

Warren Newberry Oral History Interview

PETER RIESZ: I'm just going to start in. Today's the third of August, the year 2000. We're at the home of Mr. Newberry. I'm Peter Riesz, interviewing for the MOWW. It's 10 minutes to 10:00 in the morning. Morning, Warren. How are you doing today?

WARREN NEWBERRY: Just fine, thank you.

PR: What's your complete name?

WN: Warren David Newberry.

PR: And you were born when?

WN: Five twenty-eight twenty-four.

PR: Where were you born?

WN: Graham, Oklahoma, Carter County.

PR: Is that a big, robust community?

WN: Well, actually I was born out in the country in my mother's folks' house.

PR: Was your whole family from Oklahoma for quite a while?

WN: Yes.

PR: Where did you attend elementary school?

WN: In Graham. I attended the third grade in Clemscott and then the first, second, up to the eighth, through the eighth, in Graham.

PR: Why did switch to Clemscott for one year?

WN: I don't know. We could walk, for one thing. It was a lot closer to walk.

PR: This was an oil field camp, you were telling me. Wooden barracks and a lot of activity.

WN: Mm-hmm.

PR: Any paved streets in the town?

WN: No.

PR: (laughs) What other activities were there in the town?

WN: They had a movie theater. Didn't have a roof on it.

PR: Open-air theater.

WN: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) go to the movies. It was a very conservative, religious community. We did have Big Jack, was a lady. They called her Big Jack. And she had a dancefloor. Not a dance hall, but a dancefloor. She was the trash of the community in the group that I went with.

PR: With that wild dance hall, huh? (laughter) You finished elementary school at Graham. Where did you go to high school?

WN: Dad was transferred to the East Texas oilfield north of Longview. And I went through high school at [Judson?] Grove, six miles north of Longview.

PR: What year did you graduate?

WN: Nineteen forty-two.

PR: So you were 18 years old when you graduated.

WN: That's right.

PR: You had to register for the draft? Eighteen-year-olds all had to register?

WN: Yes, mm-hmm.

PR: What did they tell you when they registered? Indicate when you might be called or drafted?

WN: Well, I had 120-day contract working with the Soil conservation service. I was active in the agriculture part of high school. So I fulfilled that 120 days. And President Roosevelt had a program out where 18-year-olds could enlist in the branch of service that they wanted to get in. But they couldn't choose what they wanted in that branch of service. But they were guaranteed. So I enlisted.

PR: Voluntarily. When was that that you enlisted?

WN: I enlisted on December the seventh of '42. But I wasn't sworn in till December the eighth, the next day.

PR: So you volunteered, and they took you. Bing, bang, they swore you in, and you were in.

WN: They took me from Longview to Tyler. They gave you physicals and everything there. I liked that I passed my physical, because I was really scared of needles. They were a deathly animal to me. From there, taking blood from me, they went and let the doctor listen to my heart. He

said, "Son, what's wrong with you?" I said, "That needle in there." He said, "Your heart's acting up terrible." I said, "It'll be all right. I'm just scared of that needle." And I had to do some talking. I said, "If you'll just give me some time, it'll settle down. I want to go." He said okay.

PR: (laughs) What was your serial number they gave you then?

WN: One eight oh nine eight seven seven nine.

PR: That's instilled right in you, isn't it?

WN: It is.

PR: What transpired then? You were sworn in and had your physical and everything. What was the next thing?

WN: They had a bus waiting on us. And they took us to Mineral Wells at Camp Walters. It was later Fort Walters, but they had called it Camp Walters. It was a reception center.

PR: What branch were you in?

WN: The Army Air Corps. I wanted to be an airplane engine mechanic.

PR: So they sent a group of you by bus to Camp Walters. What happened at Camp Walters?

WN: One of the greatest things happened to me there. I never was too athletic. They gave you all aptitude tests and physicals, and showed you indoctrinating films and things like that. But they had me out, and I was jumping flat-

footed, seeing how far I could jump. I couldn't even get out of my tracks. The Sergeant was getting kind of aggravated at me. So there was a voice behind me. Said, "Soldier, you can jump farther than that." I turned around and I looked. I started up this fella. And he was a big man. He had the railroad tracks on, which was a Captain. He was standing there with his hands on his hips, looking at me. He said, "You jump." And I think that's the first time in my life I ever put anything in my life into what I was doing. And I could jump. It really did surprise me how far. I wish I could've met that man later.

PR: Isn't that something? The small things that mean so much. This was a part of your basic training?

WN: The reception center. They give you aptitude tests and see what you're qualified for. They told me when I went in to get my assignment, this guy said, "We're sending you to Madison, Wisconsin." I said, "What for?" "To Radio School." "Radio School?" "Yeah, the Morse Code part of your aptitude test said you just really did good." "Well, forget that, because I guessed at it. I don't know any part to do with radio." I had to talk, and finally I convinced him. They sent me to Sheppard Army Air Force Base. I got out of that.

PR: That's one time when they listened to you.

WN: Well, it would've been quite exciting, I'm sure, if I had gone that way.

PR: How long did you stay at the testing at this reception center?

WN: From the 8th to the 12th.

PR: Did they bus you up to Sheppard?

WN: Bus.

PR: That's in Wichita Falls.

WN: Mm-hmm.

PR: And Walter Mitchel called it Colonel [Clagatt's?] Concentration Camp.

PR: (laughs) How'd he know about it?

WN: He was one of the leading commentators. I don't know. But he shouldn't have done that, because it wasn't all that bad. They had to make men out of you.

PR: How did they treat you when you got to Wichita Falls? Did you have uniforms yet?

WN: Yes, we got that at Mineral Wells.

PR: But you still didn't know about military discipline, marching, commands, and things like that.

WN: No. One interesting thing I'd like to back up on at Mineral Wells, at Camp Walters. This Sergeant, we got in there late at night and he had got us all around. He said, "I'm going to show you how to make a bed." He made it, it

seemed like, in about three seconds. He said, "You've been showed once. That's all. You're only showed once in the Army." We were up at three o'clock the next morning, trying to make that bed. (laughter) Usually they didn't even come in and look at it. But he was making a point. And he did a great job.

PR: They had all these millions of men with no military experience they had to shape up into an Army in a hurry. At Wichita Falls did you stay in barracks?

WN: Yes, nice. They didn't have the landscaping, but --

PR: Did they have any airplanes there yet, or was this all training school?

WN: They had some airplanes. Many schools there. I understand they still have one of the best Aviation units there.

PR: It's very active. Did they start you out with just the basic training type thing, with marching and guns, rifle range, combat course, things like that?

WN: We got there the 12th. We went out. They didn't have a good obstacle course. We thought it was, but it was a joke really. We only had one Corporal to teach us. We didn't go to the rifle range. We didn't go on any long hikes. And on Christmas day, I was confined to the area pending shipping orders. Well, the shipping consisted of getting my barracks bag the day after Christmas and walking about

three or four blocks to another barracks. And I was assigned to the Glider Maintenance School.

PR: How long were you in that basic?

WN: About 10 or 12 days. You're talking about from the time I got there and the time I started school? Mm-hmm, about 10 or 12 days.

PR: So you never did have a 12-week basic training at all.

WN: No, we didn't.

PR: Did they march you? Calisthenics?

WN: They taught you how to march. You had calisthenics and all that. You just went through little exercises.

PR: They weren't real heavy on that.

WN: No, they didn't have time. But the Glider group, we found out later, they had tried to assemble these gliders in England, about three different groups. And they couldn't cut it. They just really couldn't get the production out. A glider had seven boxes to it with seven different parts to put all together. So they decided they would have their own mechanic Glider Maintenance group within the Air Force. I was in Class 11. They didn't teach us very much. They had one of the gliders that they would be working on in the hangar there roped off, and they wouldn't even let us get around it. We didn't even get to look inside or nothing.

PR: So this was a Glider Maintenance School you were in. Did you have classes all day long?

WN: Yes. And here not long ago there was a lady in Victoria. I always read the obituary column. And it says one of the things she did was taught Glider Maintenance. She came later than me. I wish I could've talked to her.

PR: So it was classes all day long.

WN: We had eight hours. But then after we'd get off, then we had about an hour or two of supposedly calisthenics and drilling.

PR: Did you have formal reviews and marches?

WN: Some did, but we didn't.

PR: How many were in your class? You were in Class 11.

WN: I would say not over 20.

PR: It was a relatively small class. They're teaching you Glider Maintenance; what type of maintenance do you have on a glider once it's assembled?

WN: This glider here --

PR: Tell me a little bit about out. What's this glider called?

WN: This is the CG-4A Combat Glider. The 4A is the modifications that they improved from CG-1.

PR: Is this the one they call Waco?

WN: It's a Waco Glider, yes.

PR: How did it get the name Waco? Was it made in Waco or made in Texas?

WN: I believe it was a Waco aircraft that engineered it.

PR: Where were they manufactured?

WN: There was about six different manufacturers for it. Ford Motor Company was the best. The Gibson Refrigerator Company was real good. I did have a list; and I got it somewhere here.

PR: It was a variety of manufacturers. They were manufactured and shipped in these seven crates over to the assembly point in England. Is that what they were teaching you, how to assemble them?

WN: And maintain them. All this is fabric. This is fabric over plywood on this wing. This structure in here is a steel tubing. They made it as light as they could.

PR: In the body portion?

WN: Yes. This comes apart here. There's four bolts that holds it. That's what the pilot's worried about. We had to magniflux over bolts to make sure that they were the tensile strength they had to be.

PR: What does magniflux mean?

WN: They put them in a magnetic -- and check them. They put some dye on it. That'll let you know whether there's any cracks in them or they were faulty. It'll show up.

PR: So the body was just held together by four bolts.

