn't have any supplies at all. You're talking about eating supplies or things like...

PR: Ammunition and heavier weapons, machine guns?

JM: No. We had what they call door bundles, that the jumpmaster -- they had, like, ammunition and first aid gear and that sort of thing. And they'd boot them out.

PR: He'd kick that out as they went?

JM: And we also had we called (inaudible) bundles that you could put them underneath and carry underneath the airplane that could cut loose, too.

PR: Oh. Did they have parachutes on them, or did they just fall free?

JM: They had parachutes on them.

PR: Do you remember the amount of equipment those paratroopers had on? Did it seem extraordinarily big to you?

JM: Yeah, they were loaded down with knives and fighting tools of all kinds. Some of them undoubtedly had their own private weapons, pistols, and stuff that they'd gathered.

PR: What's your impression of the attitude as you went through them to get into your plane? Were they upbeat, exuberant? Or were they more subdued?

JM: Everybody including the flight crew was pretty subdued. This was coming down to the wire. It was going to be hairy regardless.

PR: Big stuff this time. Practice is over.

JM: Playtime's over. This is down and bloody from here on.

PR: Yeah. And you knew someone was waiting for you. What time did you start -- now your whole crew was assembled. What time did you start your engines?

JM: Well, they estimated it would take, as I recall, about three or three and a half hours to circle and let all the squadrons get together, you know, and get lined up in their formation. So I guess we started engines about 8:30, 9:00. It was still light, of course.

PR: Yeah. Oh, that's right. In June, it's the long days. So your D-Day started well before the 6th.

JM: Yeah.

PR: Did they have the whole troop carrier group up that day?

JM: Oh yeah, you bet.

PR: Was that all loaded with paratroopers? No gliders that first day?

JM: No. Our group -- that's my yard.

PR: Oh. Let me just turn it off here.

(break in audio)

PR: We're up to engine starting time.

JM: We were getting ready to take off, weren't we?

PR: Yeah. How many paratroopers did your plane carry, by the way? I've never asked you that.

JM: Well, they'd have different amounts. Now, on D-Day itself I believe we had the jumpmaster and 15 paratroopers. It'd be 16 altogether. But, like I say, we had different amounts depending on where they were going and what the deal was.

PR: So you had eight on each side then?

JM: Well, in those C-47s they had those seats, you know, just made out of metal. And they had the shooting portholes to the glass windows. Nobody ever used any that I know of. But, I guess you'd call them ventilation holes. You could pull that thing out and they were secure to where you could put it on the inside. And they had those seats on the side so there was plenty of places to sit down.

PR: Were the seats like benches?

JM: They just --

PR: They faced toward the middle of the plane with their back against the outside?

JM: Yeah. And you could take those things down. And when you were evacuating the wounded, you could hang up stretchers up there on either side, two stretchers, one above the other one. You were geared up to where you could carry 24 stretchers back in the airplane.

PR: Really, double line on each side? Would they put the doors on then?

JM: Well, yeah. They'd shut the door because...

PR: How about with the paratroopers? Did you have the doors on or off?

JM: The doors? The doors were open prior to the jump. But on the takeoff and everything there wasn't a need to have that Windstream coming in. So we'd get up into the air, and then they'd slide those doors back.

PR: The doors slid?

JM: So the paratroopers could bail out of that thing. And they didn't pull the ripcord. It pulled itself automatically when they came out of that thing. It ran down.

PR: With the ripcord or whatever they call it?

JM: The cable right down through the fuselage.

PR: Yeah. That's what they hitched up to was that static line or whatever they called it?

JM: Yeah.

PR: So they loaded up? They loaded 16 on. You had no sleep? You had sleep the night before, a regular day of work and then no sleep when you took off?

JM: Well, I don't know. We might have -- in the afternoon there might have been some dozing, you know?

PR: Had a catnap?

JM: Pilots can sleep anywhere, anytime.

PR: Really? Like Winston Churchill, he could be asleep in a second.

JM: But, by that time I doubt if there was much sleeping going on because people were getting geared up.

PR: Now, when you had your briefing was your navigator with you and your copilot?

JM: Oh yeah, everybody was there.

PR: Do you remember, how did your route go from Reading?

JM: Well, when we took off we circled the airport until everybody joined in. And then we went...

PR: Were you still in your groups of three? Or were you all together in a...

JM: We got in three-ship formations after we got up circling around. And then when we got together, headed out for the coast.

PR: Did you have a main navigator you were following?

JM: Well, the lead aircraft, of course, we had a navigator, too. But everybody's is. You know, you could see them. And they had those little running lights at the back where you could be behind them, and you could still see the little dots of light up there where the aircraft was.

PR: Okay. And you headed toward the coast by Reading first?

JM: Yeah. We just headed right toward the English Channel and then just straight across.

PR: Right straight across?

JM: Yeah.

PR: Oh. Now, where did you hit the coast then in France? Do you remember?

JM: We hit the French coast right there at the beachhead there.

PR: Right over Omaha?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And then went straight into Sainte-Mère-Église?

JM: Well, Sainte-Mère-Église is right there, you know? That bay comes in there like that. And here's the hill. It had pretty good cliffs of 60 or 70 feet high, maybe more at times. And the little town sits over here. And the Germans, of course, had fully secured the bunkers and trenches and one thing up on top. And so, that's where it all took place as far as my outfit was concerned.

PR: Do you remember seeing just huge amounts of planes as you flew across, everyone gathered up?

JM: Well, no. By that time it was getting dark. And what was behind us ended up having to take care of themselves. We had all we needed to take care of ourselves.

PR: Yeah. So you were leaning on the guy ahead of you, following along?

JM: Yeah. We were just following right on. The old man, his crew was leading the deal.

PR: How high would you estimate you were flying then as you went across?

JM: We flew across there about 600 feet.

PR: Okay. And the weather?

JM: The weather was fair. It had a little -- had a few cumulus clouds. But the bulk of that stuff was up above us, you know. You were flying so low.

PR: Was there a moon, a bright moon that night?

JM: No, I don't recall being a moon at all.

PR: Could you see anything of the ground? Or were you just going strictly by the people ahead of you?

JM: Well, when we -- of course, even at night you're flying out over the water. And you hit the land. Well, you can see and tell where the waves are hitting on the other thing.

PR: Oh, I see, yeah, that foam and white of them.

JM: And so, we went right across there and started making our drop.

PR: Really? By the way, that was the -- let's see, you told me. That was the 82nd Airborne?

JM: I believe it was the 82nd we had.

PR: Do you know what company or regiment of it?

JM: No.

PR: How were they decked out?

JM: I believe it was the 807th. But I'm not sure about that.

PR: Yeah. Were they all black-faced and camouflaged? Nothing shiny on them?

JM: Well, they used camouflage paint over their face. And they supplied the paratroopers with those little clickers.

PR: Oh yeah, those little cricket things? They really did that?

JM: You bet. They'd click it a couple of times. And if there was movement there and you didn't hear a click back, if you weren't already dead you'd better start shooting.

PR: So when did you get the first resistance gunfire from down below?

JM: Well, there's -- I don't know what they call them, (inaudible) or something like that, those two or three little old islands off the coast there. And we started picking up fire there. And that's when I believe I told you somebody said, "Look at the fireflies." I said, "Fireflies, hell. Those are tracers."

PR: Tracers coming at you? So even on the islands they were firing at you?

JM: Oh yeah. Of course, they were under German control.

PR: Oh yeah. Now, how about off the coast? As you got across the coast you knew your drop was going to happen pretty quick?

JM: You bet. They started working on us pretty good. The Germans had -- from the time that thing was set up, just a day or two before they had brought a bunch of German troops in there to rest them, to give them some rest. And they were old veteran --

PR: Top division.

JM: -- people. And so, it didn't take them long to get underway and start shooting. And like I say, there was plenty of shooting going on.

PR: Yeah. now, you're going right straight on to Sainte-Mère-Église. How did you know it was -- how did you get the signal for the drop? How did that work out?

JM: Well, the lead aircraft got up there. He broke radio silence and said, "We're ready."

PR: Drop, huh?

JM: Yeah. So that's how it -- they also, prior to us going there they had what they call the pathfinders, a couple of aircraft that went in there and put some small flares out to help the lead aircraft get right in there where it wanted to go.

PR: Could you see those from the air, or someone else?

JM: No. The lead aircraft, of course, saw them. But, at that time I wasn't looking for any flares on the ground.

PR: Yeah. You were getting plenty of ground fire as your people went out?

JM: Hell yes.

PR: Did they get out successfully, no problem?

JM: Well, we lost -- I've forgotten how many aircraft we lost. But, when we back in there with gliders two or three days later, there must have been 50 or 75 aircraft floating down there in the water. In fact, they finally had to sink some of us with fire from the ships because they were making hazard navigation down there. But they floated to beat the band, which was very encouraging, because didn't anybody know for sure whether they floated or not.

PR: These were DC-3s actually been shot down and floated in the water?

JM: Yeah. We lost one crew in the very tragic situation there. They got knocked down and went down into the water and then managed to get back on land, the whole crew. And they were trying to get up there and meet with some friendly paratroopers. And they all got up there into those hedgerows. And the next morning, just at daylight, a German plane come in and strafed the area and killed the pilot and the copilot, I believe, and finally killed them all but one. And he finally got back and told the story.

PR: To tell the story?

JM: And one of them -- I don’t know whether it was the navigator or who -- he was trying to get the group together so they could...

(break in audio)

PR: Did your men get out of your -- your paratroopers get out of your plane okay, drop successfully?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And then, how did you -- by the way, you hear talks about planes got disoriented and went through fog banks and got out of line and wrong area. Did you have any problem with where your troops dropped or with the weather throwing you off course?

JM: No, not on that deal. That was later on in another --

PR: Other areas?

JM: -- area. But there on D-Day was no problem in that regard.

PR: So your guys went...

JM: And the paratroopers all cleared the aircraft. Now, what happened to them after that I don’t know.

PR: Oh yeah. What are they called, the stick when they drop a line of them?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: So your guys dropped right on target then?

JM: Pretty well as far as I know. We were right where we were supposed to be.

PR: How did you head out after the drop now?

JM: Well, as soon as they dropped, we started turning back to the right as quick as we could because the further we went in there the heavier the fire was getting. We were trying to get out of the area of fire as quick as we could.

PR: Were you still more or less in formation?

JM: And we also started climbing, too, so we wouldn't be so close to the ground.

PR: Yeah, what height did you drop the sticks at?

JM: We dropped at around 5-- or 600. As heavy as those paratroopers loaded, they almost have to push away and freefall to it like they was pulling the chute themselves. But even so, it took a little while for those chutes to open. The last thing a paratrooper wants is still to be swinging when he hits the ground, you know, particularly when he's loaded down with gear. So it's the same old deal. You have your legs close together and you hit the ground, hopefully rolling, you know?

PR: Hope for the best.

JM: And then collapse your parachute and get rid of it.

PR: Better them than you, right?

JM: Yeah. There wasn’t any point in trying to roll them up and conceal them like you would, you know, under different circumstances because the Germans knew you were there.

PR: Could you see these sticks going down in the planes up ahead of you?

JM: No.

PR: You just see your own fellows?

JM: I couldn’t see them at all. Well, I couldn’t see those either. They were behind me, of course.

PR: Oh, yeah, of course.

JM: The crew chief was there.

PR: So you headed out and turned right, what, went out over Brittany?

JM: No, we went right back out over the English Channel and then just straight back to the base there. And then we could go.

PR: How about the fire coming up at you -- stay pretty heavy while you were over the land?

JM: Well, yeah. They was working on everybody -- the airplane flying the number two position and me. I mean, you said it. The machine gun was just tacking at the tail section of the airplanes and went around.

PR: Oh really?

JM: Of course, I didn’t know it. I knew I was being shot at.

PR: Yeah. Did they knock some pieces off?

JM: No. Well, I knew I'd got a time or two. And then I told you after I got on the ground and was walking around to see what damage had done, I smelled the gasoline. And small arms, probably -- a rifle or light-caliber weapon of some kind. I had to secure it with a guard around it to keep somebody from coming by smoking and flick a match or something.

PR: Torch the plane. So even going back it's still pretty early. You're not seeing any gunfire from the navy ships off the coast. Did you get the idea there were ships accumulating down there?

JM: No. That was a few hours later, of course.

PR: Did you get the idea there were a lot of ships down there or just couldn't see?

JM: No, the way we come across, the ships were in a different area, probably a 45-degree angle back to our right as we were heading back toward England.

PR: So you went right back to your base at Aldermaston Court?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Okay. And no problem getting back there?

JM: No, sir.

PR: Did you meet any other planes coming?

JM: No.

PR: The main drop was at midnight then, and then...

JM: Yeah. As far as troop carriers were concerned, we fulfilled our mission for that deal, at least. They went back to their respective bases.

PR: What were your feelings when you got back down to the ground again and accomplished your mission part of it?

JM: Yea, verily. The meek shall inherit the earth, all six feet of it. We passed it by this time.

PR: Yeah. Golly, that's something. And all your -- from your group, everyone got back?

JM: Well, like I say, we lost --

PR: Except for that one?

JM: We lost that one aircraft.

PR: And how many were you flying in the squadron that day? What would you estimate?

JM: I believe we put up, I believe, 24 aircraft.

PR: Twenty-four.

JM: My squadron put up. That'd be eight flights with three aircraft to a flight.

PR: Three in each? And all the other squadrons were doing the same thing.

JM: Well, I'm not sure how many the other squadrons put up. I have no idea. But basically the only reason an airplane

would have dropped out is some mechanical failure taken place on the ground before it ever took off.