WN: This part. This nose would come off. You can see some of the pictures in a middle. This nose would braze.

PR: That would swing up.

WN: Mm-hmm. In the glider, they had two poles. They had a hole through here. They'd get out and they'd raise it, stick that pipe through there, and then put these two poles under it to hold it up. When they raised this, it could carry a jeep. They designed a 75-millimeter piece for it. And they designed a little bulldozer for the Burma, Colonel Cochran Burma raid over there when they went way behind the Jap lines. They took it in there and built an airport. If you want to see a movie on that, it's a good one. Errol Flynn. It's *Destination Burma*, and it's about this deal.

PR: So they jacked the tail end of the plane up to level off the loading compartment. They'd raise the nose up. Where were the pilots seat? Would they raise up when it hinged up?

WN: Yes, sir.

PR: So the whole thing would hinge up.

WN: And the jeep was attached. It had a pulley to where when you started the jeep up and pulled it out, it would raise the nose up. And it'd just zip right on out of there.

PR: And it had wheels on it.

WN: On the start, the wheels were only used for takeoff. And then they would jettison. That wasn't too good because they had to land on the skids then; you stopped pretty quick. Then later they put a regular hydraulic landing gear on it. These are P-38 wheels off the P-38 airliner.

PR: So they tried to land on the wheels, but there was still a skid in case the wheels failed or broke up.

WN: They would nose it up. And there's some skids under here. And it'd really stop quick. But it would haul 13 fully full combat Infantrymen, plus two pilots. But mainly in Bastogne they hauled five-gallon gas cans, when they relieved Bastogne. That's not too good of cargo. It was pulled by a 350-foot-long, inch-and-a-half nylon rope. They attached it up here and then to the back of the C-47 or the tow plane. Needed nylon. It had to give. Anything else, it'd break.

PR: So it wasn't completely rigid. It would stretch a little bit and then come back to original length again.

WN: You ought to see them take off. Some of them just pulled right in two. And when they would splatter that (inaudible) field, it was something else when it'd break. But this was stuck; they were stuck.

PR: The cord would actually break and then snap back.

WN: Then later we put on the Griswold nose. I have a picture of it. This is just very vulnerable. If they hit a tree, it'd just go right through it, kill everything in it. We put a Griswold nose because the man that designed it was named Griswold. They were heavy pieces of steel coming out, reinforced. When it would hit, it would have a tendency to -- it was curved.

PR: Push it away from the object.

WN: Over to the side.

PR: When they took off, was there one plane for one C-47?

WN: One, or they could pull two. This right here, some of these are two-tow. You can see the deal on here.

PR: How would they keep the planes apart when you're towing two?

WN: One rope was shorter than the other on the gliders. It just took some good flying on the glider pilot's part.

PR: When they got over the target, they'd release the cable?

WN: They had a little lever up there. And they'd hit it, and that would turn this rope loose. They'd have a caution light on the back of the plane. And when it was getting close, they would turn that on. Then when they'd get over the landing zone, then it would turn to green. They'd hit the green button. And they would cut loose.

PR: Were the men sitting on benches in the back when you had the 13 men on board?

WN: Yeah, they were on the side.

PR: When they landed, would the pilots turn into troopers, too? There was no more job left for them to do.

WN: They was in the Infantry. They was ranked on Market Garden in one of the missions they went on. They were short because of one patrol, one platoon, to guard a certain bridge. The glider pilots all volunteered. And they were the first all-Officer platoon. (laughter) They got in some combat.

PR: So the pilots were Officers.

WN: Flight Officers and Second Lieutenants. The highest officer in the glider pilots was Lieutenant Colonel LaSalle. Then Mike Murphy was a stunt pilot in civilian life, and he was a Major. He's the one that flew the glider on D-Day that the General was killed in. Did you see --

PR: *Private Ryan*? Yeah, I read that, too. Was in a jeep or something?

WN: Actually, they overloaded him somewhat. They put steel under this General to protect him. They didn't tell Murphy. You shouldn't land these things over 80 miles an hour, but he had to land them around 100. Right in here,

you have a five-inch piece of tubing, five-inch diameter, to hold these rings together. It was just head-high, sitting in the jeep. When Murphy came down, he ran out of space and he hit this hedge row. And that jeep kept going. When that General came by, his head hit that tubing. That's what really happened to him.

PR: Did it kill the pilots up front, too?

WN: No, the General's the only one.

PR: In that heavy jeep, barreling forward.

WN: Murphy somewhere, with the jeep going forward, it pulled him up out of the way. You couldn't believe some of the stories. And they have photos and pictures to back it up.

PR: This is almost worse than -- they call a plane landing on an aircraft carrier a controlled crash. This is more like an uncontrolled craft, because you never knew where you were coming down or what the terrain was like specifically where you hit down, did you?

WN: Rommel, which was I'd say one of the smartest Generals of the war -- I wish we could've captured him in North Africa and he'd have come over to our side, because he wasn't a Nazi anyway -- he knew we had these gliders. They put posts in every field in Normandy. There wasn't any way you could get in without tearing things up.

PR: They call them Rommel's Asparagus? (laughter)

WN: My job on this, in the assembly line on this glider, I would crawl all the way to the back. And I had me a little board. This tubing is all fabric, and you don't want to step on any of it, because you'd go right on through it. I would lay down, and they would stick these elevators in the rudder in. And I'd bolt it all together then.

PR: That's all the tubular -- was it aluminum?

WN: No, it was steel. And this was a piece of plywood. They bolted right down in here. Then I would hook up the elevator.

PR: So the wings, elevator, and tail assembly were all plywood with fabric over it.

WN: This was plywood; this was fabric. This was fabric; this was plywood.

PR: The controls, were there rudders on the back with cables?

WN: Cable control.

PR: And the pilot ran that.

WN: The really funny thing, I found this. I went on through this; it really brought back some good memories. I made notes of how many pounds of tension to put on. The actual notes I made.

PR: To get it tuned up just right.

WN: You had a little lever, a little instrument you could put on it. And you could just tighten up on that cable until it had that tension.

PR: Did you find the kits for making the gliders were all pretty much the same way? Was there any variation in what they ship you?

WN: Ford's went together good. Some of them were pretty tough.

PR: Like building Liberty ships. You had to pound and bend and stress more than you'd like to.

WN: You learned quick, or we did, that everything was expendable, including you. As long as you could get a craft that would get into the air, that was the main thing.

PR: We're getting a little bit ahead of the story on that. How much training did the pilots have, and where were they trained?

WN: Lubbock was one of the main --

PR: For glider training?

WN: Yes. They had different phases. First, they went through the sail plane, the little sail planes. Then they had a larger glider in there, a training glider. Then this was the last thing they got to.

PR: So they actually got to do some landings with the Waco.

WN: Yes, when we were assigned, they had lots of training. You want me to wait until I get to Laurinburg Maxton?

PR: Yeah, let's wait on that. Were there many crashes during the training? These were not easy things to fly, and there was no power. They must've had a higher number of crashes than a powered flight plane.

WN: The idea was to get together, stay close together. I've seen them. They'd mark off a big circle with a line. They'd want 72 gliders in that circle.

PR: We'll jump ahead while we're talking, but techniques with landing, did they have any control over how they stopped the plane?

WN: Oh, they was easy to stop.

PR: How would they stop it?

WN: Once they get on the ground. If you nose it up and those skids hit on it, you come to a stop.

PR: How would you nose it up?

WN: With your elevator.

PR: Was there a tendency for them to flip all the way over if you stopped too fast, or they were designed not to?

WN: Some of them did on D-Day, but it was because the objects coming up they had to stop it.

PR: How were the troops strapped in? Did they have seatbelts to keep them on the benches when they landed at such a fast rate of speed?

WN: I don't remember no safety belts on it.

PR: You'd think with a row of men like that... Were they in bucket seats or just a flat bench?

WN: I have some pictures. They had bench seats on each side.

PR: How long was the Glider Maintenance training?

WN: I'd say it was about six weeks.

PR: Where did you go after the Glider Maintenance there at Wichita Falls?

WN: They sent me to Bowman Field in Louisville, Kentucky, to a replacement center.

PR: What timeframe are we in to go to Bowman Field?

WN: I finished, I believe, in February or January. February, we went to Bowman. These dates are grey, man.

PR: What did you do at Bowman, then?

(break in audio)

WN: -- field replacement center. And it was pretty cool over there. We took some pretty good hikes over there. I didn't mind it. It was snowing and beautiful. And we burned a lot of coal, and I love the smell of coal. I enjoyed that Bowman Field. They also trained the Flight Nurses there. They were Lieutenants. When we'd see one coming, we'd just fall off and we was walking together, the six of us. We would drop off. And she'd have to salute six times instead of one. They got a big kick out of that, too. We stayed there about 10 days. Then they put us on a

troop train. Course, they don't tell you anything. But I asked this Captain, I believe. I said, "You didn't tell us where we was going." I knew that he wouldn't tell me. He said, "I'll tell you something, Soldier. If you know where Ardmore, Oklahoma, is, then you know more where we're going than I do." Well, see, that's my home. (laughter) Gene Autry had given the Army a lot of land, and they could build an Air Field there. The little town of Ravia, Oklahoma, they changed the name of it to Gene Autry. We went to Gene Autry Army Air Corps Field in Ardmore. We got there around midnight from Fort Worth; had a long layover in Fort Worth.