PR: Yeah. It'd have to drop its place?

JM: And they had auxiliary aircraft ready. They could come right on out and load those paratroopers right quick.

PR: So the mission was to get those paratroopers over there?

JM: That's right.

PR: If they had to substitute, why, they wouldn't cancel.

JM: That's right.

PR: I'll be. What was your next -- so, you come back on the 6th of June. When did you fly again?

JM: I believe it was three days later we went in with gliders. And we were a little deeper. And we were deeper into the interior and a little bit -- it would have been to the west, I guess, up the beach there a ways.

PR: Okay. West of Sainte-Mère-Église even?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Okay. So they were still fairly close to the coast? You were dropping these gliders in that strip right behind the coast?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Was that a daylight drop?

JM: Yes, sir, it was daylight.

PR: You had one glider behind you?

JM: I've forgotten whether I had one or two. Like I said, it's been so long ago.

PR: About how many troops would those gliders hold, by the way?

JM: Well, it would depend on the kind of equipment in there. You could put jeeps and small artillery pieces and things like that in there. The airborne instruments, if you just had it loaded with instruments, those CG-4As had a crew of two, the pilot and the copilot. And I believe you could put about 15 or 16 men in one.

PR: Okay, so about the same as your plane carried, about the same number of men?

JM: Well, I've carried as high as 50 people in one of those aircraft. Well, it'd just fly great if you had room to take off. That airplane was wonderful.

PR: What do you remember about that flight with the glider into Omaha? No problem getting to the coast?

JM: No. As I recall, we didn't have any problems at all. Now, the glider pilots, when they made their drop and got their people on the ground, they evacuated those glider pilots as quickly as they could. And they might be back on the base in a matter of three days, something like that. And then, they'd get geared up for the next mission, you know? So it wasn't a matter of losing a glider pilot. Of course, some of them got killed, too, of course. But those that

survived, they evaluated them just as quickly as they could.

PR: Was that a pretty heavy load to take off on from the airport?

JM: Well, it wasn’t any difficulty at all as far as taking off with one. In fact, the glider was usually airborne before you ever got your gear off.

PR: Even loaded up?

JM: Yeah, they lifted right up.

PR: Would that be a help to you or make it trickier for you?

JM: Well, it was certainly easier because you didn’t have that drag going down the runway. And you’d get your tail up and on your wheels and get airborne and suck your gear up, and off you were gone.

PR: When you got up to speed, did it make any difference to you flying the DC-3 that the glider was back there? Or didn’t it make much difference?

JM: Oh yeah, it made a lot of difference. You could sure tell. And you towed those things normally to about, as I recall, around about 140 miles an hour.

PR: Was the towing speed? How fast would you be going just, like, with the paratroopers on board? How fast would you fly?

JM: We’d fly probably 155, 160 miles an hour.

PR: Okay. So you were slower down with the gliders on?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: Do you remember the scene down below Omaha Beach when you came over?

JM: Well, of course, they had great gobs of ships lined up out there. And they were still shelling back in there, some of those large deals, battlewagons and so on. And destroyers and small vessels would come in close. And they were showering down on them, too, you know? But, it was something to see.

PR: Must have been quite a sight.

JM: And they had lots of disabled beach craft. You could sure see those, you know? A lot of those people never made it to dry land. They were dead before they ever got out of the water.

PR: Could you actually see the troops on the ground? Or were you too high to see individuals?

JM: Well, occasionally you could see pockets of troops, you know? As far as individuals are concerned, you can see a few. At the edge of the beach you could see bodies down there.

PR: Really? Lots of smoke?

JM: Well, they had been killed, you know, when they were trying to land. They'd come in there, and they'd drop those

ramps. And the tide, well, putting that thing off one day would change the tides, too, you know? And those ramps that they had up there, they'd drop them. And they had concertina barbed wire and these big, like, railroad irons and so on stuck up there. And then they had -- the Germans had their firing positions set up there. So a lot of those people never even made it to dry land. And they disabled lots of those landing craft, too.

PR: Could you see a lot of smoke on the beach and the shore area?

JM: Well, there wasn't much smoke involved.

PR: Could you hear any of that?

JM: The bulk of the smoke would be if some airplane had gone in or something.

PR: Oh, I see. I guess it was too high to hear any of the ground noise. You just hear the ack-ack.

JM: Well, you could hear one of those battlewagons once in a while. Of course, they make a terrific noise.

PR: Was there noticeably less ground fire toward your plane on that third day?

JM: I don't know if there was any less.

PR: If they're shooting at you, they're shooting at you.

JM: If they shoot at you one time, that's plenty, you know?

PR: One shot can do it.

JM: That’s right.

PR: So there was still significant resistance. What height did you drop the gliders from?

JM: I took those gliders in at about 400 feet. You could drop them practically at any altitude you wanted to, you know? But, the lower they were to ground, the better chance they had of surviving, too.

PR: And then, what did you do after you dropped? How did you go?

JM: Well, same old deal. As soon as you got them loose, why, you started making the turn going back home.

PR: Right-hand turn all the time? Was that sort of the order?

JM: Well, depending on which way you’re going, of course. But you tried to stay away from the ships at sea, you know. It wouldn’t be beyond the realm of possibility you get killed with one of those shells coming through there, too, you know.

PR: Yeah, because they lobbed them up.

JM: So you’d stay away from that area as much as you could.

PR: And what was your pattern after that first glider drop that you had? Did you continue to...

JM: Well, we’d try to stay in formation as much as we could.

PR: Coming home?

JM: Of course, you always had a problem with German fighters, too. And that so-called tail end Charlie was always vulnerable, you know?

PR: You tried not to be the last man?

JM: The Germans knew that those aircraft couldn't -- we couldn't fire back at them anyway. And we had -- on those glider flights we had our fighters up above us trying to protect us as much as they could, too.

PR: Well, that was a help.

JM: Oh, you bet, big help.

PR: What flights did you do after that glider drop? How did you manage in the rest of the month of June and July?

JM: D-Day plus six, I believe it was, we went in to that strip they'd laid a piece of that chicken wire stuff up there to land on up there at Omaha, up on the hill. And we went in there to pick up some wounded to evacuate them.

PR: Do you remember the name of the strip or where it was?

JM: It was right there at Omaha Beach, right on top of it.

PR: And then you picked up wounded?

JM: We got in there and landed and got ready to get the wounded on board. Of course, we got off the strip to do all that, and one of our fighter aircraft came in there. He got shot up pretty bad. And when he landed, it was a crash landing on a strip. So he just tied the strip down. We couldn't

operate. So that was pretty obvious. So several of us went down right there at that bluff at Omaha to take a look at it right from there. And they had the things marked off where the Germans had mines and so on. We stayed within those white markers. We got right down there and looked right down there at the landing deal.

PR: Right on the landing?