At that time, I don't know whether you remember or not, but in St. Louis they took a bunch of dignitaries on a flight in one of these gliders to prove how safe they were. This strut right in here, they machined it too thin and it broke. It killed them all, the mayor and dignitaries. So this glider was in limbo. What we didn't know was they was sending all the glider people to Gene Autry because it really wasn't finished, the base wasn't. And they brought in about 1,000 glider pilots there. They were looking for jobs for us to do. They assigned me right off the drill to Officers' KP. That Mess Sergeant told me, "Son, here's

where you'll finish the war." And boy, we were eating good until those 1,000 glider pilots came in. And then one day he told me to report to the Captain in the Personnel Office. I believe his name was Mitchel. I went down there. He said, "I see you took typing in high school. Type this paragraph for me." Just opened the book up and point. I said, "I wasn't very good at typing." He says, "Type it for me." So I type it. He said, "You can go back to your duty now." In about two weeks, Sergeant told me, "Go get in Class A. Report to Captain." I was assigned to the Message Center. I had to record every piece on any document or any mail that came into that base. I had to number it, put who it was from, who it was to. And if it wasn't confidential, I read it to give a subject and all that. That was real interesting. I enjoyed knowing what was going on.

PR: You weren't working with the gliders down there. The whole program was in limbo.

WN: It was in limbo. They didn't know what they was going to do.

PR: Were you assigned to a unit by that time?

WN: No.

PR: You still weren't assigned. What was your rank?

WN: I made PFC there. I was one of a few. I don't know of anybody else that made a rank there, rating there. One of my old buddies, Ed Lanthy, out at Lubbock -- I see him each year -- he put P-Fly. He got P-Fly out of that PFC, some way or other. And that nickname followed me all the way. Even to this day, a lot of them will call me P-Fly.

PR: How long did your training there last?

WN: That was February. In May of '43, they sent us to Baer Field. They had a successful deal over in Burma with the gliders. They fired it back up.

PR: Where was Baer Field?

WN: In Fort Wayne, Indiana, the nicest Army town that I was ever in. They really treated you nice. They had, I don't know, a four- or five-story building there for USO. You could just get a full meal. They really were nice.

PR: Made you feel at home.

WN: They did.

PR: What were your duties there?

WN: It was a replacement center. Same. Bowman Field moved to Baer Field. Lieutenant [Brenneman?] and all. Lieutenant Brenneman was the Pennsylvania track star that would take you on these "walks," as he called it. And he could run forward and backwards. And most of us couldn't, forward.

PR: Are most of the troops from Class 11 still along with you?

WN: Yes.

PR: There weren't any other Glider training or reception centers in the country?

WN: No, this reception center was for Army Air Corps. They had everything, not just the gliders.

PR: What did you do after that?

WN: In May of '43 -- didn't stay at Baer Field very long -- they sent us to Pope Field at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, at Fayetteville. What they wanted there, they had assembled a lot of gliders and they wanted somebody to clean the boxes up to get rid of them and clear the area. That wasn't a nice time, at Pope Field.

PR: You were just sort of cleaning up, odd-job assignments.

WN: That's right. I never was assigned -- I don't know how I made PFC at Ardmore -- but I never was assigned to a squadron as such until I got overseas. We were always attached wherever we went.

PR: What would they call you? Just Glider Maintenance cadre?

WN: In the cadre, mm-hmm. Let's see; now, where are we? Pope Field. We finished there, and I got the only furlough I received during the -- I got to come home for two weeks there. When I got back to Pope Field, they sent me to Laurinburg Maxton Base down at Laurinburg, North Carolina. It's way down in the southern part of the case, in case

you're not familiar with it. There's two little towns, Laurinburg and Maxton. And they had this airbase there.

PR: What was the purpose there?

WN: That's where the Glider Pilots and the Glider Maintenance really learned what it was going to be all about. Training for flight. They would bring in whole companies of Airborne Infantry. They would load a glider, take off, circle the field, and land. Take it back to the runway, load it up, and just all day long. That's hard on equipment. But the pilots really got some good training. And Hap Arnold, General Arnold, came down to visit us there. They had a pond, pretty good-sized pond. They landed one in the pond to see the reaction. The wings floated good. The wings are in two sections, right along here. They floated real well. They had barrels ready for them. It was a controlled -- that's where I saw Mike Murphy, Major Murphy, loop one of these things six times.

PR: How fast? He must have come in at a fantastic rate of speed.

WN: No, he just was way up there.

PR: Just kept tumbling down? And they survived?

WN: Right on down. But he looped it on purpose, just to show the people.

PR: Loop isn't front -- loop is around and around?

WN: No, you dive down and you just come right on over. And then you just come down again.

PR: Oh, in the air. I thought you meant on the ground. In the air? Six complete --

WN: Six times. He got down, and he went over and patted the wing. And he said, "Boy, that sure is a good wing."
(laughter) He was a stunt pilot in civilian life.

PR: He's the one that landed the General's plane.

WN: Yes.

PR: When they loaded these planes, they're real fussy about weights and distribution of weights in planes these days. Would they be concerned with the weight of the troopers and the distribution of it, or would they just load it up?

WN: When it came down to the nitty gritty, they were vastly overloaded for D-Day.

PR: With all their packs and ammunition and things they had to carry with them.

WN: And that's why they had to land them fast. That's why they lost so many people. The guys had to bring them in way too fast.

PR: So the weight would speed the landing.

WN: You had instruments that you'd balance. The main thing not as much as the weight is it was balanced, to have it just right, because you didn't want all the heavy part in the

back or in the front, because the pilots... That would cause them trouble in flying.

PR: Lose control. What were the controls like? Was there a rudder stick? A wheel like an airplane?

WN: Just like an airplane.

PR: What sort of instruments did they have?

WN: (laughter) They didn't need many instruments. They had an air state indicator, altimeter.

PR: Was there any radio communications?

WN: They tried it on the start. All the ropes had radio with wire in it. And then they tried the little walkie talkies. When it was all said and done, the lights were the best.

PR: Who controlled the lights?

WN: The pilot. When that navigator said, "We're here," then they gave him the green light.

PR: This intense training time, what happened after that? How long did you stay there?

WN: That was July that I got to Laurinburg Maxton. And I'm amazed at how many grey areas I have, what I actually did there. But in September of '43, they sent me to [0?], North Carolina. It was on a Friday afternoon. They came after five o'clock. We were dressed to go to town. They came in, blew a whistle, and everybody fell out. They read a list of 137 names. I was on it. They said, "Y'all are

confined to the area. You'll go on rifle range in the morning, Sunday morning. And you will ship out Monday to Goldsboro, North Carolina, overseas replacement center."

And I was tickled. I was really tickled that I was going to get to go overseas.

PR: You're finally going to be moving.

WN: Yeah. So we got to Goldsboro. They wanted to know who we were, because they said, "Y'all are the hottest bunch that's ever come through here." They just dropped everything and processed us.

PR: How many of you were there?

WN: Hundred and thirty-seven.

PR: So you were a high-priority item.

WN: We were. And we didn't stay there any time. They loaded us on a train. We got a lot of shots and stuff. Sent us to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. The guy that wrote *Trees*, you know? So we were there for three or four days. They told us the same thing. Then they loaded us on a train. Next thing we knew, we were next to the water in New York.

Turned out to be New York. They loaded us on the *Empress of Russia*. That was a World War I German ship that the English had captured. It was very old. It was the dirtiest, filthiest thing I have ever seen. They took us way down below. We had to get over the steam lines where

it wasn't insulated in places. You had to be careful not to get burned. They put us in a room. It just wasn't very big at all. You had to sleep on hammocks in order to have enough room for everybody to sleep. And you just wouldn't believe the food that they served us. There was two little 30-gallon cans of water. In one you washed the food out of your mess kit. And then you dipped it in the cleaner water. Can you imagine what that was like if you were about the 100th down the line? And I didn't want to sleep in one of those hammocks. I hung around and hung around, because all you had was air coming in. I slept on a mess table with my head right in one of these vents. The next morning, we got out. They took us out that morning. We were in a convoy, ships everywhere. Man, it's exciting.

PR: What date is this?

WN: I can't nail it down. First part of September. I'll give you a better idea in just a minute.

PR: Where did you leave from? One of the piers on the Hudson River in New York?

WN: Mm-hmm.

PR: So your train went through one of the tunnels and up to the piers. You load right from the train onto the ship?

WN: Yeah. The next morning, early, one of the guys says, "Hey, we're just passing the Statue of Liberty. We're back in

New York." Everybody was mad. They told him to cut that stuff off, because we didn't like that ship at all. But I noticed that it wasn't as rough as it had been. It was pretty calm, the ship was. Anyway, there were several rumors. The main thing was it couldn't keep up the required number of knots.

PR: For the rest of the convoy.

WN: Some said the coal got wet. I don't know. Anyway, we got off it. We were the first to get off that ship, the *Empress of Russia*. And we went to Camp Shanks. We went up the Hudson River quite a ways on a ferry. We got in there late, in the morning, I guess about two o'clock. And we were hungry because we didn't eat much on that ship. The Mess Sergeant was the nicest guy at that time of day. He said, "Fellas, it's just a few hours till I have to get everybody out. I hate to get them early. We work 12-hour shifts and all this. I just don't really have anything that you need." We said, "We're not particular." He said, "How about weenies and sauerkraut and light bread?" "Great." A bunch of us jumped in there and helped him. We ate that stuff. That was one of the best meals I ever had. (laughter) Then later they made a hospital ship out of that, the *Empress of Russia*. It was painted white; it was beautiful. It exchanged a bunch of German wounded

prisoners, went to Stockholm and Sweden and picked up a bunch of real injured Allied (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) in that *Empress of Russia*. But it had just brought a bunch of Italian prisoners back to the United States when we got on. We stayed 10 days in Camp Shanks, and we got to go into New York City every other night. They would go on about, "Don't write home and tell where you are," and all of that stuff. And then on the 19th of September --

PR: How did you get to New York? Was there a ferry boat service?