JM: Yeah. And that's where General Earl Rudder and the raiders came up on that deal later on. I haven't seen it except pictures of it. They've got a plaque up there on that little --

PR: Pointe du Hac?

JM: -- place up about that high where they came up there. And he wasn't a general at that time. I believe he was a light colonel. I'm not sure about that either.

PR: No, I think that's right.

JM: They devised some special fire out of mortars with some grappling hook things. And they fired them up there. And some of them had some ladders with them, too. And those Germans right there would hear them coming. All they had to do was shoot you at point-blank range with those potato mashers. They just tap them on their helmet and drop them right into your arms, you know? It's unbelievable that anybody got up that thing, period. I'm just absolutely

amazed that they could do that. But they did. And General Rudder and I got to be real good friends after that. He was the president of the university at A&M.

PR: Oh yeah, Rudder Hall. I remember -- we've got three Aggie kids.

JM: During the course of his career he was the land commissioner when they put that guy in the penitentiary, you know? And he was the land commissioner. And when Price Daniel got -- he had been elected governor. And I picked up the general and flew him over to Liberty. And he and Price met each other for the first time. This was before Price was inaugurated as governor. And he was a gentleman and a scholar. I saw him for the last time about a couple of months before he died. And I'd gone up to A&M to take some doves to do some pathology work on them. They'd been poisoned with poison grain down in the valley someplace. And I called the general's office from the airport there. And his secretary answered the phone. And when I told her who it was, she said, "He's in a meeting right now." And I said, "Well, don't disturb him." She said, "Oh, no, Mr. Matlock." She said, "I know how you and the general are." She said, "He'll really raise Cain if I don't tell him." So bless his heart if he didn't insist

that he come out to the airport and met him. That's the kind of man he was.

PR: Is that right? Yeah, quite a guy.

JM: Oh, he was a great man.

PR: Huh. Are there any of his Rangers that are still alive around here that you know of?

JM: Well, he's dead now. But, the widow, that Dr. Hicks married his widow...

PR: Charlie Hanley?

JM: Charles Hanley. He was an officer down at the bank, you know? He was big and heavyset. It's hard to believe he was ever slim and trim, because those guys went out of the way to kill you whether you needed it or not some of the time. And Charles Scott Hanley was a Ranger.

PR: I'll be darned.

JM: He sure was.

PR: Would have loved to talk to him.

JM: Oh yeah.

Billy: Don't start shooting.

JM: Hello, Billy.

(break in audio)

PR: The fighter crashed, and you went over to see Omaha. Do you remember all the troops behind landed and supplies coming in?

JM: Well, of course, that was all over with at that time. They had vessels out there. And they had those little balloons scattered around to keep German fighters from coming in there. They could still make it, but it wasn't so easy. At any rate, we went down there. And like I say, I had an opportunity to be right there at the place. And it's just remarkable that anybody survived that at all. And then, Charles Scott, like I say, you see him later on. You'd never believe that he'd been a Ranger.

PR: He did that? When did you finally get to take off then? They cleared the runway finally?

JM: Well, they finally cleared the runway. And so, we picked up our wounded and took them back to England.

PR: Who was helping in the back? The corpsmen would be on the plane with the wounded?

JM: Well, they had those evacuation nurses. They had an enlisted RN female and one technical sergeant to assist her.

PR: And they loaded them in and out of the back, those back doorways?

JM: Yeah. you could carry 24 litters back there. Sometimes you had so-called walking wounded, and they'd just sit down on the floor there someplace. But, some of the worst, most pitiful cases I ever saw were tank people, tanks when they caught fire and blew up, that sort of thin.

PR: Burned and wounded, too?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And you finally got to take off then?

JM: Yeah, then we loaded up and went back to England.

PR: Where would you fly to -- Aldermaston Court?

JM: Well, it depended on where these field hospitals were. We'd go to just different places. They'd tell us in advance which one we'd return to. And so, just wherever it was, that's where we'd go. But they were all back in England at that time.

PR: Did you keep -- but you stayed based in Aldermaston Court? You were just doing the landings and pickups at the matted field?

JM: Yeah, over in France and then take them wherever they were supposed to go.

PR: How long would that continue? Would you make a flight every day or every other day?

JM: Oh yeah. They had plenty of casualties, you know? And then, when Patton broke out at Saint-Lô, then they really

started having some casualties. We were flying night and day at that time. He didn't want any food. He didn't want any letters. All he wanted was ammunition and fuel for his tanks.

PR: Would you fly supplies in and then...

JM: Oh yeah. We'd go back to England and get loaded up. And they'd bring some hot food down there. But most of the guys would lie down underneath the wings and try to get a little sleep because you could always eat a K-ration in the airplane flying back, you know? And so, I'd say that went on for several days. I don't remember how long. But, that's when we got awarded the second Croix de Guerre, on that operation.

PR: The first was for your action on D-Day?

JM: Yeah, D-Day.

PR: And the second was the support of --

JM: Saint-Lô.

PR: Saint-Lô. Where would you land? Where were you landing then?

JM: Well, they had those little old strips that they had, like B1, B2, B3. They just had that kind of a designation. You didn't know where you were going to be. They'd just say where it was, and the navigator, they'd brief you.

PR: They'd have it marked on your map?

JM: Yeah, and you'd just fly there.

PR: So you'd fly supplies in, wounded out?

JM: Yeah.

(break in audio)

PR: And then, around Saint-Lô...

JM: Yeah, we were carrying ammunition and diesel fuel for his tanks.

PR: How would you carry the diesel fuel, in those jerry cans?

JM: In those five-gallon cans.

PR: Okay. Could you see the fighting going on down below at all? Or were you too remote from it?

JM: No. Of course, he was on the move with those tanks, you know? And we didn't get up there where that was going on.

PR: What would they do, truck them from your...

JM: We would have a -- we'd have a place where -- no, we'd land someplace and drop them off. And then they'd truck them up to...

PR: Okay, try to catch up with them.

JM: To wherever they were -- I'm sure they had prearranged refueling/rearming spots up there. But, we'd get out, and the officers and enlisted crew, everybody helped load and

unload that stuff. And they'd back a truck up against the airplane. And we'd load them onto that.

PR: Speed was of the essence?

JM: Yeah, you bet. It sure was. And I'd say he wasn't interested. He'd live off the land. And they'd get their letters and so on at their own. He was there just to kill Germans, and the sooner the better, and the more the merrier.

PR: Yeah. What Air Force were you in, by the way, during the D-Day time?

JM: Well, prior to D-Day we went into the 9th Air Force.

PR: Oh, okay.

JM: The 8th was just the heavy bombardment. And then all the tactical aircraft they put into the 9th.

PR: In the 9th?

JM: So that's when we got into the 9th.

PR: Okay.

JM: We had to change our uniforms back to the 9th, and our blouses.

PR: Yeah. Well, you had been the 8th?