WN: Bus. I got to go up on the Empire State Building. I always wanted to. From the Empire State Building, you could look at all the harbor and you could see every ship in there. They had all this secrecy. One day, it's full of ships; and the next day, it isn't. (laughter) But anyway, on the 19th of September we were marching down to the ferry. When we went by, there was a band playing. And when we went by they sang, "The Glider Maintenance will win the war." And they were singing this to everybody. I said, "Why won't they let us write our mother and daddy where we are? And here they are, they're broadcasting to the whole world who we are." (laughter) So we got on. We

got down to the ship. Boy, I knew we went on something big.

PR: The ship was right there?

WN: No, we had to take a pretty good trip on that ferry. But it was dark at night. And it was tented in. We couldn't see anything. Big, huge tent. And we went. We went up quite a ways on the stairs. When I walked on this ship, I knew it was something big.

PR: That was back in New York Harbor again?

WN: Mm-hmm. And it was *Queen Mary*. They sent me to a little state room, well, it was a state room. But they had bunks on the walls. Several of us stayed in there. We were supposed to stay down there one night and stay up on deck the next. It just so happened that the bus that I was in, we had a bunch of nature boys that wanted to stay up on the topside every night. And that didn't bother me. But it was a big ship for this little boy. The place we marched to eat, our table was in the swimming pool. Yeah, it was in what was the swimming pool. It was amazing. They had these big, nice marble columns in there. And they just had this regular old galvanized sheet iron wrapped around it and wired up to protect that marble. In five days, you zigzag over.

PR: No convoy, though.

WN: No.

PR: How many troops do you think were on it?

WN: Ten thousand. Twice too many.

PR: It was fast enough they didn't have to worry about submarines too much.

WN: That's why they went in a zigzag. You could look back and it's just like a snake in the water.

PR: So you left the 19th of September.

WN: And the 25th we landed in Glasgow, Scotland. And they put us on a train immediately. Walked right off the ship, right onto the train, and handed us out K-rations. That was my first expert with K-rations. And I thought, "Man, these are not bad." Course, you eat the food on the ship... So we went to Stone, England. That was kind of a replacement center there. We didn't stay very long.

PR: Near Glasgow? No, this is down from Glasgow.

WN: I don't know where Stone is. I never did look it up on the map. Stone, England... We went to Crookham Commons at Newbury. They had an airbase there and a golf course. And the golf course was the end of run of the runways. This golf course is where they had dumped all these glide boxes. No order whatsoever.

PR: How did they ship them there? By train?

WN: Trucks.

PR: Shipped them on the ships, and then trucks out of the harbor. Just dumped them out.

WN: I'm sure some of them was taken on the train, maybe. But mostly all we saw was trucks coming in with these 40-foot bed trucks on them.

PR: No organization to it?

WN: I was trying to keep them in a sequence. So you could see the problem that this presented. And my best buddy was the fella that located. He was in charge of locating all of the seven boxes, and have them on a map so that they could go get them, with name and serial number.

PR: They had to go by serial number?

WN: Yes, sir. All of them had a serial number. You couldn't take just any wing and put it on any. They were all made together. They had been preassembled. I'm not sure that it wouldn't been have all right to do it the other way.

PR: Were you in a unit yet?

WN: No.

PR: Let me know when you get to a unit.

WN: We weren't assigned. Nobody wanted us.

PR: No Air Force or anything.

WN: No. When we got there, there was 13 people. There was Lieutenant [Shawcraft?], and he had 12 GIs with him. He

was a pilot, but his training mainly was engineering. He was a real good engineer.

PR: You said before this they tried to have other crews assemble planes. English people tried to assemble some, and it just didn't work.

WN: They did assemble some, because they had a few gliders scattered all over England at different bases. They didn't fly them. They pulled them down there and then put the wings on and everything. And you talk about holes. And there were broken stars in the wings. It was a mess. We'd go down there on the [tack?] service. But I'm getting kind of ahead.

(break in audio)

WN: Yes, N-E-W-B-U-R-Y.

PR: This is going to be the main place where you work from now on?

WN: No, that's a town next to it. We were up at Crookham Commons.

PR: But you stayed at the same base for the rest of the time.

WN: Yes. While we were there, we didn't have any place to stay.

PR: What kind of a base was this? Just a county airport?

WN: No, it was a golf course.

PR: It wasn't really a flying field.

WN: They had a flying field right next to us that we could pull the gliders down this road and then take it on. These troop carrier groups would come in and get them. And that's what those boxes looked like. This box here is the one that would keep this section of the glider in, the big one. You see?

PR: I see a door on it.

WN: These are taxiing doors. But what we did, we cut a door. They would line them up. They were double-walled with the fabric in between that would make them weatherproof, and this tar paper on top. And you see this fella here? Lives in Brownwood, Texas. Good friend of mine. And we made our own barracks, our own facilities.

PR: You called in Shantytown.

WN: That's what this magazine that came out did. We would have our bunks. All they gave us was a mattress cover and a bunch of hay, straw we could go get. And it was flat-bottomed. They gave us a pot-bellied stove. And they put in one electric light. We didn't stay in them very much anyway. I lived in this one. It had a leak in it. We stole a tarp and put (inaudible) tarp on it. See here, this is called a clete track. We're pulling this section out. Just loosen the bolts in the bottom. Then when they would get through, then they'd pull that back in, bolt it

back up, put the ends on it, and then we'd make us a place to stay. Actually, we had it made. Boy, that was nice.

PR: Really sturdy. This is the section they're pulling out? It would be on skids on the bottom?

WN: Skids on the bottom of this crate.

PR: This was like a half-track that they used --

WN: Only they called it a clete track, C-L-E-T-E.

PR: And that's how you actually pulled the different parts out of those shipping crates.

WN: They would get up and move, man oh man. But they'd throw sand, dirt... And they're putting the nose on here.

PR: This is all outside.

WN: All outside.

PR: Did you have sort of an assembly line that you worked from where you pulled all these different parts to?

WN: See how they're lined up here? Assembly line. And here's where we're putting the tail sections on them here. And then they'll come and pull them out of there.

PR: These are all your packing crates, shipping crates.

WN: Yes, sir. Then they've got them up here when they're doing the rigging. From here, you'd go up to where the wings are laid out. They'd go right down.

PR: You'd pull them with your cleted vehicle up to here?

WN: Here's them showing them putting a wing on. They made a dolly for the tail. The guy got the Bronze Star for it.

PR: For designing that dolly?

WN: He was a welder. Boy, with that they could move those gliders around fast. But when you had to get in there and guide them, it was awful. You had to take it slow. You couldn't control them that good. But after they got that dolly, it really made it. I've got a picture here somewhere of it. Wherever that box was, they'd bring it to you and they'd put them on. This old boy here, he's in the nursing home up in Oklahoma, north of Tulsa now, with a stroke. He can't move his right side. You can see him on this.

PR: They had lots of names for it. That's Packing Case Town. You had Shantytown. Oh, here, Crate City.

WN: Different newspapers would come out.

PR: Are these newspapers covered in the UK?

WN: They were little magazines that came out and did it. I got the sheets, and I had them laminated to protect them.

PR: With all these crates, you didn't use all these crates. You selected ones and used them for your living quarters.

WN: There was only one that you could make living quarters out of.

PR: That big one for the body. What they'd do with the rest of the crates?

WN: They were getting them for lumber. They recycled that lumber. It was top stuff. And it was double-walled.

PR: That's for shipping. Was there much damage in shipping?

WN: No, it was strong. It sure was. This is the Horsa Glider of the English people.

PR: That was a much larger glider.

WN: Thirty (inaudible). But that's what they would glide, one of those.

PR: This was actually in combat?

WN: Yes, actually landed in combat.

PR: When did you get to Crookham Commons?

WN: It was in October sometime.

PR: Took a week or so to get finally to Crookham.

WN: When they got there in October, the next time we got off was a half day in Christmas. We would assemble gliders from daylight to dark. And then after dark you went out and they had these big screws. They were like a big spring. You would screw them in the ground and tie the gliders down. Because any little wind at all, boy, they were ready to go.

PR: What does the whole glider weigh?

WN: I don't know.

PR: They were as light as possible, though.

WN: The floor was strong enough that they would -- the ingenuity of the American soldier... They recognized how strong the floor was, and they would put it over the little crevices to drive tanks over. It was that strong. They'd strip everything off.

PR: After they'd been used.

WN: When they were over in Normandy.

PR: How about the weather? You're out here in the golf course. The weather's not sunny every day. Did the mud and the water bother you very much in your construction? Did you have enough gravel to dry things off with? Drainage?

WN: You had some roads. You had raincoats. The attitude of the people, you couldn't believe.

PR: All going the same direction.

WN: In the snow.

PR: No one was complaining, bitching, talking about how bad things were.

WN: No. That's me. That's my job, laying in here, you can see.

PR: You were inside them some of the time.

WN: But I didn't get to meet the guys and get acquainted with them. You'd get to bed about ten o'clock at night. And

you'd get up and, boy, you were so tired. By the time you sponged off out of your helmet, your bath --

PR: Would you have three meals a day there?

WN: Yeah.

PR: Regular mess hall?

WN: This was a barber shop. This was the mail room. And they put I don't know how many of these things together and made a Mess Hall. Made a theater out of this lumber.

PR: Who ran the Mess Hall? Was it a regular Quartermaster?

WN: They sent cooks in.

PR: Regular meals in? Not just K-rations and C-rations.

WN: They had one little Victrola and one record. (laughter) It was [Bernie Berman?] and that crazy [young sun?] with nothing to do. It was amazing how long it lasted. And then once we got a theater built, they began to get some movies in. But, man, I was so tired that... And then they made a band, tried to get a band together. And one fella actually made a (inaudible) out of the lumber and stuff that come from us.

PR: So you had no leave time at all.

WN: No, didn't even enter your mind. Finally, they started bringing people in. And man, at one time, I don't know how many we had there. But we had the 127 set up the assembly line process.

PR: You were the spearhead from the start, to get this going the right way, 127 of you. Did you have an Officer, Captain?

WN: Yeah, Shawcraft. And then this glider pilot picked us over, Stout, from Lexington. He was the finest young man.

PR: How did you get moving? Did you all sit down together and identify the problems and start to have ideas about how to do it? Or did the Officers sort of have an idea how to divide you up?

WN: No, there wasn't enough Officers to. The guys did it.

PR: These are all Glider Mechanics, trained.

WN: Yes.

PR: What's your rank? Had you made Corporal yet?

WN: No, because we wasn't a squadron. And finally, they made the 26th MR&R, which is the 26th Mobile Reclamation and Repair Squadron. When they did, boy, it had a good TO, (inaudible). Twelve masters, twelve techs. And that Lieutenant, he was the Captain then, Shawcraft, he sat down and he promoted that guys and set this thing up. He promoted them from PFCs to Master Sergeant, Tech Sergeant... I skipped Corporal. I went from PFC to Sergeant. He got hauled on the mat for it. They asked him why he did it. He said, "I wasn't about to let you ship in a bunch of ranks when these guys have done all the work."

We were acting. They had our orders out where we were Acting Sergeants and all that stuff. Brokow wrote the book *The Greatest Generation*. I was 18. A lot of us, 18. But it was those guys that were 22 and 23... (pause)

PR: They really had the knowledge and the motivation. Kicked the whole thing through. They didn't need any generals.

WN: (crying) No.

PR: That's the greatest thing about the United States forces. If your Officer went down, you didn't have to... The Germans got lost. They didn't know what to do. The GI, the next guy in line would step up and do the job, get it done. Were you under another division above you? A bomb group?

WN: No.

PR: You went right up to the 8th Air Force?

WN: When I went in, I wore this patch in the Air Corps. When I got to England, the only thing over there was the 8th Air Force.

PR: You were the 8th Air Force.

WN: And then they had the 9th Air Force there.

PR: You were attached to them?

WN: We went under the 9th Air Force. This is strictly heavy bombers and fighters. Then they gave us this patch. And that one, I took it off and put it on a cap. That's the

patch I have on in there. You see the glider and the parachute. We were under the 9th Air Force, though. The 9th Troop Carrier Command.

PR: Ninth Troop Carrier of the Ninth Air Force. And that was for the glider pilots. The planes, the C-47s that pulled you, were they in the same?

WN: I don't know. There was just [bouqous?] of groups. Then we were all just made up the Troop Carrier Command. The planes in the [Belian?] (inaudible), they were all those guys.

PR: I heard that troop carrier, all those C-47s --

WN: Yeah, they were Troop Carrier Group people. But they split them up. Didn't have any need for them after the war.

PR: You got there and you set up the assembly line, got things rolling. They ship you other troops in?

WN: Yeah, they sailed mechanics in from these other groups for six weeks of detached service. They would help. One day we got some guys in. And I met one of them when I was out doing -- they had enough people. Somebody beat me inside, so I was working on the outside assembly. I noticed this fella was pretty old. He was around 30 years old. A very nice guy. He was helping me. They sent in a bunch of guys. They went through the Boston Brig, Naval Brig. And these guys had jumped ship. They didn't want to go

overseas. He said, "They took me to the ship in leg irons and shackles." But he was a good worker. He wasn't as bad as you'd think he was. His name was Steps. He said he had some beauty shops from his father. He said, "Jack Dempsey in New York is one of my customers." Anyway, so they had this type of people, too.

PR: Anybody would go in and help out, then.

WN: With the experience that we had accumulated, they could take a green fella and give him to one of us, and you could just go right on.

PR: When you initially started out, how many gliders were you assembling? One a day? Would it take several days to assemble one?

WN: We didn't have the equipment we needed. Did you see that tracker with the boom truck? On the start, we didn't have that. As we realized what we needed, then they'd see to it. No problem. They sent it to us.

PR: Different parts that came in, they always had the shipments together so there was always something to assemble?

WN: They'd send us the equipment, that boom truck to put the wings on and everything, those clete tracks and all the tools we needed.

PR: You were assembling and assembling and assembling, getting faster and faster at it?

WN: They did close to 200 one day. In one day.

PR: Really in high gear. What would they do when they finished them off? You didn't have storage space for all these gliders.

WN: They'd have the Troop Carrier Groups waiting for them. The C-47 would be sitting out there in the runway. They'd pick it up there.

PR: They'd actually fly them out to the fields they were going to. They didn't ship them on train.

WN: No, they didn't. With those (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

PR: Where would they fly them to? Big troop assembly areas?

WN: They were stationed all over. They had bases all over England.

PR: When it came time to participate in these maneuvers, would the troops come to the air grounds where the --

WN: There were four squadrons in a group, and each on each one of them had 12 gliders.

PR: How many groups were there?

WN: I really don't know.

PR: Dozens?

WN: Yes. I'd say 50, 60 on up. More than that.

PR: How many gliders do you think participated on D-Day?

WN: Three hundred and forty-seven, I believe. That was the initial. But the next day, they brought in more.

PR: So it wasn't just on the D-Day, it was continually supplying them.

WN: The Rhine and Market Garden, and that one bridge too far, up in Holland. That was a catastrophe of Montgomery's.

PR: So they still used the gliders in those operations.

WN: Right to the last.

PR: So you kept on assembling them.

WN: Well, they kept on assembling. In June the sixth, it was D-Day and I was at Bournemouth. I was down there, took a group of guys down there to put on the Griswold nose. That's when we found out it was going to be D-Day, because they said, "You're not going to get close to those gliders. They've got places to go tonight. Y'all are confined to this base."

PR: Is that the first you knew that D-Day was --

WN: We knew that it was getting close. That's the first time I knew it was going to be.

PR: This was Bournemouth?

WN: Bournemouth.

PR: Along the southern coast, there?

WN: Uh-huh.

PR: Did you actually see the planes take off?

WN: They marched them right over us.

PR: That must've been a sight.

WN: When they started coming over, I thought they never would get over.

PR: Like a kettle of hawks.

WN: I just imagined myself as a German soldier over there. And to see all that bunch come over and go behind me... And here this bunch was coming at me in front... That must've been pretty hard on them.

PR: What time of day was that? Do you remember?

WN: They wanted to get there just at dark, just enough time to land.

PR: At the end of the day. So they were taking off during the day of the sixth.

WN: And it was a rough flight. Can you imagine that many aircraft? That many propellers turning? The glider pilots tell us that they would give out in 15 minutes, and they had to switch over. They could only fly about 15 minutes.

PR: And then the other one had to take over.

WN: It was so rough.

PR: Nothing hydraulic. It's all mechanical link.

WN: But then after D-Day, I'd say July, the Ninth Army needed some help, General Stempson. They were having some

problems with getting their Cubs together. That's these little --

PR: Fighter planes?

WN: Just like that, Grasshoppers. They used them for a spotter. So they pulled a bunch of us out and formed the 50th Mobile Reclamation and Repair Squad. They sent us over to France. First thing we did, though, was help some French put B-17 oxygen bottles up in this Cub for gasoline, to where they'd have enough gas to fly across the Channel. That was an experience, working with those French folk.

PR: You were all done with the gliders.

WN: We didn't have anything. They were still assembling gliders. In fact, they made record production after we left. But Stempson, they really needed some help on these cubs.

PR: The production line, were there just tons of gliders there? Boxes?

WN: They assembled 5,000.

PR: What time did you go with this 50th group?

WN: In July, I'd say, '44.

PR: Where did you go for that operation?

WN: We went up to Kettering, England, and just kind of bounced around, trained a little bit, and got an idea. Then they divided us into 16-man teams. Don't ask me how many teams

we had. I don't really know. And in that you had specialists. You had a hydraulic specialist and all that. We were supposed to be able to go out and work on anything in the field. But our main job was this Cub.

PR: You're a glider mechanic; what did they feel you could contribute to fixing a Piper Cub up? You knew about the wings and how to attach things together? Was that the thinking? Or were you just a smart guy that, any job they gave you, you could figure out what to do with it?

WN: That was the secret. You just didn't -- can't or are not able or don't know... That didn't even enter the picture.

PR: It was just a challenge.

WN: Yeah, we did it. When they said, "This is what you do," we did it.

PR: Did you work there in England?

WN: No, very little in Cubs on England.

PR: When did you get to France and where were you in France?

WN: They took us on a ferry boat to France.

PR: Across the Channel?

WN: Mm-hmm.

PR: Let's backtrack just a minute. In England, did you see any of the offensive weapons? The V-2s? They have any German bombing raids? Anything? The V-1s? Anything like that at all?

WN: I was in London when they had that V-2, the one that's supersonic. But when I get to Holland, I'll tell you about those V-1s and V-2s.

PR: Did you have a little leave time, finally, to see London?

WN: Yes.

PR: Where was your base located? Where's Newbury?

WN: I'd say about 80 miles from London.

PR: Which direction?

WN: I never did know the direction over there. It was close to Reading.

PR: So you're on the ferry.

WN: We went across. And we couldn't get off the ship for about four days because of the rough weather.

PR: Do you know where you landed?

WN: At Omaha Bay. We got off on those cement barges that the English made.

PR: The Mulberry.

WN: They sunk them and made the pier. They had two LCIs there for us. Finally, they said, "We got to get off." They tried this plastic chute. We just put our barracks bag and followed it.

PR: Just slide down?

WN: But the thing began to tear apart. So they threw this net, which is a ladder, all up and down. Threw that over. And that's what I crawled out on, on this LCI.

PR: Onto that Mulberry Harbor thing.