JM: Well, yeah. When we first went over there we were in the 8th.

PR: Oh, okay. And then they split them.

JM: Yeah, they split them up so we were in the 9th.

PR: Okay. Now, you continued to supply -- this is toward the end of July, isn't it, Saint-Lô and the breakout?

JM: That sounds about right. Yeah, sounds about right.

PR: You continued to fly in the Saint-Lô area? Or would you move on up to different fields?

JM: As they'd move forward, we'd move up and on different strips, you know? Like I say, they just had them designated EC1 and EB2 and that sort of thing, just arbitrarily assigned it to them.

PR: Do you know what towns you were landing there as you went across France?

JM: Well, it was day and night, just as soon as we could load up and get off again.

PR: It was just a continuous thing?

JM: It was a night-and-day operation.

PR: Really? Fuel up and men, and wounded back? Fuel and supplies up?

JM: We didn't bring any wounded back at that time. It was strictly fueling up.

PR: But you still operated out of Aldermaston Court?

JM: Yes, sir, at that time.

PR: That was your home base? They did your repairs and...

(break in audio)

PR: Six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Okay.

JM: Now, we were in friendly territory at that time, coming across and dropping that stuff off. The only thing we had to concern ourselves about, which is always something we did concern ourselves with, is German fighters.

PR: Did you see many?

JM: I don't recall. I personally was never fired on. Of course, if I had I wouldn't be here talking to you now because you had no defense against them.

PR: When you were flying these missions, were you in groups still, groups of three? Or would you go solo?

JM: Just as soon as you loaded up you'd be solo and there'd be someone pretty close behind you, of course.

PR: How did you take off at your home strip, by the way? Was there a control tower like we talk about today with radio communication?

JM: Oh yeah. Oh, sure.

PR: And you went by your call letters?

JM: We were, of course, operating off of hard-surface runways.

PR: And they'd give you the clearance and tell you how to taxi out?

JM: Yes.

PR: Could you taxi and land at the same time? Or was it strictly just takeoff operations and then landing?

JM: No, it was strictly one by one. As they load you up, why, you'd call the control tower. "This is 343 W for Willie. We're ready to taxi." And they'd tell you what was the operating runway, and that's where you'd go and go.

PR: How much range did you have? Would you have to fuel up after each run? Or could you make several runs?

JM: Those airplanes with regular fuel in them, you could fly about eight hours.

PR: Oh, okay. And how long were those runs to average at that time?

JM: Well, I'd have to get a chart out and look. I've forgotten. But, wherever it was over there, there was -- as I recall, it was, what, three, three and a half hours across there, something like that. But, while you were on the ground and they were loading the stuff up, they'd bring a tank truck by. Those things hold 800 gallons.

PR: So they'd take a tank truck up to you and fill you up again?

JM: Yeah, fill you up.

PR: Okay. And that ran on, what, high-octane gasoline?

JM: Oh yeah, 90 proof.

PR: Yeah, strong stuff.

JM: You bet.

PR: Now, you're advancing across France. Do you remember going across Paris and doing the same thing?

JM: Well, that was later on, of course, when we would start going to Paris. And then we went into Paris countless times, went into Le Bourget. That was the field there. And the first time I ever went into Paris, we were still doing some fighting over there on the west bank. It was a so-called free city, you know, and they didn't bombard it. They bombed all around it. And then, later on, when we left England, we went to France and were stationed in two or three different place there. We were stationed at Reims on two different occasions, once while the war was still going on. And then when the Germans surrendered we were in Reims at the time. And Eisenhower had his headquarters down in the little red schoolhouse right there by the railroad tracks. And the Reims Cathedral was out there where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. The cathedral, you could see it a long way off.

PR: Where was the first field you were based at in France, do you think, at Reims there?

JM: No. I've forgotten for sure. But we were -- we spent a good deal of time at Mourmelon-le-Grand, Napoleon's old cavalry school area.

PR: [Malmedy?]?

JM: Mourmelon.

PR: [Marmelan?]?

JM: M-O-U-R-M-E --

PR: M-O-U-R...

JM: M-E-L-O-N. Le, L-E. Grand, G-R-A-N-D. Mourmelon-le-Grand.

PR: Where is that near?

JM: That’s out of Paris and then in the Champagne district there.

PR: Oh yeah, out of Paris?

JM: Yes, sir.

PR: And that’s -- you think that’s the first place you were assigned? Well, I’ll let you -- you can do some research on that for me.

JM: I believe that’s correct. Part of the crew, we were scattered out in so many different buildings. And we had our mess hall in one of the old -- in one of the stables. And those stables and those houses were built far better than the peasants were living in, by far. And I was digging a foxhole just outside this room I was in in one of these buildings. And that’s when I dug up this cavalry stirrup.

PR: Oh, really? You found the stirrup?

JM: Yeah.

PR: You still have it?

JM: Yeah.

PR: No fooling? Why did they move you to Mourmelon, just to be closer to the...

JM: Well, we moved from England over so we would not have to fly so far. The gasoline saving was something that we had to consider.

PR: Were you still flying supplies up into Belgium and northern France?

JM: Yeah, and evacuating wounded.

PR: Okay. What timing are we looking at now, up toward the Bulge yet in November/December or...

JM: We went over there in -- I believe it was in November. I'm not sure. Winter was just getting ready to set in.

PR: That's some of those snowy scenes you have from that, flying from there?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And what did you recall about the -- were you still stationed there when the Bulge started up?

JM: Yes. We ran on the Battle of the Bulge. And I was -- at that time, the squadron flight surgeon that's later on, one of his names was [Emil?], for Dr. Emil [Ruprecht?]. He

carried me over the hill one time. And we named our son; his middle name was Joe Emil Matlock for Doc Emil.

PR: Was your flight surgeon there?

JM: Yes. And so, he just did the duties, you know? He had a small hospital in Dearborn, Michigan. And basically all his business came from the motor companies up there. And I believe he had 16 beds. And we had some other flight surgeons there that were doctors. And they sure were making a lot more money than the army was paying them, you know? Doc never said one word about the revenue that he undoubtedly was missing.

PR: Passed by, huh?

JM: Yeah. He was a fine gentleman.

PR: Isn't that something? How did the Bulge change your missions you were doing?

JM: Well, that was just before Christmas. And the first time we ran in there, it was bad. It was snowing and one thing and another. And I got back up there to the strip. And I had Christmas packages and so on. And I told Doc, I said, "I'm going to open these up, because I don't have a reason to believe I'll be here at Christmas."

So I opened them up, and we had a little feast with some of the gifts that were there.

PR: Where had you landed in Belgium? Do you know where it was?

JM: No. What do you mean? Where it was?

PR: You flew from Mourmelon up into Belgium with the supplies?

JM: Well, of course, we had charts where we knew where these places were. And the navigator would look at the chart. The pilot and the copilot and the navigator all had to know where they were going in case somebody got hurt, you know? So we had real good charts. And so, wherever the action was, that's where we'd go.