WN: On the LCI. Then the LCI took us down to the pier. They had two LCIs tied together there. I had to go from one to the other one. That was the most hairy part of it, getting off of one onto the other.

PR: Don't want to lose your legs in the process.

WN: I saw this 55-gallon barrel sitting there. I said, "I wonder what that thing's for?" It wasn't long until you find out what it's for. You stay on that very long, you start getting sick. A lot of the guys did.

PR: What day is this?

WN: D-99, D-plus-99. It was one of the most important days in my life. I'd like to play a little something for you on TV about that. Actually, we had to wait after we got off. We had to wait four or five days. But when we got off and got on this pier and we walked off of this pier, everything was clean. And one pillbox on the side; a little concrete was left on it. We were all laughing and joking. "This doesn't look too bad." We were expecting something. I don't know what we were expecting, but we didn't expect that everything is quiet. But when we walked up the little

old draw that we rode, it was a nice trail, the way the incline was. When we got up there, I noticed the guys, when they were getting to the front, they were getting white. Didn't say anything. There these 44,000 crosses were.

PR: That's right in Saint Laurent, the cemetery?

WN: No, it's right there on the beach.

PR: Right above Omaha.

WN: Yeah, right above it. The French didn't want them to use that high-price territory. And it was awful. It looked awful. It wasn't landscaped. Just like a ploughed field. A big mess.

PR: So that's where they took all the casualties from all those beaches.

WN: I'm going to play what my thoughts were. I can't tell you. But we stayed around there about four or five days. The trucks picked us up and we went through Saint-Lô. And I'm sure the road we went through, they just bulldozed. There probably wasn't even form of it. They probably didn't even follow the streets. The Germans wouldn't leave, and the B-25s came over at treetop level just about. Everything was destroyed, looked like. The church was hit less, though, than anything.

PR: That's about the only thing that survived it.

WN: Amazing.

PR: I just talked to Oscar Vogt. He was in the 4th Division. They're the ones that went through. They didn't capture Saint-Lô; another division did that. But they went through right after the bombing. And he said it was unbelievable dust and smoke. You couldn't see. That's why they dropped short bombs on some of our troops. They couldn't see what was below them. There was so much dust from this tremendous bombardment they put up. Did the job, though. Where did you go on after Saint-Lô, then?

WN: To Rennes, R-A-N-N-E-S, France, to a former German base there. We wasn't there very long. Seemed like I got to go into town one time. I wanted to see some kind of cathedral there. They have a pretty nice cathedral. Then they sent 16 of us back to Omaha, A7, Air Strip A7. They smoothed the ground and put this wire on it. It was a P-51 base there.

PR: Were they still using the base?

WN: No, nobody was there.

PR: They're well beyond that. This is July 25th. Had Paris been liberated yet?

WN: Yeah.

PR: Paris was August 25th.

WN: I believe it was. Anyway, Stempson was over on Cherbourg. He had a bunch of them cornered over there. And they sent us back to Omaha, tents and everything.

PR: K-rations? C-rations?

WN: They'd bring the Cubs in, in the crates, one crate. A7s. We would assemble it.

PR: That's why they picked you guys, then. You knew how to put things together.

WN: Boy, it was cake.

PR: How did they get the crate to you?

WN: They had a truck. It wasn't very big. It's neat. They were designed where they were able to do everything.

PR: So you started to assemble these little observation planes right there.

WN: Yeah, for the different Armored Divisions. And we had a pilot on-hand all the time to test them. But it didn't take us very long.

PR: Why did they have trouble? Can you speculate?

WN: Well, one day I was unpickling the engine. That was one of my jobs. I'd take the oil out of it and run it through, and then put the spark plugs and put the new regular oil in it, and start the engine. That was one of my jobs on it. I wasn't paying a whole lot of attention, because there was always somebody coming in, landing and checking on their

stuff. I would say that we'd have one ready to fly in no less than five hours. That might be way long. I didn't pay any attention to it. Somebody said, "Soldier, who's in charge here?" I didn't even turn around. I said, "Well, Lieutenant [Caruba?] is the Officer in charge. But Sergeant Finch is our Line Chief." He said, "I would like to see them." And I turned around. (laughter) And there was the kindest old gentleman, with the Silver Star right there on his hat, just as nice as he could be. And boy, I saluted and I got busy. First time and only time I got to talk to a General.

PR: Who was that?

WN: I don't know what his last name was. I said, "Sir, the man you want to see is Sergeant Finch if you want to know about your plane." Well, Caruba came out there. He was a genius. But anything you put him on, it just turned. Major Davis told Sergeant Finch, "I'm sending Caruba with you to sign these papers. You might need to because you're responsible." He was my buddy. Still is. We see each other. He was my best buddy. So he told Finch, "I'm having some trouble. My boys are having some trouble putting our planes together. Is there any way you can help us?" Finch was four years older than I was. He just had such natural leadership. General Davis didn't mean one

thing to him. They could talk. He could with anybody. He said, "Well, where are you located?" Told him. And he said, "Well, we don't have anything coming in tomorrow. We can come over tomorrow and help you out." Boy, he sure would appreciate it.

We went over there where they were. And somewhere they had a big hangar, this Armored Division. They had about four or five cubs there. And it was bad. (laughs) It was something else. And the General, (inaudible) because we didn't want to hurt these guys' feelings. They were going to go fight. And we were very respectful of these combat troops. But they really wasn't the smartest guys in the country. They didn't have the mechanical aptitude. So the General came around. And I noticed old Finch went up to him and was talking to him. It wasn't long till all these guys left, these fellas. They just backed off. He told him, "Sir, now, no disrespect. If you really need these planes, if you'll call your people off, we'll have them ready for you today." He said, "But we don't want to cause any problems. But we have our system. And everybody knows what to do, if you'll just..." So boy, we did. And that guy wrote the nicest letter, that General did, to our CO.

We stayed down there about six weeks, I guess, on Omaha. I got to go all over that place. I went in those big gun emplacements.

PR: Did you see Pointe du Hoc, where the Rangers came in?

WN: I didn't. All we had was bicycles, so... But this big dome place, we got to go in there. A group of fellas came in on a half-track. And they (inaudible) problem on this, taking one of these. And they still had back problem galore on that thing, down below. And somewhere they caused an explosion. And that track on that big gun, it had already been -- it must've hit it direct, because it was off the track. But you could see this much of a guy out from underneath that after that explosion. It must've raised that gun up somewhere. And this fella blew in it and was blown under the track. I don't know how they got him out. But that was rough. The skin was just like you took a sandblasting. Anyway, we went back. Then we went up to Holland.

PR: From A7 you went all the way up into Holland?

WN: We went back to Randers, to our base. And then we went all the way to Holland at (inaudible). We set up a central base there.

PR: For these Piper fighters?

WN: Yeah.

PR: What did they call them? Piper Cubs?

WN: L-4s.

PR: Made by the Piper company.

WN: The one bigger, larger, was L-5. Bigger, a little larger, and more horsepower.

PR: So you were assembling them?

WN: Yes. I was in charge of the (inaudible) of the squadron. I'd go out and we'd take two or three guys. We'd go out on a two-and-a-half ton truck. They made us some -- we called them jigs. We'd just fit these parts of the Cub in it, in the back of the truck. And it held them real good and didn't damage them further. We'd get one on the back of them. One of them snagged traveling.

PR: One of them crashed?

WN: Most of them was shot up. It took a slug through the main spar, or they'd drop little antipersonnel bombs. And the fabric just had jillions of holes in it. That's the only time I got to go in Germany. The bags were all in Germany. They dropped a little bomb by this one. It was around the outskirts of town, these guys were living in the basement of these (inaudible). The Germans left it. The town was completely a ghost.

PR: Was this Maastricht?

WN: No, it was Baesweiler, in Germany. And there was 13 black and white cattle, big. They were dead just out there. And I noticed something funny about them. They fell straight down. Just like the legs just turned. They're laying on their stomachs. They didn't turn on their side or anything. I asked them. I said, "What got them?" They said, "Concussion." Killed. They had a big pile of sugar beets there. These people had to go out and leave their home. These boys were sleeping on duty-rest mattresses and everything.

PR: (laughs) That must've been the first trips into Germany. They didn't go in till September.

WN: We stayed in Maastricht until December. I was called out again. But anyway, this was between the Artillery and the Infantry there. It was so quiet.

PR: They ship you up there for the same thing?

WN: No, I took a truck and a couple guys and a driver, and went up to get this little Cub to bring it back to Maastricht to overhaul it.

PR: The unit Artillery, you passed through them.

WN: Yeah. In here, right in the middle of this thing was a little old truck just bobbling along. And it was a little old girl that didn't weigh 100 pounds with Red Cross. She was one of the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Right up

there. (laughter) But it's a different atmosphere. Those guys were so good.

PR: Could you hear the war? Firing?

WN: It was quiet that day.

PR: Just happened to be a quiet time.

WN: One of them, we had a strafing. Our 47s, they went out of sight when they come down to strafe. And then right after the 47s left, a Junker 88 came over. And I said, "Boy." And I looked toward Germany. And there was five what looked like 47s coming. I said, "Boy, that Junker better take off." But they (inaudible). They looked like 47s. When they bombed, you could see the bombs when they turned loose. They were way up there. Must've been real young pilots. Boy, it was plenty of noise then.

PR: You come back to Maastricht, then?

WN: Mm-hmm.

PR: This is still in September?

WN: No. This is from September until December the fifth or sixth.

PR: You didn't rotate in September, then; you stayed longer in Europe.

WN: Yeah, we stayed with the 50th MR&R until December. I'm talking about Glider Mechanics.

PR: So you kept doing the same thing there at Maastricht with the 50th.