PR: Close by the front lines?

JM: Hell yes. The front lines were all around us at Bastogne.

PR: No fooling?

JM: Oh, hell yes. They had them completely surrounded. That's when they came over and tried to get the general to surrender. And he said, "Nuts."

PR: Nuts? Were you flying in mostly...

JM: And the German turned around. "Is that affirmative or a negative?" He didn't know what the hell he meant. The heaviest on just west of town there, later on they named it Eisenhower Ridge for some reason. They had artillery up there and tanks hub-dub up there. I just didn't see there's any way that you could survive that. I never saw such a concentration of fire in my life. They shot the hell out of that airplane, but we didn't lose a man. But

that’s what I told Doc, “Going to the Christmas goodies now.”

PR: What were you flying in, mostly ammunition?

JM: Ammunition and medical supplies. My aircraft didn’t do it. But one of the aircraft dropped my medical team, one or two doctors and two or three corpsmen, and that sort of thing to give them a hand because they was working on them good, you know?

PR: Drop them into Bastogne itself?

JM: Yeah, just dropped them right there.

PR: Really? Could you see Bastogne with the flying you were doing?

JM: Oh yeah, sure. Sure you could see it.

PR: Those were tight times, weren’t they?

JM: They sure were.

PR: Now, how long did that emergency sort of situation continue? When did it...

JM: It went on for about four or five days. And then they brought in by truck -- they brought some paratroopers in there by truck. And that’s when the Germans had a bunch of people in American uniforms and had GI equipment that they’d gotten here and there and had stopped areas where they could, you know?

PR: Tried to confuse us?

JM: That's when it got to the point where whoever stopped them, the GIs, the real sure enough GIs, would want to know who won the World Series and so on and so forth, and what's the capital of California and that sort of thing. That's also where the Germans executed a bunch of people who were strutting around -- 90, I think -- that they had their arms tied behind them with the wire, and executing them out there in that field.

PR: Did things sort of relieve then? The weather got better, and things turned around the other way?

JM: Well, the paratroopers got there. That was an all-out effort with the Germans. And then the weather cleared up to where they could get in there with some heavy bombardment and fighters and that sort of thing. And that broke that situation up. That broke the back, really, of the German army, so to speak, right then and there.

PR: Were you still supporting the 82nd Airborne or 101st? Or were you just taking supplies to whoever?

JM: Well, we didn't make any drops then. They came in by truck there. But, we were still evacuating.

PR: Evacuating back?

JM: Carrying supplies and so on.

PR: Where would you evacuate the wounded to at that time?

JM: We'd take them to different field hospitals in France.

PR: Set up in France?

JM: Yeah, at different places.

PR: Were you pretty much on a continuous flight thing -- sleep under the wing and eat when you could?

JM: No, it wasn’t that bad.

PR: Wasn’t as bad as the Saint-Lô operation?

JM: No, it wasn’t that type of operation.

PR: And things got easier around January?

JM: Well, compared to GI out there in a hole someplace in the ground in the weather, we had an easy war of it, really. And we got back to base. We’d have a dry place to sleep and something to eat, you know, which they sure didn’t have. So by and large --

PR: Well, they didn’t get shot at flying through the air either.

JM: -- the Air Corps -- well, they got shot at on the ground plenty.

PR: Yeah.

JM: And so, like I say, the Air Corps, by and large, had a pretty easy war of it.

PR: What were your duties then from January and February and on into March?

JM: Well, just still picking up the wounded and evacuating them, yeah.

PR: Same, as they started to move into Germany?

JM: Resupply and just that sort of thing.

PR: Were you still flying out of Mourmelon?

JM: Yes, at that time.

PR: Okay. And how long did that last then?

JM: Well, until the tail end of the war when we made the operation across the Rhine over into Holland and over in through there. That was the last major operation we had.

PR: Oh, okay. Now, was that Arnham, Montgomery's fiasco at Arnham? Were you flying with that?

JM: Well, he indicated that he'd be up there in five days. He was bent out of shape because Eisenhower was the supreme commander, you know? And he thought, well, he should be the head knocker. And at the end of the campaign, he still hadn't got up there; still hadn't got there. And they wiped out the Polish Air Brigade, practically to a man, on that operation.

PR: Were you doing any flying in support of that Montgomery operation, Market Garden?

JM: Well, yeah, sure. We took paratroopers and gliders both in there during that operation.

PR: Oh, okay. Now this is at Arnham?

JM: Yeah, across the Rhine there.

PR: Okay. In Holland, though?

JM: Yeah.

PR: Okay. Is that when the Messerschmitt snapped your line?

JM: Yeah, that was that operation. And they had that bridge up there, too, they sure were interested in, you know? But you get across there, and that was a bloody battle.

PR: Could you see that bridge in the flights that you did?

JM: Oh, hell yes. That was at Nijmegen. And of course you could see it.

PR: Oh yeah. We were...

JM: We dropped at a place just off from the bridge there, 10 or 12 miles. There's a place called Grave spelled G-R-A-V-E. And I sure as hell thought it was going to be the grave.

PR: You had a drop of paratroopers.

JM: Dropped paratroopers, and then we dropped gliders in there, too. And the Germans had set up, like, poles in there, like telephone poles. And the gliders had to -- and they wrecked many a glider and --

PR: Trying to swoop around them?

JM: Killed many a man going in there.

PR: That was pretty much a disaster, wasn't it?

JM: It sure was.

PR: Montgomery did not shine.

JM: No, he was still hell and gone back up the country.

PR: Were you still landing with the supplies and troops and taking wounded out during that time, too?

JM: Well, no. We were strictly operational. We're dropping paratroopers and gliders. And then later on when it simmered down we started picking up the wounded.

PR: How would they convert your plane to wounded, for taking wounded? Were there straps they hung from the roof?

JM: Well, it had a conversion to it. They just had some straps up there that they put on the ends of the stretchers. And of course, when it was on the ground it'd be like that. But then when you got airborne, well, you -- but, it'd be like that.

PR: So that webbing would just put the...

JM: Carry 12 on each side. That's 24.

PR: They just put the handles of the stretcher through those loops?

JM: Through the loops.

PR: Oh. And then when you weren't using it they'd tuck it up in the ceiling or something?

JM: Well, of course, you didn't have the stretchers. The things just fold up, up there in the top of the fuselage.

PR: Compartment?

JM: In a regular airplane, like closing...

PR: Now, you went through the Market Garden at Nijmegen in Holland. Did you get involved then in that big airborne operation across the Rhine River in Germany?

JM: Well, that was the operation across the Rhine.

PR: Yeah, that was in Holland, though, right?

JM: Well, Nijmegen is in Holland.

PR: Nijmegen, yeah. But then there was another one later on that crossed the Rhine River by Cologne.