WN: Yeah, on these Cubs. A little incident: one day, one of these pilots came in with spotters. A little short blond-headed guy. When he landed, I went out to see what he was needing. He said, "Sergeant, do you have any red paint?" I said, "I don't know. You'll have to see Sergeant Finch on that. He's our Line Chief." I saw Oscar Finch. I said, "Oscar, do you have any red paint?" He looked at me. I said, "The Lieutenant wants some red paint." He said, "Why do you want the red paint?" "I want my cowling on my plane, painted red." He said, "You want cowling painted red?" He said, "Hell, give them something to shoot at." (inaudible) (laughter)

PR: Those were dangerous things to fly anyway, weren't they?

WN: Those little Cubs? Well, those guys had 2,000 hours in them.

PR: They used them as artillery spotters.

WN: And they got to learn that if a guy shot at them, one infantryman shot at them, they'd be known to lay a whole barrage down on him. So they got pretty good respect.

PR: This was in December. What happened in December?

WN: While we were in Maastricht, that's when the Germans tried to destroy Antwerp with the buzz bombs. And we were

assembled one day. And here come this sputtering thing. I looked at it and I thought, "Oh my gosh."

PR: Had you heard about the buzz bomb before?

WN: Mm-hmm. We heard about that in May. We were right in the flight pattern. In fact, a lot of the guys dug their tents right below the ground where they slept, because if one of them gets you, you never know about it. The small engine went off five or six miles over there, and it just glides in. And then we'd seen them where they just go do that, and then here comes a little pilot right here.

PR: Straight down.

WN: But they were never (inaudible). They really were. You didn't get a whole lot of rest, because they really sent a lot of them. But that's where this Hurricane with the five-bladed prop came in. There'd be two of them, the Hurricane would be on that farther-down flight pattern. And this spotter, Spitfire or whatever, appeared. He would fly and tell him that he'd located one. And this Hurricane, one of those guys got the word they could fly right in front of that thing and flip him, and send him back to Germany. They didn't try to shoot it down. They'd just flip it over.

PR: With the tip of their wing?

WN: The turbulence from the prop flier.

PR: So they flew in front of that thing. They didn't set the thing off.

WN: I tell you what, that was what it was about.

PR: Did you see any of them go off yourself, near to you?

WN: Those buzz bombs? Yes. They killed a horse just a little ways over from us. It was malfunctioned. It didn't glide in.

PR: They were trying to knock (inaudible). That was the intention.

WN: Yeah. They wanted to keep them from repairing that harbor.

PR: Short supply base, yeah.

WN: That's what the Battle of the Bulge was all about, was Antwerp. But that was a good duty with the 50th and the Ninth Army. Then we got ready for the final push. Was it the Rhine? No. We went through Bastogne on the 12th of December, I believe it was.

PR: How did you get up there?

WN: We had to go back to Paris. They ordered. One day they assembled all the 50th out. They called a list of names out of the Glider Mechanics. They sent us to go back to England, because they needed Glider Mechanics to get ready for -- I believe it was the Rhine invasion. I was on that list. I hated it.

PR: You passed through Bastogne the 12th of December.

WN: And when we got to Paris, that Battle of the Bulge broke out. They had Bastogne covered pretty quick.

PR: You were fortunate. Did they hold you up?

WN: We were shackled in because of fog. We had to wait in Paris for three or four or five days. They had a big German Heinkel bomber there. It had four inches and two propellers. They had barrels tied into the gear box. And they designed it to bomb New York. It never did pull it off. It was on its way to New York for a bomb drive. But it was a long cigar (inaudible). The tail-gunner, no way he could get it back through there. So we got in and went back to England.

PR: You got to do a little sightseeing in Paris?

WN: No, not then. Everywhere you went, you were confined because they wanted to get us back to England quick.

PR: Was there a lot of panic with the Battle of the Bulge?

WN: No, no.

PR: There was never any question of holding you up and sending you off to battle.

WN: No. Like Eisenhower said, "Now the enemy has committed himself; let's punish him for it." When we got back to England, I was assigned to the 315th Troop Carrier Group.

PR: You switched from the 15th to the...?

WN: The 315th Troop Carrier Group in the 310th Squadron. That was the most unhappy time in my career.

PR: Where were they located?

WN: At Kettering, England. I did get to go back and see my old girlfriend at Oxford, though. It wasn't far from that. It's a repair base there.

PR: What was that duty?

WN: I was the Technical Inspector for gliders. The Glider Mechanics are always put in the bottom of the barrel. For instance, there wasn't any rank in the Glider Mechanics. And there was supposed to be a Tech Sergeant as a Line Chief, and a Tech Sergeant as a Technical Inspector to go out and inspect the ship and say it's ready to fly. The Line Chief was a Corporal, six weeks out of school, in Wichita Falls. He was pitiful. Morale was... And those around him, there wasn't any rank. Finally, the guy told me on the side -- he had been a Glider Mechanic -- that they had given a rank to these Radio Operators and Crew Chiefs on the C-47s, carrying them as Glider Mechanics and letting them have the rank.

PR: No wonder they're demoralized.

WN: Thanks goodness that didn't last long. At Kettering, they practiced a lot of flights, the gliders. We had a lot of

flights. In other words, that's where they draw that circle and put 72 gliders in it.

PR: For the purpose of training the pilots.

WN: For going over the Rhine. Then they hauled a lot of gasoline, the C-47s. They'd land those out in the open. They had to haul it to Patton when he got loose. They had to haul it, laying right out there next to the apple orchards and everything else with him. It was a different life from what we'd been living, or I had. They had dances and they had a dance band. But I just didn't like it, like I had. I'd been free, where you're really into it every day. But I did get to go back down to where they were sending the gliders. They sent me back down there to get a lot of lumber to pack up to go to France. So, we went to France.

PR: From Kettering. With a new glider group?

WN: No, the 315th Troop Carrier Group. We went to Amiens Islands, France, somewhere in March or April.

PR: Why did they send you there?

WN: I don't know. We didn't do nothing.

PR: Were there any gliders there?

WN: Yeah, we took our whole group, the gliders and all. We just moved. That airbase was vacant, and we moved. We had to put up tents and everything there. It had been an

active German airbase. The C-47s were busy all the time, with the gliders.

PR: Hauling supplies?

WN: Yes. But then it wasn't long till May the sixth.

PR: You stayed right there at Amiens.

WN: I stayed right there. And May the sixth, when it was over, we had a street dance in Amiens that night. It was the Russian flag, that Russian flag there. You see that? They had the Russian and the French and the United States and Great Britain hanging all together. That town was decorated. Oh, they was having a time. So I said, "You know, I think I'm going to get me a souvenir." And I'd run and would jump, and I got that Russian flag and a French flag. But I had some friends that stayed in Paris as missionaries. And they knew a lady in Amiens, and I sent the French flag back to her with a little history because she was collecting stuff like that. And the next morning, instead of having my hat like this, I had this.

PR: (laughs) French beret. Is that the one?

WN: Yeah. The same one. French soldier and I became real good friends. (laughs) And some way or other, he liked my hat.

PR: So you traded.

WN: I really don't know how I got back to the base that night.

PR: Lots of good celebration.

WN: They moved us out the next day. We went from the dance back to our tents. And then they did one of the things that I'll always remember and appreciate. I got to ride on a 40-and-8 Railway car. Great car.

PR: How many of you in there?

WN: Wasn't very many.

PR: Not too bad.

WN: We had an Officer with us. And they took us to Camp Lucky Strike at La Havre.

PR: I've heard about those cigarette camps. When was this?

WN: This was the sixth of May. Right then, we left. When it dawned on me that I was leaving Europe, I felt cheated. I really did. I didn't get to stay over there and enjoy the spoils of victory.

(break in audio)

WN: We left for La Havre from Amiens on about May the sixth, on V-E Day.

PR: How long were you at Lucky Strike?

WN: Wasn't long. Just real quick. We got on the USS *General Gordon* for Trinidad.

PR: Was that a regular troop ship?

WN: That was a special class of designed troop ship. Boy, they were good from what we'd been traveling on. They were especially to carry troops. They were safe. Here in the

(inaudible) most of your ships out of Florida, these cruise liners, were converted general class. We went on one. I forgot the general on it. It had it up in the flight deck there. I mean... Flight deck? (laughs) The deck. They had this bronze thing that told what it was.

PR: When did you leave La Havre?

WN: About the middle of May.

PR: The war was still on. No war in the Pacific, rather.

WN: We went by convoy because they were scared that there might be a German sub out there that hadn't gotten word. Those things were fast. But we had to (inaudible) back. We went over halfway across with convoy. We left in a storm. It was quite interesting. It was interesting on that to see how people treated the dollar bill versus the pound note. The pound note wasn't that... But boy, the dollar bill, the Americans get the scent and tighten up.

PR: Why did you go to Trinidad?

WN: We left the convoy after four or five days. You could tell when we left [Boami?]. They goosed that thing and we took off. They moved thousands of people down there. They formed the Green Project. It was an airline from Italy, across to Dakar, the Azores, Natal, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and then Miami, flying high point people out of Europe, getting them back. I wanted to go to an emergency strip on

the upper Amazon, but I didn't get to. I stayed at Trinidad at Waller Field.

PR: With your whole 315th?

WN: No, it was everybody. It was all Troop Carrier people. We had a B-51 Crew Chief on there. It was Air Force people. We worked three shifts, three eight-hour shifts, pulling 50- and 100-hour inspections on the C-47.

PR: In Trinidad? So they left you there as an assignment?

WN: Yeah. I got there about June first, right after my birthday.

PR: They call it the Green Project. Were these all military?

WN: All military. They had some C-54s on it, but we didn't work on any of those. We were strictly C-47s.

PR: Doing those maintenance inspections.

WN: It's very boring. And the Navy was in charge of Trinidad. And they just put that off limits. We couldn't hardly go anywhere. We had a wonderful USO Club there, though. But here we were, war over, looking to hit a little R&R. And then they stick us in a place like that down there.

PR: What was the name of the base?

WN: Waller Field.

PR: Was that near a town?

WN: Port of Spain. But they've abandoned it now, and it's junk.

PR: How long did that last for?

WN: You remember I got off at Scotland on September the 25th of '43. I left Trinidad September the 25th, 1945, and landed in Miami.

PR: Two years to the day. Did you fly direct from Trinidad to Miami?

WN: We landed in Puerto Rico.

PR: On a C-47? One of the ones you'd inspected?

WN: Yeah. Then got on a train in Miami. Went to Jacksonville at that army base there. Whatever it is at Jacksonville, Florida. That's when I realized we'd won the war.

PR: (laughs) How's that?

WN: When we went in the Mess Hall, those German prisoners of war were waiting on us hand and foot.

PR: They took care of them.

WN: They were nice guys. The Germans was really, really nice people.

PR: A lot better than the Eastern Front.

WN: And then I went from there to Fort Sam Houston. That was on the last day of September.

PR: When you finally got to Fort Sam?

WN: Yeah. Had I stayed one more day, I could've gotten out. They said, "You can stay one more day and get out, or we'll give you a 45-day recuperation and rehabilitation leave."

Won't count against your furlough time or nothing." And I took it. Big mistake.

PR: (laughs) You got to go right home then?

WN: I went right home.

PR: Still on Active Duty.

WN: Still on Active Duty. Helen and I got married on the 29th of October. I was still in. And then I went back and got out. Was discharged on November the 19th of '45.

PR: Went back down to Fort Sam?

WN: Mm-hmm, yeah.

PR: The only difference was that you got paid for 45 days. The other option, you wouldn't have gotten paid for.

WN: Yeah, but can you imagine -- and I didn't, either -- how many good jobs filled up in that length of time?

PR: That's true. There was a flood of guys coming out.

WN: Oh, Lord...

PR: So you went back on the 19th. Did they discharge you right away then?

WN: Yes.

PR: Did you have a physical?

WN: The 19th is when they discharged. Yeah, they give you a physical. And they try to get you to reenlist. I loved it. I did.

PR: Were you tempted to stay in?

WN: Well, I really liked that life structure and everything. But being young and everything, I didn't think to discuss it with Helen. I thought the idea was to get out, get a job, and --

PR: What are you, 21 years old?

WN: Twenty-one.

PR: What rank were you discharged at?

WN: Staff Sergeant.

PR: That's what you got when they finally recognized you and you got some rank.

WN: Well, I got a Sergeant's deal there. But I think that letter from that General... My buddy recommended me for staff over there. Major Davis was a VMI graduate. There's several instances I left out that the kids would really like.

PR: Tell me about them.

WN: Well, one time while we were still in England and while I was at (inaudible), I got in the 50th. And 805 went down up in northern England. We had to go up there and get it. It was all wet. It was overnight to get there. We spent the name in. Went through Birmingham, their steel center, and spent the night in a NAAFI, which is the British Red Cross. We stopped in Wilbraham to ask where the NAAFI was. And there was four women and five of us. And one said,

"One, two, three, four. Goodie, I'll get to sleep with two of them." They were all redheaded. They worked in a -- that made explosives. I don't know whether it was TNT or what. The chemical turned their hair red. Anyway, we disabled the truck. That's against all rules in the ATO. We were a day late. (inaudible) towed it back to Birmingham, and we were late getting back. It was a big mess. I came in and reported to Major Davis. I said, "You're going to get a bad report on me," after telling him all this. I said, "They're going to write a letter on it." He said, "Well, is that all that happened?" I said, "Well, don't you think that's enough?" He said, "Well, then I think we ought to forget about it."

PR: (laughs) Did you retrieve the train and bring it back?

WN: Yeah. When we left Holland, Major Davis had his office in -- it wasn't a castle, but it was a big building. Had a moat around it and everything. He was military BMI. He had given us our cigarettes as we're going back to England. I went up at his desk, saluted him, and I said, "I'm going back to England. I don't smoke. I don't even want my cigarette. Guy will need him worse than I do. And there's plenty in England. I just want to tell you, I really did enjoy being in your squadron, your outfit." And that guy got up and came around his desk and shook hands with me.

(laughter) And he was just a kid, of course; he was all of 25.

PR: Probably the best thing he'd heard in a month.

WN: But it was things like that that really makes... The war really caused you to grow up. I feel like I was cheated out of my boyhood to a great extent. But it was a great opportunity.

PR: That's one of the great observations I've had. You guys that I've talked to, you came back and you didn't complain about how you got cheated from your education, from jobs. You got married, you started a business, you went to work. You used the GI Bill and went to school. You just got on with it. Didn't look back; always looked ahead.

WN: Well, when you get to thinking about it, we really had a wonderful opportunity of ridding this world of really a menace. If he'd have won with that crew he had, Hitler, it'd have been awful.

PR: It's frightening how close he came to doing it at the Bulge, there.

WN: Had we lasted another year, with the jets and everything that come in, it would've been... The jet grounded the 8th Air Force for 10 days one time. They would go through it, just barrel-rolling, guns wide open. It was awful. But the P-51s saved us.

PR: The Air Force guys told me they learned to fly a tighter formation, too. Before the jet, they were spread out. After the jet, they closed in so they couldn't go through the middle like that. They had to just go around the edges, and that helped a lot. The V-2 was fighting, too. He was shooting 1,000 a month off of them.

WN: Did you know that we brought 1,500 of those back? We were going to use them on Japan and start producing them ourselves. We were setting up to start making them.

PR: That was the heart of our rocket program in Alabama.

WN: When Korea came up, they sent me a letter and offered me a Sergeant's rank to come back in. I really agonized with it.

PR: I bet your wife helped straighten you out in a hurry.

WN: I didn't say anything to her about it.

PR: Did you get out completely when you were discharged?

WN: I was in the --

PR: Inactive Reserve?

WN: Yes. Big mistake. I always believe my mother helped, because I'd have reenlisted. You should've stayed in and got on Active Reserve. A lot of the guys went back in at Korea.

PR: They got drafted back in again. They didn't have any choice about it.

WN: They just brought that (inaudible). They had a lot of oil field units in the Pacific that did nothing but work building tanks for the oil. They pulled those guys back in. You were in the Army; were you a doctor down in the Army?

PR: Yeah.

WN: I felt so sorry now for the doctors. All the units I were in overseas, I never got a physical in the daylight. It was always before wartime, in the morning. They'd call us out in boots and a raincoat. And that's it. The doctor would examine us -- we'd be in the line -- with a flashlight. Mainly they were looking for gonorrhoea and syphilis and looking in your throat, things like that. Some of it was pretty rugged weather, too.

PR: Did they have a Dispensary at your base all the time? If you were sick, you'd go to it?

WN: No.

PR: They bump you up somewhere else?

WN: I never did have to go. I went to the dental. But this dentist, he traveled. They brought his chair and everything there. I got one tooth --

PR: Did you ever hear of any American military hospitals where the wounded were being brought back to? Did you ever see any sight of that at all?

WN: No.

PR: There had to be a huge system for medical evacuations.

WN: The C-47s, they could throw this kind of stretchers in, hang them up.

PR: I was amazed. The evacuation time... I thought this rapid evacuation was a new thing in Vietnam. But the average evacuation time from the time a soldier was wounded in the Bulge back to England was only 22 hours. They sent them right back. And they treated them emergency if they needed. But within 22 hours, less than a day, they were back in England at a primary General Hospital with all sorts of staff and operating rooms so they could do the proper treatment on them. I was really surprised it was that rapid an evacuation, with that many troopers wounded that they had.

WN: That blood was something else. In the Air Force, they offered the Staff Sergeants on up a Second Lieutenant's rating if we'd go and spend six weeks on the front line training. And then they'd commission us.

PR: Would you like to get a reissue of your medals again?

WN: Yes, sir.

PR: I'm going to look into that. Do you have your DD-214, your discharge paper?

WN: No, I've got it in my safety deposit box.

PR: I'd love to have a copy of it; that's got so much good stuff on it. Are those all your campaign medals and your continental time, when you shipped out and when you came back. Were you listed in the Normandy campaign?

WN: I didn't go in on D-Day, but D-99 is the closest.

PR: Well, the campaign was official over July 24th, I think. You would've been after that.

WN: Our group, the gliders that we had, were in there.

PR: Is Normandy listed on your campaign ribbons? How many stars do you have on your --

WN: Four.

(break in audio)

PR: If you have four, I bet Normandy is listed. I'm going to put you in for that Normandy certificate. These are participation of wars. Central Europe. No, you got more than Central Europe.

WN: But I don't have some of them.

PR: Rhineland, campaign in Germany. Come on, Normandy. Northern France. Come on, Normandy. I hope you have one more.

WN: I don't believe I have.

PR: Darn.

WN: We had some guys to go over there and see if there's any gliders that they could bring out. But they couldn't.

PR: Bronze Star. Oh, a reissue? Yeah. If you don't mind, make me a copy of your discharge paper.

WN: I think all of our records were burned in New Jersey in that wooden building.

PR: St. Louis?

WN: Mm-hmm.

PR: Yeah, there was a lot. But if you have your discharge paper, it'll list it on there. All the pilots that flew in that parade through Normandy, they got credit for the Normandy campaign. You should, too. They used to give a medal out from the French government. But now they have a certificate they're supposed to issue. If Normandy's in there, you're qualified for that.

WN: When I saw the cemetery at Omaha, I grew up then.

PR: It really shapes you up, doesn't it?

WN: Mm-hmm.

END OF AUDIO FILE