JM: No, Cologne is when we killed so many civilians there in that bombing raid. They went in, and the cathedral there, the Cologne Cathedral was there. And there's pictures of it there in that thing. Of course, they had no way of knowing it, but they had some troops come in there by. Some of them had come from the Russian campaign. And they came in there at Cologne. And there was many, many members of their families and friends and associates and so on that met them there. That's when they bombed them with 24s and 17s. Of course, they didn't know it. They killed 25 or 30,000 civilians in that deal. And that Cologne Cathedral was almost miraculous. It was hardly hit at all. It was still --

PR: Isn't that something.

JM: The structures were practically -- I've got pictures of it there. And it's just there by itself.

PR: Everything else is blown up?

JM: They really killed the civilians, but fare the well.

PR: Now, that's getting towards April/May, the end of the war, isn't it?

JM: Yeah, that's the tail end.

PR: Were you still flying, doing flights, keeping supplies in and troops out?

JM: Wherever the wounded was and they needed supplies, that's where we'd go.

PR: When did you switch off to Reims now from Mourmelon?

JM: Well, we went back up to Reims toward the tail end of the war. And we were there when the Germans surrendered. And then we started getting rigged up to come back to the States from there.

PR: Did you have an idea that the war was coming to an end?

JM: I had no idea of it until I came in to the field one night from a flight. And did I tell you this? Seeing that arc of fire that was over the field, and I called the tower and asked them if we were under attack. And they said no. They said, "The war is over." And I said, well...

PR: And everyone was firing in the air?

JM: I sure don't want to get us killed by friendly fire. And I told him I'm going to back off over here towards the trace. I'm going to drop the gear down and turn the landing lights

on full so these guys could see me. And that's what I did. And we got on the ground, and several people got killed that night. Those paratroopers got drunk, and they was throwing grenades around here and there. In fact, I gathered up the crew going back up to our quarters, and I arrested two or three different people that were just out there just shooting. Just shooting, didn't give a damn where they're shooting. And target opportunity could be anybody or anywhere.

PR: Did you see the surrender, the surrender place?

JM: No. Well, yeah. I didn't know it at the time. That was a well-kept secret. But it was right there, like I say, in Reims. But, I had no idea that that was the headquarters.

PR: I'll be darned. What did you do? How did they change your assignment now that the armistice is signed?

JM: We didn't do much of anything. Some of the -- they just let the airplanes just sit idle. And one of the worst things to do is just let an airplane sit up. So the guys made different flights around where they'd had some particular interest, where they'd got shot up pretty bad or something to look at it in the daylight. So they'd look the situation over.

PR: Sort of a tour then, pleasure tour?

JM: That's right. And that's where we left from when we came back to the States and went from there over across to Le Bourget.

PR: Okay. Now, you had a story, something about flying French POWs.

JM: Yes. That was...

PR: How did that occur and when? Where?

JM: Well, they sent three. My airplane and two others made it. And they said to go over in Germany at this field over there. And we were going to pick up some guys that had been POWs. Well, we had some POWs, too. And we had high hopes we'd pick up some of our people. But these were all Frenchmen. And I got over there and loaded them up. Some of those guys had been prisoners for over five years. And one or two of them might have spoke English. And so when we took off, one of them had a chart. And when we crossed the Rhine River over in France you should have heard the cheering. So we went up to Le Bourget. That's where they told us to take these people. They got up there in sight of the field. And my God, I never saw so many people in my life. And they knew something I didn't know, because I didn't know anything about all this taking place, you know? And then, finally figured out what was going on, so we made a little ceremony of it. And I was talking to the other

aircraft. And we landed and got out and stood at attention and saluted these guys as they come off. And they went up toward the tower where all this was taking place. And they had the gendarmes there, the military police. And they tried to hold some of these people back. But some of them recognized members of the family. And they'd break out there, and lots of hugging.

PR: After all these years, yeah.

JM: Crying and weeping and throwing snot, this, that, and the other. It was something. But, it was a real emotional experience. It really was.

PR: And you saw it right there, the release?

JM: Yeah, sure did.

PR: And then gotten the word that you were coming in with these prisoners, obviously.

JM: Yeah, they knew.

PR: The secret was out of the bag.

JM: Word got out. And all we knew is pick these guys up and take them into the airport.

PR: Yeah. Did they honor you in some way?

JM: No, no.

PR: You got the Croix de Guerre eventually, though.

JM: Well, we'd already got that. No, it was -- like I said, it was a real emotional experience for everybody.

PR: Yeah. And then you flew back to Reims again?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And then you started...

JM: Then we got geared up to come back to the States.

PR: How did you get the word you could return to the States now? Were they sending the whole group back? Or, did you have points or something and rotated back?

JM: Well, you know, they were sending lots of people home at that time, which -- you start moving that many people around from that many different places around the country, why, it takes some planning. And we'd been running short of navigators. And that's when I proposed to the crew that we fly back without a navigator. And the old man finally went for it. And those that were going to be on the airlift, every one of them wanted to get on that airplane. They kind of considered that a lucky airplane, which it was. And so then we went over on the coast of France and then up to Gibraltar and went on back...

PR: Yeah, you told me that part.

JM: On back to the States.

PR: Who were the troops? You said you had a squad of soldiers that you brought with you, too. Who were those guys, just ones that had earned enough points to rotate?

JM: Well, yeah. Everybody had been over there long enough that they had plenty of time to come back.

PR: Were the soldiers in your plane, were they airmen? Or were they Army soldiers?

JM: No, they were members of our squadron.

PR: Oh, from your squadron? Oh, I see. They weren't on flying crews.

JM: In Liberia we picked up a pilot. And he was flying an A-26. And they had a gunner back at the back, an enlisted man. And he got lost. He couldn't find that deal. And he finally set it down on the beach. And he went, and where he set it down he'd gone by the end of that runway no telling how many times. And he was hacked. Oh, he was hacked. So he got -- they put him in the enlisted men.

PR: Joined up with your crew?

JM: And he got in my airplane, too. We brought him back safely. He didn't say half a dozen words to me the whole damn trip.

PR: No kidding?

JM: No, hell no.

PR: Should have left him on the beach.

JM: Well, I would have as far as I was concerned. And the enlisted man, he was pretty quiet, too, because he could

tell that his pilot was bent out of shape. And he finally got friendly with some of the enlisted people.

PR: Takes all kinds. What was your rank, by the way?

JM: I was first lieutenant at that time. I made captain a little later on.

PR: Oh, really? And your crew, you were an officer. How about your copilot, an officer?

JM: Yeah, yeah.

PR: Any others in the crew officers?

JM: No. Normally the navigator would have been an officer. And then the crew chief and the radio operator were enlisted.

PR: Were enlisted? Okay. Were you all first lieutenants?

JM: No, they were enlisted people.

PR: No, I mean the navigator and the copilot?

JM: Well, we didn’t have a navigator, but my copilot was first lieutenant also.

PR: Now, after you got back to -- eventually ended up at Fort Wayne where you started. Is that where you were discharged from?

JM: No. I was actually discharged from San Antonio, where I was discharged.

PR: Oh, okay. What happened when you got back to Fort Wayne? How long were you there?

JM: We were only there long enough to cut orders. See, we had a 30-day delay because the war was still going on in the Pacific. And we were regrouped at Fort Wayne. And we thought we were scheduled to go to the Pacific. And that's when the war ended all of a sudden, of course. That ended that. Now, they did have a program that some of the older members of the squadron -- there was 10 or 12 of us -- that American Airlines had some kind of a rigging that they could sign you on as pilots for American Airlines and get you out of the service. That was ex-combat personnel. Well, everybody looked into it, and only one man in the bunch went along with it because it was all going to be flying down in South America. And you sit over in the ignorant seat. And you might as well been someplace else, because we had enough of that being away. And so, like I say, only one man went along with it.

PR: Were you still in the same -- you're still in the same DC-3 that you had all through the war back at Fort Wayne?

JM: I had it until we landed, until we landed there at Charleston. And then they had a crew of people that -- we got everything out of it that belonged to us. And they had a crew right there and immediately got to the field, into the airplane and flew it to Luke's Field. That's where

they had that graveyard. And as far as -- I don't know what happened to the airplane after that.

PR: No fooling? Now, when was this, on the way home to San Antonio?

JM: That's when we'd come up from Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico and flew into Charleston. That's where they took the airplane.

PR: Oh. So this is on your flight home from Europe?

JM: Yeah.

PR: They're ready to ditch it right away?

JM: Yeah.

PR: And you flew in another plane to Fort Wayne?

JM: No, we rode the train.

PR: Took the train?

JM: We rode the train.

PR: I'll be. That must have been a strange feeling.

JM: Well, of course, I'd come to Fort Worth first. We had orders and gave us 30-day leave. So I came to Fort Worth.

PR: Now, did your whole 434th end up at Fort Wayne there, the whole group?

JM: Yeah, regroup. Everybody regrouped there.

PR: Give you new planes? Didn't get that far?

JM: Well, we didn’t have any airplanes. The war ended. And so, then they started cutting orders and sending people home.

PR: Okay. So you never got to start training up again?

JM: No. They sent me back to San Antonio. And that’s where I was officially discharged.

PR: Oh, okay. I think - in October, was it, of ’45?

JM: No, that was in September.

PR: September? Do you remember the date?

JM: Well, it was toward the tail end. We had a saying when it was over -- “Home alive in ’45.” And it was in the latter part of September.

PR: End of September?

JM: Or the first of October because I...

PR: Was that a good feeling to get out, knowing it was over?

JM: Well, you know, it kind of left you hung out there. I had a job I could go back to on the railroad. But it was -- you had a lot of time on your hands. You didn’t really know what to do with it.

PR: Mixed emotions?

JM: Well, yeah. You’d been in a situation where you kept your adrenaline going strong. And so, there you were.

PR: Always something going on until a time when...

JM: It was like a different place and a different time, really. You got used to civilian life again.

PR: You were giving yourself orders instead of following someone else's.

JM: Oh, hell yes, plenty of that.

PR: How did you get with the -- was it the fish and wildlife service you went?

JM: Well, I worked on the railroad for a while. And I got in a bad accident, had a damn fool engineer that was really the cause of it. And while I was still kind of banged up, a friend of mine that has been an old, old friend of the family for years -- Doc Sinclair there in Fort Worth -- came by to visit with me. And he said, "I just was down." He was the president of the state wildlife association at that time. And he said, "I just went down and gave a talk to a game warden class that just graduated. He said, "That might be something you might be interested in." So that's how I got in the state game warden business. And I went down and talked to a man named Captain Frank Houser and visited him down in his office in Austin and told him that Doc Sinclair had told me about your operation. I knew the game warden. But I don't know that I had ever seen one up there at that time. I'd probably seen him and didn't know it. So we talked a little bit. And he said, "Well," he

said, “We sure don’t make much money.” And he said, “We can’t compete with the railroad at all.” And I said, “Well, I’ve just recovered from a bad accident on a railroad.” And I said, “I’d sure -- if I could get in on your training program and be a warden, I’d like to do it.” And he said, “Well, if that’s what you want to do,” he said, “You can sure have it.” So that’s how I got in on the deal. And then later on I had an opportunity -- I took an examination and took one for just the regular game agent, the fish and wildlife service, and also another one as an agent-pilot. And I was rated single and multi-engine land and sea anyway. So that’s how I got to fly in an airplane for the fish and wildlife service.

PR: That’s how you got into flying in the fish -- what kind of plane did you usually fly with them?

JM: Well, flew Super Cubs, 190s and Grumman Goose. That’s the twin-engine powered with two Pratt & Whitney’s 450s.

PR: Oh. Were you assigned to Texas? Pardon?

JM: That’s land and sea, you know, that Grumman Goose. So I was stationed at Houston, Texas. That was my first assignment. And it got to the point where you couldn’t hangar an airplane over in Houston. So then I transferred over here to Victoria. And I was here from then on.

PR: Oh. When did you transfer to Victoria here?

JM: Nineteen fifty-eight. I went to work for fish and wildlife service in ’54.

PR: Fifty-four in Houston and then ’58 to Victoria?

JM: Fifty-eight here.

PR: When did you retire here from the...

JM: Seventy-three.

PR: Seventy-three? I’ll be. That’s fascinating. And you told me about your story, your team that found the whooping cranes up there. Did you used to do the whooping crane surveys over at Aransas?

JM: Oh, yeah. I did many, many.

PR: Could count them in your sleep, I bet.

JM: Well, yeah. It got to the point where you pretty well knew where they were. They set up their own territory, you know? And unless something unusual happened, why, you see them today, that’s the general area where you expect them to be tomorrow, too.

PR: I’ll be. So once they got there, you knew where they were staked out?

JM: Yeah. And they’d fly strip flying. So if something did happen they wouldn’t fly. They’d be someplace else. You’d count the same ones to reconcile it.

PR: Oh, I see. Yeah. That's a fascinating story, too. Well, that's quite a [quid?]. Well, we've been through a lot, Joe.

JM: Yeah, we...

PR: Huh? (inaudible). How many more questions do I have, though?

JM: We went from A to Z, didn't we?

PR: Yeah. You have to go through some of your notes if you want to add places and dates and times in there, too. Why, do it. Just make a note on a pad or something with me.

JM: Okay. That'd be good.

PR: Yeah. Well, we started at 9:00. It's almost 11:30 now. So this has been a real nice interview. I appreciate you sharing your experience.

JM: Well, I appreciate you doing it.

PR: Yeah. Okay. Well, I'll sign us off here.

JM: Say, as I told my daughter, I don't get a captive audience like this all the time.

END OF AUDIO FILE